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## Denotation and Connotation

L.6.4.c–d, L.6.5.c



## Getting the Idea

A word can have two different kinds of meanings—its dictionary meaning and its implied meaning. The **denotation** of a word is its dictionary meaning. The **connotation** is the implied meaning. A word's connotation is made up of the feelings, memories, or images that come to mind when you hear the word.

For example, the words *house* and *home* have the same general definition, or denotation. They both mean “a place where someone lives.” However, many people associate things such as comfort, love, and family with the word *home*. The word *home* has a positive connotation. The word *hovel* is also a synonym for *home*, but it has a negative connotation. It connotes a lower level of quality. People prefer to live in a house, but not a hovel. The word *house* has a neutral connotation, meaning it is neither positive nor negative.

The word *thrifty* can have a positive connotation. But its synonym, *cheap*, usually has a negative connotation. Similarly, *proud* has a positive connotation, but its synonym, *conceited*, has a negative connotation.

Use a dictionary or a glossary to find the denotation of a word. Below is a sample dictionary entry for the word *young*.

**young** *adj.* **1.** Being in the early or undeveloped period of life or growth. **2.** Newly begun or formed. **3.** Of or relating to youth or early life.

A thesaurus can give you a hint about a word's connotation by listing words that have the same feeling or tone as the one you are looking up. Below is a sample thesaurus entry for the word *young*.

**young** *adj.* meaning: being between childhood and adulthood  
**synonyms:** adolescent, immature, juvenile, youthful  
**antonyms:** old, elderly, aged, mature, grown-up, adult, full-grown

The chart explains the denotation and connotation of different words.

Word	Denotation	Connotation	Example
frugal	not generous; economical	being careful with resources responsibly	Joy's <i>frugal</i> father always had money set aside for a rainy day.
stingy	not generous	unwilling to share	John was so <i>stingy</i> , he only gave his brother one potato chip.
car	automobile	average automobile in good working condition	Mark brought his <i>car</i> to the mechanic.
jalopy	automobile	automobile that is not in good condition	Jason's <i>jalopy</i> broke down on the interstate.
breeze	moving air	refreshing wind	The sea <i>breeze</i> on the beach was welcoming.
gale	moving air	destructive, powerful wind	A <i>gale</i> tore my flag to pieces.
terrified	afraid, scared	overwhelmed with fear	Lee was <i>terrified</i> as he was about to parachute for the first time.
petrified	afraid, scared	paralyzed with fear; unable to act or move	The hiker was <i>petrified</i> when he noticed a mountain lion five feet away.
frightened	afraid, scared	lesser degree of fear, lasting for a brief moment	The raccoon <i>frightened</i> Rachel when it jumped out of the garbage can.

## Thinking It Through

Read the following passage, and then answer the questions that follow.

The front door slammed, and Rosalinda heard a voice call out, “I’m home!” She hurried out into the hallway to greet her father. She was as excited as a five-year-old child on her birthday. Her father was bringing home a computer!

Rosalinda ran to hug her father. “Did you get it?” she asked.

Mr. Ramonov chuckled. “Yes, I got it. The boxes are in my car. Let’s go fetch them together.”

Rosalinda knew it would be her best birthday ever.



What is the denotation of the word *slammed* in the first sentence? Does the word have a positive or negative connotation in the passage?

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### HINT

Think of synonyms for the word and think about the context of the sentence.



## Coached Example

Read the passage and answer the questions.

Jordan skipped down the sidewalk. She could smell the odor of the blooming rose bushes and hear the bluebirds chirping in the trees. Every part of the world seemed to be alive and thriving. Across the street, Mrs. Jimenez tended to her vegetable garden. She glanced up to wave warmly at Jordan. Jordan's friend Lisa ran out of her house to greet her. They were going to play in Lisa's yard. Jordan loved the spring; it was her favorite season.



1. Read the following sentence.

**She could smell the odor of the blooming rose bushes and hear the bluebirds chirping in the trees.**

Which synonym for odor has a positive connotation?

- A. smell
- B. fragrance
- C. stench
- D. stink

### HINT

The correct word is used for something that smells nice, such as perfume.

2. What is the denotation of the word thriving?

- A. dying
- B. struggling
- C. blossoming
- D. greeting

### HINT

Think about the context of the word. How is the word used?