

## Grades 9–10 Playlist: Figurative and Connotative Meanings

Aligns with *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4*:

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

### Welcome

How does an author explain a concept or image that has been explained throughout history, such as love or a sunset? To create fresh, new ways of expression, authors need to be creative with their word choices. In turn, by manipulating language, authors present readers with the chance to

experience the text in ways that go beyond the literal meanings of words and to understand the text's deeper meaning.

### Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings.
- analyze and evaluate the use of language and its impact on meaning and reader experience.

### Review

#### Key Terms

- A word's **connotation** refers to the suggestions, associations, or emotional response that surrounds most words and extends beyond the literal, or **denotative**, meaning.
- **Diction** simply refers to a speaker's (or author's) word choice.
- **Figurative language** refers to words or phrases that employ one or more figures of speech to supplement or modify the literal, denotative meanings or words with additional connotations. Figurative language adds color, immediacy, and richness to a text.
- **Figurative devices** used to achieve this effect include (but are not limited to) simile, metaphor, symbol, personification, and irony. These devices are usually used to create emphasis on a given concept, image, or idea, and also affects or allude to the tone. For example:
  - **Dramatic irony** is a literary technique in which readers are aware of information that the characters aren't.
  - **Personification** is a type of figurative language in which human qualities are given to something that is nonhuman.



- **Symbolism** is a literary technique that employs symbols as representations of ideas and concepts.
- **Mood** is the feeling conveyed in a text.
- **Tone** is the author’s attitude toward the work.

### Watch!

Watch this video for an additional explanation of connotative meanings with many examples of how they create an author’s/speaker’s tone and meaning:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-Z26ffxZaw>

### Watch!

For a more in-depth review of mood and tone, watch this video:

- <https://www.opened.com/video/what-is-the-difference-between-tone-and-mood-mp4-youtube/108459>

## Exploring the Standard

The figurative and connotative meanings of words, because they imply something larger than their basic definitions, create the feel of a text while also affecting the meaning, style, and purpose the author wishes to achieve. This is why some words can evoke emotions and sensations as well as develop meaning.

### A Closer Look: Edgar Allan Poe’s Word Choices in “The Masque of the Red Death”

Edgar Allan Poe is known as an excellent wordsmith who uses evocative images in his short stories to exemplify the creepiness of his gothic fiction. The following excerpts epitomize the ways in which Poe uses figurative language to evoke emotions in the readers, set the mood of the story that keeps readers engaged, and convey meaning.

Consider paragraph 1 of “The Masque of the Red Death”:

The “Red Death” had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal—the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body and especially upon the face of the victim, were the pest ban which shut him out from the aid and from the sympathy of his fellow-men. And the whole seizure, progress and termination of the disease, were the incidents of half an hour.

In the story, the “Red Death” Poe is referencing is a plague with horrible symptoms that has been ravaging a non-specified country. The sentence “Blood was its Avatar and its seal—the redness and the horror of blood” conveys the strength of this horrible disease. An *avatar* is a representation of something. Poe is stating that blood represents the disease, emphasizing its violence and gruesomeness. A reader, then, from the very beginning, feels a sense of dread, because the depiction of the plague sets the genre and mood: this is a horror story that will end in tragedy.



## Teaching Notes: Figurative and Connotative Meanings

The goal of RL.9-10.4 is for students to determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings, and analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone). This playlist focuses on the former, and the following information contains ideas that teachers can incorporate into their classroom as well as additional resources to peruse and integrate into instruction as appropriate.

### Activities

1. Have students read T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” with the task of identifying its use of allusion, or any other literary device of your choice. Since this poem is quite long, students may be set into groups for collaborative work, or the reading should be assigned as homework. If done as homework, students could answer the following questions while providing examples from the text: How does the diction in the poem evoke a sense of time or place? How can readers tell the tone and mood of the poem?
2. Using a poem of your choice, set students up into groups of 2–4 with the task of breaking down the use of language. Have students identify examples of figurative language and determine its corresponding tone and how it affects the meaning of the poem. After they finish, reconvene as a class and discuss students’ findings.

### Writing Prompts

1. Assign a short story of your choice that uses multiple literary devices, and have students answer the following questions in a multiple paragraph response: What devices did the author use to show figurative language? How did the author’s diction and use of figurative language impact your interpretation of the text?
2. Have students write their own poem, short story, or play, but require them to use at least three different devices of figurative language, and have students share their creative writing with the class.

### Additional Resources

Consider this additional resource when teaching RL.9-10.4:

- This site offers many links and guides to poems that use various figurative language devices and techniques. It could be used when preparing activities for exploring a specific concept or device: <http://literatureguides.weebly.com/examples-of-poems-using-figurative-language.html>

