THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

KU

Achievement & Assessment Institute

ANALYIZING THE EFFECTS OF WORD CHOICE ON TONE

8.RL.2.C Analyze how specific word choices and sentence structures contribute to meaning and tone.

CONTENTS

ANALYZING THE EFFECTS OF WORD CHOICE ON TONE

UNIT OVERVIEW

These lessons promote active engagement with a literary text as students discover how words and phrases have connotative and figurative meanings that contribute to the meaning and tone.

Lesson 1: In this lesson, students distinguish connotative from denotative language and determine its meaning within a text.

Lesson 2: In this lesson, students review figurative language and determine the meaning of specific figurative language from the text. Then they analyze the effects of the figurative language on the meaning and tone.

Lesson 3: In this lesson, students look deeper into the meaning of allusion and analyze its effects on the meaning and tone of the text.

Research Findings	Lesson Strategies, Approaches, or Activities
"Students' knowledge of words is the greatest predictor of their reading comprehension. Without the ability to identify words and their meanings in context, readers will struggle to read with deep comprehension." (Sisson & Sisson, 2014, p. 44)	In Lesson 1, students explore the denotation and connotation of words. Then they examine the connotative meaning of the words that describe the characters, setting, and plot. This activity trains students to decipher the meanings behind the actions and words to comprehend their role.
"Vocabulary instruction that makes students think about the meaning of a word and demands that they do some meaningful processing of the word will be more effective than instruction that does not." (Nagy, 1988, p.24)	Throughout the unit, students connect the meaning of words with the context of the text and examine how the author's word choice enriches the story.
"Students need skills in contextual analysis, such as determining the connotation of words, and practice integrating the skills to make meaning of what they are reading." (Sisson & Sisson, 2014)	All lessons provide practice in making meaning out of vocabulary to analyze the story.

"Students need to understand terms that can become both conceptual tools for noticing and thinking and procedural tools for interpretation. If all they know is a definition, they possess only inert pieces of information, not tools for knowing and doing the work in flexible and transferable ways." (Wilhelm & Smith, 2010, p. 64)	The lessons provide students the tools to make meaning out of words and phrases in a story and to transfer those meanings to a deeper conceptual knowledge of how and why an author uses the specific words in the text.
"To interpret figurative language, a person must rely on their schemata. ELL students often need explicit instruction and modeling to bridge cultural context and figurative meaning." (Palmer, Shackelford, & Leclere, 2006)	It is recommended that you take the needs of your ELL learners into account for this unit.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Palmer, B. C., Shackelford, V. S., Miller, S. C., & Leclere, J. T. (2006). Bridging two worlds: Reading comprehension, figurative language instruction, and the English-language learner. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *50*(4), 258–267.

Sisson, D. S. & Sisson, B. (2014). *Targeted reading interventions for the Common Core.* New York: Scholastic.

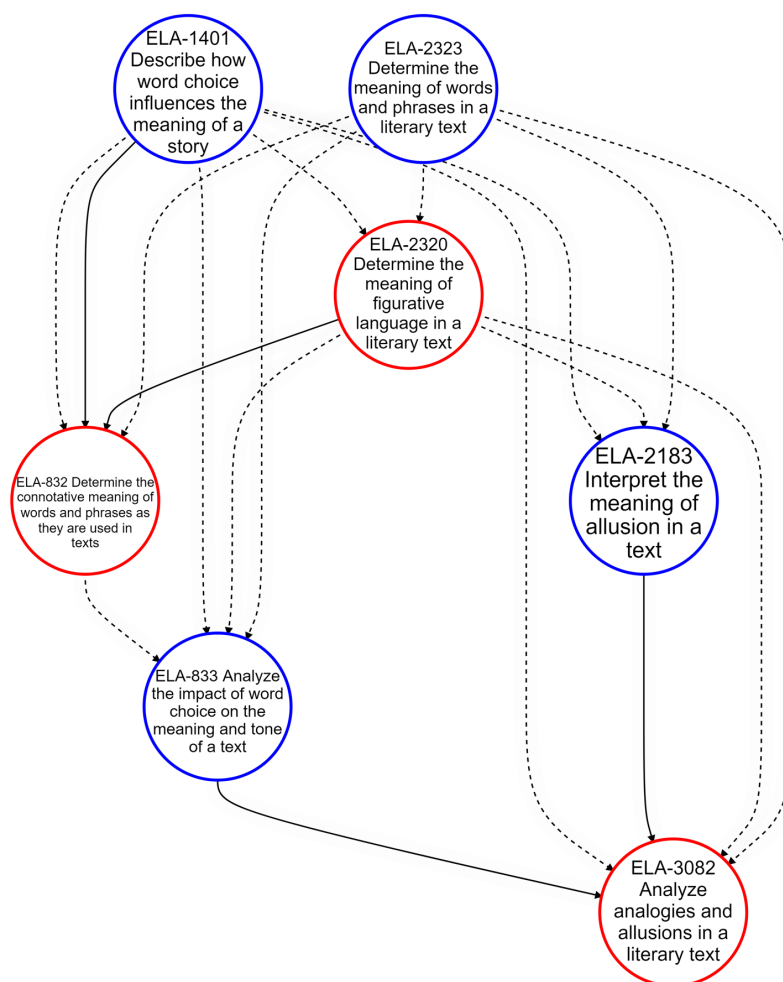Wilhelm, J. & Smith, M. (2010). *Fresh takes on teaching literary elements: How to teach what really matters about character, setting, point of view, and theme.* New York: Scholastic.

