

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 8 ENGLISH/HANDOUT 4

CONNOTATIONS AND DENOTATIONS

This week's homework has a section about connotations and denotations. You'll need to know the difference between the two. Read the web resource below.

(Web resource: <https://literarydevices.net/connotation/>)

Connotation Definition

Connotation refers to a meaning that is implied by a word apart from the thing which it describes explicitly. Words carry cultural and emotional associations or meanings in addition to their literal meanings or denotations.

For instance, "Wall Street" literally means a street situated in Lower Manhattan but connotatively it refers to "wealth" and "power".

Positive and Negative Connotations

Words may have positive or negative connotations that depend upon the social, cultural and personal experiences of individuals. For example, the words childish, childlike and youthful have the same denotative but different connotative meanings. Childish and childlike have a negative connotation as they refer to immature behavior of a person. Whereas, youthful implies that a person is lively and energetic.

Common Connotation Examples

Below are a few connotation examples. Their suggested meanings are shaped by cultural and emotional associations:

- A dog connotes shamelessness or an ugly face.
- A dove implies peace or gentility.
- Home suggests family, comfort and security.
- Politician has a negative connotation of wickedness and insincerity while statesperson connotes sincerity.
- Pushy refers to someone loud-mouthed and irritating.
- Mom and Dad when used in place of mother and father connote loving parents.

Examples of Connotation in Literature

In literature, it is a common practice among writers to deviate from the literal meanings of words in order to create novel ideas. Figures of speech frequently employed by writers are examples of such deviations.

Example #1

Metaphors are words that connote meanings that go beyond their literal meanings. Shakespeare in his Sonnet 18 says:

“Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day”

Here, the phrase “a Summer’s Day” implies the fairness of his beloved. Similarly, John Donne says in his poem “The Sun Rising”:

“She is all states, and all princes, I.”

This line suggests the speaker’s belief that he and his beloved are wealthier than all the states, kingdoms, and rulers in the whole world because of their love.

Example #2

Irony and satire exhibit connotative meanings, as the intended meanings of words are opposite to their literal meanings. For example, we see a sarcastic remark passed by Antonio on Shylock, the Jew, in William Shakespeare’s play “The Merchant of Venice”:

“Hie thee, gentle Jew.
The Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind.”

The word “Jew” has a negative connotation of wickedness, while “Christian” demonstrates positive connotations of kindness.

Example #3

George Orwell’s allegorical novel “Animal Farm” is packed with examples of connotation. The actions of the animals on the farm illustrate the greed and corruption that arose after the Communist Revolution of Russia. The pigs in the novel connote wicked and powerful people who can change the ideology of a society. In addition, Mr. Jones (the owner of the farm), represents the overthrown Tsar Nicholas II; and Boxer, the horse, represents the laborer class etc.

Example #4

Metonymy is another figure of speech that makes use of connotative or suggested meanings, as it describes a thing by mentioning something else with which it is closely connected. For example, Mark Anthony in Act III of Shakespeare’s “Julius Caesar” says, “Friends, Romans,

countrymen, lend me your ears.” Here the word “ear” connotes the idea of people listening to him attentively.

Read the following lines from Robert Frost’s poem “Out, Out”:

“As he swung toward them holding up the hand
Half in appeal, but half as if to keep
The life from spilling”

In the line “The life from spilling” the word “life” connotes “blood”. It does make sense as well because loss of blood may cause loss of life.

Example #5

Connotation provides the basis for symbolic meanings of words because symbolic meanings of objects are different from their literal sense. Look at the following lines from Shakespeare’s play “As you Like It”:

“All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,”

“A stage” connotes the world; “players” suggests human beings; and “parts” implies different stages of their lives.

Function of Connotation

In literature, connotation paves way for creativity by using figures of speech like metaphor, simile, symbolism, personification etc. Had writers contented themselves with only the literal meanings, there would have been no way to compare abstract ideas to concrete concepts in order to give readers a better understanding. Therefore, connotative meanings of words allow writers to add to their works, dimensions which are broader, more vivid and fresher.

Can you come up with a few sentences that contain either positive or negative connotations?

PUT...

For this week's homework, you'll also be asked to think about different phrasal verbs with the word "put" in it.

Put off - postpone, leave until a later time.
Put up with - to tolerate.
Put down - to insult.
Put on - to dress oneself.
Put up - to erect.
Put across - to communicate something.
Put out - to publish.
Put back - to put something where it was previously.

