

Boost Free Lessons - Year 8 English

Lesson 1: Connotation vs Denotation

Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Worked Example 1

Explain the difference between the two words in bold.

*The jacket was **cheap**.*

*The jacket was **affordable**.*

1. **Denotation** is a word's dictionary meaning. Both words denote a low price.
2. **Connotation** is the feeling or association a word carries beyond that meaning.
3. *Cheap* carries a negative connotation, suggesting poor quality as well as low cost.
4. *Affordable* carries a positive connotation, suggesting good value. The price is the same; the judgement is not.

Both denote low cost. *Cheap* connotes poor quality, while *affordable* connotes good value.

Worked Example 2

Why has the writer chosen **crammed** rather than **filled**?

*The hall was **crammed** with parents.*

1. Start with denotation. Both words mean the space contained a lot of people.
2. Now the connotation. *Filled* is neutral, and simply reports the fact.
3. *Crammed* connotes discomfort, pressure and too little room.
4. So the word choice tells the reader how to feel about the crowd, not just that there was one.

***Crammed* connotes discomfort and overcrowding, so the reader feels the hall was unpleasant rather than simply full.**

Remember: **Denotation** is the dictionary meaning. **Connotation** is the feeling a word carries. Writers choose between words with the same denotation to control how the reader judges the facts.



Question 1: Explain the difference in connotation between each pair of words.

1. **slim** and **skinny**

2. **confident** and **arrogant**

3. **curious** and **nosy**

4. **determined** and **stubborn**

5. **relaxed** and **lazy**

6. **youthful** and **childish**

7. **traditional** and **old-fashioned**

8. **unique** and **strange**



Question 2: Read the passage below, then answer the questions.

The new development has swallowed the last of the old orchard. In its place stand forty identical townhouses, packed shoulder to shoulder, around a generous strip of lawn the brochure calls a park.

1. Find one word with a negative connotation and explain its effect.

2. Find one word with a positive connotation and explain its effect.

3. Rewrite the first sentence using neutral words only.

4. How does the writer's word choice reveal their opinion of the development?

5. Which single word do you think does the most work? Explain.



Question 3: Answer the following questions.

1. Write a sentence about a school that makes it sound welcoming.

2. Rewrite it so the same school sounds unwelcoming, changing only word choices.

3. Explain why two writers can report the same fact and give opposite impressions.

4. Why is connotation important when reading advertising?





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Answers and Model Responses: Connotation vs Denotation**Question 1**

1. Both denote thinness. *Slim* is positive, while *skinny* suggests unhealthy thinness.
2. Both denote self-assurance. *Confident* is positive, while *arrogant* suggests excessive self-belief.
3. Both denote interest. *Curious* is positive, while *nosy* suggests intruding on others.
4. Both denote persistence. *Determined* is positive, while *stubborn* suggests refusing to listen.
5. Both denote a lack of hurry. *Relaxed* is positive, while *lazy* suggests avoiding work.
6. Both denote youth. *Youthful* is positive, while *childish* suggests immaturity.
7. Both denote age. *Traditional* suggests valued custom, while *old-fashioned* suggests being out of date.
8. Both denote difference. *Unique* is positive, while *strange* suggests something is wrong.

Question 2

1. Model: *swallowed*, which connotes something being consumed and lost, making the development sound destructive.
2. Model: *generous*, which connotes kindness and makes the green space sound like a gift.
3. Model: The new development will occupy the site of the old orchard.
4. The negative words describe the development and the positive ones describe what it replaces, which shows the writer opposes it.
5. Model: *swallowed*, because it turns a construction project into something that consumes, making the loss feel violent.

Question 3

1. Model: The corridors were bright and busy, and someone was always laughing near the lockers.
2. Model: The corridors were glaring and crowded, and someone was always shrieking near the lockers.
3. Word choice carries connotation as well as meaning, so two writers can state the same fact while signalling opposite judgements about it.
4. Advertising relies on positive connotation to make ordinary claims feel appealing, so noticing it helps you judge what is actually being promised.

