CONNOTATION AND DENOTATION

Whether you're reading a book or just chatting with friends, your brain is constantly working to interpret the meaning of the words you're taking in. Generally, there are two different types of meaning to choose from: connotation and denotation.

con·no·ta·tion | /ˌkä-nə-ˈtā-shən/
(noun)
· something implied or suggested by a word or phrase

Connotation is the emotions and/or ideas associated with a particular word or phrase.

If a word invokes a good feeling or idea, that word has a positive connotation. If a word invokes a bad feeling or idea, that word has a negative connotation. If a word doesn't invoke any partiular emotion or idea, then that word has a neutral connotation.

Positive connotation: Jamie uses coupons because she is *economical*.
Negative connotation: Jamie uses coupons because she is *cheap*.

The context of the surrounding text can help clarify a word's connotation.

Denotation is simply the literal meaning or definition of a word or phrase.

de·no·ta·tion | /ˌdē-nō-ˈtā-shən/
(noun)
· the direct dictionary definition of a word or phrase

Here's an example of the connotation and denotation of the word *timid*:

Connotation: The connotation of *timid* is generally a negative one, especially if you compare it to the word *reserved* or the word *apprehensive*, both of which have a more positive connotation.

Denotation: The denotation, or definition, of *timid* is "lacking in courage or self-confidence."