Connotation and Denotation Lesson

Students will be able to (SWBAT):
• Explain the difference between connotation and denotation.
• Identify and explain connotation in a text.
• Appreciate and explain why an author chooses to use connotation a certain way in a text.

Common Core Standards:
• Reading Literature 8.4: Determine the meaning of the words/phrases as they are used in the text. Including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies and allusions to other texts
• Language 8.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
  o C: Distinguish among the connotations of the words with similar denotations (e.g. bullheaded, willful, firm, persistent, resolute)

Materials:
• Connotation/Denotation Worksheet
• “The Lady or the Tiger” PowerPoint
• “Positive,” “Negative,” and “Neutral” papers

Startup (5 min):
• How would you feel if someone called you confident? Why?
• How would you feel if someone called you conceited? Why?
• Discuss their thoughts about these questions as a class.

Model (12-15 min):
• Introduce and define denotation and connotation.
  o Denotation: The literal or dictionary meanings of a word
  o Connotation: The emotional or cultural association of a word
  o Use the startup as an example and discuss.
• Ask the class to come up with as many words as they can think of that have the same (or similar) denotation as “smart.” (Examples: Shrewd, egghead, bright, clever, brilliant, cunning, intelligent, brainy)
  o Ask the students how they feel about each word they gave as examples. When they hear each word do they have a positive feeling or a negative feeling? Discuss why one word (such as egghead) would be used instead of another (such as brilliant). How does using one word over another change the meaning of a statement even though the words have the same denotation?
  o Discussion Question: What do you think has influenced how you feel or think about certain words?

Group Practice (10-12 min):
• Three pieces of paper will be placed on the walls of the classroom to create a spectrum. On one side will be a paper that reads, “Positive.” On the other side there will be a paper that reads, “Negative.” And in between them both will be a paper that reads, “Neutral.”

• I will introduce these papers to the students and explain that I have several groups of three words that have similar denotations but different connotations.
  ○ Every student will stand and when I read the first word of a group they will go wherever they feel the word fits on the spectrum. They will move accordingly for the other two words I read for the group.
  ○ We will discuss why everyone went to the same area in the spectrum for certain words or why some people did not. (They must be ready to explain why they chose a certain way)

• We will continue with this activity for several groups of words.

Review and Connect (10-12 min):
• Bring the class back together in their seats and discuss what they noticed.
• Discussion Question: What does any of this have to do with “The Lady or the Tiger”?
  ○ Discuss how Stockton’s word choice manipulates us to feel more positively about the King and his arena than we probably should. Pull in the previous day’s lesson on propaganda and help them recognize that word choice was a major tool used to feel a certain way. People who create propaganda are always careful to use words with positive or negative connotations depending on their goal.

• Bring up an excerpt from “The Lady or the Tiger” and point out words that have rather positive connotations. Ask students how they feel about the King when they read the passage.
• Then show the class the same excerpt from the story but with a few words with positive connotations switched out with ones with negative connotations. Ask the students how the word changes influence how they feel about the King.

Closing (5 min):
• Review definitions of connotation and denotation.
• Clarify any questions.
• Reiterate the important of recognizing how authors use words’ connotations in order to make readers feel a certain way. Explain that it is important to recognize how we are influenced by certain words so as to not be manipulated into believing certain things.

Enrichment Activity (optional):
• Students who need extra practice may work on or take home a chart similar to the game we played in class. This will allow them to work individually to understand their feelings and not be overwhelmed or persuaded by their classmates. The words are grouped according to their

Remediation Plan:
• The activities are focused around group participation. Everyone is participating, which allows for plenty of questions to be asked and clarification to be given.
• We will go over it all together and make sure all the students understand the difference between connotation and denotation.

Worksheet:

Name: _________________ Period: _____

Connotation/Denotation Activity

Categorize the Following words as positive, neutral, or negative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>house, dump, home</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>exotic, foreign, strange</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>babble, talk, chat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>dinner, feast, slop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>fragrance, stench, smell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>venerable, old, decrepit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>sound, tune, noise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>beast, animal, pet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>