

# Cloze Testing

Anytime you give a fill-in-the-blanks test, consider it a form of cloze testing that can help you assess reading comprehension. If you look at page 251 of Teaching Reading in the Middle School, you will find Laura Robb's description of three cuing systems that readers use. The following cloze tests - and others you might devise - give you some understanding of how students make use of two of them: the semantic, and the syntactic cuing systems. The semantic cuing system is the use of meaning (context) to solve unknown words or concepts. The syntactic system has to do with the ordering of grammatical elements - an essential key to meaning in reading.

You can make up your own cloze exercise by eliminating every 5<sup>th</sup> word in a passage to see whether students can fill in the blanks. If they can get 40% correct in this kind of cloze, the passage is likely at their instructional level.

The following samples swerve slightly from the pure every-fifth-word rule in order to eliminate words that the teacher has decided are predictable in meaning because of sufficient context clues. In each case, some attention is drawn to particular blanks that might tell you something about the student's use of syntax or semantics. It might be advisable to put one on an overhead and model your own process for thinking it through so that students know what skills are brought to bear.

The scoring tables that follow each example help the teacher see certain responses more distinctly as indications of the use of the cuing systems.

Cloze tests can also be devised with degrees of support. For example, you can give students multiple choices for each blank, thus exercising some control over semantic and syntactic choices.

They can also make for some brief and interesting lessons on the use of context clues, and on the parts of speech ("A" or "the" is always followed by a noun; blanks just after a verb are likely to be adverbs; blanks just before nouns are likely to be adjectives.) Take a passage and delete all prepositions. In the act of trying to fill all of them in, students might discover a list of words that are prepositions, and a certain pattern in the groups they begin (e.g. preposition, article, noun).

Passage from: *The Interlopers*, by H.H. Munro  
 (Sightlines, Prentice Hall, 1999) pp. 33

In a forest of \_\_\_1\_\_\_ growth somewhere on the \_\_\_2\_\_\_ spurs of the Carpathians, a \_\_\_3\_\_\_ stood one winter night \_\_\_4\_\_\_ and listening, as though \_\_\_5\_\_\_ waited for some beast of the \_\_\_6\_\_\_ to come within the range \_\_\_7\_\_\_ his vision, and, later, of \_\_\_8\_\_\_ rifle. But the game for whose presence he \_\_\_9\_\_\_ so keen an \_\_\_10\_\_\_ was none that figured in the sportsman's calendar as lawful and \_\_\_11\_\_\_ for the chase; Ulrich Von Gradwitz patrolled the dark \_\_\_12\_\_\_ in quest of a human enemy.

Number of blanks: 12

Number of exactly correct words: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of exactly correct words: \_\_\_\_\_

Syntax Analysis	Semantic Analysis
Was the student able to place the following parts of speech in the indicated blanks?  Adjectives (1, 2)                  Noun/Pronoun (3, 5) Verb (9)                                  Preposition (7)	Was the student able to guess that blank 12 should have a word like "forest" or "night."

*Thunder and Lightning*, retold by Kathleen Arnott  
Literature and Media 9, (Nelson? 1999?) page 50

A long time \_\_\_1\_\_\_, both thunder and lightning \_\_\_2\_\_\_ on this earth, among all the people. Thunder was an old mother \_\_\_3\_\_\_ and Lightning was her son, a handsome ram, \_\_\_4\_\_\_ neither animal was very popular.

\_\_\_5\_\_\_ anybody offended the ram, Lightning, he would fly into a furious \_\_\_6\_\_\_ and begin \_\_\_7\_\_\_ down huts and corn bins, and even knock \_\_\_8\_\_\_ large trees. Sometimes he damaged crops on the \_\_\_9\_\_\_ with his fire and occasionally he \_\_\_10\_\_\_ people who got in his \_\_\_11\_\_\_.

As soon as his mother, Thunder, \_\_\_\_\_ he was behaving in this evil \_\_\_\_\_, she would raise her voice and \_\_\_\_\_ as loudly as she \_\_\_\_\_, and that was very loud indeed.

