

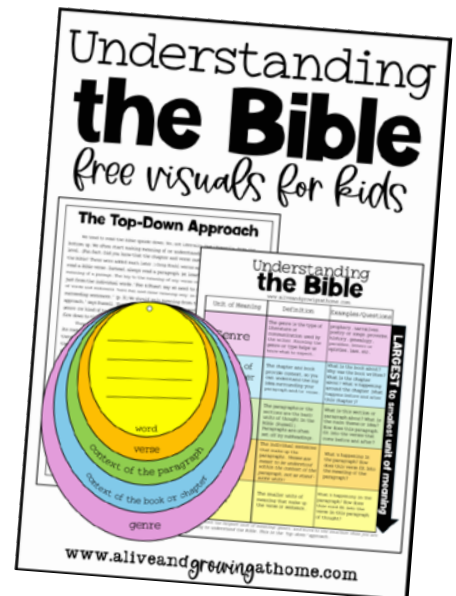
Understanding the Bible

Understanding the Bible is KEY to our spiritual development and that of our kids!

Use this FREE pack to help your kids see how to make meaning of Scripture using the top-down approach, as promoted by Koukl, Fee, Stuart, and Russell. (See my resources on page 3 of this file.)

Please share this printable with others by sending them to this link:

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More Resources...

Click on the images or the links below to find these resources.

Understanding the Bible

Storyline of the Bible

Five Questions

Understanding the Bible

Context Clues

Name that Genre!

Genre

ALIVE and growing AT HOME

Understanding the Bible

Grab the COMPLETE pack from my shop to help your kids understand how to read and study their Bibles using the "top-down" method.

Bible Text Features

This pack has charts and games to help your own kids understand how to use the study tools found in their Bible.

BIBLE TEXT FEATURES

learning how to use your Bible

BIBLE TEXT FEATURES teaching points

BIBLE TEXT FEATURES chart

BIBLE TEXT FEATURES scavenger hunt

ALIVE and growing AT HOME

The Top-Down Approach

We tend to read the Bible upside-down. No, not literally, but literarily, from the bottom up. We often start making meaning of or understanding the Bible at the verse level. (Fun fact: Did you know that the chapter and verse numbers were not originally in the Bible? These were added much later.) Greg Koukl warns against this by saying, "Never read a Bible verse. Instead, always read a paragraph (at least) if you want to unlock the meaning of a passage. The key to the meaning of any verse comes from the paragraph, not just from the individual words." Fee & Stuart say we need to understand that the meaning of words and sentences "have full and clear meaning only in relation to preceding and succeeding sentences." (p. 31) We should gain meaning from the Bible using the "top-down approach," says Russell. This means starting with the largest unit of meaning first, the genre (or kind of text). After we understand the type of literature that it is, we gradually flow down to the smaller units of meaning like the verse and even the individual words.

There are several dangers to gaining meaning from a verse when it is taken out of its context (the larger units of meaning). Let's just focus on three dangers, although there are many more. First, we can produce a meaning that the author never intended, therefore believing something that isn't true. For example, we might believe that a promise given specifically to Joshua is ours to claim. This may lead to disappointment and confusion when "our promise" isn't fulfilled. Second, we can use a verse out of context to justify sin or a personal preference. I think the saying, "I can do all things through a verse taken out of context," is hilariously sad. Third, all false teachers and cults (and even Satan himself) use the bottom-up method. They take Scriptures, twist the meaning to fit their worldview or ideology, and teach them as truth. A reading of Matthew 4 and the temptation of Jesus shows Satan in action doing just this. The purpose of this pack is to explore the top-down method or approach. I believe its key to understanding the Bible.

Resources:

- "Playing with Fire: How the Bible Ignites Change in Your Soul" by Walt Russell
- "Reading Scripture with All Your Mind," a BIOLA University Lecture by Walt Russell
- "Never Read a Bible Verse: The Most Important Thing I could Teach You," Greg Koukl, www.str.org
- "How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth" by Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart

