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Keys to Comprehension

CONTEXT CLUES

Context Clues are words within the text that help you understand an unknown word. They can usually be found in the same sentence, or in the sentence before or after the unknown word.

The chart below shows some types of Context Clues to look for:

Context Clues to Look For

Types of Context Clues	Definition	Example
Synonym	Words that mean the same as the unknown word <i>*A synonym clue may be set off by commas.</i>	One way to conserve , or save, energy is to turn off lights when you don't need them. <i>(Conserve means save.)</i>
Example	Examples of the unknown word help the reader understand it. <i>*The words "for example", "like", "such as", "and other" make us aware of this.</i>	Eating nutritious foods, like fruits and vegetables, help us grow. <i>(Fruits and vegetables are examples of nutritious foods.)</i>
Definition	Definitions nearby help the reader understand.	Zoe got a scholarship for getting perfect grades. A scholarship is a prize to pay for school. <i>(A scholarship is a prize to pay for school.)</i>
Inference	Word meanings are not directly stated, but need to be inferred from the surrounding text.	The tribe frequently moved to new hunting grounds. These nomads took their tents with them. <i>(Nomads are people who move from place to place.)</i>



Try the context clues in place of the unknown words.
Do they make sense?

Ask Yourself:

Dates: What do these dates mean to me?

Paragraph 1: Who is the narrator? Who is the “Captain”?

Paragraph 8: Why does Pedro know things the others don’t?

Pedro’s Journal

by Pam Conrad

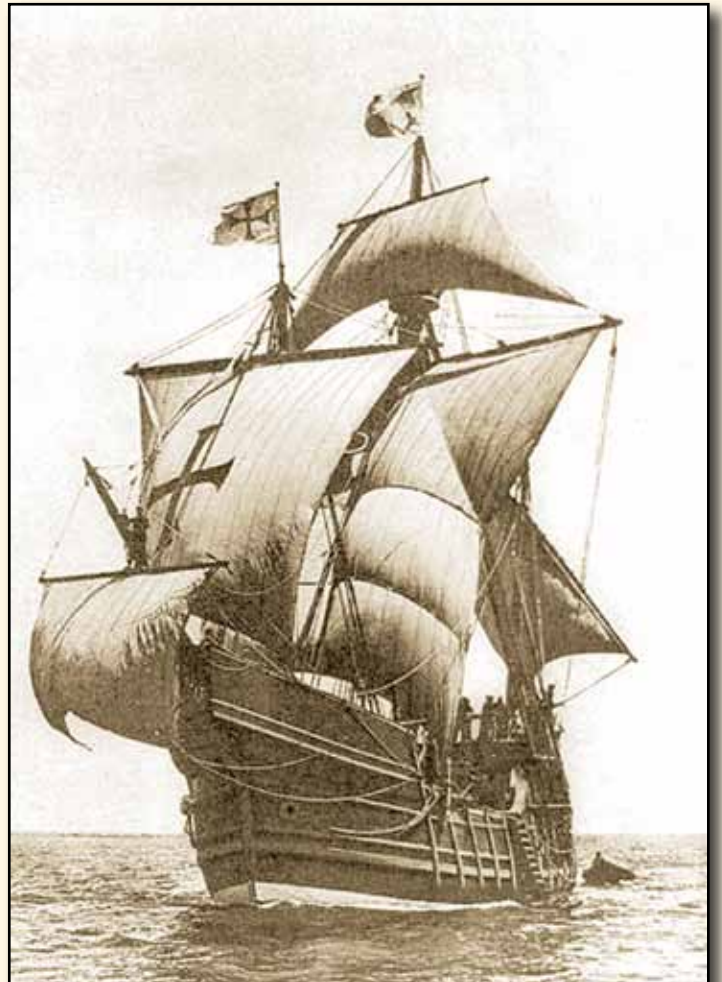
August 3, 1492

1 The ship’s roster of the *Santa Maria* has me down as *Pedro de Salcedo*, ship’s boy. The captain of this ship, who calls himself “Captain General of the Ocean Sea,” has hired me not for my great love of the sea, and not for my seamanship, but because I have been taught to read and write. He thinks it will be useful to have me along.

2 Last night I boarded the *Santa Maria* with forty others and made ready to begin this uncertain journey to India. I saw my mother standing alone on the dock wrapped in her black shawl. She lifted her hand to wave and I turned away quickly. I have never been away from our home. I have never been on a ship as great as this one. I dedicate this journal, this parcel of letters and drawings, to my dear mother who has lost so much. I pray she will not lose me as well—me her young boy whom she calls *Pedro de mi corazon*, Pedro of my heart.

3 We are a fleet of three ships. The *Nina* and *Pinta* are with us. This morning in the darkness, with no one watching or waving good-bye, we left the harbor at Palos and headed out for the sandbar on the Saltes River. There we waited for tide and wind and then made way for the Canary Islands. We are to be the first ships ever to run a course west to the Indies, Marco Polo’s land. There, palaces are built of gold, mandarins wear silk brocade, and pearls are the size of ripened grapes.

