

DENOTATION & CONNOTATION QUIZ

Which connotation is more positive? Write the answer (the word) in the _____

1. Our trip to the amusement park was _____.

- a) fine
- b) wonderful

2. _____ people rode on the roller coaster.

- a) Brave
- b) Foolhardy

3. We saw _____ animals in the animal house.

- a) fascinating
- b) weird

4. Some of the monkeys made _____ faces.

- a) hilarious
- b) amusing

5. Everyone had a _____ on his or her face on the way home.

- a) smile
- b) smirk

Which connotation is more negative?

6. We bought _____ souvenirs at the amusement park.

- a) cheap
- b) inexpensive

7. I ate a _____ sandwich.

- a) soggy
- b) moist

8. Mike _____ us to go to the funny house.

- a) nagged
- b) reminded

9. I didn't like the _____ on the jester's face.

- a) smirk
- b) grin

10. It made me feel _____.

- a) uneasy
- b) frightened

Which is the best answer?

11. Which is worth more?

- a) something old
- b) something antique

12. Which is better?

- a) to be skinny
- b) to be slender

13. Which would you rather be called?

- a) thrifty
- b) cheap

14. Which would a vain person be more likely to do?

- a) stroll
- b) parade

15. Which is more serious?

- a) problem
- b) disaster

16. Which is more polite?

- a) sip a drink
- b) gulp it

17. Which would you be if you hadn't eaten for several days?

- a) hungry
- b) starving

18. Which would you be after a walk in the mud?

- a) filthy
- b) dirty

LESSON PLAN: POETRY

Since everyone reacts emotionally to certain words, writers often deliberately select words that they think will influence your reactions and appeal to your emotions. Read the dictionary definition (DENOTATION) below.

cock roach (kok' roch'), n. any of an order of nocturnal insects, usually brown with flattened oval bodies, some species of which are household pests inhabiting kitchens, areas around water pipes, etc. [Spanish cucaracha]

1. What does the word cockroach mean to you?
2. Is a cockroach merely an insect or is it also a household nuisance and a disgusting creature?

**See what meanings poets Wild and Morley find in roaches in the following poems.

Roaches

Last night when I got up
to let the dog out I spied
a cockroach in the bathroom
crouched flat on the cool
porcelain,
delicate
antennae probing the toothpaste cap
and feasting himself on a gob
of it in the bowl:
I killed him with one unprofessional
blow,
scattering arms and legs
and half his body in the sink...

I would have no truck with roaches,
crouched like lions in the ledges of sewers
their black eyes in the darkness
alert for tasty slime,

breeding quickly and without design,
laboring up drainpipes through filth
to the light;

I read once they are among
the most antediluvian of creatures,
surviving everything, and in more primitive times
thrived to the size of your hand...

yet when sinking asleep
or craning at the stars,
I can feel their light feet
probing in my veins,
their whiskers nibbling
the insides of my toes;
and neck arched,
feel their patient scrambling
up the dark tubes of my throat.

--Peter Wild



from Nursery Rhymes for the Tender-hearted

Scuttle, scuttle, little roach-
How you run when I approach:
Up above the pantry shelf
Hastening to secrete yourself.

Most adventurous of vermin,
How I wish I could determine
How you spend your hours of ease,
Perhaps reclining on the cheese.

Cook has gone, and all is dark-
Then the kitchen is your park;
In the garbage heap that she leaves
Do you browse among the tea leaves?

How delightful to suspect
All the places you have trekked:
Does your long antenna whisk its
Gentle tip across the biscuits?

Do you linger, little soul,
Drowsing in our sugar bowl?
Or, abandonment most utter,
Shake a shimmy on the butter?

Do you chant your simple tunes
Swimming in the baby's prunes?
Then, when dawn comes, do you slink
Homeward to the kitchen sink?

Timid roach, why be so shy?
We are brothers, thou and I,
In the midnight, like yourself,
I explore the pantry shelf!

--Christopher Morley

Reread the dictionary definition.

3. Which of the denotative characteristics of a cockroach both poets include in their poems?

4. What characteristics does Wild give his roaches that are not in the dictionary definition?

~~5. What additional characteristics does Morley give to roaches?~~

~~In each poem, the insect acquires meaning beyond its dictionary definition. Both poets lead us away from a literal view of roaches to a nonliteral one.~~

6. Which poet succeeds in giving roaches favorable connotations?

Context and Connotation

Context profoundly affects word meaning. In the following pairs of sentences, not the different meanings on the appropriate lines.

1a. "*The hardly fought election had put him in the limelight.*"—Agatha Christie, *Sparkling Cyanide*.

1b. In the last round he *hardly* fought at all.

2a. Don't *depress* me with anymore bad news.

2b. Remember to *depress* the clutch first.

3a. The trail *inclined* steeply and left us breathless.

3b. Is he *inclined* to go hiking each summer?

4a. After marriage, the couple will *cleave* together as one.

4b. Don't attempt to *cleave* the diamond until you have examined it thoroughly.

OVER

5a. You're just *plumb* crazy if you think I will go!

5b. We'll *plumb* the complexities of that book in class discussion.

6a. Did he *intimate* that I was acting foolish?

6b. "*'Twas one of my most intimate enemies.*"—D. G. Rossetti, "Fragment"

7. Synonyms for *relinquish* include *yield*, *surrender*, *abandon*, *resign*, and *waive*, yet the connotation (the feeling) of each is slightly different. For the following five words and their synonyms, explain the connotative meanings for each word and synonym.

_____ a. vigilance _____ attentiveness

_____ b. cower _____ crouch

_____ c. disengage _____ withdraw

_____ d. voluble _____ articulate

_____ e. commiserate _____ sympathize

~~8. Using three of the following adjectives and three prepositional phrases write no more than a page about a double dare. Start with: She said, "I double dare you..."~~

~~astute heavy optional vicious brave intelligent~~
~~woeful zany placid jovial quaint flagrant~~