DENOTATIVE AND CONNOTATIVE MEANING OF A WORD

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Abstract: *Connotation refers to the additional meanings and feelings that a word suggests, beyond its literal definition. It encompasses the various emotional or symbolic associations that people have with words, known as denotations. By understanding the concept of connotation, we can delve into the subjective and personal experiences that shape our perception of language. Connotation plays a crucial role in creating the mood, tone, and atmosphere of a literary work. It adds depth and complexity to the writing, allowing readers to interpret and understand the text on multiple levels.*

Key words: *connotation, denotation, literal, subjective, cognizant, negative association, atmosphere, mood, tone, complexity.*

Connotation is a further association that a word suggests other than its literal dictionary meaning. The connotation of a word is an idea or feeling that the word invokes in addition to its literal meaning. Words evoke many meanings to people that extend beyond the technical definitions known as denotations.

Connotations are what we associate with words based on our personal experience with them. A good example of connotation in words is the word spider.

Word: spider

Denotation: an eight-legged arachnid.

Connotation: many people are terrified of spiders, so fear is a common connotation when spider is used. Others might simply find them gross.

Animals make for good illustrations of connotation, so let's look at another.

Word: snake

Denotation: long, limbless reptile

Connotation: Many people associate snakes with liars and tricksters. This may have biblical origins, but it obviously differs from the denotation of the word.

The difference between connotation and denotation is that denotation is the literal meaning of a word. Connotation and denotation both deal with the meanings associated with words, but they are opposite in their approach.

Denotations are simple and straightforward; everyone will arrive at the same meaning by using the dictionary whereas connotations are subjective and will differ from person to person based on their social experience with the words.

Word: mushroom

Denotation: the fleshy cap-like, spore-bearing organ of various fungi

Connotation: pizza, gross, pests, delicacy, psychedelic, Mario Brothers

The denotation of mushroom is its technical definition that everyone will see when he or she looks the word up in a dictionary. The connotation, however, varies widely on what individual people associate with mushrooms. The denotation of a word is limited while the connotation has the potential to be endless.

When writing, it is important to be cognizant of a word's denotation as well as the connotation your audience may have with it. Denotations are essential for meaning and understanding, while connotations are important in setting the mood of a piece of literature. For example, if the purpose is to establish the mood of the story to be cool and calm, you may want to use words that evoke these feelings such as the colors green and blue.

In literature, connotation is often used to set the mood of the piece. Here are some examples of this. In James Hurst's "The Scarlet Ibis" connation is used in order to set the mood in the introduction. It is also used to foreshadow the events to come in the story.

"It was in the clove of seasons, summer was dead but autumn had not yet been born, that the ibis lit in the bleeding tree. The flowering garden was stained with rotting brown magnolia petals and ironweeds grew rank amid the purple phlox."

This example includes words that are often associated with death such as dead, bleeding, stained, rotting, brown, and rank. By using words with this connotation, Hurts sets the somber mood and foreshadows the death of the young character, Doodle.

Another example of the use of connotation is in William Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet":

"But soft, what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun."

In Romeo's line, he compares Juliet to light and the sun. Shakespeare does this because light and sun have positive connotations. Many people associate these words with happiness; therefore, we are able to understand how Romeo feels about Juliet and that creates and exciting and romantic mood.

Oftentimes, words evoke either a positive or negative connotation, depending on a person's experience with the word. When writing, it is important to be aware of the words you are using and how they often translate to the audience. While most people may see one word in a positive light, some people may have a negative association with it, which would affect their connotation. For example, let's take the word "baby". While most people associate babies with positive connotations, someone who has had fertility issues may have negative connotations with the word.

Writers must be aware of a word's connotation when writing in order to set the mood of their work effectively.

Final example,

From Emily Dickinson's " 'Hope' is the thing with feathers,"

" ' Hope' is the thing with feathers—/ That perches in the soul—/ And sings the tune without words—/ and never stops—at all—"

In this example, Dickinson uses words with positive connotation such as feathers, soul, sings, and tune to establish the positive outlook she has regarding the concept of hope.

In conclusion, the connotation of a word is a feeling or idea that is evoked from associations with the word itself. These feelings may well extend beyond the dictionary definition.

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