

WORDS TO KNOW

denotation

connotation

positive connotation

negative connotation

neutral connotation

Lesson 4

DISTINGUISH DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION 6L5c

INTRODUCTION

Real-World Connection

FAMILY LIFE

Justin's favorite pastime is writing stories. He likes to read them to his dad and little sister. He hopes to be an author someday, but for today he just wants to find the perfect word to describe the main character in a short story he is writing. His story is about a boy named Lon who does not like to spend money. Finding the right word to describe Lon is tricky for Justin. There are so many words to choose from, and Justin wants to pick the word that is perfect at describing Lon. Justin looks up the words *thrifty* and *stingy* in the dictionary. They have similar meanings—to be careful or reluctant to spend money—but one word makes this seem like a good trait, and the other makes it seem like a bad one. Justin really wants his dad and sister to like Lon, so which word should he choose? In Guided Instruction and Independent Practice, we will practice the skills to help Justin decide, then at the end of the lesson revisit Justin and his story.

TIPS AND TRICKS

When you read, use a pencil or highlighter to select words with similar meanings. Think about whether you also have a similar reaction to the words.



What I Am Going to Learn

- How words that seem similar can have different meanings
- How words that seem similar can be more appropriate in certain contexts
- How and when to use the best word in a given context

What I May Already Know 5L5c, 4L5c

- I know that words have relationships with other words, such as words that have opposite meanings or the same meanings.
- I know words that may be spelled the same but pronounced differently with different meanings.

Vocabulary in Action

As you read, you will come across words that are used in a variety of ways.

- The denotation of a word is the dictionary definition of the word.
- The connotation of a word is the feeling you associate with the word. This goes beyond the actual meaning of the word and gives the reader a positive or negative feeling. Often, the best way to understand a word's connotation is to look at its context.
- A positive connotation evokes good reactions in readers.
- A negative connotation evokes bad reactions in readers.
- A word or phrase can also have a neutral connotation. This means the word or words do not evoke positive or negative feelings.

◀ HINT, HINT

You can find clues to both the denotation and connotation in the context of the word.

GUIDED INSTRUCTION

Read this page from one of Justin's short stories. As you read, circle words that have a positive, negative, or a neutral connotation.

Adventures in Baking

Jae and Chris are making a pie together. They are hoping by the time their sister comes home they will be done, but they cannot seem to get the crust right. First, they try mixing a lot of flour in the pie crust, but then the dough is tough and when they try to roll it out it will not flatten. Next, they try to stir water in to make the dough moist, but they use too much and it spreads all over the counter. The boys are irritated because now the dough is soggy. Jae thinks adding some cornstarch will help, but Chris is worried the pie will taste like corn. The brothers need another solution.

Jae remembers that once he saw someone create a crust with graham crackers. He wonders if maybe that will work. He and Chris quickly crush the crackers into crumbs, add melted butter, and smooth the mixture. The graham crackers work perfectly, and they are able to pour the pie filling into the crust without any spills. At this rate, they may even finish baking in time to show their sister.

◀ HINT, HINT

The connotation usually does not show up in the dictionary definition or denotation of a word. For clues to connotation, look at the context and think about your emotional response to the word.

Complete the chart by listing more words you find in the passage and their denotations and connotations. Then, answer the question.

WORD OR PHRASE	DENOTATION	CONNOTATION
tough	difficult to work with	Negative: It would not flatten because it is too tough.

HINT, HINT

Ask yourself, "What does the context tell me about these two words?" Does the context tell you that there is a difference in connotation or denotation between two words?

Type sentence below

Part A

Which TWO words have the same denotation but different connotations?

- (A) "crust" and "flour"
- (B) "smooth" and "crush"
- (C) "moist" and "soggy"
- (D) "create" and "mix"

Part B

_____ the sentence that BEST shows the negative connotation of the answer to Part A.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Read the article. Then, answer the questions that follow.

Native American Houses

Genre: Article

- 1 Today, Native Americans in the United States usually live in the same types of houses that other Americans live in. In the past, Native American tribes had to build homes that adapted to their environments and their ways of life. Often, the natural materials they used for their homes were scarce. They lacked the machinery that is used to build homes today. Much of the backbreaking work had to be done by hand. 2a
- 2 The tribes who lived in the Great Plains, such as the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Comanche, were nomads. This means their entire villages did not stay in one place for long. Instead, they moved frequently. While they had several reasons for roaming around, chief among them was the buffalo, which they depended upon for food. When they followed buffalo herds, the Plains tribes packed up all of their belongings and carried them, including their homes. 2b
- 3 For these tribes, the tepee was the ideal dwelling. They made tepees from buffalo hides stitched together and a few long wooden poles. To construct a tepee, the poles were arranged to form a cone-shaped frame and tied together at the top. Then, they would wrap the buffalo hide covering around the frame. Some Native Americans would paint the outsides of their tepees for decoration.
- 4 When the tribe arrived at a place to settle, assembling the tepee took only about 30 minutes. While the tepee might look like a very simple structure, it was not as primitive as it seemed. Grass and other materials insulated the tepees. In cold weather, there were campfires in the tepee for cooking and warmth. The outside of these mobile shacks was quite plain. The inside was modest, with few features besides a central fire pit. After the tribe moved on, all that was left of the abandoned camp was the ash from their campfires. 4,
2d
- 5 Other tribes were not as mobile as those of the Great Plains. The Algonquin tribes of the American Northeast built homes called wigwams. Like the tepee, the wigwam had a frame made from wooden poles that were covered with natural materials. The Algonquin used flexible poles that would bend to create dome-shaped frames. Instead of covering the frames with hides, they used bark and strips of wood. 2c
2c
- 6 The Algonquin were not nomads like the Plains tribes, but they did move occasionally from one place to another. While a wigwam frame was permanent, the coverings were not unmovable. They were removed and used to build other wigwams. 2b

SKETCH IT

Draw a small tepee in the space above based on the description. Why would a tepee be an “ideal” dwelling?

