

Connotation vs. Denotation

How do we assign words meaning?

SWBAT

- Define connotation and denotation
- Read a sentence and determine if the wording is connotative or denotative

Connotation and Denotation

- **Connotation** is the emotional and imaginative association surrounding a word.



- **Denotation** is the strict dictionary meaning of a word.



“You may live in a house, but we live in a home.”

- If you were to look up the words *house* and *home* in a dictionary, you would find that both words have approximately the same meaning- "a dwelling place."
- However, the speaker in the sentence above suggests that *home* has an additional meaning.

house

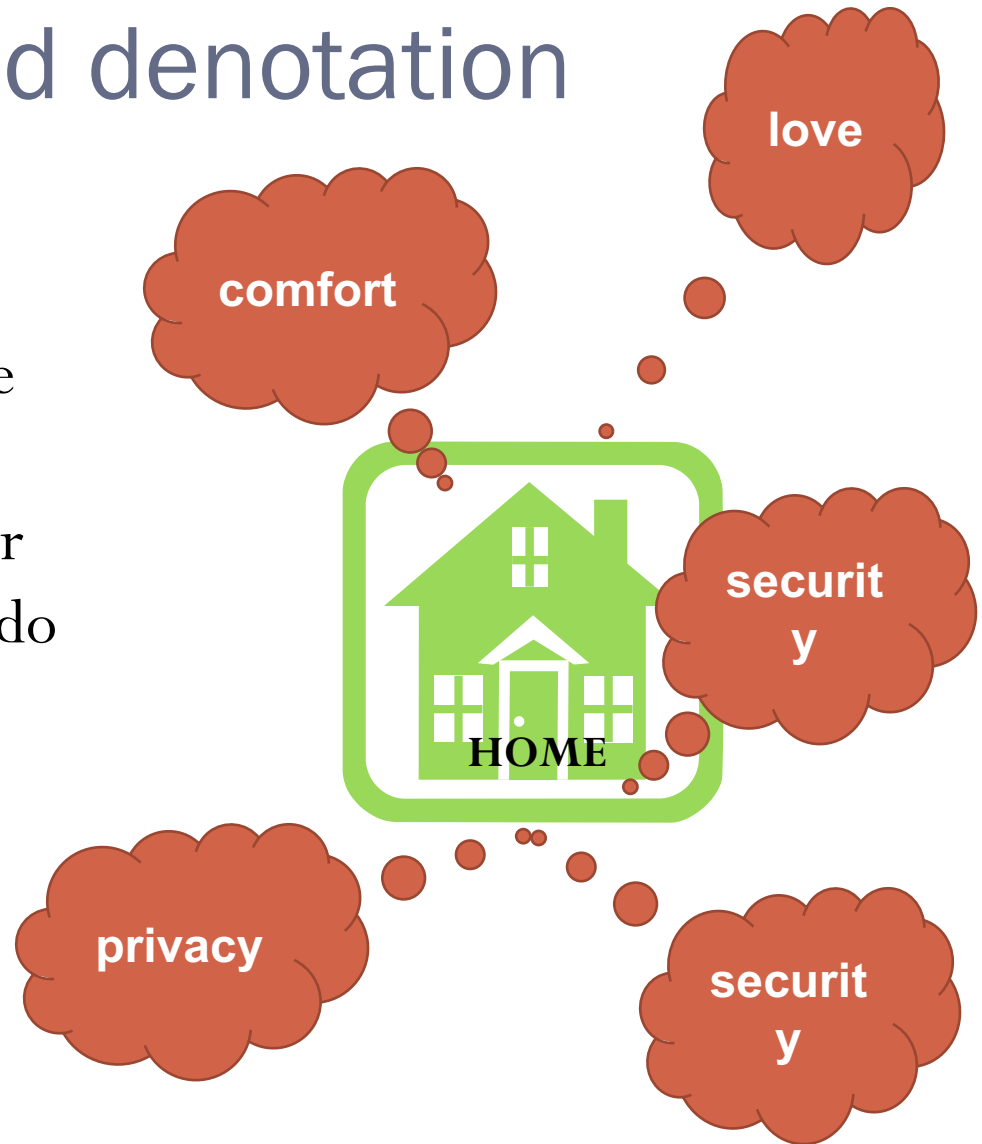


home



Connotation and denotation

- Aside from the strict dictionary definition, or *denotation*, many people associate such things as comfort, love, security, or privacy with a home but do not necessarily make the same associations with a house.



