What if your mother said, "Stop procrastinating! You have put off cleaning your room too long." You might not know the word *procrastinating,* but you would know what she means. The words *stop, put off,* and *too long* help you understand that *procrastinating* means "not doing something right away."

When you are reading, you are likely to find some words you don't know. How do you figure out the meaning of a word you don't know? You can use other words around that unknown word to help you understand it. This is called using **context clues.**

Context clues may be one or more words in the same sentence as the unknown word. They may be found in other sentences, too. Knowing how to use context clues when you are reading will help you figure out words you don't know.

> When you use *context clues,* you use the words around a word you don't know to help you figure out its meaning.

❀ Read the following sentences. See the underlined context clues that help a reader understand the word *ancient.*

Rome is a <u>very old</u> city. It was built <u>thousands of years ago</u>. You can visit this ancient city today.
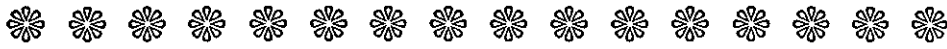
Did you figure out that *ancient* means "very old" or "something from very long ago"? The context clues "very old" and "built thousands of years ago" help you to know.

❀ Now read this next group of sentences. What does *fortunate* mean? See the underlined context clues. Then write the meaning of *fortunate* on the line.

Tad is very fortunate. He always has <u>good luck</u>. <u>Nice things happen</u> to him all the time. He feels <u>lucky</u>.

fortunate: _____

Figure Out New Words

Exploring the Strategy

✿ Read the selection below. Look for context clues to help you understand the meaning of these words: *graceful, flutter, enormous, nectar.*

Butterflies

Have you ever watched a butterfly fly from flower to flower? A butterfly looks so graceful and beautiful as it floats smoothly through the air, almost like a ballet dancer. A butterfly's wings flutter up and down quickly, showing great flashes of color.

Some butterflies are enormous; others are very tiny. The largest butterfly is called the Queen Alexandra birdwing. This butterfly is eleven inches wide at the wings—almost a foot wide! One of the smallest butterflies is the western pygmy blue. This butterfly's wings are less than half an inch across.

Butterflies spend their days flying from flower to flower. They drink the flowers' sweet liquid. This liquid is called *nectar.* Butterflies drinking nectar is quite a sight.

Did you find the context clues for each word listed at the top of the page? Go back and underline the context clues for those words.
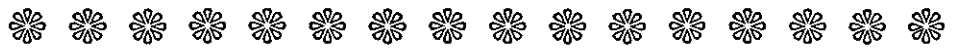
✿ Now write the meaning of the words on the lines below:

graceful: _____

flutter: _____

enormous: _____

nectar: _____

Reel Animals

by Samantha Bonar

You probably have seen movies with talking animals. Maybe you even saw Babe, *a movie about a talking pig. Have you ever wondered how movie makers train animals to look like they are talking? You can learn how from what animal trainer Karl Miller told* 3-2-1 Contact *magazine.*

Studying the Strategy

As you read this selection, context clues will help you understand these words: *finicky, feline, animatronic, infancy, moody, sulk, extreme, expression.* Sometimes you might have to read a few sentences or a whole paragraph to find all the context clues. However, you do <u>not</u> have to underline the context clues.

"LIGHTS. CAMERA. SLOBBER!"

Training dogs to act in movies is doggone easy. As any cat owner knows, it's a little more difficult to get a finicky (fussy) feline to do what you want. But things really get tough when directors want to make movies with unusual animals like whales, elephants, and pigs.
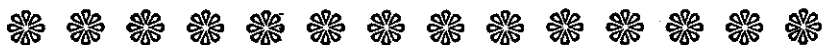
Take the movie *Babe.* Filming a pig who wants to be a sheep dog was no frolic in the mud! A whopping 970 animals had to be trained for the film. The animals included pigs, ducks, sheep, cows, and horses. And that's not counting the remote-controlled animatronic (robot) and hand-operated puppet animals that also starred in the show.
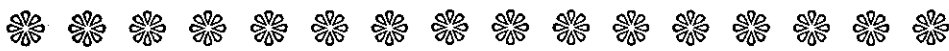
"It's really difficult to get each animal to do the right thing at the right time," Hollywood animal trainer Karl Miller told CONTACT. "By the time three of them are doing it right, two of them are goofing off."

WHAT A HAM

Miller hand-raised many of the animals from infancy. He had to raise and train 48 piglets just to play the part of Babe. The pigs playing Babe had to be between 16 and 19 weeks old. After 19 weeks, they grew too big, so new piglets had to take over the role.

Pigs are tough to train because they can be moody, Miller explains. "You can't yell at them to get them to do something correct because they'll sulk. And you can't baby them because they'll become too happy and giggle." His secret: Every time a pig did a stunt correctly, the oinker got a piece of dog food. "The most important thing to a pig is food," says Miller.

Animatronic, or puppet, "doubles" were used in place of real animals "to take the punishment," Miller explains. "A real animal was never kicked or made to trip over something."

Animatronics also stepped in for extreme close-ups—when it's difficult to get an animal to have the right expression on its face. "He might look away, or he might be panting," Miller says. After filming was completed, the animals' mouths were animated—so they look as if they're actually talking!

Using the Strategy

Write the meaning of each word on the lines below. If you are not sure of a word's meaning, go back to the selection, find the context clues, and underline them.

finicky: _____

feline: _____

animatronic: _____

infancy: _____

moody: _____

sulk: _____

extreme: _____

expression: _____

More to Explore

Look up your favorite animal in a book about animals or in an encyclopedia. Copy one or two paragraphs that have a few hard words and circle those words. Get together with some classmates in a small group and take turns reading the paragraphs. Ask group members to use context clues in your paragraphs to figure out the meanings of the hard words.