

Connotation and Denotation

Is there more to a word than how
it is defined in the dictionary?

Yes, there is more. In fact, every
word has at least two definitions:

connotative and denotative

So, what's the difference?

Denotation

This is the “**dictionary definition**” of a word.

Find the denotation of the following words:

Tyrant-

Erosion-

Exponential-

Connotation

Many words have multiple meanings or can be implied to mean something other than the definition we find in the dictionary.

Connotation is the emotional and imaginative association surrounding a word

- The connotative meanings of a word exist together with the denotative meanings.
- The denotation of the word *snake* is “any of numerous scaly, legless, and sometimes venomous reptiles”



- The connotations for the word *snake* could include evil or danger.

Here is a sample of a word that has denotative meaning and connotative associations:

“She’s my baby.”

Denotation

infant



Connotation

girl friend

The denotative definition is based on the literal definition of a word.

The connotative definition is the figurative or emotional meaning of a word.

Example

- ◆ **Cheap**

Denotation: *low in cost*

Connotation: *poorly made, made with inferior ingredients or products*



Your turn to analyze word choices.

For each of the following sentences, explain why the word or words in bold are not good choices for the sentence. For example, it might not be a good time to use the denotation of a word because it's too scientific.

#1



“ Trip and journey are both words whose denotation means to travel, right?

“ What is the connotation of each? (Hint: What would you pack for a trip? What would you pack for a journey?)



#2

" Dirt and soil both have a denotation that mean the upper layer of the earth or the ground

" What is the connotation of each? (Hint: Do plants grow best in dirt or in soil? Why would that be?)



#3

” Cabin and hut have the same denotation. They are both places to live.



” What is the connotation of each? (Hint: Which would you rather live in? Why?)

#4



“ Explain why the words in italics are not good choices for these next two sentences, even though their denotation is correct.

“ Shawn wrote letters to his *female parent* while he was overseas. (Why doesn't this sound good?)



#5

“ He named his new song “*House Sweet House.*”

“ Why does this sound bad for a song’s name? What kinds of feelings are missing?”

Good writers choose their words for the **effects** they have upon their readers. Word choice is also a clue to the writer's attitude toward his/her subject – **tone**.



They think about the **denotation** of a word – its dictionary meaning and the **connotation** – the implied meanings and associations when choosing words.



Words can have **neutral**, **positive** or **negative** connotations:

“ For example: slender/skinny

. Both words above mean “**thin**” or “**trim**”

“ However, **slender** has a positive connotation

“ **Skinny** has a negative connotation

Another Example

“ A **stubborn** person can be described as being:

- . **Strong willed** (positive connotation)
- . **Pig-headed** (negative connotation)

As Seen in Advertising:

“ Both of the following sentences mean the same thing, but advertisers prefer to use the second sentence because it has fewer negative connotations:

- . All of the cars we have for sale are used.
- . All of the cars we have for sale are previously owned.

Home, house, residence and dwelling all have the same denotation, but the connotation of each word is very different.

“ Denotation: Where a person lives at any given time.

“ Connotation:

Home: cozy, loving, comfortable

House: the actual building or structure

Residence: cold, no feeling

Dwelling: primitive or basic surroundings

“ Which is most positive??

Here are some words that have **denotative** and **connotative** meanings. On your paper, create a chart like the one below and identify the **denotative** and **connotative** meanings of the following words.

Word	Denotation	Connotation
brutal		
commitment		
tight		

The word **brutal** can have two meanings.

The fight scene in the *Two Towers* between the Orcs and the travelers was **brutal**.



Denotation
extremely cruel

Connotation
violent to the point
of entertaining



Word	Denotation	Connotation
brutal	extremely cruel	violent to the point of entertaining
commitment		
tight		

The word **commitment** can have two meanings.

The couple has a **commitment** to each other.



Denotation
a pledge to do

Connotation
an emotional
connection to
another person



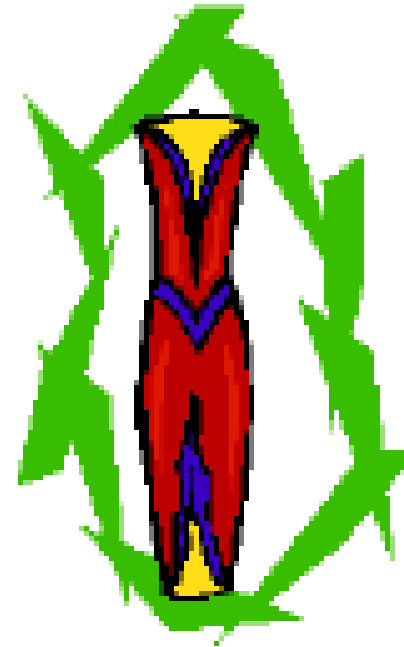
Word	Denotation	Connotation
brutal	extremely cruel	violent to the point of entertaining
commitment	a pledge to do	an emotional connection to another person
tight		

The word **tight can have two meanings.**

The dress she was wearing was really **tight.**

Denotation

fixed firmly in place



Connotation

good, fantastic, awesome

Word	Denotation	Connotation
brutal	extremely cruel	violent to the point of entertaining
commitment	a pledge to do	an emotional connection to another person
tight	fixed firmly in place	good, fantastic, awesome

- “ Read each list of words below.
- “ Each word has a different connotation, but has the same general denotation.
- “ Decide what the general denotation is for each group.
- “ Write your answer on the line provided.
- “ Then, **number the words** in each group from most positive connotation to most negative connotation. **1 being the most positive, 5 being the most negative.**

“ _____ uprising
_____ riot
_____ demonstration
_____ unlawful gathering
_____ protest
_____ disturbance

“ _____ (general denotation)

“ _____ prisoner
_____ evacuee
_____ internee
_____ detainee
_____ inmate

“ _____ (general denotation)

Homework

- “ Using the next slide, write one sentence for each of numbers 1-10. Make sure that your sentence reflects the connotation of the word (i.e. if it is a negative connotation your sentence should have a negative feeling.)
- “ You should have at least 3 positive and 3 negative. The other 4 you write are your choice.

	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable
1.	relaxed	inactive	lazy
2.	prudent	timid	cowardly
3.	modest	shy	mousy
4.	time-tested	old	out-of-date
5.	dignified	reserved	stiff-necked
6.	persevering	persistent	stubborn
7.	up-to-date	new	newfangled
8.	thrifty	conservative	miserly
9.	self- confident	proud	conceited
10.	inquisitive	curious	nosy