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Unit of Meaning	Definition	Examples/Questions
Genre	The genre is the type of literature or communication used by the writer. Knowing the genre or type helps us know what to expect.	prophecy, narratives, poetry or songs, proverbs, history, genealogy, parables, letters or epistles, laws, etc.
Context of the Chapter or Book	The chapter and book provide context, so you can understand the big idea surrounding your paragraph and/or verse.	What is the book about? Why was the book written? What is the chapter about? What's happening around the chapter (what happens before and after this chapter)?
Context of the Paragraph	The paragraphs or the sections are the basic units of thought in the Bible (Russell). Paragraphs are often set off by subheadings.	What is this section or paragraph about? What is the main theme or idea? How does this paragraph fit into the verses that come before and after?
Verse	The individual sentences that make up the paragraphs. <i>Verses are meant to be understood within the context of the paragraph, not as stand-alone units!</i>	What's happening in the paragraph? How does this verse fit into the meaning of the paragraph?
Word	The smaller units of meaning that make up the verse or sentence.	What's happening in the paragraph? How does this word fit into the verse in this paragraph of thought?

LARGEST to smallest unit of meaning



Begin with the largest unit of meaning, genre, and move to the smallest when you are trying to understand the Bible. This is the "top-down" approach.

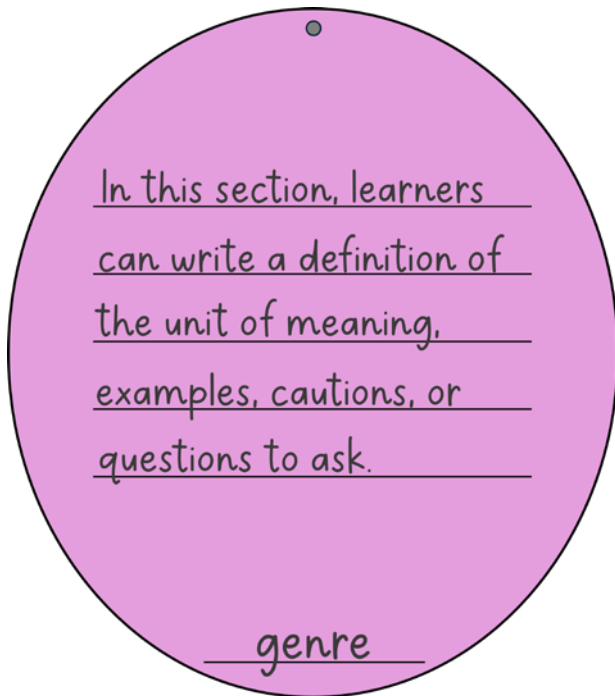
How to Assemble the Visual

Optional: Print each page on colored cardstock.

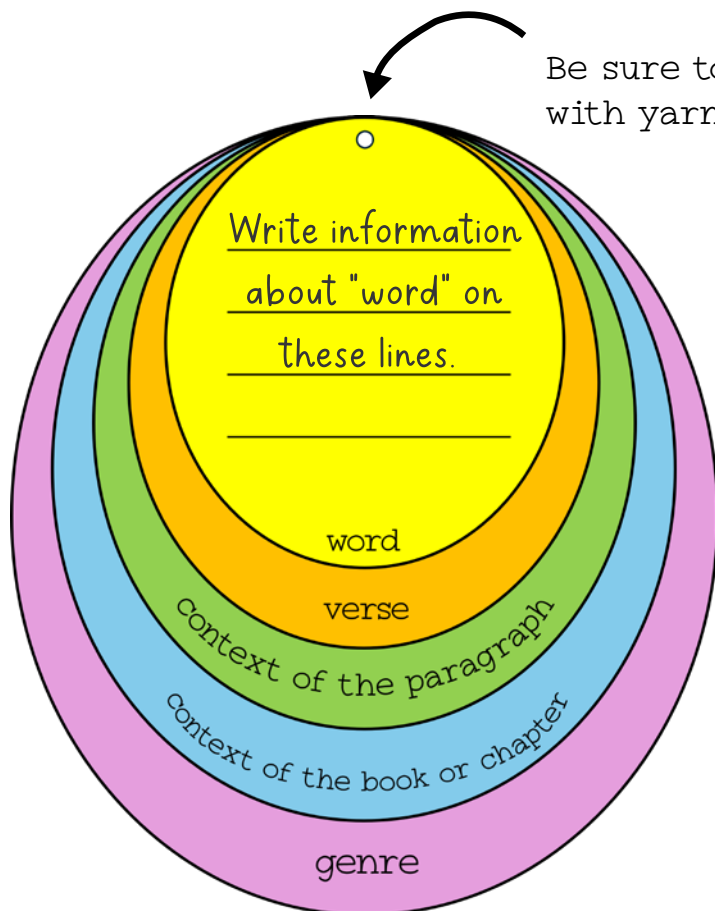
Each oval comes with a line at the very bottom. Learners should write the unit of meaning there. Begin with "Genre" as it's the largest unit of meaning.