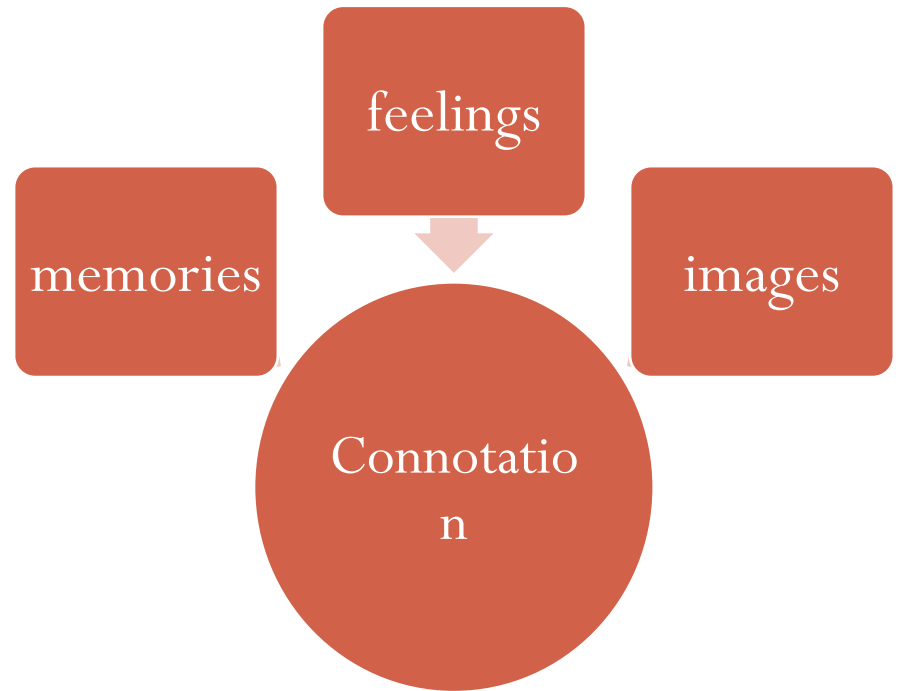
Questions to brainstorm....

- What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of:
- a home?
- of a house?
- Why do you think that real-estate advertisers use the word home more frequently than house?



Connotation

- The various feelings, images, and memories that surround a word make up its *connotation*.
- Although both house and home have the same denotation, or dictionary meaning, home also has many *connotations*



“I know what you said, but what did you mean?”

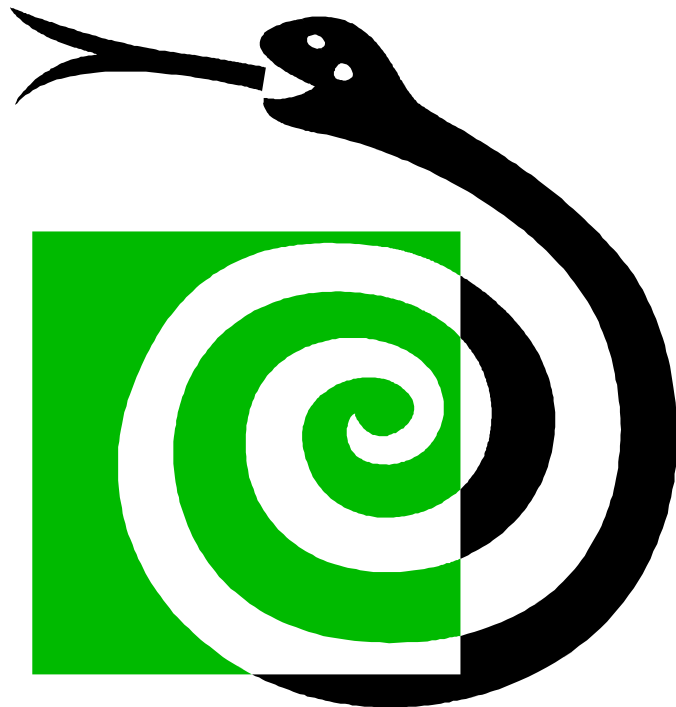
- A word's **denotation** is its literal definition. For example:
- Snake: a limbless reptile with a long, scaly body



