

ANALYZING WORD MEANING AND TONE IN INFORMATIONAL TEXT

RI.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

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LEARNING MAP TOOL	An overview of the standards, the learning map section, and the nodes addressed in the lesson set.
INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR LESSONS 1–3	Detailed walkthroughs of each lesson.
STUDENT HANDOUTS FOR LESSONS 1–3	Reproducible handouts students will use to complete activities during the lessons.
SUPPLEMENT FOR LESSON #2	An additional teacher resource to use during the lesson set. This unit’s supplement accompanies the lesson’s instructional activity.
STUDENT FEEDBACK GUIDE	A feedback tool for students to complete following the lesson set.

ANALYZING WORD MEANING AND TONE IN INFORMATIONAL TEXT

TEACHER NOTES

RI.7.4, Lessons 1–3

UNIT OVERVIEW

These lessons promote active engagement with informational 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 review strategies for determining word meaning and reflect upon how domain-specific terms influence the ideas of the text.

Lesson 2: In this lesson, students distinguish connotative language from denotative language and determine its meaning within a text.

Lesson 3: In this lesson, you review figurative language and students identify and analyze the effects of specific word choice on the meaning and tone of the text.

Research Findings

Lesson Strategies, Approaches, or Activities

“Discipline-specific vocabulary should be taught using scaffolding in an authentic contexts. Students need knowledge of how these words function as tools in disciplinary texts.”

(Nagy & Townsend, 2012)

“Teachers can prepare students to deal with technical words by using vocabulary strategies that help recognize, break down, define, and interpret these terms rather than ‘teaching’ a technical subject.”

(Chung & Nation, 2003)

“Teachers of all disciplines should intentionally teach selected vocabulary to highlight and strengthen the connection between vocabulary and reading comprehension.”

(Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts, 2006)

“In order for students to develop a full understanding of technical words and phrases, the concepts to which these words apply must be taught in conjunction with one another.”

(Harmon, Wood, & Medina, 2009)

In Lesson 1, students focus on the specialized role of technical terms and investigate how they contribute to the meaning of the text.

<p>“To promote higher-thinking, students must have knowledge of a concept’s accompanying vocabulary.”</p> <p>(Jetton & Alexander, 2004)</p>	
<p>“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.”</p> <p>(Sisson & Sisson, 2014, p. 44)</p>	<p>In Lesson 2, students explore the denotation and connotation of words and examine how to decipher the meanings behind the actions and words to comprehend their role.</p>
<p>“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.”</p> <p>(Nagy, 1988, p.24)</p>	<p>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 ideas.</p>
<p>“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.”</p> <p>(Sisson & Sisson, 2014)</p>	<p>All lessons provide practice in making meaning out of vocabulary to analyze the text.</p>
<p>“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.”</p> <p>(Wilhelm & Smith, 2010, p. 64)</p>	<p>The lessons provide students the tools to make meaning out of words and phrases in a text and to transfer those meanings to a deeper conceptual knowledge of how and why an author uses the specific words in the text.</p>
<p>“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.”</p> <p>(Palmer, Shackelford, & Leclerc, 2006)</p>	<p>It is recommended that you take the needs of your English Language Learner (ELL) students into account for this unit.</p>

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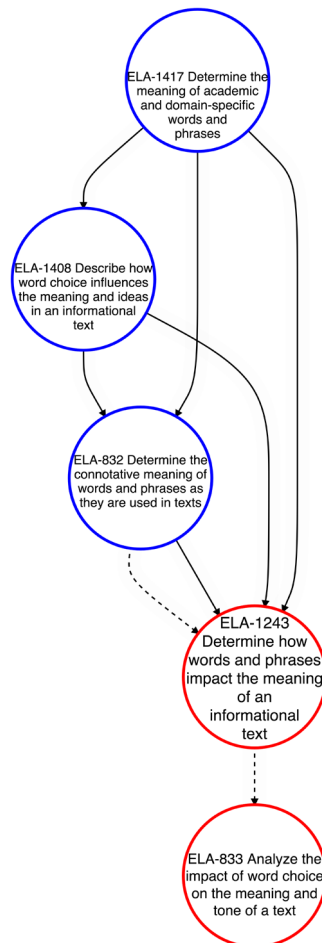
ANALYZING WORD MEANING AND TONE IN INFORMATIONAL TEXT

LEARNING MAP TOOL

RI.7.4

STANDARD

RI.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.



