

# Vocabulary Power



## Lesson 28 Using Reading Skills

### Connotation

Many words have another kind of meaning beyond their surface meaning. Even a simple color can have a wide range of possible meanings, depending on how it is used. The word *black*, for example, denotes “the darkest color” or “a complete lack of light.” Going beyond denotation, or the dictionary definition, you can understand that “black is beautiful” and that operating a business “in the black” is positive, while being the “black sheep in the family” or having a “black heart” is not desirable. This is what is meant by *connotation*—the implied or suggested meaning of a word.

Knowing the connotations of words helps you understand language more fully. All of the following words denote a thoroughfare, yet all have different connotations:

- alley** a narrow passage through the middle of a block giving access to the rear of lots or buildings.
- boulevard** a broad, often landscaped thoroughfare, named after a notable person or event, and located in an area relevant to the name
- road** an open way outside of an urban district, formerly for horseback travel, between distant places or for travelers, vehicles, and animals in rural areas, now used interchangeably for urban and rural thoroughfares
- street** a paved public means of access through a city, town, or village with sidewalks, buildings, and availability to traffic

Although the above words have similar denotative meanings, the words have different connotations. For example, referring to the world-famous Champs-Élysées Boulevard in Paris as a “road” would be inappropriate. This landmark consists of palaces and some of the finest hotels and restaurants in the world. Awareness of differences in word meanings can help you in reading, speaking, and writing.

### EXERCISE A Usage

Explain the meaning of each sentence based on the connotations and denotations of the boldfaced words.

1. Lynn is a **mediocre** singer. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Lynn is an **average** singer. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Lynn is an **adequate** singer. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Dwight seems **pleased** with his new car. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dwight seems **elated** with his new car. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dwight seems **ecstatic** with his new car. \_\_\_\_\_

### EXERCISE B Word Association

Journalists generally try to be neutral; that is, they avoid words with either strong positive or negative connotations. Novelists and other authors, however, usually want to use words with powerful connotations to evoke certain emotions in their readers. Choose one newspaper story and one page from a favorite novel or short story. On a separate sheet of paper, make a list of six words from each piece of writing. Rate the words on the basis of connotation, using plus for positive, minus for negative, or X for neutral.



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## Review: Unit 7

### EXERCISE Circle the letter of the phrase that best explains the boldfaced word.

- If you are looking for **solitude**, you are probably in need of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - good reading material that will keep you amused
  - a secluded place where you can have peace and quiet
  - a low calorie but nutritious meal
  - a crowded dance floor where you can show off your moves
- If you purchase a **biennial** magazine subscription as a gift, you can expect that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - the magazine will probably go out of business in a few months
  - the price will go up when it is time for renewal
  - the recipient will receive the magazine twice a year
  - the recipient will receive the magazine for two years
- Clothes that **constrict** your body during hot weather are not advisable because they \_\_\_\_\_.
  - bind or squeeze
  - are too big
  - are too colorful
  - absorb too much perspiration
- People who lose themselves in **reverie** are said to be \_\_\_\_\_.
  - unaware of responsibility
  - unbalanced and overly emotional
  - daydreamers
  - gluttons for punishment
- Bilingual** books are helpful to someone learning a new language because they \_\_\_\_\_.
  - are written in two languages
  - have study questions that cover all the material
  - have exciting plots and believable characters
  - follow a magazine format with many pictures and little writing
- Someone suffering from the effects of **stress** might experience \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a guilty conscience
  - sore muscles and aching joints
  - broken promises
  - sleep and appetite disturbances
- If you saw a friend looking particularly **wan**, you might \_\_\_\_\_.
  - offer him or her a ride
  - suggest that he or she see a doctor
  - laugh at his or her facial expression
  - ignore him or her
- Readers and viewers of plays can learn much from an actor's **monologue** because this \_\_\_\_\_.
  - long speech reveals character
  - short dialogue moves the action
  - emotional message is the climax
  - series of puns lightens the mood