Number of blanks: 15

Number of exactly correct words: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of exactly correct words: \_\_\_\_\_

Syntax Analysis	Semantic Analysis
Was the student able to place the following parts of speech in the indicated blanks?  Adjectives (1, 2) Verb (2, 7) <span style="float: right;">Preposition (8)</span>	Was the student able to guess that blank 10 should have a word like “burned” “hurt” or “killed”

*Gore*, by Sarah Ellis  
Sightlines, (Prentice Hall, 1999) p. 4

I just hate that, the \_\_\_1\_\_\_ Lucas can sound so \_\_\_2\_\_\_. If possible I would \_\_\_3\_\_\_ to a higher authority. \_\_\_4\_\_\_ have no shame about \_\_\_5\_\_\_, whining, telling, etc, when \_\_\_6\_\_\_ comes to Lucas. I \_\_\_7\_\_\_ whatever counter-weapons I \_\_\_8\_\_\_ at my disposal. With \_\_\_9\_\_\_ as a brother it \_\_\_10\_\_\_ sometimes necessary to have \_\_\_11\_\_\_. I'm not ashamed to stand \_\_\_12\_\_\_ an adult peace-keeping force. Lucas \_\_\_13\_\_\_ this as an act of \_\_\_14\_\_\_ and wimpiness. He tries \_\_\_15\_\_\_ shame me. "Why don't \_\_\_16\_\_\_ run to Mummy?" But I \_\_\_17\_\_\_ care. I figure it is \_\_\_18\_\_\_ some small but extremely \_\_\_19\_\_\_ country calling on the \_\_\_20\_\_\_ Nations when attacked by an aggressor. \_\_\_21\_\_\_, in this case, the peace-keeping \_\_\_22\_\_\_ are out at Mega-Foods \_\_\_23\_\_\_ the Saturday shop.

---

Number of blanks: 23  
Number of exactly correct words: \_\_\_\_\_  
Percentage of exactly correct words: \_\_\_\_\_

Syntax Analysis	Semantic Analysis
Was the student able to place the following parts of speech in the indicated blanks? Adjectives (2, 19)      Noun/Pronoun (9, 14) Verb (5)                      Preposition (12)	Was the student able to guess that blank 20 should have a word like "United"?

*Cudjoe and Nanny, Heroes of the Maroons*, by Kat Mototsune,  
Literature and Media 9 (Nelson Canada, 1999) p. 130

Jamaica was under Spanish \_\_\_1\_\_\_ from 1494, when Christopher Columbus \_\_\_2\_\_\_ the island, to 1655, \_\_\_3\_\_\_ the British invaded. As \_\_\_4\_\_\_ faced the British, \_\_\_5\_\_\_ Spanish freed the black \_\_\_6\_\_\_ they had brought from Africa. \_\_\_7\_\_\_ freed slaves, and those \_\_\_8\_\_\_ had previously escaped into \_\_\_9\_\_\_ wild mountainous interior of \_\_\_10\_\_\_, formed a group that \_\_\_11\_\_\_ known as the Maroons, probably \_\_\_12\_\_\_ the Spanish word *cimarron* \_\_\_13\_\_\_ means “wild and untamed.” The Spanish \_\_\_14\_\_\_ organize, train and set the Maroons \_\_\_15\_\_\_ the British. \_\_\_16\_\_\_ the Spanish were defeated in \_\_\_17\_\_\_ in 1655, the Maroons \_\_\_18\_\_\_ a “thorn in the \_\_\_19\_\_\_ of the English” until the end of the eighteenth \_\_\_20\_\_\_.

Cudjoe was a Coromantee slave \_\_\_21\_\_\_ what is now Ghana. The \_\_\_22\_\_\_ people were known for \_\_\_23\_\_\_ courageous and warlike and Cudjoe \_\_\_24\_\_\_ fierce and shrewd. He united the Maroons \_\_\_25\_\_\_ several African bands - from Ghana, Nigeria, Dahomey, Madagascar - and \_\_\_26\_\_\_ his leadership they became \_\_\_27\_\_\_ guerrilla warriors. They swooped \_\_\_28\_\_\_ from the hills to \_\_\_29\_\_\_ plantations and then disappeared \_\_\_30\_\_\_ into the difficult terrain. They \_\_\_31\_\_\_ expert shots with muskets. The \_\_\_32\_\_\_, mountainous country where they \_\_\_33\_\_\_ been forced to retreat became \_\_\_34\_\_\_ greatest advantage: they \_\_\_35\_\_\_ to move quickly and quietly \_\_\_36\_\_\_ the rocky ground and became \_\_\_37\_\_\_ in traveling through untracked \_\_\_38\_\_\_. The British tried to rout Cudjoe’s \_\_\_39\_\_\_ with Indian trackers, dog handlers \_\_\_40\_\_\_ Cuba, the militia, and \_\_\_41\_\_\_ two regiments of regular \_\_\_42\_\_\_ - all without success.

*Cudjoe and Nanny, Heroes of the Maroons*

Number of blanks: 42

Number of exactly correct words: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of exactly correct words: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Syntax Analysis</b>	<b>Semantic Analysis</b>
Was the student able to place the following parts of speech in the indicated blanks?  Adjectives (32)                      Noun/Pronoun (4, 38) Verb (18)                              Preposition (21, 36)	Was the student able to guess that blank 12 should have a word like “forest” or “night.”