- 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"

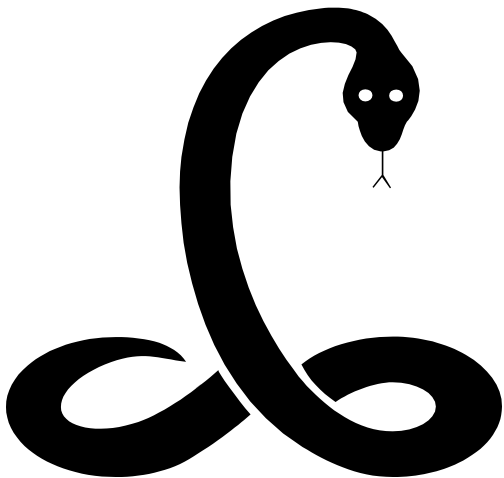
Who is hearing the word?

- *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.



Shades of meaning...

- 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.



Use it in a sentence.

- You will answer ten questions while viewing the upcoming slides.
- Read the following sentences.
 - **Annette was surprised.**
 - **Annette was amazed.**
 - **Annette was astonished.**
- 1. What is the general meaning of each of the three sentences about Annette? Do the words surprised, amazed, and astonished have approximately the same denotation?

Use it in a sentence.

- 2. What additional meanings are suggested by astonish?
Would one be more likely to be surprised or astonished at seeing a ghost?



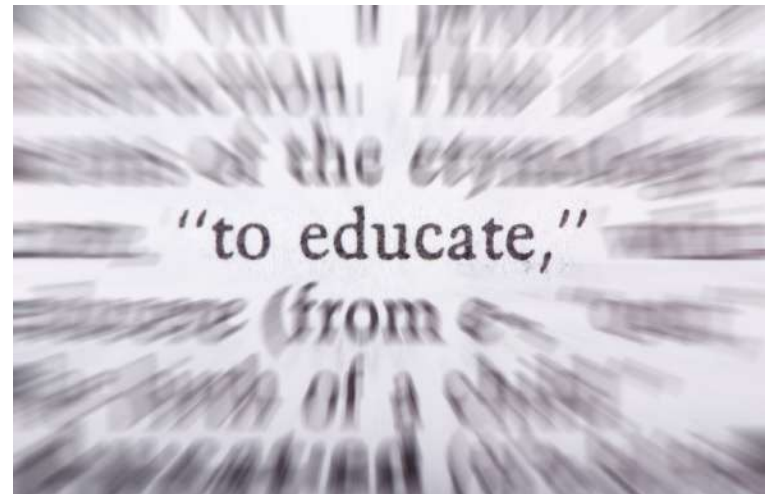
“I was surprised to see a ghost.”

“I was amazed to see a ghost.”

“I was astonished to see a ghost.”

Compare some words.

