

Name _____ Class _____

Target Lesson: Finding the Meaning of Unknown Words with “How an 11-Year-Old Boy Invented the Popsicle”

PART 1: Warm-Up: Writing

Directions: Look at the picture and answer the question.

Popsicles were invented by 11-year-old Frank Epperson in 1905.



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Today you’re going to learn about how a young boy invented the beloved popsicle.

- Why do you think popsicles are still popular over 100 years after they were invented?

Take **three minutes** to write down your ideas.

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PART 2: Video Introducing the Target Skill

Directions: Watch the video and then answer the question.

1. In your own words, how do you figure out the meaning of an unknown word?

PART 3: Review the Target Skill - Finding the Meaning of Unknown Words

Today we will practice using context clues to figure out the meaning of unknown words. Good readers use context clues by:

Rereading
the
sentence
the word is
in

froze. In the morning, Epperson devoured the icy concoction, 2 licking it off the wooden stirrer. He declared it an Epsicle, a portmanteau of icicle and his name, and started selling the treat around his neighborhood. Question 1

Rereading
the
sentences
around the
unknown
word

PART 4: Reading and Answering Questions

Directions: Read the text and answer the questions.

How an 11-Year-Old Boy Invented the Popsicle

by Shelby Pope for NPR

[1] The next time you pop a Popsicle in your mouth, think about this:
You're enjoying the fruits of an 11-year-old entrepreneur's¹ labor.

[2] Back in 1905, a San Francisco Bay Area kid by the name of Frank Epperson accidentally invented the summertime treat. He had mixed some sugary soda powder with water and left it out overnight. It was a cold night, and the mixture froze. In the morning, Epperson devoured the icy concoction,² licking it off the wooden stirrer. He declared it an Epsicle, a portmanteau of icicle and his name, and started selling the treat around his neighborhood.

[3] In 1923, Epperson decided to expand sales beyond his neighborhood. He started selling the treat at Neptune Beach, a nearby amusement park. Dubbed a "West Coast Coney Island," the park featured roller coasters, baseball and an Olympicsized swimming pool. Neptune flourished in the pre-Depression³ days, and consumers eagerly consumed⁴ Epsicles and snow cones (which also made their debut⁵ at Neptune).

[4] Buoyed⁶ by this success, Epperson applied for a patent⁷ for his "frozen confection"⁸ of attractive appearance, which can be conveniently consumed without contamination by contact with the

Paragraph 2

1. What is the best meaning of "portmanteau" (port-man-toe) as it is used in paragraph 2?

- A. a blend of two words
- B. a type of dessert
- C. a neighborhood
- D. a recipe

¹ **Entrepreneur (noun)** a person who starts a business

² **Concoct (verb)** to create something magical or unusual by mixing different ingredients

³ The Great Depression was a worldwide economic decline that lasted from 1929 to 1939.

⁴ **Consume (verb)** to eat or drink something

⁵ **Debut (noun)** the first public appearance

⁶ made (by something) to feel confident; encouraged

⁷ a license that ensures a right or title for a set period, often the right to prevent others from making, using, or selling an invention

⁸ a dessert made with sweet ingredients

hand and without the need for a plate, spoon, fork or other implement”⁹ in 1924. The patent illustrates the requirements for a perfect ice pop, including recommendations on the best wood for the stick: wood-bass, birch and poplar. Eventually, Epperson’s children urged him to change the ice pop’s name to what they called it: a Pop’s ‘Sicle, or Popsicle.

[5] This origin story is charming, if somewhat apocryphal¹⁰ (sources differ on the details), but it didn’t have a happy ending for the inventor. A broke Epperson sold the rights to his creation to the Joe Lowe Co. in the 1920s, much to his regret: “I was flat¹¹ and had to liquidate all my assets,”¹² he later said. “I haven’t been the same since.”

[6] The Lowe Co. went on to catapult Epperson’s invention to national success. During the Great Depression, the company debuted the two-stick version of the Popsicle to help consumers stretch their dollar — the duo sold for 5 cents.

[7] But this delicious duo faced competition from Good Humor, which had recently debuted its own chocolate-covered ice cream on a stick, and Lowe was sued for copyright infringement.¹³ The court’s compromise? Popsicle could sell water-based treats, and Good Humor could sell ice cream pops. Popsicle tested the limits of the agreement, selling a “Milk Popsicle,” and the two companies tussled in court about the definitions of sherbet and ice cream over the years through a series of lawsuits.

Paragraph 5

2. An "asset" is something you own. What does the phrase "liquidate all my assets" reveal about Epperson's situation? (Paragraph 5)

⁹ a tool

¹⁰ **Apocryphal (adjective)** well-known but probably not true

¹¹ “Flat” can mean utterly ruined or destroyed.

¹² to sell one's valuables in exchange for cash

¹³ legal term that describes the use of a concept, artistic work, or invention that belongs exclusively to someone else

[8] The giant food corporation Unilever scooped up the Popsicle brand in 1989, expanding the brand beyond its original fruity flavors. It also bought Good Humor, ending the feud between the two icy competitors.

[9] Over the years, Epperson's childhood invention has achieved iconic status, standing in for any frozen treat the way Kleenex means a tissue. That explains why also over the years, Unilever has worked to keep the name Popsicle its and its alone: In 2010, the company threatened legal action against artisan¹⁴ Brooklyn ice pop makers People's Pops for using the word "popsicle" on its blog.

[10] As for Epperson, he died in 1983 and is buried in Oakland's Mountain View Cemetery, where he's featured on a tour celebrating local food luminaries¹⁵ including chocolate mogul¹⁶ Domingo Ghirardelli and mai tai¹⁷ inventor Victor "Trader Vic" Bergeron.

[11] His story lives on in many forms — from the official Popsicle website, where it's illustrated in comic form, to an inspirational Christian self-help book about trusting in God's grand plan for your life. Epperson's childhood invention, born randomly on a freezing night, has also proved to be resoundingly successful and long lived: These days, some 2 billion Popsicles are sold each year.

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Paragraph 9

3. What does the phrase "iconic status" suggest about the popularity of the popsicle? (Paragraph 9)

"Over the years, Epperson's childhood invention has achieved iconic status, standing in for any frozen treat the way Kleenex means a tissue."

Paragraph 10

4. What does the phrase "local food luminaries" illustrate about the way Epperson is remembered? (Paragraph 10)

- A. He is remembered as surprisingly inventing a popular food.
- B. He is remembered as a careless businessman from California.
- C. He is remembered as a powerful businessman from California.
- D. He is remembered as significantly contributing to the world of food.

¹⁴ describes products made in a traditional way (often by hand)

¹⁵ **Luminary (noun)** a very famous, successful, or inspirational person

¹⁶ a powerful person in one or more specific industries (such as the chocolate industry)

¹⁷ a popular alcoholic drink

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PART 5: Assessment

Directions: Answer the questions.

1. What is the best meaning of “feud” as it is used in paragraph 8?

- A. conflict
- B. disaster
- C. collaboration
- D. business deal

2. Summarize the history of the popsicle in 4-5 complete sentences.
