

The DENOTATION & CONNOTATION of words

You thought that words just have one meaning? Well, it's not as simple as that. Learn the following difference between the denotative and connotative meanings of words, so that your writing can be more precise.

DENOTATION

The denotation of a word is **the literal meaning** of a word: the dictionary definition.

CONNOTATION

The connotation of a word is **the associations or emotions** related to a word.

An example:

"He is a snake."



The **denotative** meaning of the word 'snake' is a limbless reptile with no eyelids and a short tail.

The **connotative** meaning of the word 'snake' is a deceitful, untrustworthy person.

For each of the following, identify the denotative and connotative meanings associated with the bold words.

This toy is really cheap .	DENOTATION
	CONNOTATION
She is a chicken .	DENOTATION
	CONNOTATION
He is skinny .	DENOTATION
	CONNOTATION
He handed her a red rose .	DENOTATION
	CONNOTATION
My brother is childish .	DENOTATION
	CONNOTATION
He is a talkative child.	DENOTATION
	CONNOTATION
It will always be my home .	DENOTATION
	CONNOTATION
She's a real lady .	DENOTATION
	CONNOTATION
She wore a plain dress.	DENOTATION
	CONNOTATION
He is a wily old fox .	DENOTATION
	CONNOTATION

The DENOTATION & CONNOTATION POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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For each of the following, identify the denotative and connotative meanings associated with the bold words.

This toy is really cheap .	DENOTATION	The toy is inexpensive; it doesn't cost very much.
	CONNOTATION	The toy is poorly made or of inferior quality.
She is a chicken .	DENOTATION	She is literally a domestic fowl.
	CONNOTATION	She is cowardly.
He is skinny .	DENOTATION	She is very thin, with little body fat.
	CONNOTATION	She is unattractively thin.
He handed her a red rose .	DENOTATION	He handed her a flower which was red.
	CONNOTATION	He displayed his love to her (red roses are associated with love)
My brother is childish .	DENOTATION	My brother displays the actions appropriate for a young child.
	CONNOTATION	My brother is immature or extremely silly.
He is a talkative child.	DENOTATION	He talks a lot, and enjoys talking.
	CONNOTATION	He talks too much.
It will always be my home .	DENOTATION	I will literally inhabit it forever.
	CONNOTATION	I will always think of it as a place I belong.
She's a real lady .	DENOTATION	She is a female.
	CONNOTATION	She displays very feminine/proper manners.
She wore a plain dress.	DENOTATION	There were no decorations or patterns on the dress.
	CONNOTATION	The dress was ordinary and not very attractive.
He is a wily old fox .	DENOTATION	He is literally a carnivorous mammal of the dog family.
	CONNOTATION	He is cunning and sly.