

Teacher Notes



Elements of Denotation and Connotation

Activity 1 Exploring Denotation and Connotation

Activity Overview

Students will write definitions and connotations of four common words for themselves. They will examine how various common terms can have the same denotative meaning but completely different connotative meanings. Students will determine what audiences might understand certain meanings in ways not intended by the author and consider the importance of word choice in their own writing. Students will work individually to identify possible connotations of specific terms in a phrase and discuss these connotations as a class.

Tip

By writing their own denotative definitions and connotations of terms and comparing those to characters who might have different interpretations of the same words' connotations, students will be able to identify the difference between the two types of meaning immediately. By identifying possible connotations of words in phrases and then discussing those possibilities, students will begin to recognize the myriad connotations a word can have, as well as how connotations depend on personal experience.

Activity at a Glance

- ◆ **Subject:** English
- ◆ **Subject Area:** English/Language Arts
- ◆ **Category:** Literary Devices
- ◆ **Topic:** Denotation and Connotation
- ◆ **Grade Level:** 10 – 12
- ◆ **Prerequisites:** None
- ◆ **Total Teaching Time:** 60 minutes

Materials

- ◆ Voyage™ 200 Personal Learning Tool (PLT), TI-92 Plus, or TI-83 Plus
- ◆ **Elements of Connotation and Denotation** edc resource file: White Dove, White Sneaker, Definitions
- ◆ TI-GRAPH LINK™ Cable, USB Cable, or TI-Navigator™
- ◆ TI External Keyboard (optional)

Directions

Before the Activity Begins

Have the students write a brief description of their impression of the following words: love, school, summer, and family. Ask them to include what they think the word “means” as well as what specific images or feelings it conjures up for them.

Ask the class to share their definitions of what each of the four words “means” to them. Use a dictionary to corroborate these definitions. Explain to students that this is the *denotative* meaning of the word. Then ask students to share the images or feelings that each of the words has for them. Explain that these images or feelings comprise the *connotative* meaning of a word. Students should understand that people with similar cultural backgrounds might share connotative meanings, but connotative meanings are infinite and depend on the individual.

Have students return to their four terms and write what the same words might connote for someone who is the son or daughter of recently divorced parents, and has just failed a class and learned he or she has to take summer school. Also have the students write what the same words might connote for someone who is the son or daughter of a parent who has recently remarried and is blissfully in love, planning a summer vacation to Paris as a part of their honeymoon, and has just been awarded a prize for scholastic achievement. Discuss the different connotations these words might have for the different characters.

During the Activity

When writing, we should choose our words carefully to ensure that our intended meaning is understood. While some words have connotations that are familiar to most people, others do not and require explanation. The activities the students will perform for this lesson are based on the following example.

Consider the phrase “My love is like a white dove.” The word dove has a certain connotation for many people. Doves often represent purity, cleanliness, emerging from danger. With this connotation, the statement that my love is like a white dove could mean my love is pure, it is clean, it is safe. However, if we change the statement to read “My love is like a white sneaker,” the connotation is clearly different. While someone might be thinking of a nurse’s white sneaker, which could be pure, clean, and safe, just like the dove, the word sneaker is much less likely than the word dove to have similar connotations to others. Perhaps someone else would think of a sneaker used in gym, one that is supposed to be white but no longer is. This person would think, then, that my love is somehow dirty, or old, when that is not what was intended.

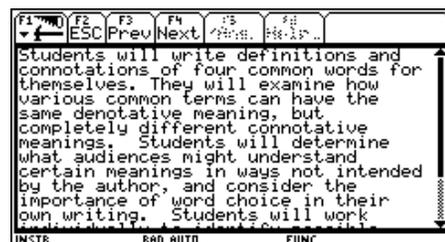
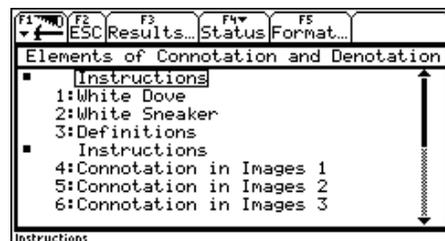
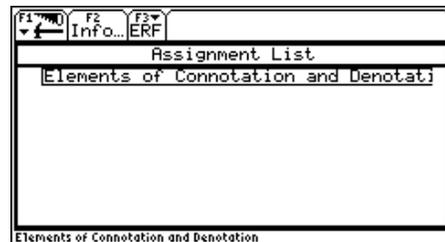
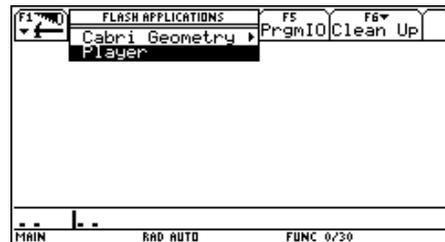
Students should access the **White Dove** and **White Sneaker** files to record other possible connotations for the words *dove* and *sneaker*, including a description of what audience might think of what connotation and why they would think so.

