

## Grade 3 Playlist: Shades of Meaning

Aligns with *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.3.5.C*:

- Distinguish shades of meaning among related words that describe states of mind or degrees of certainty (e.g., knew, believed, suspected, heard, wondered).

### Welcome

*Jeannie is sad. Greg is upset. Tamara is disappointed.*

Do Jeannie, Greg, and Tamara all feel the same way? They all feel unhappy in some sense, but their feelings are not exactly the same. The words *sad*, *upset*, and *disappointed* have different shades of meaning. Writers use shades of meaning to help readers know exactly how a character is feeling or what a character is doing.

### Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- distinguish between words with similar meanings.
- organize words according to their shades of meaning.

### Review

#### Key Terms

- **Synonyms** are words that have similar meanings.
- A **thesaurus** is a reference material that helps writers find synonyms.

### Exploring the Standard

Most synonyms do not mean exactly the same thing. Synonyms have slight differences between them, or **shades of meaning**. Understanding these shades of meaning helps readers better understand what they read.

Look at these two sentences:

Hector probably went to the park.

Hector possibly went to the park.

*Probably* and *possibly* are synonyms. Both words describe a chance of doing something. However, *probably* describes a greater chance than *possibly*.

To find different shades of meaning, it is easiest to start with **synonyms** for the word. Then, once several synonyms are found, just place them in order of “weakest” to “strongest.”



**Watch!**

A thesaurus is the perfect place to go for help if one is struggling to come up with a synonym. A **thesaurus** is a reference tool that lists synonyms, just like a dictionary lists definitions. This video is a great way to see just how helpful a thesaurus can be.

- <http://www.tv411.org/vocabulary/dictionary-thesaurus/video-whats-thesaurus>

**A Closer Look: Organizing Words by Shades of Meaning**

Some words with related meanings can be organized on a scale based on how weak or strong they are. Using a scale helps to show differences in the meanings of the words.

Look at the scales below. Notice how the meanings start off “weak” on the left hand side and get “stronger” as they go along. The word on the far right has the “strongest” meaning. Notice, as well, that all of these words have related meanings. Some of the words are synonyms.

**Example 1**

**Petite** and **microscopic** both describe something small. However, these words have different shades of meaning. **Petite** describes something that is slightly smaller than normal, while **microscopic** describes something so small that it is invisible to humans’ eyes.

**Example 2**

All of these words describe a way of moving. However, the speed of these actions is different. **Limp** is a much slower action than **sprint**. The word **limp** also suggests that the person moving is hurt, while **sprint** does not have this meaning.

**Example 3**

All of these words describe a way of talking. The main difference in their meaning is the loudness of the person’s voice. If someone **whispered**, they were very quiet. If someone **shouted**, they were loud.



## Teaching Notes: Shades of Meaning

The goal of L.3.5.C is for students to be able to tell the difference between words with related meanings. The following information contains ideas that teachers can incorporate into their classrooms as well as additional resources to peruse and integrate into instruction as appropriate.

### Activities

1. A great way to let students practice shades of meaning is by writing on paint sample cards that can be picked up for free at local hardware stores. These sample cards show a color in various shades and students can write words directly on these cards, putting “weaker” words on the lighter colors. See the additional resources section below for a link to a student sample from this activity.
2. Using a chart similar to the one shown below, allow students to illustrate the different words to help them grasp the precise meaning of each word. By drawing the words, students will be able to visualize the difference in “strength.”

microscopic	Tiny	small	little	petite

### Writing Prompts

1. Introduce overused words you observe in your students’ writing. (Common examples are “said,” “cool,” “boring,” “good,” “bad,” etc.) As a class or small group, brainstorm synonyms on a large piece of paper to hang in your room for each of the overused words. Discuss the shades of meaning of these synonyms. The next time students want to use a common word in their writing, refer them to the chart you made to help them be more expressive.
2. As a daily writing activity, put a simple prompt on the board for students to complete, such as “Today I feel \_\_\_\_\_.” or “Today the weather is \_\_\_\_\_.” Have students read their answers and see how many different words they come up with. Then sort them into categories of “strong,” “weak,” or “medium.”