Learners should write the information about each unit of meaning on the lines. This information can be found on the chart (p.4) or on the individual oval pages that follow.

Cut out the oval and hole-punch the top. When the next smallest oval is completed, which is "context of the book or chapter," cut it out, hole punch it, and attach it ON TOP of the "genre" oval.



Be sure to hole-punch each oval and attach with yarn or a metal ring clip.

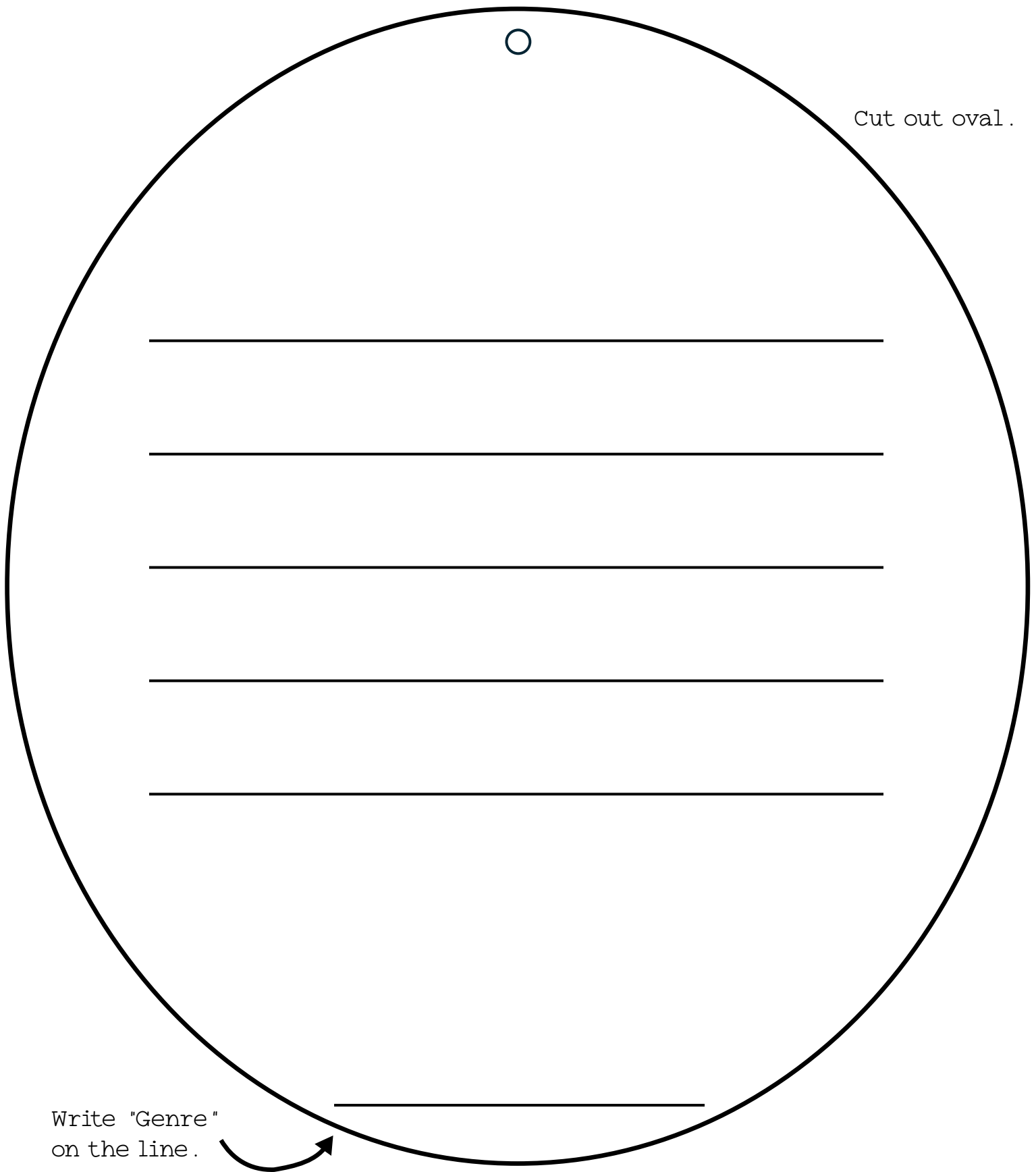


This visual can serve as a helpful reminder on how to understand Scripture. In the same way we read and comprehend other types of writings (the newspaper, books, articles) we should understand Scripture from the "top-down." (Russell, p. 65)