- Write these examples in your daybook along with your answers
- 3. Which word in each pair below has the more favorable connotation to you?
 - **thrifty-penny-pinching**
 - **pushy-aggressive**
 - **politician-statesman**
 - **chef-cook**
 - **slender-skinny**



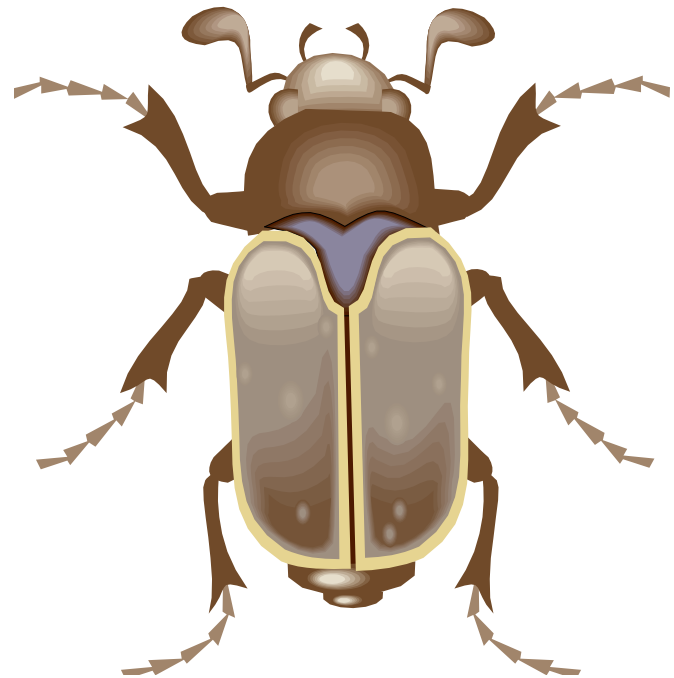
Read it in text.

- Since everyone reacts emotionally to certain words, writers often deliberately select words that they think will influence your reactions and appeal to your emotions. Read the dictionary definition below.
- cock roach (kok' roch'), n. any of an order of nocturnal insects, usually brown with flattened oval bodies, some species of which are household pests inhabiting kitchens, areas around water pipes, etc. [Spanish cucaracha]



A cockroach?

- 4. What does the word cockroach mean to you?
- 5. Is a cockroach merely an insect or is it also a household nuisance and a disgusting creature?
- See what meanings poets Wild and Morley find in roaches in the following poems.



Roaches

Last night when I got up
to let the dog out I spied
a cockroach in the bathroom
crouched flat on the cool
porcelain,
delicate
antennae probing the toothpaste cap
and feasting himself on a gob
of it in the bowl:
I killed him with one unprofessional
blow,
scattering arms and legs
and half his body in the sink...
I would have no truck with roaches,
crouched like lions in the ledges of
sewers
their black eyes in the darkness
alert for tasty slime,

breeding quickly and without design,
laboring up drainpipes through filth
to the light;
I read once they are among
the most antediluvian of creatures,
surviving everything, and in more primitive
times
thrived to the size of your hand...
yet when sinking asleep
or craning at the stars,
I can feel their light feet
probing in my veins,
their whiskers nibbling
the insides of my toes;
and neck arched,
feel their patient scrambling
up the dark tubes of my throat.

---Peter Wild

*from Nursery Rhymes for the
Tender-hearted*

Scuttle, scuttle, little roach-
How you run when I approach:
Up above the pantry shelf
Hastening to secrete yourself.

Most adventurous of vermin,
How I wish I could determine
How you spend your hours of ease,
Perhaps reclining on the cheese.

