

Connotation Spectrum

Mission: Writers choose words carefully because words carry feelings. These words have similar dictionary meanings but different emotional charges. Place each one on the spectrum and discover how word choice shapes meaning.

Big question: How does connotation affect the meaning and tone of words?

Warm-up: Which would you rather be called?

Choose and explain.

"Curious" or "nosy"? ✓ **Curious (positive connotation).**

"Relaxed" or "lazy"? ✓ **Relaxed.**

Key vocabulary

Denotation	The dictionary definition of a word.
Connotation	The feeling or idea a word suggests.
Tone	The author's attitude toward the subject.
Word choice	The specific words an author picks (diction).

Box 1

Set 1: saving money

In the simulator: Place all words in Set 1 correctly.

Why is "stingy" negative while "thrifty" is positive?

- ☐ Stingy suggests being unfairly unwilling to share; thrifty suggests being smart with money
☐ Stingy means spending more ☐ They mean opposite things

✓ **Stingy suggests being unfairly unwilling to share; thrifty suggests being smart with money**

Box 2

All sets

In the simulator: Place the words in all three sets.

What did you notice?

Box 3

Author's choice

A real estate ad calls a tiny apartment "cozy." Why?

- ☐ "Cozy" has a positive connotation that makes small sound appealing ☐ Cozy means large ☐ It is a mistake

✓ **"Cozy" has a positive connotation that makes small sound appealing**

4 Box 4

Change the tone

Rewrite the sentence two ways: "My neighbor is careful with money and has a small house."

Positive version

Look for: Uses positive words; at least 8 words

Negative version

Look for: Uses negative words; at least 8 words

5 Box 5

Legend: explain the effect 🏆 Legend only

Explain how changing ONE word can change a reader's opinion of a character. Use an example.

Look for: Uses connotation; at least 18 words



Exit ticket: answer the big question in your own words

How does connotation affect the meaning and tone of words?

Look for: Denotation is a word's dictionary meaning; connotation is the feeling it carries. "Thrifty" and "stingy" both describe saving money, but "thrifty" sounds positive and "stingy" sounds negative. Choosing words by connotation lets writers shape how readers feel.

Completion codes

Students see a code like **ABC-I3** when they finish. The first part must match below. The letter is the level (E = Explorer, I = Investigator, L = Legend), and the number at the end is how many stars they earned.

Level	Code starts with
🗺 Explorer	1YP-E
🔍 Investigator	M5I-I
🏆 Legend	IXE-L



Watch for these misconceptions

- "Synonyms can always be swapped." Connotation changes the meaning and tone.
- "Tone and mood are the same." Tone is the author's attitude; mood is how the reader feels.
- "Figurative language is only in poems." It appears in all kinds of writing, even news.