Connotation and Denotation

vocabulary mini-lesson
Definitions

- **Denotation** - the strict dictionary definition of a word
- **Connotation** – the various feelings, images, and memories that surround a word
Example

- **Denotations (definitions):**
  - House – a dwelling place
  - Home – a dwelling place

- **Connotation (feelings, images associated):**
  - You may live in a *house*, but we live in a *home*.
  - We might associate love, safety, security, and/or privacy with the word “home” more so than with the word “house”.
Example

- Annette was **surprised**.
- Annette was **startled**.
- Annette was **shocked**.

- Do these words have approximately the same denotation?
- In what case would you use the word “surprised”? “Startled”? “Shocked”?
Positive and Negative Connotations

Here are several words that people might use for the word "car":

- Positive connotation - automobile, vehicle, hot rod, wheels, ride, convertible
- Negative connotation – boat, heap, gas guzzler, clunker, junker
Positive and Negative Connotations

- Now consider all of the words people might use for “bathroom”:
  - Positive – restroom, powder room, water closet, men’s or ladies’ room
  - Negative – john, can, outhouse, latrine, head, potty, toilet
More Examples

- Which of the words in the following pairs have a more favorable or positive connotation?
  - thrifty or penny-pinching
  - pushy or aggressive
  - politician or statesman
  - chef or cook
  - slender or skinny