STANDARD

8.RL.2.C Analyze how specific word choices and sentence structures contribute to meaning and tone.

Learning map model for 8.RL.2.C

Node ID	Node Name	Node Description
ELA-832	DETERMINE THE CONNOTATIVE MEANING OF WORDS AND PHRASES AS THEY ARE USED IN TEXTS	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including connotative meanings.
ELA-833	ANALYZE THE IMPACT OF WORD CHOICE ON THE MEANING AND TONE OF A TEXT	Analyze how word choice (e.g., figurative and connotative meaning) impacts the overall meaning and tone of a text.
ELA-1401	DESCRIBE HOW WORD CHOICE INFLUENCES THE MEANING OF A STORY	Describe the ways in which the meaning of a story is influenced by the author's word choice.
ELA-2183	INTERPRET THE MEANING OF ALLUSION IN A TEXT	Interpret the meaning of allusion (e.g., literary, biblical, mythological) based on the context.
ELA-2320	DETERMINE THE MEANING OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN A LITERARY TEXT	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative meanings such as metaphors, similes, analogies, and allusions.
ELA-2323	DETERMINE THE MEANING OF WORDS AND PHRASES IN A LITERARY TEXT	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a literary text, distinguishing literal from non-literal language.
ELA-3082	ANALYZE ANALOGIES AND ALLUSIONS IN A LITERARY TEXT	Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies and allusions to other texts.

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students distinguish connotative from denotative language and determine its meaning within a text.

STANDARD

8.RL.2.C Analyze how specific word choices and sentence structures contribute to meaning and tone.

PREPARATION

Before the lesson, select a literary text from a curriculum resource that has been purchased for individual student use, such as a class set of textbooks. Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use from any other source.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ literary text, for individual student use and displayed
- ▶ SUPPLEMENT: THE MONKEY'S PAW EXCERPT
- ▶ STUDENT HANDOUT: CONNOTATIVE MEANING

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: "I can determine the connotative meaning of words and phrases."

Begin with a real-world application of connotative language as it applies to the students. **Display** a phrase from a song's lyrics that contains connotative words. **Ask** students to explain the meaning behind the phrase.

Then **prompt** students to provide an explanation of why the writer chose to use the connotative phrase rather than the literal phrase. **Explain** that authors intentionally include connotative language in stories for similar reasons.

Review definitions of connotation and denotation as needed. **Explain** that *denotation* is the literal meaning of a word; for example, a house is a structure where people live. Denotation starts with the letter *d* and can be remembered as being the dictionary definition. *Connotation* is the positive or negative feeling associated with a word. **Say**, "For example, does *nosy* have a positive or negative connotation? What about *curious*? Those are both adjectives that could describe a person, but the words have different connotations. The word *person* is neutral, because it does not have a positive or negative feeling. But if you add the words *nosy* and *pushy*, then the feeling of the text changes." Refer to the song lyrics from the example, and have the students identify the positive or negative connotations.

Distribute and **display** the chosen literary text. **Direct** students to listen as you read an excerpt from the story and **circle** the connotative words and phrases. Refer to SUPPLEMENT: THE MONKEY'S PAW EXCERPT as an example.

Call on students to identify whether the words have a positive or negative connotation. Explore the associations with each word by having students share what comes to mind when they hear each word. **Mark** each word with a positive or negative sign. **Compare** the denotation and the connotation for each word out loud.

