

Unusual Meanings

This activity accompanies “Riding to Town,” from *The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar* by Paul Laurence Dunbar, record number 5054.

Activity Title: Unusual Meanings

Description: The students will use context clues to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words, and then they will use a dictionary to find the most appropriate definition.

Subject: Reading/Language Arts

Skill: Vocabulary and Context Clues

Behavioral Objective:

- The student will use context clues from the poem to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words, and then he or she will check the answers with a dictionary.

Materials:

- “Riding to Town” poem, available in audio and print form at <http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/>
- Paper and pencil
- Vocabulary sheet (below)
- Dictionary

Procedures:

Read the poem with the students, or have them read it on their own. Discuss with the students the main idea of the poem. Next, have the students work with a partner to use the context clues of the poem to define the meanings of unfamiliar words, or unfamiliar uses for common words. Then, review with the class their answers to the vocabulary sheet (below).

Answers for the unusual meanings vocabulary sheet (below):

1. Nag – an old, inferior or worthless horse
2. Gingham – a yarn-dyed cotton fabric woven in stripes, checks, plaids or solid colors.
3. Hood – a loose pliable covering for the head and neck, often attached to a robe or jacket.
4. Crown – the distinction that comes from a great achievement.



Name _____

Date _____

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Directions: Use the context clues from the poem to write a definition for the words below, and then use a dictionary to write the most appropriate meanings as the word fits in the poem.

1. **Nag** –

Write your definition: _____

Write the dictionary definition that fits the use in the poem: _____

2. **Gingham** –

Write your definition: _____

Write the dictionary definition that fits the use in the poem: _____

3. **Hood** –

Write your definition: _____

Write the dictionary definition that fits the use in the poem: _____

4. **Crown** –

Write your definition: _____

Write the dictionary definition that fits the use in the poem: _____
