



Item specifications are currently under construction. [Additional research and standard setting for the ILEARN Through Year](#) has informed updates to the performance level descriptors and related resources. Revisions to example items, including sample passages, will occur on a rolling basis.

6.RC.12: Distinguish among the connotations of words with similar denotations.	
Reporting Category: Reading Comprehension	Subdomain: Understanding and Using Vocabulary
Assessed On:	
☐ Checkpoint 1	☒ Checkpoint 2
☐ Checkpoint 3	☒ Summative
6.RC.12 Instructional Framework	
ILEARN Stimulus and Item Difficulty Matrix	ILEARN Stimulus Specifications
Content Limits: • Include items that are: Passage Based and Standalone • Avoid items that focus on Greek/Latin roots/affixes, or figurative language • Use informational or literary text to provide context for items related to this standard.	
Clarifications: • Comprehension is enhanced when readers are able to distinguish between the dictionary meaning (denotation) and the implied meaning (connotation) of a writer's words, and recognize nuances in word meaning. • Connotation can be perceived in three ways: Positive, Negative, or Neutral ○ Positive (e.g., guest): These are feel-good words. The feelings, emotions, and ideas associated with a particular word are used to create a positive reaction from the reader. ○ Neutral (e.g., visitor): These are not very emotionally charged, depending on the context. ○ Negative (e.g., intruder): These words are often linked with negative thoughts, emotions, or ideas. They are often used to create a negative reaction from the reader.	
Items Tagged as Reading Comprehension Items for Text-to-Speech: Yes	
Expected Academic Vocabulary: connotation, denotation	
Sample Passages for Example Items	
Literary: <i>Coming Soon!</i>	
Informational: <i>Coming Soon!</i>	
Proficiency Level Descriptors and Example Items	
Below Proficiency: Determine the connotative meanings of familiar* words in context.	



* "Familiar" = words often encountered and understood easily.

Stimulus Considerations: Local/Proximal. Items target a limited, specific section of text or they may target the entire text at a surface/obvious level. Context clues are adjacent and although meaning is not explicitly addressed, a clear and logical connection is evident. Minimal synthesis may be required.

Key and Distractor Analysis: Logical. Answer options may be reasoned, paraphrased, or quoted statements that use familiar language. Key requires connecting clear ideas. Distractors are plausible, relying on ideas that can be eliminated with basic logic or a cursory understanding of the text.

Read the sentence and answer the question.

Madison was very easygoing about the project. She didn't let the stress get to her.

The word easygoing **most likely** suggests Madison is

- A. relaxed
- B. lazy
- C. uncaring
- D. generous

[Multiple Choice]

Which word **best** replaces the word easygoing?

[Multiple Choice]

Which word is closest in meaning to the word easygoing as it is used in the sentence?

[Multiple Choice]

In the passage, Frank says he felt like an "intruder" at the party. What does the connotation of the word intruder **most likely** suggest about Frank?

- A. He was not made to feel welcome.
- B. He did not know many people.
- C. He was not invited.
- D. He was kicked out.

[Multiple Choice]

Read the sentence and answer the question.



[Passage excerpt with underlined target word]

What does the author suggest to the reader with the use of the word [insert target word]?

[Multiple Choice]

Select the word the author uses to suggest that the cat is unwelcome.

Sarah was working on homework in her room when her brother, Matthew, intruded. “It seems we have a visitor,” he said. Their dog, Fido, was barking up a storm at the invader he spied on the back porch. Sarah quickly intervened. “Fido, stop barking at our guest!” Matthew looked surprised. “Fluffy belongs to Mrs. Smith, up the road. I am taking care of her cat while she’s away.”

[Hot Text Selectable]

Approaching Proficiency:

- Interpret the connotative meanings of intermediate* words in context.
- Explain the shared connotative meanings of multiple words in context.

* “Intermediate” = words that require some exposure to fully grasp.

The items below require students to interpret the connotative meanings of intermediate words in context.

Stimulus Considerations: Sectional/Paragraph-Level. Essential information needed to demonstrate comprehension requires greater discernment with navigation of multiple paragraphs or an entire text. The answer to the question is not explicitly stated in the text, so some interpretation is required that involves making reasoned connections. Context clues may be spread throughout the text.

Key and Distractor Analysis: Inferential. Answer options are reasoned statements. The key requires making a reasoned connection, as distractors present more relevant ideas that require comprehension and/or interpretation to eliminate.

Select the word that **best** suggests a negative connotation.

The weekend trip to the rocky cliffs began with an incredibly dismal morning. A heavy, grey fog pressed down on the beach, and a cold drizzle soaked right through the back of Julian's jacket. He stared at his empty collection bucket, listening to the relentless, dreary pounding of the waves against the mud.