Pass out STUDENT HANDOUT: CONNOTATIVE MEANING. **Explain** that students will work with a partner to continue reading and recording the words with a connotative meaning. Students will add a word to the list according to whether it describes a character, the setting, or part of the action. Students will indicate if the word has a positive or negative connotation by putting a checkmark in the appropriate column. Students will then explain the denotation and connotation of each word. **Remind** students of strategies to help determine the meaning of an unknown word, such as using the surrounding context clues in the sentence or paragraph. Consider having dictionaries and thesauruses available to confirm the meaning of a word. For English Language Learners, **model** the thinking process of how to determine word meaning from context, and **provide** students with probing questions as a scaffold.

An example for the STUDENT HANDOUT is shown.

Characters

Word/Phrase	Positive	Negative	Denotation	Connotation
radical changes		✔	Radical can relate to plant roots, word roots, something extreme, or the slang term.	Father's chess strategies involve risk and moving towards danger rather than keeping his pieces protected.

Release students to work. **Collect** evidence about student thinking by asking any of the Checking for Understanding questions.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Determine if the student can DETERMINE THE MEANING OF WORDS AND PHRASES IN A LITERARY TEXT (ELA-2323):

▶ What do you think this word [or phrase] means?

▶ Who or what is it referring to? How do you know?

▶ Could this word have another meaning? What meaning?

▶ What word describes a character [or the setting]? What does the word mean?

Determine if the student can DESCRIBE HOW WORD CHOICE INFLUENCES THE MEANING OF A STORY (ELA-1401):

▶ Why does the author use this word [or phrase]?

▶ What does the word choice tell you about the narrator?

▶ How would the description of the character [or setting] change if the author used [synonym] instead?

▶ What does the character do that shows they are [description word]?

▶ What is your opinion of the [protagonist, antagonist, setting]? What words in the story influence your opinion?

Determine if the student can DETERMINE THE CONNOTATIVE MEANING OF WORDS AND PHRASES AS THEY ARE USED IN TEXTS (ELA-832):

▶ What does this word make you think about?

▶ What feelings are associated with this word?

▶ Which words have [positive, negative] connotations? How do you know?

▶ What is the connotation [or denotation] of this word? How did you determine that?

▶ What can you visualize from this word or phrase?

Ask for volunteers to share a word's denotation and connotation with the class.

To conclude the lesson, **tell** students to look back over the words they listed on the handout. **Prompt** students to draw a conclusion. **Ask**, "What can you conclude about the author's choice of connotative words?" **Collect** handouts.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the TEACHER NOTES for this lesson set.

Characters

Word/Phrase	Positive	Negative	Denotation	Connotation

Setting

Word/Phrase	Positive	Negative	Denotation	Connotation

Action

Word/Phrase	Positive	Negative	Denotation	Connotation

WITHOUT, the night was cold and wet, but in the small parlour of Laburnam Villa the blinds were drawn and the fire burned brightly. Father and son were at chess, the former, who possessed ideas about the game involving radical changes, putting his king into such sharp and unnecessary perils that it even provoked comment from the white-haired old lady knitting placidly by the fire.

   "Hark at the wind," said Mr. White, who, having seen a fatal mistake after it was too late, was amiably desirous of preventing his son from seeing it.

   "I'm listening," said the latter, grimly surveying the board as he stretched out his hand. "Check."

Jacobs, W. W. (1902). *The Monkey's Paw.*

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students determine the meaning of figurative language and analyze the effect on the meaning and tone of a text.

STANDARD

8.RL.2.C Analyze how specific word choices and sentence structures contribute to meaning and tone.

PREPARATION

Before the lesson, identify and familiarize yourself with the figurative language in the text.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ literary text, for individual student use and displayed
- ▶ STUDENT HANDOUT: EFFECTS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: "I can analyze how figurative language effects the meaning and tone of a text."

Review the term *figurative language*, which is language that contains figures of speech such as metaphors and similes. **Tell** students to recall different types of figurative language and provide examples. **Record** terms, definitions, and examples on the board. Be sure to include the types most frequently used in the text. For example, *personification* is giving human qualities to something that is not human, like the phrase, "The camera loves me!"

Note: The term *allusion* will be analyzed in greater detail in the next lesson.

