Clarifying with context clues

When there are new words or phrases, you try to **clarify**. **Context clues** can help you figure out new words. Context clues are pieces of information in the passage that tell what the new word might mean.

Context clues that **define**

Sometimes, the passage gives you a definition of the new word or phrase. You can look for this kind of definition after a comma or dash, in the same sentence as the new word, like this context clue for **segregation**:

→ States and towns in the South used **segregation**, a system to keep African Americans separated from Whites.

Is the meaning of segregation clear? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

Context clues that **give a hint**

Other times, context clues give you just a hint. The hint comes in the sentences surrounding the new word. See if you can figure out **supremacist** in this section.

→ The Ku Klux Klan was also active in the South during this time. The Ku Klux Klan, or KKK, is a white **supremacist** hate group. They fought against equality for African Americans. They tried to keep Whites in power. Often, they used violence and murder to try to achieve their goals.

Supremacist might mean

Context clues that **give an example**

Other times, the next sentence gives you an example, like this context clue for **deference**:

→ In the South, African Americans were expected to show **deference** to Whites. They had to say "sir" and "ma'am" to Whites. They had to sit at the back of the bus. They were expected to look down when White people passed by them.

Deference might mean

Context clues with **base words**

Sometimes the best clue is in the word, not in the sentences around the challenge word. Spotting a base word you know can clarify the challenge word. Try finding the base word to figure out **sharecroppers**.

→ Farmers who worked on this system were called **sharecroppers**.

Sharecroppers might mean