

Grade 6 Playlist: Denotation and Connotation

Aligns with *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.5.C*:

- Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., *stingy*, *scrimping*, *economical*, *unwasteful*, *thrifty*).

Welcome

There are more than 1 million words in the English language. Some of those words have similar meanings, or denotations. However, words with the same meaning can be associated with different feelings. These associations are called connotations. It's important to know that a word's connotation will affect a reader's understanding of a text.

Watch!

This video shows how words with similar meanings can be associated with different emotions.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRt06AvUm0A>

Objectives

In this playlist, the student will learn and practice how to:

- determine if a word has a positive or negative connotation.
- determine the strength of a word's connotation.

Review

Key Terms

- Denotation** is a word's literal meaning.
- Connotation** is the emotional association of a word.
- Word choice** refers to the decisions writers make in selecting words to create a specific meaning and tone.

Think about the words **scrawny** and **slender**. They have a similar meaning, but a different connotation. A thin person who has been sick with a stomach virus for a week would be called **scrawny**. A thin ballerina would be called **slender**.

Word	Denotation	Connotation
scrawny	thin	thin in an unattractive or unhealthy way
slender	thin	thin in an attractive or graceful way



Exploring the Standard

Writers keep both connotation and denotation in mind when selecting words. Both are important to the effectiveness of a story, poem, drama, or informational text. Denotation provides meaning for the reader. Connotation helps the reader figure out how he or she should feel about something being described.

Connotation can be positive or negative. Think back to the example of the words **scrawny** and **slender**.

- **Scrawny** has a negative connotation.
- **Slender** has a positive connotation.

Two words with the same denotation might both have the same type of connotation. For example, **angry** and **furious** both mean to be very upset. They also have a negative connotation. However, which word would make a person seem more upset? **Furious** has a **stronger** connotation than **angry**.

A Closer Look: Positive vs. Negative Connotations

When thinking about word choice, writers consider if a word has a positive or negative connotation. Words with positive connotations are associated with good emotions. Words with negative connotations are associated with bad emotions.

Imagine reading a story about a doctor. She knows that she is good at her job. Now the author has a choice. The author can make the reader like the doctor or dislike the doctor.

Look at these two sentences:

1. Dr. Hernandez was **confident** in her abilities as a doctor.
2. Dr. Hernandez was **cocky** about her abilities as a doctor.

Both sentences have the same denotation: Dr. Hernandez knows that she is good at being a doctor. However, they don't have the same connotation. Sentence 1 is more positive. It is considered a good thing to be **confident**. Sentence 2 is more negative. To be **cocky** means to be too proud or smug about something.



Teaching Notes: Denotation and Connotation

The goal of L.6.5.C is for students to be able to distinguish among the different connotations of words with similar 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.

Denotation and Connotation

A good way to teach denotation and connotation is to have a lot of words to choose from. Students can choose if a word is positive or negative and then compare the strength of the connotation by looking at different words. It's important to show words in the context of a sentence, so the student can see how connotation affects a sentence. Tone isn't really discussed in this module, but it might be useful to explain that words with positive and negative connotations affect the tone of an author's writing.

Vocabulary lists:

- <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/wordlist/positivewords.shtml>
- <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/wordlist/negativewords.shtml>
- <https://quizlet.com/5403191/negative-and-positive-connotation-flash-cards/>

Teaching activities:

- <http://www.brighthubeducation.com/high-school-english-lessons/13411-connotation-and-denotation-activities/> ("Getting Started" activity)
- <http://thewritepractice.com/connotation-vs-denotation/> (Practice section)