**Learning map model for (enter standard code).*

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[SDL1]	Analyze how word choice (e.g., figurative and connotative meaning) affects the overall meaning and tone of a text.
ELA-1243[FSA2][SDL3][FSA4]	DETERMINE HOW WORDS AND PHRASES IMPACT THE MEANING OF AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Determine the ways in which words and phrases, especially words with multiple meanings, technical meanings, and figurative meanings, affect how a reader interprets an informational text.
ELA-1408	DESCRIBE HOW WORD CHOICE INFLUENCES THE MEANING AND IDEAS IN AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT	Describe the ways in which word choice can influence the meaning and ideas in an informational text.
ELA-1417	DETERMINE THE MEANING OF ACADEMIC AND DOMAIN-SPECIFIC WORDS AND PHRASES	Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in an informational text.

USING WORDS FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

RI.7.4, Lesson 1

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students determine the meaning of academic and domain-specific words and phrases and describe how word choice influences the meaning and ideas in an informational text.

STANDARD

RI.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

PREPARATION

Before the lesson, select an authentic informational text from a curriculum resource that has been purchased for individual student use, such as a class set of textbooks to use throughout the unit. The text should contain general academic and discipline-specific words that center on a particular theme, including words with commonly used roots, prefixes, and suffixes. The text should clearly demonstrate how the words are used in conjunction with one another to contribute to an understanding of the text, as learning the words in isolation is not the end goal. Consider the other content-area teachers in your school and discuss your vocabulary needs for collaboration and text-selection purposes, as domain-specific (Tier Three) words should be selected to support instruction and have a clear connection to the learning goal. Additionally, create an example sentence containing a word with an affix for the beginning activity.

Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use from any other source.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ informational text, for individual student use and displayed
 - ▶ **STUDENT HANDOUT: WORD MEANING AND PURPOSE**, for individual student use and displayed
-

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: “I can determine the meaning of words and describe how they affect the meaning of the text.”

Begin by telling students that a writer’s words are his tools. Have students think about how different jobs and hobbies require specific tools and knowledge. For example, a landscaper has to have proper equipment, knowledge, and work ethics to work in an outdoor environment and interact with people. “Tools” are a metaphor and do not necessarily refer to physical tools. **Ask** a volunteer to share how words are part of a writer’s tool set. **Explain** that it is critical for readers to be prepared to identify and tackle the different purposes that words have among different contexts.

Lead a brief investigation of the strategies students use to determine the meaning of unknown words. **Display** an example sentence and **underline** a key word. **Tell** students to share with a partner how they would determine the meaning of the underlined word. **Call on** volunteers to share their thinking and list ideas on the board. **Add** additional strategies to the list for later reference. For example, use context clues, identify roots and affixes, and look for cause-and-effect relationships.

Display the term *technical words* and **write** a definition. **Explain** that technical words relate to a particular subject, such as social studies or math. **List** technical words that relate to math, such as *cube*, *volume*, *fraction*, and *rectangular prism*. **Reiterate** that these terms are specialized vocabulary that someone will most likely find in a math class. **List** technical terms for a lesser-known hobby and see if students can guess what the subject or hobby is. For example: *acidity*, *fermentation*, *milk*, *mold*, and *queso* are all specialized terms related to the science of making cheese.

Provide another example of how technical words are used. Remind students that if they have done technical writing, they have most likely used technical words. **Call on** volunteers to share an example of a time when they used technical words.

Distribute and **display** the selected informational text. **Tell** students to silently skim the first two paragraphs and identify the technical terms with a partner. Then, **lead** the class in reading the first two paragraphs, and **circle** the technical words. **Ask** volunteers what makes each word technical.

Distribute and **display** **STUDENT HANDOUT: WORD MEANING AND PURPOSE**. **Select** one technical word to use as an example for modeling the handout. **Explain** how to write the word in the first column, and **provide** your own definition in the second column. **Think aloud** as you use a strategy to determine the meaning of the word. In the third column, **draw** a picture of the term with a brief explanation. In the fourth column, **list** a few related words that could be associated with the technical term. Acknowledge that it is OK to list words that are not found in the text.

