



# Diction

CFA 1 on 9/5/14

good  
very  
really  
a lot  
funny  
nice  
pretty  
great  
mad  
scared  
bad  
fun  
happy  
sad



numerous  
innumerable  
marvelous  
dreadful  
jolly  
comical  
peculiar  
exceptional  
splendid  
superb  
incensed  
enraged  
irate

charming  
fascinating  
captivating  
terrified  
frightened  
petrified  
unusually  
immeasurable  
infinitely  
fetching  
delightful

# Discussion

Think about the two sets of words. Which set was more appealing to you as a reader? Why?

# The Power of Words

DPS "morose"

(first 45 seconds)

DPS Beauty of Language

The Power of Words

# What is diction?

diction - author's choice of words

Words are the writer's basic tools:

1. They create the color and texture of the written work.
2. They reflect and determine the level of formality.
3. They shape the reader's perception.

Good writers eschew words like *nice* and *bad*. Why?

Instead, they use words to invoke a specific effect.

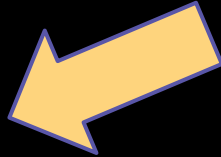
- ★ The house isn't *dirty*; it is *foul*.
- ★ The army doesn't *want* revenge; it is *thirsty* for revenge.
- ★ A person doesn't *cry*; they *whimper*.

Based on these examples, how does the author's use of diction affect the reader?

Diction is dictated by occasion. As with clothes, level of formality influences appropriate choices.



Would you wear this to the movie theater?



# Denotation

literal meaning of a word (dictionary definition)

Read the following groups of words and determine the general denotation of each.

- uprising, riot, demonstration, protest, disturbance
- lazy, apathetic, laidback, passive, carefree



# Connotation

the emotional feeling attached to a word

A connotation may be positive, negative, or neutral

She is *slender* and *lean*.

She is *thin*.

She is *skinny* and *scrawny*.



# PRACTICE

Put your answers in your  
notebook.

Rank the words in order from positive to negative.  
(You may use tech to look up words.)

A. thin, slim, lanky, skinny, gaunt, slender

B. aggressive, assertive, domineering, dynamic,  
pushy, forceful

C. shrewd, egghead, bright, clever, cunning, smart,  
intelligent, brainy

A redheaded woman was there with Trout. Kate could see her **rummaging** through the cabin, **dumping** drawers and **knocking** things from the shelves of cabinets.

-Louis Sacher, Holes

1. What picture do you get in your mind when you read the second sentence?
2. How would the meaning of the sentence change if we changed the **bold** words? For example: *Kate could see her searching through the cabin, emptying drawers and taking things from the shelves of cabinets.*
3. Write a sentence describing a small boy making a mess in a restaurant. Choose words that are clear, concrete and exact.

For nearly a year, I **sopped** around the house, the Store, the school, and the church, like an old biscuit, dirty and inedible. Then I met, or rather got to know, the lady who threw me my first lifeline.

- Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

1. What is the denotation of the word **sop**? This word is not usually used to describe a person's actions. What effect does this have on the reader?
2. What is a **lifeline**? How is Angelou's use of the words different than its usual use? How does this diction affect your understanding of the sentence?