Using Other Context Clues to Identify Vocabulary

Oftentimes authors, particularly of informational texts, will define a new term for you within the same sentence. To recognize when the author is providing you with a definition, look out for the following punctuation cues:

**Colons:**
In cases of disease or injury, physicians often perform a *splenectomy*: a surgical procedure involving the removal of the spleen, which is located in the upper left part of the abdomen.

**Commas:**
The monkey was raised with a *surrogate*, or substitute, mother.

This and *chilblains*, which is a mild form of frostbite, are a common source of discomfort.

**Dashes:**
In psychology, such swallowing whole is often called *socialization* — the process of assimilating and internalizing the rules of one’s culture.

It has been estimated that *recycling* — the reprocessing of used materials for reuse — could provide two-fifths of the materials required in our own manufacturing sector.

**Parentheses:**
The problem of *pediculosis* (head lice infestation) has reached high levels in the United States.

**MORE HELPFUL HINTS:**
To help you determine word meanings, you can also use:

- **Synonyms** (words that have the same, or almost the same meaning),
- **Antonyms** (words that have the opposite, or almost the opposite meaning),
- **Examples** (knowing what the examples have in common, and using this to figure out definitions), and
- **General sentence clues** (general subject matter and key words).