Call on volunteers to explain the meaning of the figurative phrases as well as why they are more interesting than the literal phrases. "The camera loves me" means that the person looks good in pictures. Simply stating the literal phrase, "I look great in pictures" would be boring and somewhat confusing. By using personification, the reader's attention is captured and we are able to gain insight about the character that used the phrase.

Distribute and **display** STUDENT HANDOUT: EFFECTS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE or a graphic organizer of your choice. **Explain** that students will identify the type of figurative language in the first column and record the example quote or phrase in the second column. Next, students will provide the meaning of the phrase as it applies to the story. In the last column, students can use pictures or words to describe the *tone*, or the narrator's attitude toward the subject. **Clarify** that tone is the writer's attitude toward the subject and is reflected through the writer's words and style. Tone is not the same as *mood*, which is the effect of the tone felt by the audience. **Model** the procedure by providing an example.

Figurative Language Type	Quote/Phrase	Meaning	Tone
Personification (words cannot die)	"The words died away on his lips."	Mr. White stopped talking and his words didn't mean anything.	Using the word "died" shows a dark or serious approach from the writer.

Allow students to work with a partner. Consider telling students which paragraphs contain figurative language to allow more time for analyzing the effect of the figurative language rather than searching for the figurative language. **Circulate** the room and **check** for understanding by listening closely to student responses to the Checking for Understanding questions.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Determine if the student can DETERMINE THE MEANING OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN A LITERARY TEXT (ELA-2320):

▸ What makes this phrase [personification, a simile]?

▸ What clues help you determine the meaning of this phrase?

▸ Could there be any other meaning?

Determine if the student can ANALYZE THE IMPACT OF WORD CHOICE ON THE MEANING AND TONE OF A TEXT (ELA-833):

▸ What effect does this word have on the reader? Why?

▸ What does this phrase make you visualize?

▸ What can you infer about the author's attitude toward the [character, subject matter]?

▸ What phrases or words produce an [eerie, creepy, sinister] tone? How?

Have students share their thinking about the figurative language and the effect on the meaning of the story. **Prompt** students to describe the overall tone and list adjectives on the board. **Ask** students their opinion of the story's tone. Do they like it? Why or why not? Explain that their reactions are actually the mood and a result of the tone created by the author.

To conclude, **tell** students to write a brief reflection describing how the story would be affected if the author did not use the figurative language and word choice that he did. What would be different? How would the meaning of the story change?

Collect and **review** handouts and reflections. **Provide** feedback to students confirming their understanding or misunderstanding of the learning goal.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the TEACHER NOTES for this lesson set.

Figurative Language Type	Quote/Phrase	Meaning	Tone

Figurative Language Type	Quote/Phrase	Meaning	Tone

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students interpret the meaning of allusions and analyze their effects on the meaning and tone of the text.

STANDARD

8.RL.2.C Analyze how specific word choices and sentence structures contribute to meaning and tone.

PREPARATION

Before the lesson, prepare to display and mark the handout. Additionally, make time to explicitly work with ELL students who may lack the cultural understanding or schemata required for interpreting figurative language.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

▸ literary text, for individual student use and displayed
▸ STUDENT HANDOUT: DEFINING ALLUSION
▸ STUDENT HANDOUT: ANALYZING ALLUSIONS AND TONE
▸ SUPPLEMENT: ANALYZING ALLUSIONS AND TONE

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: "I can analyze how allusions influence the meaning and tone of a text."

Begin the lesson by defining the term *allusion*. An allusion is a reference to a well-known person, place, event, or idea from another text, religion, mythology, or history. **Call** on volunteers to share what they know about the term. **Display** examples of allusions found in popular culture that are relevant to the students, including movies or music. For example, the Disney movie *Shrek* is filled with allusions. The Far, Far Away sign in the landscape is meant to resemble the Hollywood sign. Gingy, the gingerbread character, references Tiny Tim from *A Christmas Carol* when he walks with a cane and says, "God bless us, everyone."

