



ELA Virtual Learning

8th Grade ELA

Connotation & Denotation

April 23, 2020



Grade/Course

Lesson: April 23, 2020

Objective/Learning Target:

I can determine how connotations are used to develop characterization as well as add meaning to a poem.

Essential Question:

How can analyzing an author's word choice and literary devices (connotations) clarify characters and meaning?



Warm Up - connotation/denotation review

Connotation

- The intended meaning of a word
- It can be positive or negative
- CON-notation like CON-text

Denotation

- A word's exact meaning
- DE-notation like DEF-inition
- Use the dictionary to find the definition for denotation (this was not in the video)

As a writer, I can choose the word that will tell the reader exactly what I mean.

IT ALL DEPENDS ON THE CONTEXT IN WHICH I USE IT.

EXAMPLES:

*The dog lapped water out of his bowl getting slobber all over Tiffany's shoes. **Lapped = Negative**

Connotation

*Bobby wanted to throw his controller across the room after his friend lapped him in Mario Kart.

Lapped=Positive Connotation

Angelica's performance at the recital was just lovely. **Lovely = Positive Connotation

The cat knocked over the flower vase. Just lovely. **Lovely = Negative Connotation



Warm Up (connotations)

Connotation = the emotion behind the word

In addition to how a word is used (its context) to alter their meaning, words have inherent or natural connotations (or **emotions**) associated with it.

While all synonyms, these 3 words have different **connotations**:

stubborn, tenacious, steadfast

stubborn has a negative **connotation** or **emotion** associated with it

steadfast has a positive **connotation** or **emotion** associated with it

tenacious has a neutral **connotation**

A neutral **connotation** is when the word doesn't have a true positive or negative slant or depends upon its usage.



Warm Up (connotations)

Directions: Look at the chart. The example uses 3 synonyms: 'thrifty', 'save' and 'stingy' - all deal with keeping money. Based upon their **connotation** (**emotion**) they are placed in their corresponding columns (either 'positive', 'neutral', or 'negative')

The word "vintage" is provided on the 2nd line of the chart. 'Vintage' is a positive word used to describe something old but of importance or high quality. What is a 'neutral' word for 'vintage'? A 'negative' word for 'vintage'? On a piece of paper, complete the chart.

POSITIVE	NEUTRAL	NEGATIVE
thrifty	save	stingy
vintage		
	happy	
		peculiar



Warm Up (connotations)

Possible answers:

POSITIVE	NEUTRAL	NEGATIVE
thrifty	save	stingy
vintage	old	thrifty
elated	happy	maniac
unique	different	peculiar

Now we will see how author's use specific **connotations** of words to relay information about characters or additional meanings.



Warm Up (connotations)

On your piece of paper, write a positive, negative and neutral sentence of the event below.

Event: A student in your Science classroom asked questions throughout the teacher's lecture.

- 1) You want to relay your frustration of the event to a friend.
- 2) On the other hand, the narrator wanted to share the excitement of the event.
- 3) How could you portray this event in a neutral manner?



Warm Up - Possible Answers

Possible Positive, Negative and Neutral Responses:

Example:

- 1) The student was so **nosy** throughout Ms. Smith's entire lecture. She couldn't even answer a question before another question was asked. **NEGATIVE Connotation**
- 2) With Alex's father battling cancer, we all understood her **inquisitiveness** during Ms. Smith's lecture about tumors; Alex's interest was contagious to the entire class. **POSITIVE Connotation**
- 3) On the edge of her seat, Alex **questioned** throughout Ms. Smith's lecture. **NEUTRAL Connotation**



Learn (poetic terms)

At the end of yesterday's lesson, a video discussed the writer & poet Jacqueline Woodson. Today you will read Woodson's poem "Describe Somebody." The speaker of the poem is a young boy, Lonnie Collins Motion (aka Locomotion for short). The poem is one in a collection of poems, entitled *Locomotion* that shadows the life of the speaker and his world around him.

Poetic terms

poet – the "author" of the poem; the individual writing it

speaker – the "narrator" of the poem; the individual telling it

narrative poem – a type of poem that tells a story; shares many elements of a traditional prose story

Additional notes:

characterization - information about characters can be revealed in one of two ways, directly or indirectly



Practice

Possible answer:

In the poem “Describe Somebody,” the speaker of the poem is assigned by his teacher to write a poem that will ultimately have to be read to the class. Sitting and observing the class, the speaker begins with a simple description of the teacher and moves onto his friends and gradually provides insight into their character traits and personalities; the poem ends with the speaker recalling when he and Miss Edna (his foster mother) saw his friend Eric sing a solo at church (which was totally unexpected for Eric’s demeanor).

Next: On the second reading, look how the poet’s use of literary devices—word choice and connotation—provides additional insight and meaning to the poem

Read the first 12 lines of the poem (line numbers are marked to the right of the line)



Practice

“Describe Somebody” (lines 1- 12)

*Today in class Ms. Marcus said
Take out your poetry notebooks and
describe somebody.*

*Think carefully, Ms. Marcus said.
You're gonna read it to the class.*

5 I wrote, Ms. Marcus is tall and a little bit
skinny.

Then I put my pen in my mouth and stared
Down
at the words.

Then I crossed them out and wrote
Ms. Marcus's hair is long and brown.

10 Shiny.

When she smiles it makes you feel all good
Inside

On your piece of paper, write down all the descriptive words for Ms. Marcus.



Practice

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Inside

Looking at the speaker's descriptive words/phrases, what do we learn about the character, Ms. Marcus, from the speaker's description?



Answer

Possible Answer:

The speaker uses descriptive words like “skinny” and “shiny” to describe Ms. Marcus. These descriptive words tend to have a more positive connotation; however, the speaker’s final line in the section, “When she smiles it makes you feel all good/inside” has obvious positiveness. Ms. Marcus’ smile makes Marcus feel good. Using all of this information, the speaker of the poem has a positive view of Ms. Marcus.

Note: We know that dialogue is one of the five indirect ways authors reveal information about characters. Did you underline Ms. Marcus’ words? What can we learn about her from her words?



Answer

Possible Answer:

Today in class Ms. Marcus said

*Take out your poetry notebooks and
describe somebody.*

Think carefully, Ms. Marcus said.

You're gonna read it to the class.

What does Ms. Marcus' dialogue reveals? What do we learn about her character? What additional information do we learn?



Answer

Possible Answer:

Today in class reveals that the setting of the poem is in a class (what grade/age level do you think?)

Take out your poetry notebooks and describe somebody. reveals that Ms. Marcus is a teacher talking to her students

You're gonna read it to the class. reveals that Ms. Marcus is a challenging teacher; some students might not like to read their poems out loud to their classmates

Based on all of her dialogue, she talks like a teacher.

Lastly, write a description about somebody using at least 4 words that have intended connotations or emotion.

Underline the connotative words.



Hint: do you want to shed your character in a positive or negative light?

Freshman

Shades pulled tight, blankets tighter
the afternoon sun finally penetrates
the dark fortress.

Bedroom door creaks open,
he stumbles from slumber,

“What time is it?” he mutters,
feet dragging across carpet,
knuckles rubbing bloodshot eyes

I roll my eyes.

The pantry door opens,
scavenging begins
again.



Learn (example)

Freshman

Shades pulled tight, blankets tighter
the afternoon sun finally penetrates the dark fortress.
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Additional Practice

Click on the link to read the next installment of *Locomotion* entitled, "[Almost a Summer Sky.](#)"

What additional information does this poem reveal about Lonnie?

