

Denotation and Connotation Notes

Denotation

A word's **denotation** is its literal definition.

For example:

Snake: a limbless reptile with a long, scaly body

Connotation

A word's **connotation** is all the association we have with it.

For example:

"**snake** in the grass," the biblical serpent, the danger of poisonous snakes, our own fear of **snakes**, or a malevolent (evil, bad) person might be called "a real snake"

Connotation can depend on the person who hears the word and brings his or her own associations to it.

* A plumber might immediately think of a plumbing tool called a snake.

* A biologist might think of the rare Indigo Snake he felt lucky to see the past weekend.

Some words, though, have shades of meaning that are commonly recognized. While "**serpent**" is literally a snake, the word "serpent" is usually associated with evil. In today's society, "politician" has somewhat negative associations, while "statesman" sounds more positive.



Name: _____ Date: _____

Group Exercise
DENOTATION/CONNOTATION EXERCISES

Discuss the words with the students in your group. Work together to determine which column each word would fit in.

Directions: For these conditions, first think of a word with a positive connotation, and then think of a word with a negative connotation.

<i>Condition</i>	<i>Positive Connotation</i>	<i>Negative Connotation</i>
1. overweight	_____	_____
2. short	_____	_____
3. not smart	_____	_____
4. irresponsible	_____	_____
5. non-athletic	_____	_____
6. self-focused	_____	_____

For each pair of words and a phrase, use the chart below to list the one that is positive in the “**Positive Connotation**” category, the one that is negative in the “**Negative Connotation**” category, and the phrase that is a more neutral definition for both words in the “**Denotation**” column.

1. gaze, look steadily, stare
2. fragrance, odor, a smell sensed by the olfactory nerve
3. brainwash, persuade, influence one way or another
4. delayed, not on time, tardy
5. somewhat interested, nosy, curious
6. lazily, without haste, leisurely
7. ask of someone, demand, request
8. gathering, a large group, mob

- 9. slim, skinny, less than average build
- 10. discuss with others, debate, argue
- 11. observe, watch, spy
- 12. a young age, youthful, immature
- 13. not having a care, irresponsible, carefree,
- 14. unique, not commonly found, strange
- 15. find, detect, snoop
- 16. inexpensive, fairly priced, or cheap
- 17. isolation, privacy, having an opportunity to be alone
- 18. assertive, firmly confident, pushy
- 19. extravagance, generosity, giving much,

	<i>Positive Connotation</i>	<i>Denotation</i>	<i>Negative Connotation</i>
1	gaze	look steadily	stare
2	fragrance	a smell sensed by the olfactory nerve	odor
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
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16			
17			
18			
19			

Name: _____ Date: _____

Homework:

Denotation and Connotation Practice:

Choose two words from the table above. Write a sentence in which the word appears, the word's part of speech, its denotation, and positive or negative connotations associated with it.

Example:

Word: fragrance

Sentence: The candlemaker chose a pleasing, spicy fragrance for her old friend's candle.

Part of Speech: noun

Denotation: a smell sensed by the olfactory nerve

Connotation: fragrance (positive)

Synonym with different connotation: odor (negative)

1. **Word:** _____

Sentence in which word appears:

Part of Speech: _____

Denotation: _____

Connotation: _____

Synonym with different connotation: _____

2. **Word:** _____

Sentence in which word appears:

Part of Speech: _____

Denotation: _____

Connotation: _____

Synonym with different connotation: _____