Distribute and **display** STUDENT HANDOUT: DEFINING ALLUSION. **Instruct** students to fill out the graphic organizer while you discuss and model the procedure. Tell students to record their information in a format that is understandable to them, such as using complete sentences or a bulleted list including pictures.
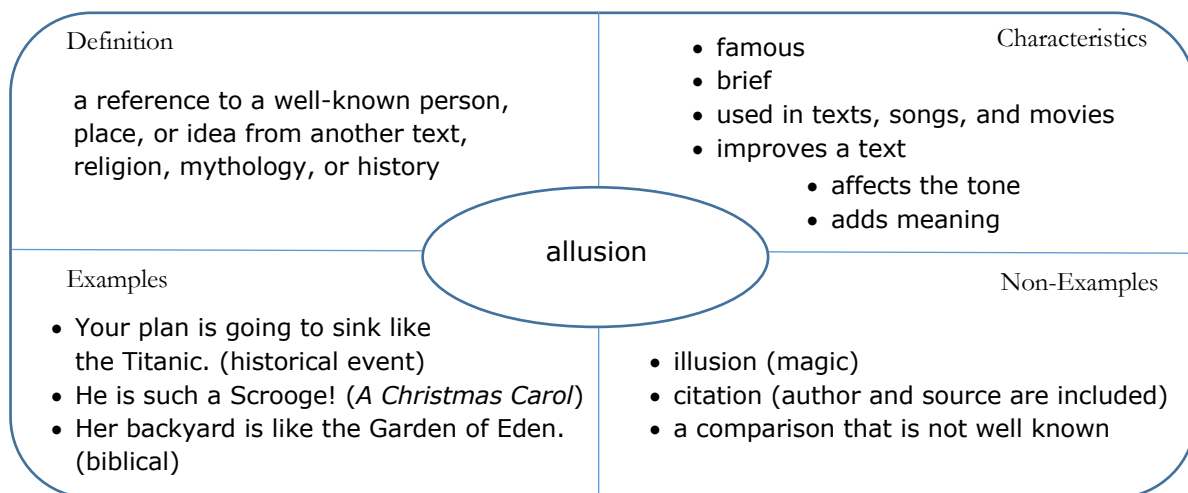
First, **write** the term *allusion* in the center oval. Next, **define** a*llusion* in the upper left-hand section with a general meaning. **Explain** that allusions can be direct or indirect, but that writers use specific allusions with the understanding that the readers will have the context and knowledge of the person, place, or event being referenced. Tell students that the most commonly used allusions reference another work of literature, the Bible, or mythology. Encourage students to write the definition in their own words.

In the upper right-hand section, **list** characteristics or facts about the term that pinpoint its most essential qualities. **Prompt** students to ask questions in order to clarify their thinking.

Brainstorm and **record** examples of allusions in the lower left-hand section. To elicit student thinking, **ask** students to explain what makes each example an allusion. Refer to the examples of allusions discussed in the beginning of the lesson.

In the lower right-hand section, **note** non-examples of allusion. **Be explicit** as you explain why each non-example is not an allusion. Avoid listing random ideas that do not help confirm understanding of the term.

An example completed graphic organizer is shown.

Definition	Characteristics

a reference to a well-known person, place, or idea from another text, religion, mythology, or history	• famous
	• brief
	• used in texts, songs, and movies
	• improves a text
	    • affects the tone
	    • adds meaning

allusion	
Examples	Non-Examples
• Your plan is going to sink like the Titanic. (historical event) • He is such a Scrooge! (*A Christmas Carol*) • Her backyard is like the Garden of Eden. (biblical)	• illusion (magic) • citation (author and source are included) • a comparison that is not well known

Distribute STUDENT HANDOUT: ANALYZING ALLUSIONS AND TONE and the selected text. Reference SUPPLEMENT: ANALYZING ALLUSIONS AND TONE. **Explain** the directions for the handout. **Assist** the class in locating and recognizing the allusions, providing background knowledge and images for context. Allow students to work in pairs to complete the handout. **Ask** the Checking for Understanding questions.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Determine if the student can **INTERPRET THE MEANING OF ALLUSION IN A TEXT (ELA-2183)**:

▶ Which words are clues that connect to the original source of the allusion?

▶ How is [this part of the text] similar to another source, person, or event?

▶ What does [this part] make you visualize?

▶ What does [this word] suggest?

Determine if the student can **ANALYZE ANALOGIES AND ALLUSIONS IN A LITERARY TEXT (ELA-3082)**:

▶ Why did the author use this allusion?

▶ What message is conveyed?

▶ Is there a deeper meaning of [this word or phrase]?

▶ What emotions are produced in the reader?

▶ What is the benefit of the allusion to the story?

▶ Do you think the allusion improves the text? How?

