Vocabulary Building Strategies
Denotation and Connotation
Objectives:

- To identify the denotations and connotation of a word.
- To describe the tone of a literary passage.
- To make connections between word connotations and tone.
Using these three words: OLD WEATHERED MATURE Write each of these three words in SEPARATE sentences to describe a MADE UP (FICTIONAL) character.

How does the sentences change your perception (thoughts) about the character?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Write:</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denotation:</strong></td>
<td>The dictionary definition</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Connotation:</strong></td>
<td>A negative or positive association that the word suggests</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Synonyms</strong></td>
<td>are words that have the SAME meaning.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Antonym:</strong></td>
<td>Are words that have the OPPOSITE meaning</td>
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</table>
# Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Denotation</th>
<th>Negative Connotation</th>
<th>Positive Connotation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inexpensive</td>
<td>Low in cost</td>
<td>Cheap</td>
<td>Economical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inquiring</td>
<td>Eager to investigate</td>
<td>Nosy</td>
<td>Curious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sportsperson</td>
<td>Person trained in sports</td>
<td>Jock</td>
<td>athlete</td>
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</table>
Directions:

- Create a list of sports team names. Then choose one team name, and complete the graphic organizer below.

**EXAMPLE:**

**Team Name**
Colts

**Denotation**
Baby horse

**Connotation**
Negative

NOW YOU DO!!!!
Task:

- Discuss these words, their denotation and their connotations. Use a dictionary if needed. Which word is positive and which is negative?

  - Words:
    - Misplaced and Lost
    - Slender and Skinny
    - Youthful and Childish
    - Crippled and Handicapped
Discuss these words, their denotation and their connotations. Use a dictionary if needed. Which word is positive and which is negative?

- Relaxed, Laid-back, Lackadaisical, Easy-going
  - Slim, Skinny, Slender, Thin
  - Cheap, Frugal, Miserly, Economical
  - Young, Immature, Juvenile, Youthful
- Inquisitive, Interested, Curious, Convivial
  - Confident, Secure, Proud, Egotistical
  - Lovely, Knockout, Beautiful, Stunning
  - Talkative, Conversational, Chatty, Nosy
Listen:

- Your tone of voice shows your attitude. Try saying “I’m hungry” in a whiney voice. Now say it in a tone that shows excitement that it’s lunchtime. Writers also convey a tone—but we have to “hear” it through their words, not their voices. The diction and connotation are essential for conveying the TONE of a piece.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>the writer’s or speaker’s attitude</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diction</td>
<td>the writer’s word choice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connotation</td>
<td>emotional association</td>
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Thursday
By Edna St. Vincent Millay

And if I loved you Wednesday,
Well, what is that to you?
I do not love you Thursday–
So much is true.

And why you come complaining
Is more that I can see.
I loved you Wednesday, –yes–
but what
Is that to me?

› What is the speakers tone?
› What diction indicates that tone?
› What is the connotation of the diction?
Connotation/Denotation Activity

- Preview and Read “This Apple Could Have Been Saved” in Scope Magazine October 2016.
- Choose 10 words within the text that sets the TONE of the story.
- Fill in the chart as you read with at least 10 word/denotation/connotation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>DENOTATION</th>
<th>CONNOTATION (+ or −)</th>
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Definitions

- **DENOTATION**: it’s the actual definition of a word. It’s what you would read when you look the word up in the dictionary.

- **CONNOTATION**: it’s what we think about when we hear a word. It’s what feelings we have when we hear it or read it. Happy? Sad? Excited?
Definition

- **Denotation** – the dictionary definition of a word
- **Connotation** – the emotional associations of a word
Words can have neutral, positive or negative connotations
Example

- #13

**Denotation:** A number equivalent to the sum of six and seven; one more than 12; 7 less than 20

**Connotation:** Fear, suspicion

The connotation of this number can make people feel so scared that hotels don’t have floors numbered 13! The hotel floors jump from 12 to 14 because the builders thought that no one would want to stay in a room on floor 13! I don’t think I would stay on it; would you?
Another Example

- A stubborn person can be described as being:
  - Strong willed (positive connotation)
  - Pig-headed (negative connotation)
Example

- Cheap
  
  Denotation: *low in cost*
  
  Connotation: *poorly made, made with inferior ingredients or products*
As Seen in Advertising:

- Both of the following sentences mean the same thing, but advertisers prefer to use the second sentence because it has fewer negative connotations:

  - All of the cars we have for sale are **used**.
  - All of the cars we have for sale are **previously owned**.
For each of the following sentences, explain why the word or words in bold are not good choices for the sentence. For example, it might not be a good time to use the denotation of a word because it’s too scientific.
Trip and journey are both words whose denotations mean *to travel*, right?

- What’s the connotation of each? (Hint: What would you pack for a trip? How about for a journey?)
Dirt and soil both have a denotation that mean the upper layer of earth or the ground.

But what’s the connotation of each? (Hint: Do plants grow best in dirt or in soil? Why would that be?)
#3

- **Cabin** and **hut** have the same denotation. They are both places to live.

  - What’s the connotation of each? (Hint: Which would you rather live in? Why?)
Explain why the words in italics are not good choices for these next 2 sentences even though their denotations are correct.

Shawn wept at the death of his *female parent*. (Why doesn’t this sound good?)
He named his new song, “House Sweet House.”
(Why does this sound bad for a song’s name? What kinds of feelings are missing?)
THE END