Instead of starting at the verse level to gain meaning, we need to understand how the verse fits inside the larger context of the paragraph, the chapter, the book, and the genre. (See p. 3 of this file for more info.)

Genre: Genre is the type of literature or communication.

Examples: prophecy, narratives, poetry or songs, proverbs, history, genealogy, parables, etc.



Cut out oval.

Write "Genre" on the line.

Context of the Book or Chapter : Getting a sense of the book or the chapter .

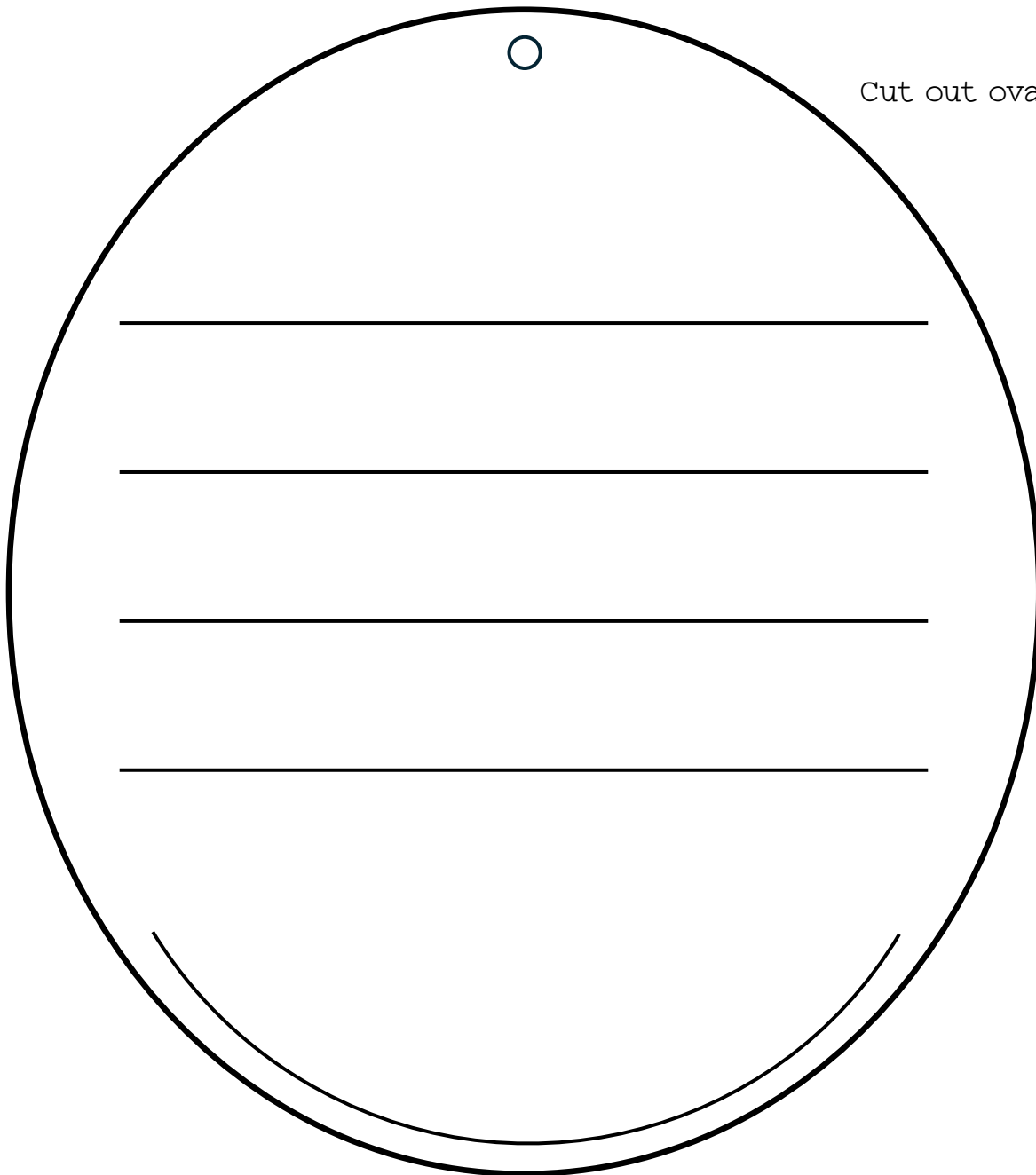
Questions to Ask : What is the book about? Who was it written to? Why was the book written? What is the chapter about? What 's happening around the chapter (what happens before and after this chapter)?