Now decide which phrasal verb is needed in each sentence:

1. I can't ____ him anymore, he's driving me crazy!
A. Put up with
B. Put back
C. Put on
2. Please ____ the milk when you're finished with it.
A. Put back
B. Put on
C. Put down
3. Can we ____ the meeting until Wednesday please?
A. Put off
B. Put up
C. Put down
4. He ____ all the time, I don't know why she's still with him.
A. Puts him across
B. Puts her down
C. Puts her up
5. They ____ a new newsletter every Friday. It's worth reading.
A. Put down
B. Put out
C. Put up with
6. I was trying to ____ my point of view but no one was listening.
A. Put across
B. Put up with
C. Put away

7. I ____ a beautiful dress and my high heels.

- A. Put on
- B. Put out
- C. Put across

8. I can't ____ the tent. I think it's broken.

- A. Put up with
- B. Put up
- C. Put down

READING AND REFLECTION

Finally, for this week's homework, questions will be asked about the May, June, and July entries in *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13 ¾*. Read a few of the May entries below.

FRIDAY MAY 1ST

Grandma rang early this morning to say 'Cast ne'er a clout till May be out'. I haven't got the faintest idea what she was going on about. All I know is that it has something to do with vests.

I am pleased to report that Barry Kent and his gang have been banned from the 'Off the Streets' youth club. (But this means that they are now *on* the streets, worse luck.) They filled a French letter with water and threw it at a bunch of girls and made them scream. Pandora burst the thing with a badge pin and Rick Lemon came out of his office and slipped in the water. Rick was dead mad, he got dirty marks all over his yellow trousers. Pandora helped Rick to throw the gang out, she looked dead fierce. I expect she will win the medal for 'Most helpful member of the year'.

SATURDAY MAY 2ND

Had a letter from Grace Pool! This is what it said:

Dear Adrian,

Thank you for your charming letter of thanks. It fair brightened up my day. The girls are all joshing me about my suitor. I am due for parole on June 15th, would it be possible to come and see you? Your Auntie Susan is one of the best screws in here, that's why I obliged and made the toothbrush holder. See you on the fifteenth then.

Yours with fond regards,
Grace Pool

P.S. I was falsely convicted of arson but that is all in the past now.

My God! What shall I do?

SUNDAY MAY 3RD

Second after Easter

There is nothing left in the freezer, nothing in the pantry and only slimming bread in the bread bin. I don't know what my father does with all the money. I was forced to go round to Grandma's before I died from malnutrition. At four o'clock I had one of those rare moments of happiness that I will remember all my life. I was sitting in front of Grandma's electric coal fire eating dripping toast and reading the *News of the World*. There was a good play on Radio Four about torturing in concentration camps. Grandma was asleep and the dog was being quiet. All at once I felt this dead good feeling. Perhaps I am turning religious.

I think I have got it in me to be a Saint of some kind.

Phoned Auntie Susan but she is on duty in Holloway. Left a message with her friend Gloria, asking Auntie Susan to ring me urgently.

MONDAY MAY 4TH

Bank Holiday in UK. New Moon

Auntie Susan rang to say that Grace Pool has had her parole cancelled because she set fire to the embroidery workshop and destroyed a gross of toothbrush holders.

Their loss is my gain!

TUESDAY MAY 5TH

Saw our postman on the way to school, he said that my mother is coming to visit me on Saturday. I've a good mind to report him to the Postmaster General for reading a person's private postcard!

My father had also read my postcard by the time I got home from school. He looked pleased and started cleaning rubbish out of the lounge, then he rang Doreen Slater and said he would have to 'take a rain check on Saturday's flick'. Grown ups are always telling adolescents to speak clearly then they go and talk a lot of gibberish themselves. Doreen Slater shouted down the phone. My father shouted back that he 'didn't want a long-term relationship', he had 'made that clear from the start', and that 'nobody could replace his Pauline'. Doreen Slater went shrieking on and on until my father slammed the phone down. The phone kept ringing until my father took the phone off the hook. He went mad doing housework until 2 a.m. this morning, and it's only Tuesday! What will he be like on Saturday morning? The poor fool is convinced that my mother is coming back for good.

WEDNESDAY MAY 6TH

I am proud to report that I have been made a school-dinner monitor. My duties are to stand at the side of the pig bin and make sure that my fellow pupils scrape their plates properly.

