Grade 7 Playlist: Connotative Meanings

Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.4:

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

Welcome

"My Aunt Petunia is an economical shopper," says Susie. "If she finds something she likes, she patiently waits until it's on sale before she buys it." Meanwhile, Susie's sister, Elsie, says, "Aunt Petunia is so stingy! She refuses to buy anything that's not on the clearance rack!"

The words *economical* and *stingy* have essentially the same definitions in the dictionary; they are both adjectives that describe people who do not want to spend too much money for things. Yet these words have different feelings associated with them. They show that the girls have different opinions of Aunt Petunia's hesitation to spend money. Which sister probably enjoys shopping with Aunt Petunia more?

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- determine connotative meanings of words and phrases as they are used in informational text.
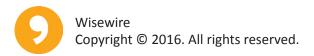
Review

Key Terms

- **Denotation** is the literal meaning of a word, or the word's dictionary definition.

- **Connotation** is a thought or emotion that is suggested or implied by a certain word.

- An author's **tone** is the attitude the author assumes toward the subject or the audience. Authors use many types of tone, but they usually assume a formal or serious tone in informational texts.

- **Context** is the phrases and sentences surrounding a certain word. A word's context often helps to show its meaning, including its connotation.

Practice!

Complete this activity to practice determining word meanings in context:

- https://www.opened.com/assessment/determine-the-meaning-of-words-and-phrases/1073112

Exploring the Standard

Although nonfiction writing often aims to be objective, authors can use a particular tone to indicate their view on a subject. They can develop this tone by using words with certain connotations. While two words may have synonymous definitions according to a dictionary, the feelings that they evoke in the reader may be completely different. It is important for readers to be aware of how connotations may affect their responses to a text.

Watch!

Watch this video to learn more about connotation and denotation:

- https://www.opened.com/video/flvs-english-3-denotation-and-connotation-lesson-1-04/1528995

Example 1

Read the following text and try to determine what the author's view on Kendra Thomason is. Pay attention to the connotative meanings of words.

[1]Kendra Thomason is a fresh new face on the political scene in Munfordville. A native of the town, she is proud of her accomplishments: graduating from an elite university, serving as partner at a well-known law firm in Doverton, and returning to her roots to start a blossoming firm in her hometown. Her next goal? To serve her hometown as its mayor.

[2]Recently, Thomason has been the subject of much controversy. A number of very nosy reporters have taken a great interest in her background and have discovered a few inconsistencies on her record. They have responded by slandering Thomason on the local news shows. The effects of these reports on voters will be decided on the day of the election.

Example 2

Now read this text, written by a different author. How are the connotations used in this text different?

[1]Kendra Thomason is an inexperienced newcomer to the political scene in Munfordville. A native of the town, she arrogantly brags of her accomplishments: graduating from an elite university, serving as partner at a well-known law firm in Doverton, and returning to Munfordville to start her own firm. Her next intention? To be elected mayor of her hometown.

[2]Recently, Thomason has been the subject of much controversy. A number of determined reporters have taken a great interest in her background and have discovered several inconsistencies on her record. They have responded by exposing Thomason on the local news shows. The effects of these reports on voters will be decided on the day of the election.

Teaching Notes: Connotative Meanings

The goal of RI.7.4 is for students to be able to determine connotative meanings of words used in an informational text. The following activities and resources are designed to help students develop this skill.

Activities

1. Find an editorial from a newspaper and underline words that have strong connotative meanings. Have students look for context clues that help to show whether the words have negative or positive connotations. For example, students may look for synonyms or examples that clarify the meaning of each word. Students should also consider the author's point of view in the article.

2. Discuss with students what a *euphemism* is: the replacement of a word that is considered offensive with one that has a less offensive connotation. For example, *restroom* might be considered a euphemism for *bathroom* or *toilet*. Ask students to give other examples of euphemisms and to describe how they illustrate the power of connotative meanings.

Writing Prompts

1. Ask students to describe an issue or topic that they have very strong feelings about. Then, instruct them to write an essay about that topic. Students should use a tone that reflects their view on the subject and use connotative words accordingly.

2. Use the editorial from Activity 1 above and have students replace some of the underlined words with words that have different connotations. Have students share their revised articles. Then discuss how changing the words affect the meaning of the article. Does the author's point of view seem the same? Why not?

Additional Resources

Consider these additional resources when teaching RI.7.4:

Interview a Word: In this activity, students create a mock interview with a word to help illustrate its connotation. Teachers can assign each student a different word and have them present their interviews to the class.

- http://www.visualthesaurus.com/cm/wordshop/getting-at-connotation-by-interviewing-a-word/

Word Connotations in Context: This resource gives ideas for teaching the relationship between tone and connotation.

- http://www.smekenseducation.com/word-connotations-convey-tone-in-reading-and-writing.html