

Lesson Skill: Understanding connotation

Strand Reading--vocabulary

SOL 6.4
7.4
8.4

Materials

- Copies of Lincoln's "The Gettysburg Address," available online

Lesson

1. Have students read through "The Gettysburg Address" for broad comprehension. Then, have them reread the first paragraph carefully and identify all words with positive connotations and all words with negative connotations. Have them list the words on a T chart, like this:

Negative	Positive
	new nation dedicated equal

2. Have students continue with the remaining paragraphs. After paragraph two, their charts might include the following:

Negative	Positive
battlefield	new nation dedicated equal dedicated Proper

3. Be sure students include repeated uses of the same word (e.g., dedicated). After paragraph three, their charts might resemble this:

Negative	Positive
testing	new nation
battlefield	dedicated
not	equal
struggled	dedicated
Poor power	proper
unfinished work	brave
dead	consecrate
(shall not)died in	dedicated
vain	great task
	honored dead
	nobly advanced

4. Once students have finished the re-reading and word analysis, have them identify the column of words that contains greater emotion, greater meaning, and therefore greater impact.
5. Discuss ways the use of other words (synonyms) for the words in the positive column might have affected the impact of Lincoln's speech (e.g., *leaders* for *fathers* or *goal* for *great task*).
6. Have students write a summary of their reactions to the word choices Lincoln made for this famous speech.