

Lesson 19

Denotation and Connotation

CCSS

L.8.5.c: Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., *bullheaded, willful, firm, persistent, resolute*).



Introduction

Words can have two kinds of meanings that convey very different ideas or images. A word's **denotation** is its basic meaning, or dictionary definition. A word's **connotation** is the feeling or impression that people associate with the word.

- A word can have a **positive, negative, or neutral** connotation. When you write, think about the connotations of the words you choose and the effect they will have on your readers.

Positive Connotation	Neutral Connotation	Negative Connotation
Several people lingered in the theater after auditions.	Several people stayed in the theater after auditions.	Several people loitered in the theater after auditions.
My aunt picked me up in her compact two-door car.	My aunt picked me up in her small two-door car.	My aunt picked me up in her cramped two-door car.

- To say that a car is **small** is a neutral statement about the car. A car that is **compact**, however, can fit everything you need into just a small space. This word has a positive connotation. A **cramped** car, on the other hand, conjures images of tightly squeezed passengers and belongings. The connotation is negative.



Guided Practice

Read each sentence. Each underlined word has a neutral or a positive connotation. Write a word that has a negative connotation to replace each underlined word.

Hint

Words that have the same, or a similar, denotation are synonyms. You can use a thesaurus to find the synonyms for each underlined word. Then choose and write the synonym that has a negative connotation.

- 1 It was adventurous of me to try out for the role of villain.

- 2 I'm quiet and shy, and the character is powerful. _____
- 3 My best friend was surprised that I was so firm in my decision.

- 4 I nervously held the script as I read my first lines. _____
- 5 My right leg shook as I faced the hero. _____
- 6 When offered the part, I deliberated for a while. _____
- 7 But then I decided that I had spent too much time being shy.

- 8 Sometimes, I wonder what kind of silliness I'll try next.



For numbers 1–3, which word has the same denotation as the underlined word but has a more negative connotation?

1 The director was unpredictable in his reactions to the actors and scenes.

- A changeable
- B volatile
- C whimsical
- D variable

2 The actors felt that the director's comments were sometimes clever.

- A perceptive
- B insightful
- C keen
- D shrewd

3 The director's feedback excited the actors.

- A agitated
- B inspired
- C invigorated
- D energized

Answer Form

1 (A) (B) (C) (D)

2 (A) (B) (C) (D)

3 (A) (B) (C) (D)

4 (A) (B) (C) (D)

5 (A) (B) (C) (D)

Number Correct / 5

For numbers 4 and 5, which word has the same denotation as the underlined word but has a more positive connotation?

4 The director's great arrogance made it difficult for him to compromise in his way of doing things.

- A conceit
- B smugness
- C confidence
- D haughtiness

5 At the end of the rehearsals, the actors admitted that this director brought out the best in them.

- A declared
- B confessed
- C gossiped
- D vented