Release students to work with a partner to complete the chart. **Circulate** and individually **ask** any of the Checking for Understanding questions.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING		
Determine if the student can DETERMINE THE MEANING OF ACADEMIC AND DOMAIN-SPECIFIC WORDS AND PHRASES (ELA-1417) :		
▶ In your own words, what does this [word, phrase] mean? Why do you believe so?	▶ What is another word related to this word? How or why is it related?	▶ Would another definition work for this word? Why or why not?

Instruct students to find a new partner to discuss the purpose of the technical words from the text. **Refer** to the brainstorming examples in which specific tools were acknowledged as being important to specific careers. Consider posting the following Checking for Understanding questions for students to reference in writing a personal reflection about how word choice influences the meaning of the text. **Encourage** students to use evidence from the text to support their thinking.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING		
Determine if the student can DESCRIBE HOW WORD CHOICE INFLUENCES THE MEANING AND IDEAS IN AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT (ELA-1408) :		
▶ Why do you think the author chose to use this [word, phrase]?	▶ What does this [technical word, phrase] suggest about the [topic, article, main idea]?	▶ Do you think the technical words are necessary to understand the [topic, article, main idea]? Why? How?

Collect student handouts and **review** responses. Make plans to follow up with students that do not have an understanding of the learning goal.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the [TEACHER NOTES](#) for this lesson set.

WORD MEANING AND PURPOSE

STUDENT HANDOUT

Lesson 1

Word/Phrase	Definition in Own Words	Picture/Symbol with Explanation	Words Related to This Term

Word/Phrase	Definition in Own Words	Picture/Symbol with Explanation	Words Related to This Term

CONNOTATIVE MEANING

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

RI.7.4, Lesson 2

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students determine the connotative meaning of words and phrases as they are used in an informational text.

STANDARD

RI.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

PREPARATION

Before the lesson, select an informational text from a curriculum resource that has been purchased for individual student use, such as a set of textbooks. It would be appropriate to use the same text from Lesson 1. Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ informational text, for student use and displayed
 - ▶ [SUPPLEMENT: MASSASOIT EXCERPT](#)
 - ▶ [STUDENT HANDOUT: CONNOTATIVE MEANING](#), for student use and displayed
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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 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. Also **explain** that the word *denotation* starts with the letter *d* and therefore 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 **instruct** students to identify the positive or negative connotations.

Distribute and **display** the chosen informational text. **Direct** students to listen as you read an excerpt from the text and **circle** the connotative words and phrases. Refer to [SUPPLEMENT: MASSASOIT 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 and **display** [STUDENT HANDOUT: CONNOTATIVE MEANING](#). **Explain** that students will work with a partner to continue reading and recording the words with a connotative meaning. **Show** students how to add a connotative word to the chart and indicate if the word has a positive or negative connotation by putting a checkmark in the appropriate column. Tell students that if they have trouble identifying the word as positive or negative then most likely the word is neutral and does not have a connotation. **Explain** how to provide 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 ELL students, **model** the thinking process of how to determine word meaning from context, and **provide** students with probing questions as a scaffold. If students struggle with identifying connotative words from the text, provide a list of the words and allow students to categorize the words into positive and negative categories.

An example for the [STUDENT HANDOUT](#) is shown.

Word/Phrase	Positive	Negative	Denotation	Connotation
friendly terms	✓		a friend shows kind feelings or willingness to help	the peaceful relationship established between the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag tribe

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 CONNOTATIVE MEANING OF WORDS AND PHRASES AS THEY ARE USED IN TEXTS (ELA-832) :		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What does this [word, phrase] make you think about?▶ What feelings are associated with this word?▶ What can you visualize from this word?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Which words have a [positive, negative] connotation? How do you know?▶ What is the [connotation, denotation] of this word? How did you determine that?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Does this word make sense where it is located?▶ Why do you think the author used this word?

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** and **review** handouts.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the [TEACHER NOTES](#) for this lesson set.