SKETCH IT

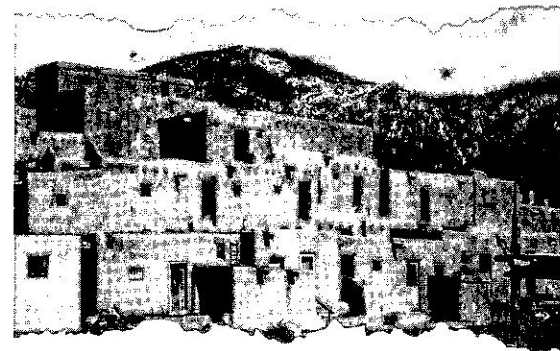
Draw a small wigwam next to your tepee. Why is a wigwam more of an ideal dwelling for the Algonquin

- 7 A wigwam could hold an entire family, including parents, grandparents, and children. The Iroquois tribes, neighbors of the Algonquin, also lived in houses made from pole frames covered with bark. The Iroquois *longhouse* dwarfed the wigwam. Designed for an entire clan, or up to 60 people, these narrow, two-story structures could reach 200 feet in length and have thousands of square feet of living space.
- 8 The Iroquois measured their longhouses not in feet but in “fires.” Down the center of a longhouse, individual campfires were built for heat and to cook food. Grass mats and wooden screens were hung from the ceilings to create separate rooms, and a raised platform made a second floor for sleeping space. A longhouse took the time and effort of many people to construct—which was suitable for the Iroquois, who relied upon farming and did not move from their villages. Many Iroquois longhouses have been reconstructed. Seeing these large, empty buildings makes one think how fascinating it is that the Iroquois could build them without modern technology.
- 9 The Plains tribes, Algonquin, and Iroquois all lived in places where they had to adapt to weather that could be very cold. In other parts of the country, the main concern was how to deal with scorching heat. The Pueblo people of the southwestern United States took advantage of the hot weather. They blended straw with clay and mud and formed this mixture (called *adobe*) into rectangular bricks. They then left the bricks to bake in the sun, which hardened them and made them permanent.
- 10 The Pueblo used these strong adobe bricks to build massive, expansive complexes. Each adobe pueblo included as many as dozens of units, much like modern-day apartment buildings. With one family in each unit, a single structure could hold an entire clan, just like the Iroquois longhouse. Also like the longhouse, the adobe pueblo was built with stability in mind, as the Pueblo were farmers who had no need to move their homes around. In fact, some of the complexes that were built hundreds of years ago are still occupied today!

◀ THINK ABOUT IT

What is the denotation of the word “dwarfed” as used in paragraph 7? What is the connotation?

20A



Adobe pueblo

1. Which sentences BEST describe the relationship between the words construct in paragraph 3 and assembling in paragraph 4?
- (A) The words have similar denotations. They both describe putting together a tepee.
 - (B) The words have different denotations. They are opposite in meaning.
 - (C) The words have negative connotations. They are associated with destroying something.
 - (D) The words have different connotations. They are unrelated words.

This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

★ 2. Part A

Which TWO words from the article have the same denotative meaning?

- (A) “live” and “adapted” (paragraph 1)
- (B) “belongings” and “coverings” (paragraphs 2 and 6)
- (C) “mobile” and “flexible” (paragraph 5)
- (D) “abandoned” and “empty” (paragraphs 4 and 8)

Part B

Which word in the answer to Part A has a neutral connotation? Underline that word in the article.

3. Read the following phrases from the passage. Look at the underlined words and place them in the correct row of the chart based on their connotation.

“Much of the backbreaking work had to be done by hand.”
(paragraph 1)

“For these tribes, the tepee was the ideal dwelling.” (paragraph 3)

“The outside of these mobile shacks was quite plain.” (paragraph 4)

“The inside was modest, with few features besides a central fire pit.”
(paragraph 4)

POSITIVE CONNOTATION

NEGATIVE CONNOTATION

4. Describe the denotation and connotation of simple and primitive in paragraph 4.

This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

5. Part A

Which sentence BEST describes the relationship between relied upon in paragraph 8 and depended upon in paragraph 2?

- (A) They have the same denotation and connotation.
 (B) To “rely upon” is neutral, and to “depend upon” is negative.
 (C) To “depend upon” has a more positive connotation.
 (D) They have opposite denotations.

Part B

Which two words in paragraph 2 have the same word relationship as explained in the answer to Part A?

- (A) “nomads” and “roaming” (B) “buffalo” and “food”
 (C) “followed” and “herds” (D) “carried” and “homes”

6. In paragraph 8, what is the meaning of the word fascinating? Which other word from paragraph 1 has the same connotation?

◀ TIPS AND TRICKS

Think about how the word fascinating makes you feel.

EXIT TICKET

6L5c

Now that you have mastered the art of distinguishing between connotation and denotation, let's revisit the Real-World Connection.

How can Justin decide whether to use the word *stingy* or the word *thrifty*? Remember that he wants the reader to like the character. Fill out the chart below with the denotation and connotation of each word. Then, write a sentence explaining which word he should choose.

WORD OR PHRASE	DENOTATION	CONNOTATION
stingy		
thrifty		