Cut out oval .

Write "Context of the Book or Chapter "
on the curved line .

Context of the Paragraph : "The basic unit of thought in the Bible is the paragraph ." (Russell , p. 68) We want to get an understanding of the paragraph or section of Scripture and how the verse fits into the context of it . (Paragraphs are often set off by subheadings within each chapter of the Bible .)

Questions to Ask : What is this section or paragraph about? What is the main theme or idea? How does this paragraph fit into the verses that come before and after?



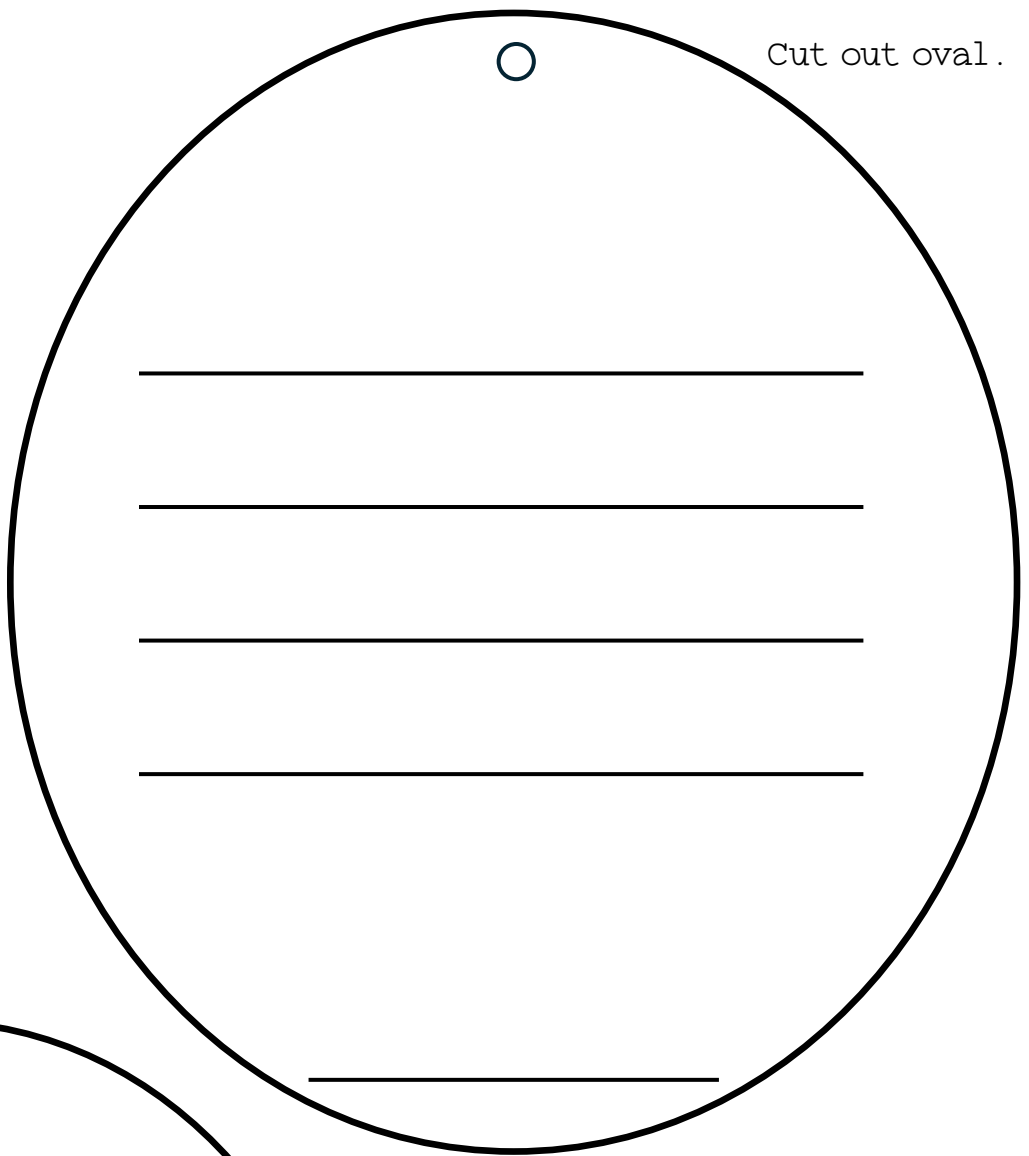
Write "Context of the Paragraph "
on the curved line.