MASSASOIT MAKES PEACE

by Laura Helweg

Neat round houses and proud rows of corn once filled the Wampanoag territory along the Massachusetts coast. But in 1616, a severe sickness emptied the tribe's villages. The Wampanoag leader, Massasoit, feared his longtime enemies would take advantage of the tragedy and attack. To solve this difficulty, Massasoit would make a risky bargain.



Massasoit led the Wampanoag confederation at the time of the Pilgrim's arrival.

IMAGE CREDIT: ILLUSTRATION IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.
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Helweg, Laura. (2018). *Massasoit Makes Peace*.

CONNOTATIVE MEANING

STUDENT HANDOUT

Lesson 2

Word/Phrase	Positive	Negative	Denotation	Connotation

ANALYZING WORD MEANING AND TONE

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

RI.7.4, Lesson 3

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students determine the meaning of words and phrases with technical, figurative, and connotative meanings and analyze their effect on the meaning and tone of a text.

STANDARD

RI.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

PREPARATION

Before the lesson, explicitly work with ELL students who may lack the cultural understanding or schemata required for interpreting figurative language.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ informational text, for individual student use
 - ▶ **STUDENT HANDOUT: ANALYZING WORD MEANING AND TONE**, for individual student use and displayed
-

IMPLEMENTATION

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

Begin the lesson by reviewing 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

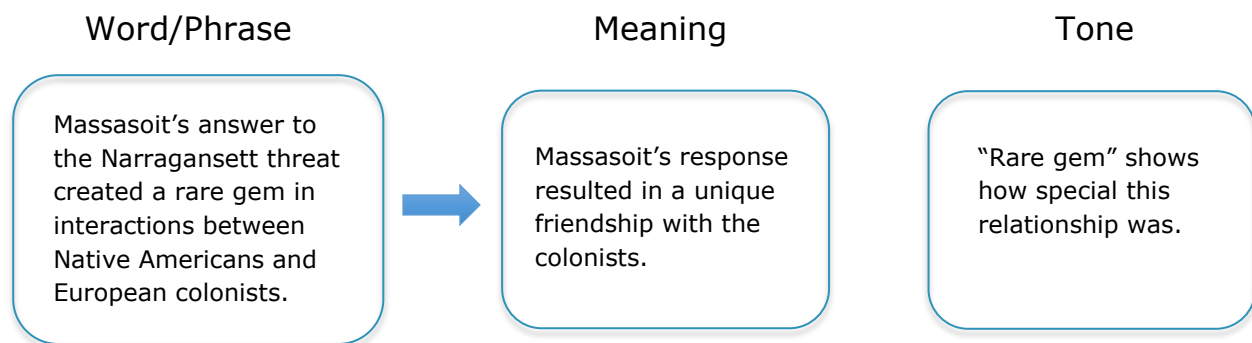
examples. **Record** terms, definitions, and examples on the board. For example, *personification* is giving human qualities to something that is not human, like the phrase, “The camera loves me!”

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 the selected text. **Explain** that students will read the text and locate the key words and phrases that are most important to the meaning and tone. **Tell** students they need to look for words and phrases that have technical, figurative, and connotative meanings. **Explain** that the words they select should reveal something important about the author or the text. **List** the three categories on the board for students to reference, and **review** each category to ensure that the class knows what to look for.

Distribute and **display** [STUDENT HANDOUT: ANALYZING WORD MEANING AND TONE](#) and **model** how to fill out the graphic organizer. In the first column, record a word or phrase that is critical to the meaning of the text. Reference the list of categories on the board, and have students identify which category the example belongs in. In the second column, **provide** the meaning of the word or phrase as it applies to the text. 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. **Point out** that there is a question at the end of the chart.

An [example](#) for the [STUDENT HANDOUT](#) is shown.



Allow students to work in pairs to complete the handout. **Ask** the Checking for Understanding questions.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING	
<p>Determine if the student can DETERMINE HOW WORDS AND PHRASES IMPACT THE MEANING OF AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT [FSA4][SDL5][FSA6][SDL7](ELA-1243):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What does this [word, phrase] mean?▶ What clues help you determine the meaning of this word?▶ Who or what is this [word, phrase] referring to? How do you know?▶ Could this word have another meaning? What meaning?	<p>Determine if the student can ANALYZE THE IMPACT OF WORD CHOICE ON THE MEANING AND TONE OF A TEXT (ELA-833): [SDL8][FSA9]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What effect does this word have on the reader? Why?▶ What does this phrase make you visualize?▶ Why did the author include the word [example] in the text?▶ Why does this word have a strong connotation?▶ What can you infer about the author's attitude toward the subject matter?

