Denotation and Connotation

The dictionary definition.
The additional meaning a word may carry.
Is there more to a word than how it is defined in the dictionary?
Yes, there is more. In fact, every word has at least two definitions: **connotative and denotative**

So, what’s the difference?
The denotative definition is based on the **literal** definition of a word.

The connotative definition is the **figurative or emotional** meaning of a word.
Connotation

- The emotional associations of a word or phrase, as opposed to its exact meaning.
- “Greasy” has a denotation meaning slippery but also has a connotation when referring to a “greasy” person.
• The connotative meanings of a word exist together with the denotative meanings.

• The denotation of the word *snake* is “any of numerous scaly, legless, and sometimes venomous reptiles”

• The connotations for the word *snake* could include evil or danger.
Connotation

• Positive

We bought *inexpensive* souvenirs at the amusement park.

I ate a *moist* sandwich.

I am a bargain shopper.

• Negative

We bought *cheap* souvenirs at the amusement park.

I ate a *soggy* sandwich.

I am a cheapskate.
Which One?

Positive or Negative Connotation
Positive Connotation

- immature
- youthful

Back to Game
Positive Connotation

- limit
- restrict

• Back to Game
Positive Connotation

- filthy
- dirty

Back to Game
Negative Connotation

- stingy
- thrifty

• Back to Game
Negative Connotation

• cluttered

• messy

• Back to Game
Negative Connotation

- unusual
- weird

- Back to Game
Well Done!
For more examples:

• Check out:
  • [http://www.dowlingcentral.com/MrsD/area/literature/Terms/Connotation.html](http://www.dowlingcentral.com/MrsD/area/literature/Terms/Connotation.html)

• Scroll down and take the practice quiz!
Example

- The word “gaze” has the following synonyms gape, stare, glare, peer, gloat
  - Gaze: _______________________________
  - Gape: ______________________________
  - Stare: ______________________________
  - Glare: ______________________________
  - Peer: _______________________________
  - Gloat: ______________________________
Activity

- For this assignment you will need a dictionary and a thesaurus. Here are the steps to follow:
  - Look up two different words of your choice in the thesaurus.
  - Under each, locate four synonyms that you like.
  - Write down the denotation of the five words in the group (should be the same denotation for all five).
  - Give the connotation of each word in the group. (Each one should differ slightly.)
WORDS: fat, obese, plump, large, stout

- **DENOTATION:** being overweight or too heavy for your size.
- **CONNOTATION:**
  - **fat:**
    - a greasy, flesh way, lack of self control
  - **obese:**
    - clinical word, grossly overweight
  - **plump:**
    - pleasantly overweight, a bit round and cute.
  - **large:**
    - heavy, but also have a bigger frame than average; more flattering word than others
  - **stout:**
    - bulky and strong, like a football lineman
Let’s use the word HOT
The denotation (or dictionary definition - remember d in denotation = dictionary) of HOT is: having a temperature higher than that of a human body.

However, when you say “Man! He/She is hot!”, are you saying “Man! He is having a temperature higher than that of a human body”? No!! You are saying the CONNOTATION of HOT – which could mean a variety of things – man he/she is cute, attractive, beautiful, and many other meanings – those come from personal experiences and cultural meanings, etc.
Advanced Info

• Connotation is extremely significant in poetry, mainly because nuances of words provide shades of meaning.

• In poetry, words are chosen purposefully. Connotations are never ignored, but utilized to their full advantage.

• Similarly, words are chosen or discarded because of their sound (assonance and alliteration).
• In Robert Frost’s poem, “Mending Wall,” two neighbors walk along a wall of loose stones that separates their properties.

• As they walk they pick up and replace stones that have fallen out of the wall but Frost thinks it’s unnecessary to repair the wall since they have no animals that could harm one another's properties.

• His neighbors responds in the last line of the poem saying “Good fences make good neighbors.”
• The wall in this poem has both a denotative meaning and a connotative meaning.

• The wall is both a boundary (denotation) as well as a barrier that prevents Frost from getting to know his neighbor and prevents any communication or involvement with one another (connotation).
In the poem, “Autumn,” by Christopher Brennan, the poet describes many aspects of the autumn season using denotation and connotation.

One line in the poem, “the silent woods brood over an anxious deep, and in the faded sorrow of the sun.”
• The word *silent* is used here to describe the woods both literally as “making no sound or noise” as well as emotionally since the word *silent* helps us visualize the woods as “dull, peaceful, and tranquil.”
“The Sun Rising” is a famous poem by John Donne which uses *the sun* to demonstrate the relationship between denotation and connotation.

> “Busy old fool, unruly Sun, Why dost thou thus, Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?”

- The denotation of *the sun* in this poem is “the star that is the basis of the solar system,” which is the dictionary meaning of the word.
• However, the sun also has a connotation meaning in the poem.

• The sun is used to represent time, the beginning and end of each day, and the figure that our lives revolve around.

• The connotation of the sun is the significance and meaning that the word has in the poem besides its literal meaning.
THE END
Parts taken from powerpoint on Denotation and Connotation

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