By noon, the clouds parted, and the mood entirely changed when Julian's classmate, Sophia, found a perfectly preserved trilobite fossil. For the next hour, Julian had to listen to Sophia boast about her discovery. She repeatedly held the ancient rock up to the light, loudly pointing out its smooth ridges to anyone who walked by, and making sure everyone knew she was the first person to find anything valuable.



[Hot Text Selectable or Multiple Choice]

Read the sentences and answer the question.

Maya stared out the window at the dismal sky, feeling her excitement slip away as she realized her plans for the day might have to be canceled.

What connotation does the word dismal suggest to the reader?

- A. a sense of peaceful calmness
- B. a sense of gloom and disappointment**
- C. a sense of anger and frustration
- D. a sense of surprise and mystery

[Multiple Choice]

Which word **best** replaces the word dismal?

[Multiple Choice]

The items below require students to explain the shared connotative meanings of multiple words in context.

Stimulus Considerations: Sectional/Paragraph-Level. Essential information needed to demonstrate comprehension requires greater discernment with navigation of multiple paragraphs or an entire text. The answer to the question is not explicitly stated in the text, so some interpretation is required that involves making reasoned connections. Context clues may be spread throughout the text.

Key and Distractor Analysis: Inferential. Answer options are reasoned statements. The key requires making a reasoned connection, as distractors present more relevant ideas that require comprehension and/or interpretation to eliminate.

Read the sentences and answer the question.

“Jon’s drive for perfection and his passion for science came together to keep him awake. He stayed up all night working on his project.” (paragraph 2)

What do the words “drive” and “passion” suggest about Jon?

- A. a sudden interest
- B. a constant struggle
- C. a peaceful nature
- D. a strong desire**



[Multiple Choice]

The words intruder, invader, and trespasser are used in paragraphs 9-11 to describe the cat found on Sarah and Matthew's porch.

Which connotation is suggested by the shared meanings of these words, as they are used in this passage?

- A. a sense that the cat is unwelcome**
- B. a sense of compassion toward the cat
- C. a sense of desire to help the cat
- D. a sense there is a lack of knowledge about cats

[Multiple Choice]

Read the sentences and answer the question.

"The visitor signed in at the front office before walking down the hallway." (paragraph 2)

"We offered our guest a glass of water and a seat in the front of the classroom." (paragraph 5)

Why does the author most likely use the word guest instead of the word visitor, which has a similar meaning?

- A. to show
- B. to suggest...
- C. to indicate...
- D. to emphasize...

[Multiple Choice]

Read the sentences and answer the question.

"The visitor signed in at the front office before walking down the hallway." (paragraph 2)

"The dog barked loudly when it sensed an intruder near the back fence." (paragraph 5)

How do the connotations of the words visitor and intruder differ in the sentences?

- A. "Intruder" shows...while "visitor" shows...
- B. "Visitor" shows...while "intruder" shows...



- C. “Intruder” shows...while “visitor” shows...
D. “Visitor” shows...while “intruder” shows...

[Multiple Choice]

At Proficiency:

- Evaluate the connotative meanings of challenging* words in context.
- Synthesize multiple sections of text to distinguish among the connotations of multiple words with similar denotations.

* “Challenging” = words requiring effort, skill, or context to understand.

The items below require students to evaluate the connotative meanings of challenging words in context.

Stimulus Considerations: Global/Broad. Essential information needed to demonstrate comprehension includes more complex, integrated ideas or literary elements. Context clues require the synthesis of ideas or events found throughout the passage.

Key and Distractor Analysis: Analytical. These items may have one or two parts. Answer options may be reasoned and/or quoted statements. In one-part items, students have to cognitively identify the answer to the question about the text in order to interpret supporting details. Key requires analysis of author technique or complex ideas. Distractors have subtle distinctions and require a high level of comprehension and evaluation to eliminate.

Read the sentence and answer the question.

The old mayor was known for his rigid rules. He refused to change the town’s schedule, even when a massive storm was forecasted, insisting that tradition must be followed exactly as written.

Which statement **best** states the connotation of the word rigid as it is used in the sentence?

- A. It implies the mayor is strong and dependable during a crisis.
B. It shows the mayor is fragile and easily broken by stress.
C. It suggests the mayor is stubborn and dangerously unyielding.
D. It indicates the mayor is neat and highly organized.

[Multiple Choice]

Read the sentence and answer the question.

[Passage excerpt with underlined target word]

Why does the word [target word] carry a positive/negative connotation in the passage?



- A. It compares...
- B. It conveys..
- C. It indicates...
- D. It suggests...

[Multiple Choice]

The items below require students to synthesize multiple sections of text to distinguish among the connotations of multiple words with similar denotations.

Stimulus Considerations: Global/Broad. Essential information needed to demonstrate comprehension includes more complex, integrated ideas or literary elements. Context clues require the synthesis of ideas or events found throughout the passage. Students will likely need to return to the text.