Have students share their thinking about the effect of the words on the text. **Prompt** students to describe the overall tone and list adjectives on the board. **Ask** students their opinion of the tone of the text. 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 describe how the text would be affected if the author did not use the word choice that he did. What would be different? How would the meaning of the text change?

Challenge students to be creative and to extend their thinking by writing their own figurative language or phrase that would appropriately add to the meaning and tone of the text. Then, as a way to demonstrate their understanding of the effect of figurative language on the text, students could create a chart with the figurative language they wrote and draw pictures or symbols next to the language to illustrate the ideas or images brought to mind by the figurative language.

Collect and **review** handouts. **Provide** students the **STUDENT FEEDBACK TOOL** for this unit. **Provide** feedback to students confirming their understanding or misunderstanding of the learning goals.

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

ANALYZING WORD MEANING AND TONE

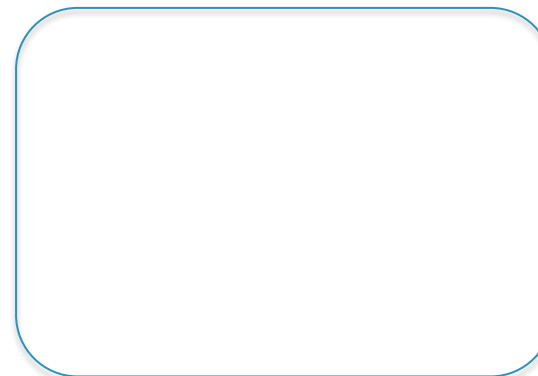
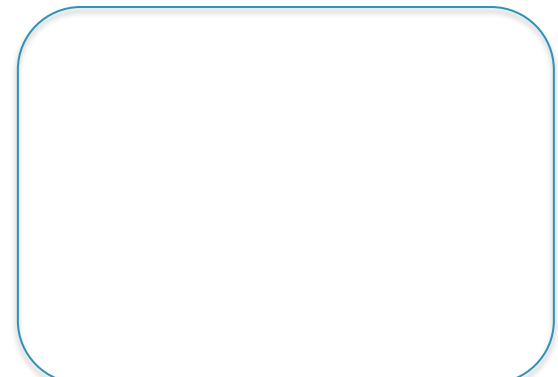
SUPPLEMENT

Lesson 3

Word/Phrase

Meaning

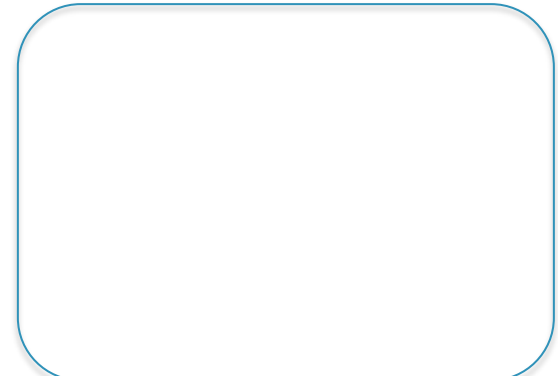
Tone



Word/Phrase

Meaning

Tone



What can you conclude about the author's word choice? (Hint: Think about the overall **meaning** and **tone** of the text.)

ANALYZING WORD MEANING AND TONE IN INFORMATIONAL TEXT

STUDENT FEEDBACK GUIDE

RI.7.4

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

Learning Goal	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Describe how word choice influences the meaning of the text	I can identify domain-specific words.	I can use context clues to determine the meaning of domain-specific words.	I can describe multiple ways word choice influences the meaning of the text.
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 effect of word choice on the meaning and tone of a text	I can determine the meaning of figurative language and other word choices.	I can interpret why the author included the figurative language or other word choices.	I can explain the effect of word choice on the meaning and tone of a text.