

A word's **denotation** is its literal definition. For example:

Snake: a limbless reptile with a long, scaly body

A word's **connotation** is all the association we have with it. For example:

"snake in the grass," the biblical serpent, the danger of poisonous snakes, our own fear of snakes, or a malevolent (evil, bad) person might be called "a real snake"

Connotation can depend on the person who hears the word and brings his or her own associations to it.

* A plumber might immediately think of a plumbing tool called a snake.

*A biologist might think of the rare Indigo Snake he felt lucky to see the past weekend.

Some words, though, have shades of meaning that are commonly recognized. While "serpent" is literally a snake, the word "serpent" is usually associated with evil. In today's society, "politician" has somewhat negative associations, while "statesman" sounds more positive.

Directions: For these conditions, first think of a word with a positive connotation, and then think of a word with a negative connotation.

<u>Condition</u>	<u>Positive Connotation</u>	<u>Negative Connotation</u>
1. overweight	_____	_____
2. short	_____	_____
3. not smart	_____	_____
4. unattractive	_____	_____
5. non-athletic	_____	_____
6. self-focused	_____	_____

Denotation & Connotation Worksheet

In each sentence below, the underlined word and the word in parentheses have approximately the same denotation, but they have different connotations. Identify the connotations (positive or negative) of the underlined word that may have influenced the writer to choose that word rather than the word in parentheses.

1. The village was so primitive (ancient) that there is no running water, heat, electricity, or communication with the outside world.

2. The man looked to his comrades (companions), who had been his closest friends for many years, for emotional support.

3. The apologetic (contrite) teenager told his neighbor that he was sorry for accidentally breaking his window.

4. In the story, the man spoke cunningly (cleverly) to his friend to try and persuade him to steal the money.

5. Mr. Beadle was known in the neighborhood as a curmudgeon (killjoy), who was always ill-tempered and nasty to his neighbors.

6. The hikers stopped at the top of the mountain to contemplate (think) silently the beautiful view of the surrounding park.

7. The boisterous (energetic) group of people at the park made so much noise that they were asked to leave.