Key and Distractor Analysis: Analytical. These items may have one or two parts. Answer options may be reasoned and/or quoted statements. In one-part items, students have to cognitively identify the answer to the question about the text in order to interpret supporting details. Key requires analysis of author technique or complex ideas. Distractors have subtle distinctions and require a high level of comprehension and evaluation to eliminate.

The words eccentric, erratic, and bizarre have similar meanings, referring to the characteristics that make people or things different or unique.

Complete the table to describe the different connotations of these similar words as they are used in the sentences.

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
"Uncle Albert is widely known in the neighborhood for his <u>eccentric</u> habits." (paragraph 2)	☒	☐	☐
"However, Uncle Albert's driving habits were entirely <u>erratic</u> ." (paragraph 4)	☐	☐	☒
"The situation took a truly <u>bizarre</u> turn when Uncle Albert decided to build a rocket ship in his driveway." (paragraph 6)	☐	☒	☐

[Table Match]

Read the paragraphs and answer the question.



However, the local pie-eating champion, Big Tim, had a gluttonous approach to food. At the county fair, he stuffed entire pastries into his mouth at once, wiping cherry filling across his face while aggressively reaching for more. Onlookers watched as he greedily cleared table after table, showing a complete lack of manners or self-control.

On the other side of town, the hikers who had been lost in the woods for three days finally stumbled into a diner. They were absolutely ravenous after their long ordeal. They ordered several plates of cheeseburgers and fries. They ate quickly because they were suffering from extreme hunger. The diner staff watched with deep sympathy.

Use the dropdown menu to select a word with a similar connotation for each sentence.

1. However, the local pie-eating champion, Big Tim, had a _____ approach to food.
[Dropdown: refined, **greedy**, desperate]
2. They were absolutely _____ after their long ordeal.
[Dropdown Menu: refined, greedy, **desperate**]

[Edit Task Inline]

Read the sentence and answer the question.

“The hikers were absolutely ravenous after their three-day journey in the woods.”

Select **two** words that share a similar connotation with the word ravenous as it is used in the sentence.

- ☐ greedy
- ☐ refined
- ☒ **starving**
- ☐ disgusting
- ☒ **desperate**

[Multiple Select or Multiple Choice]

Read the sentence and answer the question.

“The hikers were absolutely ravenous after their three-day journey in the woods.”

Which words could replace the word ravenous without changing the meaning of the sentence?



Choose **two**.

- ☐ greedy
- ☐ refined
- ☒ **starving**
- ☐ disgusting
- ☒ **desperate**

[Multiple Select or Multiple Choice]

Above Proficiency: Analyze a text to distinguish among the connotative meanings of multiple challenging words with similar denotations.

Stimulus Considerations: Comprehensive/Holistic. Essential information needed to demonstrate comprehension requires navigating dense or layered information where relevant details may be embedded within conflicting or abstract viewpoints. Context clues are more subtle. Synthesis requires evaluation of the author's underlying perspective or complex structural choices.

Key and Distractor Analysis: Critically Nuanced. These items may have one or two parts. Answer options may be reasoned and/or quoted statements. In one-part items, students have to cognitively answer the comprehension question in order to interpret the supporting details. Key requires high-level analysis or abstraction of authorial intent or complex ideas. Distractors require sophisticated elimination.

This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

Part A

What is the difference between the connotations of the words serene and placid, as they are used in the text?

- A. Serene implies a negative connotation of frightening silence, while placid implies a joyful noise.
- B. **Serene suggests something is peaceful, while placid suggests a neutral connotation of calmness.**
- C. Serene carries a negative connotation of sadness, while placid suggests things are peaceful.
- D. Serene implies something is constantly changing, while placid implies a negative connotation that things are frozen.

[Multiple Choice]

Part B

Which **two** pieces of evidence **best** support the answer in Part A?



- ☐ “Not a single ripple disturbed the water...” (paragraph 2)
- ☒ “...felt like a sacred sanctuary, a perfect place to clear their minds.” (paragraph 3)
- ☐ “A few ducks glided effortlessly across the top of the water.” (paragraph 5)
- ☒ “It was just a predictable, ordinary slice of nature.” (paragraph 5)
- ☐ “The trail ended at a swamp filled with thick, stagnant water.” (paragraph 7)

[Multiple Select or Multiple Choice]

Use **three** drop down menus in the paragraph to complete the analysis of the author’s word choice.

The author uses the word sterile in paragraph 2 to carry a [] connotation of an environment that is untouched. Then, the author uses the word barren in paragraph 4 to create a [] connotation that is focused on the description of the soil. Finally, the author uses desolate in paragraph 6 to introduce a [] connotation, implying that no one is left on the island.

Dropdown Menu 1: **neutral, scientific**; negative, dangerous; positive, exciting

Dropdown Menu 2: positive, clean; **neutral, unproductive**; negative, harmful

Dropdown Menu 3: **negative, lonely**; positive, quiet; neutral, careless

[Edit Task Inline]