Verse: The individual sentences that make up the paragraph. Verses are meant to be understood within the context of the paragraph, not as stand-alone units!

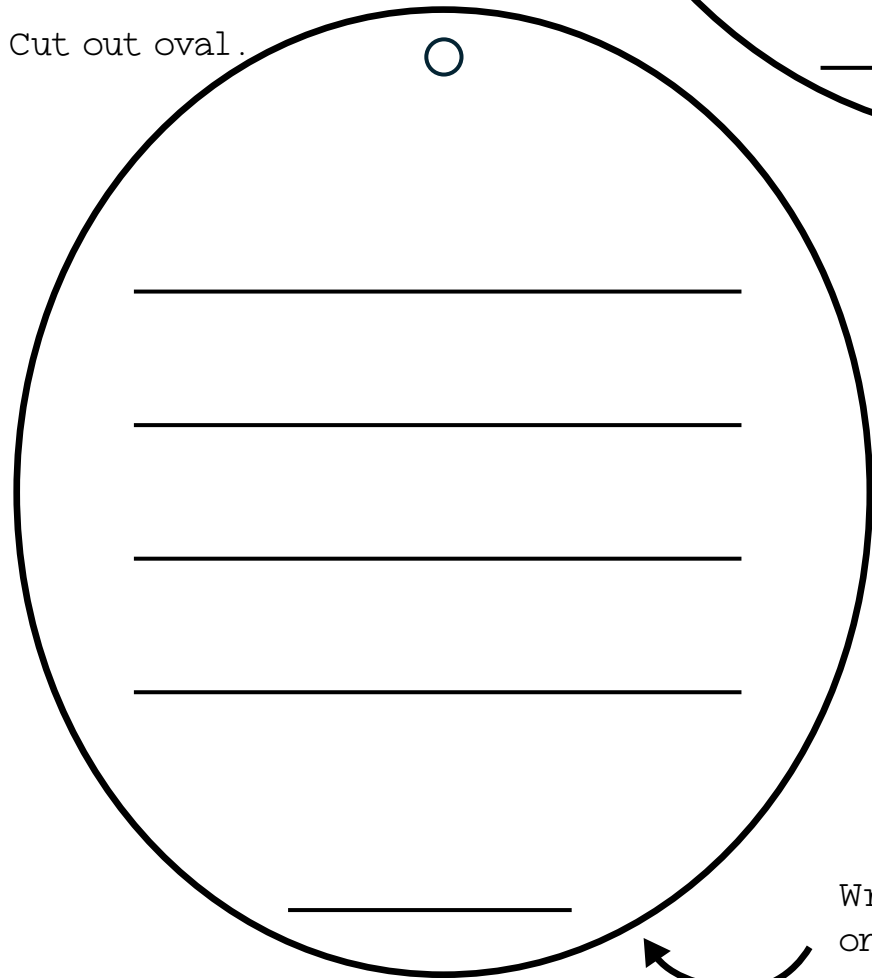
Questions to Ask: What's happening in the paragraph? How does this verse fit into the meaning of the paragraph?

Cut out oval.



A large oval shape with a small circle at the top center, indicating where to cut out. Inside the oval, there are four horizontal lines for writing.

Cut out oval.



A large oval shape with a small circle at the top center, indicating where to cut out. Inside the oval, there are four horizontal lines for writing.

Write "Verse" on the line.

Word: The smaller units of meaning that make up the verses.

Questions to Ask: What's happening in the paragraph? How does this word fit into the verse in this paragraph of thought?

Write "Word" on the line.



Hi! I'm Becky.

Let's Connect!



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