Vocabulary in context: a routine beyond copying definitions

PUPIL ACTIVITY • Name: _____ Date: _____

Try the word: reluctant

“Leah was reluctant to cross the narrow bridge. She stopped at the edge and asked whether there was another way.”
Here, reluctant means not willing or not keen to do something.

Check the meaning

Which example fits reluctant? A: A child would rather watch than join a game. B: A child eagerly asks to start. Explain your choice.

_____

Use it

Write or say a sentence that shows why someone is reluctant.

_____

Could someone be able to do something but reluctant to do it? Give an example.

_____

Your next word

Word: _____
Sentence from our text: _____
Meaning here, in my words: _____
An example: _____
A non-example: _____
My new sentence: _____

Come back to it

Later this week: Where did you notice or use this word?

_____

Teacher notes

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Prepare

Choose one or two words important to your current text. Allow about ten minutes, with brief revisits later. Give pupils page 1. Do not require personal disclosures; imagined examples are fine.

Suggested answers

A is the better example: the child is not keen to join. B suggests eagerness. A person may be able to sing but reluctant to sing in front of an audience. Other sensible examples are welcome.

What to look for

Can pupils distinguish unwillingness from inability? Does their new sentence show the meaning, rather than merely contain the word? Check interpretations in the specific text.

Support and challenge

Support: explain the meaning, use a sketch, discuss orally or in a familiar language. Challenge: compare reluctant with unable and explain where each fits. Context is a clue, not always a sufficient definition.

Revisit

Use a new sentence after a few days and ask pupils to explain it. Invite examples from reading. A copied definition alone does not demonstrate flexible use.

Background

EEF Reading House: Vocabulary. Original SkillFlex routine and examples; not a tested programme.

Further reading: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/reading-house/vocabulary

Original activity and notes prepared by SkillFlex. Share the article link with colleagues. No login or pupil-data upload is needed.