

Night

Standards Focus: Denotation and Connotation

Denotation is the literal dictionary definition of a word. Many words can have the same denotation, or definition, but words also have a **connotation**: an emotional feeling attached to the word. For example the words thin, skinny, trim, shapely, slender, lanky and slim all have the same basic dictionary definition: of limited size; of slight consistency. However, would you rather be referred to as slender or slim, or skinny and lanky? The words slender and slim have a positive connotation; the words skinny and lanky have a negative connotation. In other words, we would probably want to be referred to as slender, slim, trim, or even thin.

Our goal as writers is to explore the use of connotation to enhance our writing. For example, rather than stating, "Jan *walked* throughout the room, *talking* to her guests," we can improve the sentence with words with the same denotative meaning, but more accurate or illustrative *connotative* meaning, such as "Jan *sauntered* throughout the room, *gossiping* to her guests." Clearly, the second sentence gives the reader a more accurate and detailed description of Jan's actions.

Directions: In each sentence below, a vocabulary word from Part Three of **Night** has been underlined. Below the sentence are four choices, each with the same denotation as the vocabulary word. Using the context of the sentence and a dictionary to help you, choose the word that best matches the connotation of the vocabulary word in its context. Write the letter of the correct answer on the line provided. An example has been done for you. (Be prepared to justify your answers.)

_____ **b** (Ex.) The officer's intentions of giving extra food to the children was not entirely altruistic.

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| a. unfair | c. giving |
| b. selfless | d. non-egoistic |

_____ 1. Whenever he could, Alphonse readied a cauldron, which held extra rations.

- | | |
|-----------|--------------|
| a. kettle | c. container |
| b. bowl | d. pan |

_____ 2. Elie was offered a "good Kommando" for a pittance.

- | | |
|------------|-----------------|
| a. ration | c. share |
| b. Pfennig | d. small amount |

_____ 3. The Gestapo concluded that the power outage was sabotage.

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| a. destruction | c. injury |
| b. vandalism | d. subversion |

Name _____ Period _____

_____ 4. While some told anecdotes of their former lives, everyone sat, famished.

- a. ravenous
- b. hungry
- c. empty
- d. dissatisfied

_____ 5. Knowing that some were facing the gallows was an example to all.

- a. demise
- b. noose
- c. frame
- d. scaffold

_____ 6. Each day, prisoners prepared themselves for an imminent air raid.

- a. assault
- b. bombing
- c. attack
- d. strike

_____ 7. The prisoner's manacled hands did not tremble.

- a. cuffed
- b. shackled
- c. confined
- d. restrained

_____ 8. A wizened old man approached, cynical of the answer he would be given.

- a. ironic
- b. doubtful
- c. distrustful
- d. unbelieving

_____ 9. Franek's treatment of Elie's father because he could not march was untenable.

- a. flawed
- b. indefensible
- c. unsound
- d. invalid

_____ 10. The last sounds of the American plane dissipated as the air raid ended.

- a. scattered
- b. squandered
- c. died
- d. wasted