4 A couple of the men are seasick and are already mumbling that we will never see this India our Captain General is so certain he will find. Me, I have no knowledge of maps or charts or distant journeys. I am only a ship’s boy. There are three



Model of the Santa Maria

of us, and I am beginning to suspect that we will do all the work no one wants to do. But already the Captain favors me and has called upon me to write and to copy certain of his writings. I believe he is testing me and will find I am capable and write a good hand.

5 The Captain told me he was pleased to see my stomach is as strong as my handwriting. He has encouraged me to sketch some of the things I see around me. Perhaps I am a natural seaman, although I must admit that looking over the side of this creaking ship into the swelling water can fill me with terror.

August 7

6 Yesterday, after only four days out, the Captain was disturbed because the rudder broke on the *Pinta*. The rudder is the part that goes into the water to steer the ship, so of course we all had to wait.

7 I went with him to the *Pinta* in our ship's small dinghy to see what was wrong. The ocean tossed and threw us about, and I held onto the sides for dear life while Columbus and Martin Alonso Pinzon, the captain of the *Pinta* shouted instructions back and forth to each other. We didn't get too close to the *Pinta* for fear of being crushed against her sides, but we were close enough to see what was wrong. And we were close enough to see that Martin Alonso was able to rig the broken rudder with rope.

8 Columbus was pleased for the moment, and we returned to the *Santa Maria*. Last night Columbus wrote in his log that he believes it had been done on purpose, that there are men on board the *Pinta* who do not wish to make this journey.

9 Now those ropes on the rudder have all broken in a hard wind. More repairs must be made, or a replacement ship must be found. There is a brooding silence about the crew. I am surprised to learn through mumblings and complaints that few of the men want to make this voyage. No one has much faith. And they whisper among themselves of sea monsters and how the sea will come to an abrupt end and we will go toppling off the edge of the world like a log careening over a waterfall.

10 My Captain seems like a smart man. I cannot believe he would do something so foolish. So I turn away from the men when they speak so. But late at night, when I lie sleeping beneath my covers, sometimes I bolt awake, sure we are falling through space and that we've left the world behind.



Recite:

Describe the biggest problem revealed in the pages of the journal.

Tips for Answering the Objective Question

It is important to **return to the passage** for clues to the answers. Even if you are pretty sure of the correct answer, the text will provide you with the *evidence*.

Circle the letter next to the correct answer.

1. Why was Pedro chosen to join the crew?

- a. He is an excellent cook.
- b. He is a hard worker.
- c. He loves the sea.
- d. He can read and write.

2. **Part A.** How many voyages has Pedro made before this one?

- a. only one other
- b. two
- c. many
- d. none

2. **Part B.** Which quote from the story provides the **best** support for your answer?

- a. "He thinks it will be useful to have me along." (paragraph 1, line 4)
- b. "I have never been away from our home." (paragraph 2, lines 3-4)
- c. "I have never been on a ship as great as this one." (paragraph 2, line 4)
- d. "...looking over the side of this creaking ship into the swelling water can fill me with terror." (paragraph 5, lines 3-4)

3. Read these two statements from paragraph 2, lines 4-6 of the text.

I dedicate this journal, this parcel of letters and drawings, to my dear mother who has lost so much. I pray she will not lose me as well...

What does the boy mean by this?

- a. My mother will be sad if I decide to stay in India.
- b. My mother still thinks of me as her little boy.
- c. I am afraid I will die on this voyage.
- d. I hope I don't get lost in India.



4. At the start of the journey, how do the sailors' feelings differ from those of the captain?

- a. They are hopeful; the captain is nervous.
- b. They are uneasy; the captain is confident.
- c. They are excited; the captain is bored.
- d. They are tired; the captain is curious.

5. How has the author organized this journal?

- a. He presents a problem and a solution.
- b. He lists events in the order of importance.
- c. He tells things in sequence.
- d. He compares two or more things.

6. Read this sentence from paragraph 7, lines 1-2 of the text.

I went with him to the Pinta in our ship's small dinghy to see what was wrong.

From the context, you can tell that the word "dinghy" means:

- a. a small boat.
- b. a life jacket.
- c. a motor boat.
- d. a lookout post.

7. **Part A.** In his August 7th conversations with the crew, with whom does Pedro side?

- a. He is in full agreement with the men.
- b. He sides with the men, but is not totally sure.
- c. He sides with Columbus, but is not totally sure.
- d. He has full confidence in Columbus.

7. **Part B.** Which quote from this journal entry is the **best** evidence for your answer?

- a. "...he [Columbus] believes it has been done on purpose,..." (paragraph 8, line 3)
- b. "No one has much faith." (paragraph 9, line 4)
- c. "So I turn away from the men when they speak so." (paragraph 10, line 2)
- d. "But late at night,... sometimes I bolt awake, sure that we are falling through space..." (paragraph 10, lines 2-3)

8. What is the **greatest** benefit of the first person point of view in this selection?
- a. We get a better idea of Columbus' character.
 - b. We know how one crew member views the trip.
 - c. We can decide who is right and who is wrong.
 - d. We can guess what the outcome will be.



Check:

Did you answer ALL questions? (Remember, do not leave a blank!)