Once the students have completed these activities, students should access the **Definitions** file and write their own definitions of denotation and connotation.

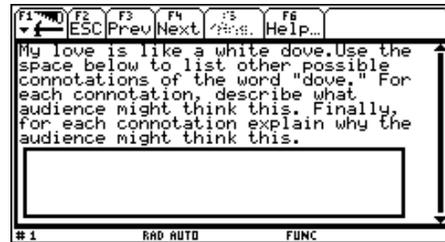
Use the following instructions to access and use the **Elements of Connotation and Denotation** files on the devices. Each step indicates the action students need to perform to obtain the files and use the exercises on their devices. Additional information for the teacher appears in shaded boxes, where necessary.

Voyage™ 200 PLT (or TI-92 Plus)

1. Turn on the device and press the  **Apps** key. Available Flash Applications display. Use   to highlight **Player**.
2. Press **ENTER**. The Assignment List displays. If more than one assignment is listed, use   to highlight **Elements of Connotation and Denotation**.
3. Press **ENTER**. Enter your ID to sign in.
4. Press **ENTER**. Student instructions and assignment files display (also referred to as the Item Menu). Use   to highlight the first **Instructions** file.
5. Press **ENTER**. Review the instructions prior to beginning the assignment. Press **F4: Next** to access the first file, **White Dove**.



- If necessary, use \uparrow \downarrow to scroll the text. Enter responses by simply beginning to type.



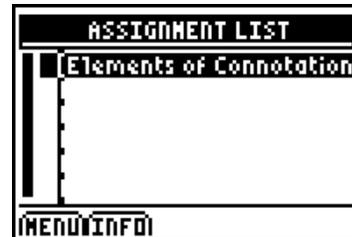
- To close this file (or any other file), press **F2: ESC**, which redisplay the Item Menu for the assignment.
- To access the next file in the Item Menu list from an open file, press **F4: Next**. For example, when the **White Dove** exercise has been completed, press **F4: Next** to proceed directly to the **White Sneaker** exercise.

TI-83 Plus

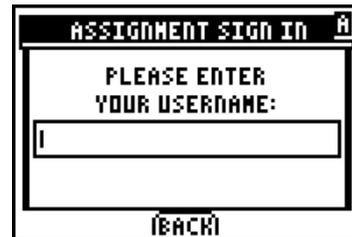
- Turn on the device and press the **Apps** key. Use \uparrow \downarrow to highlight the number preceding **PLAYER**.



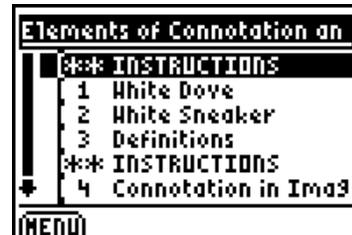
- Press **ENTER** twice to move past the title screen. The **Assignment List** displays. If more than one assignment is listed, use \uparrow \downarrow to highlight **Elements of Connotation and Denotation**.



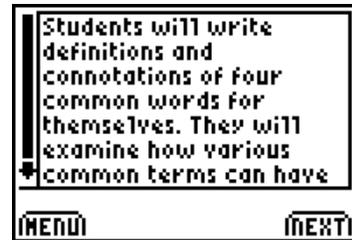
- Press **ENTER**. Enter your ID to sign in.



- Press **ENTER**. Student instructions and assignment files display (also referred to as the Item Menu). Use \uparrow \downarrow to highlight the first **Instructions** file.



5. Press **ENTER**. Review the instructions prior to beginning the assignment. Press **Next** to access item **White Dove**.



6. If necessary, use **▲** **▼** to scroll the text. Enter response by pressing **ANS** and beginning to type.



7. To close this file and return to the Item List, press **MENU**. Either highlight or press the number for the Item List option on the menu.
8. To access the next file in the Item Menu list from an open file, press **NEXT**. For example, when the **White Dove** exercise has been completed, press **NEXT** to proceed directly to the **White Sneaker** exercise.

After the Activity

Have students share their responses. Discuss the effects of connotation and denotation.