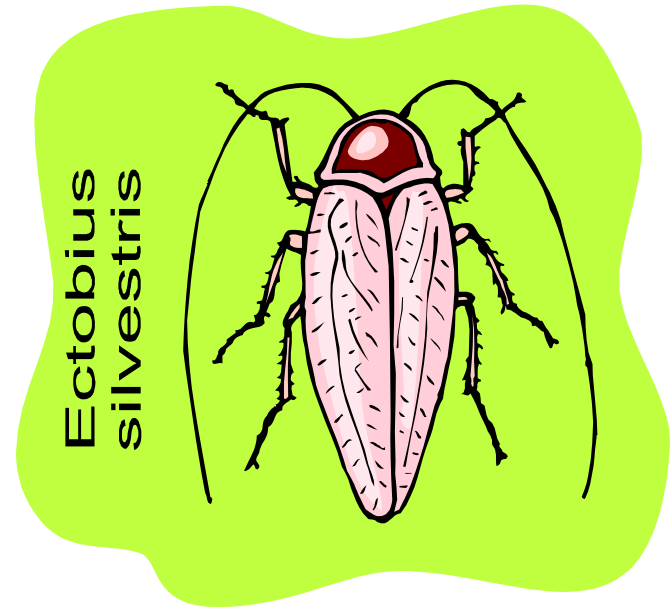
Cook has gone, and all is dark-
Then the kitchen is your park;
In the garbage heap that she leaves
Do you browse among the tea
leaves?

How delightful to suspect
All the places you have trekked:
Does your long antenna whisk its
Gentle tip across the biscuits?
Do you linger, little soul,
Drowsing in our sugar bowl?
Or, abandonment most utter,
Shake a shimmy on the butter?
Do you chant your simple tunes
Swimming in the baby's prunes?
Then, when dawn comes, do you
slink
Homeward to the kitchen sink?
Timid roach, why be so shy?
We are brothers, thou and I,
In the midnight, like yourself,
I explore the pantry shelf!

--Christopher Morley

Reading into the poems...

- Reread the dictionary definition.
- cock roach (kok' roch'), n. any of an order of nocturnal insects, usually brown with flattened oval bodies, some species of which are household pests inhabiting kitchens, areas around water pipes, etc.
- 6. Which of the denotative characteristics of a cockroach do both poets include in the poems?

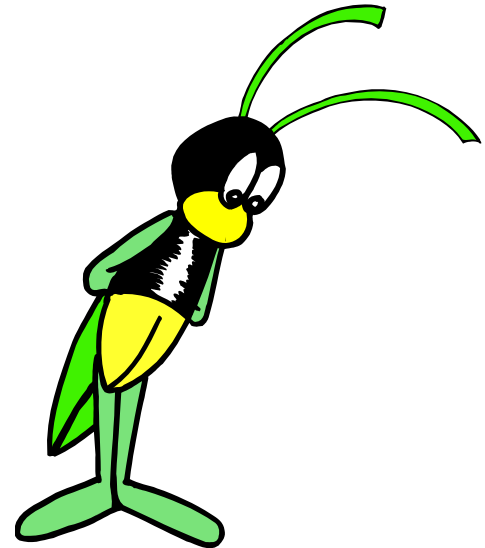


Reading into the poems...

- 7. What characteristics does Wild give his roaches that are not in the dictionary definition?

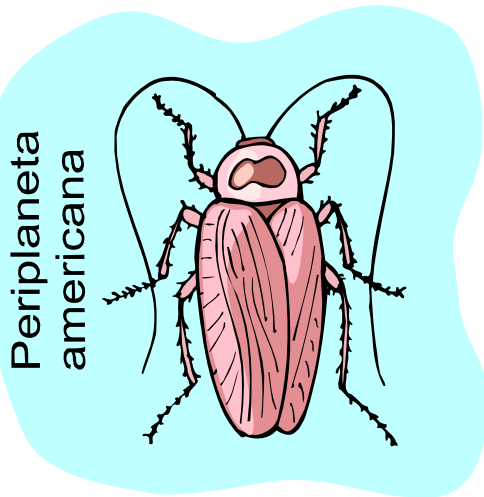


- 8. What additional characteristics does Morley give to roaches?



Reading into the poems...

- In each poem, the insect acquires meaning beyond its dictionary definition. Both poets lead us away from a literal view of roaches to a nonliteral one.



- 9. Which poet succeeds in giving roaches favorable connotations?
- 10. Which poet comes closer to expressing your own feelings about roaches?

More practice.....

- **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>
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- 1. Overweight
- 2. Short
- 3. Not smart
- 4. Unattractive
- 5. Non-athletic
- 6. Self-focused