THURSDAY MAY 7TH

Bert Baxter rang the school to ask me to call round urgently. Mr Scruton told me off, he said the school telephone was not for the convenience of the pupils. Get stuffed, Scruton, you pop-eyed git!!! Bert was in a terrible state. He had lost his false teeth. He has had them since 1946, they have got sentimental value for him because they used to belong to his father. I looked everywhere for them, but couldn't find them.

I went to the shops and bought him a tin of soup and a butterscotch Instant Whip. It was all he could manage at the moment. I have promised to go round tomorrow and look again. Sabre was happy for once; he was chewing something in his kennel.

My father is still cleaning the house up. Even Nigel commented on how clean the kitchen floor looked. I wish my father wouldn't wear the apron though, he looks like a poofter in it.

FRIDAY MAY 8TH

Found Bert's teeth in Sabre's kennel. Bert rinsed them under the tap and put them back in his mouth! This is the most revolting thing I have ever seen.

My father has got bunches of flowers to welcome my mother home. They are all over the house stinking the place out.

Mr Lucas's house has been sold at last. I saw the estate agent's minion putting the board up. I hope the new people are respectable. I am reading *The Mill on the Floss*, by a bloke called George Eliot.

SATURDAY MAY 9TH

I was woken up at 8.30 by a loud banging on the front door. It was an Electricity Board official. I was amazed to hear that he had come to turn off our electricity! My father owes £95.79p. I told the official that we needed electricity for life's essentials like the television and stereo, but he said that people like us are sapping the country's strength. He went to the meter cupboard, did something with tools, and the second hand on the kitchen clock stopped. It was dead symbolic. My father came in from fetching the *Daily Express*. He was whistling and looking dead cheerful. He even asked the official if he would like a cup of tea! The official said, 'No thank you,' and hurried up the path and got into his little blue van. My father switched the electric kettle on. I was forced to tell him.

Naturally I got the blame! My father said I should have refused entry. I told him that he should have put all the bill money away each week like Grandma does. But he just went berserk. My mother turned up with Lucas! It was just like old times with everybody shouting at once. I took the dog to the shops and bought five boxes of candles. Mr Lucas lent me the money.

When I got back I stood in the hall and heard my mother say, 'No wonder you can't pay the bills, George; just look at all these flowers. They must have cost a fortune.' She said it very kindly. Mr Lucas said he would lend my father a 'ton' but my father was very dignified and said, 'All I want from you, Lucas, is my wife.' My mother complimented my father on how nicely he was keeping the house. My father just looked sad and old. I felt dead sorry for him.

I was sent outside while they talked about who was getting custody of me, the arguing went on for ages. In fact until it was time to light the candles.

Lucas spilt candle-wax over his new suede shoes. It was the only cheerful incident in a tragic day.

When my mother and Lucas had gone off in a taxi I went to bed with the dog. I heard my father talking to Doreen Slater on the phone, then the front door slammed and I looked out of my window to see him driving off in the car. The back seat was full of flowers.

SUNDAY MAY 10TH

Third after Easter. Mother's Day, USA and Canada. Moon's First Quarter

Didn't get up until half-past four this afternoon. I think I am suffering from depression. Nothing happened at all today, apart from a hail storm around six o'clock.

MONDAY MAY 11TH

Bert Baxter offered to lend us a paraffin heater. Our gas central heating won't work without electricity. I thanked him but refused his kind offer. I have read that they are easily knocked over and our dog would no doubt cause a towering inferno.

If it gets out that our electricity has been cut off, I will cut my throat. The shame would be too much to bear.

TUESDAY MAY 12TH

Had a long talk with Mr Vann the Careers teacher today. He said that if I want to be a vet I will have to do Physics, Chemistry and Biology for O level. He said that Art, Woodwork and Domestic Science won't do much good.

I am at the Crossroads in my life. The wrong decision now could result in a tragic loss to the veterinary world. I am hopeless at science. I asked Mr Vann which O levels you need to write situation comedy for television. Mr Vann said that you don't need qualifications at all, you just need to be a moron.

WEDNESDAY MAY 13TH

Had an in-depth talk about O levels with my father, he advised me to only do the subjects that I am good at. He said that vets spend half their working life with their hands up cows' bums, and the other half injecting spoiled fat dogs. So I am rethinking my future career prospects.

I wouldn't mind being a sponge-diver, but I don't think there is much call for them in England.