Challenge students to be creative and to extend their thinking by creating their own figurative language that would appropriately add to the meaning and tone of the story. (See USE LITERARY DEVICES WHEN WRITING A NARRATIVE TEXT (ELA-2280).)
Collect and **review** handouts. **Provide** students the STUDENT FEEDBACK TOOL for this unit.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the TEACHER NOTES for this lesson set.
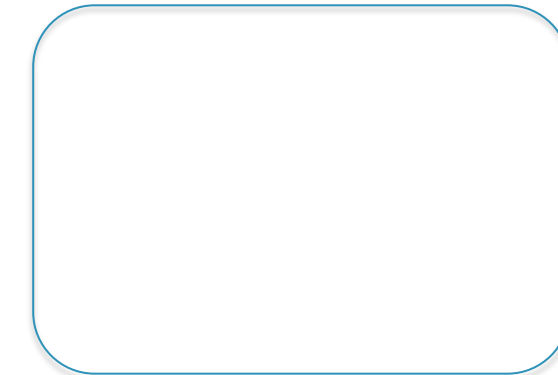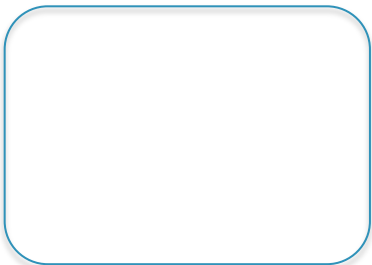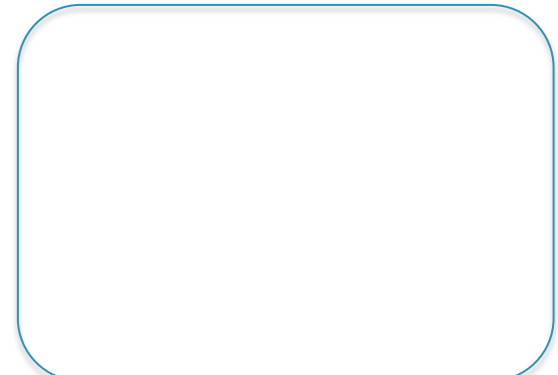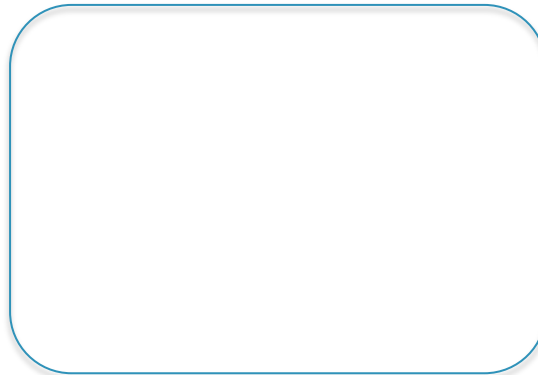

Allusion	Reference to Famous Person, Place, Event	Message Conveyed

Explain the effect of the allusions on the overall **meaning** and **tone** of the story.

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

_____

Definition

Characteristics

Examples

Non-Examples

Allusion	Reference to Famous Person, Place, Event	Message Conveyed
"Sounds like *Arabian Nights*"	also called *One Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of folktales from the Middle East and South Asia with theme of desperation for survival, including the magic lamp and three wishes from *Aladdin*	having wishes granted should be fun and happy, but you can't control magic—conveys suspense, darkness, and mystery
"wish for four pairs of hands for me"	Durga, Hindu goddess	evil, scary, freaky—compares a beneficial wish to a creepy figure, is a strange way to convey greed and selfishness

Explain the effect of the allusions on the overall meaning and tone of the story.

These allusions show that the family does not have respect for magic. They heighten suspense and fear in the reader and communicate a dark, eerie tone toward the subject matter. The allusions affect the meaning of the story by influencing the theme and by providing insight to the characters' beliefs and interactions with magic.

ANALYZING THE EFFECTS OF WORD CHOICE ON TONE

STUDENT FEEDBACK GUIDE

8.RL.2.C

Directions: For each learning goal, circle the sentence that best matches what you can do.

Learning Goal	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Determine the connotative meaning of words and phrases	I know that words can have a positive or negative connotation.	I can identify multiple words with positive and negative connotations.	I can determine the connotative meaning of words and phrases and explain how they influence a text.
Analyze the impact of figurative language on the tone of a text	I can identify figurative language.	I can determine the meaning of figurative language in a text.	I can explain how figurative language impacts the tone of a text.
Analyze the impact of word choice on the meaning and tone of a text	I can define the term *allusion*.	I can interpret the meaning of an allusion for a text.	I can explain the impact of allusions on the meaning and tone of a text.