Why do authors choose the words they do? This question isn’t as simple as it seems.

- Sometimes authors choose words to convey a **technical meaning**. Subject areas in science, math, and engineering express ideas using technical words and phrases.
- At other times, they select words for their **connotative meaning**. A word chosen for its connotation expresses not just an idea but also a feeling.
- And authors can use and combine words to produce a **figurative meaning**. These are words or phrases that express ideas in creative, unusual, or unexpected ways.

**Underline words in the diagram below with technical, figurative, or connotative meanings.**

The huge black eyes seem borrowed from the face of a space alien.

The wicked speed of the wings allows the wasp to snatch up its meal and dart away like a thief.

The female wasp’s ovipositor, or egg-laying organ, is found in the abdomen. It also functions as a stinger to paralyze and kill prey.

**The chart shows phrases from the diagram with each type of meaning. Complete the chart.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Type of Meaning</th>
<th>Why the Author Uses It</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“snatch up its meal”</td>
<td>connotative</td>
<td>to suggest that the wasp takes the meal suddenly, perhaps rudely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“ovipositor, or egg-laying organ, is found in the abdomen”</td>
<td>to communicate precisely which part of the wasp is being described</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“eyes seem borrowed from the face of a space alien”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paying attention to the different types of meaning will help you understand how the author thinks and feels about a topic. For example, you might guess that the author of the diagram has some scientific knowledge about wasps—but also finds them rather unnerving!
Read the first three paragraphs of the following scientific account.

**Don’t Let the Bedbugs Bite**  
*by Nick Marcus*

Bedbugs are a nuisance that spread quickly, so if you find bedbugs in your home, you owe it to yourself and others to take decisive and immediate action.

The scientific name for these tiny, bloodsucking insects is *Cimex lectularius*. They’re called bedbugs because they mainly feed on blood at night while their hosts are asleep. They are like an army of minuscule vampires. Places like mattresses, couches, and chairs serve as luxurious havens in which thousands of them can live.

The bedbug inserts a syringe-like proboscis through the host’s skin. It takes between three and ten minutes for the bug to drink its fill through this slender appendage. Its bite is small and painless, so the victim rarely wakes during this feeding time. Bedbugs are not known for disseminating disease, but the bumps they leave behind can become infected. Also, the saliva they release into the skin can make you itch so badly you’ll want to scratch your skin off.

(continued)

**Explore how to respond to this prompt:** 

*The underlined words and phrases in the passage express technical, connotative, and figurative meanings. Determine the meaning of each word or phrase as it is used in the passage.*

The technical word is *proboscis*. You can use context clues in the passage to figure out and describe what it means. Use the chart below to determine the meaning of *proboscis*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Context Clues</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Proboscis | “syringe-like,” “through the host’s skin,” “drink its fill,” “slender” | A proboscis is ____________________________  

__________________________

Next, consider the connotative meaning of the word *victim*, which the author uses to describe the person being bitten. What does the word *victim* suggest about both the person and the bedbug?

The word *victim* suggests that ____________________________.

Finally, the phrase “scratch your skin off” is figurative. What does this phrase help the reader understand about the itch caused by a bedbug’s bite?

__________________________________________
Continue reading the account about bedbugs. Use the Close Reading and Hint to help you answer the question.

(continued from page 88)

Bedbug infestations can appear to be a blanket of crawling pinholes that cover the place where you rest. The teensy pests often hitch rides on suitcases left in hotel rooms and travel home with unwitting victims, so keep your luggage off the floor when you travel, and wash your clothes in hot water when you get home.

Use a flashlight and magnifying glass to scrutinize your mattress. If you find any evidence of bedbugs, destroy the mattress immediately and call a professional exterminator. You owe it to neighbors and fellow travelers not to spread the bedbug headache.

Circle the correct answer.

Which statement best describes the impact of the author’s word choice on the overall tone of the account?

A  Phrases like teensy pests and hitch rides give the whole account a humorous tone.

B  Words like rest, travel, and neighbors give the account a comforting tone.

C  The words evidence and professional exterminator are used to create a threatening tone.

D  Words with technical meanings create an informative tone, but phrases like crawling pinholes add a note of disgust.

Show Your Thinking

Explain which words and phrases helped you figure out the intended tone of the account.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

With a partner, discuss which words in this part of the account have connotative meanings and how they contribute to establishing the author’s attitude toward bedbugs.
Read the scientific account. Use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.

The Goliath Beetle  

by Eleanora Inez

1. Named for the biblical giant Goliath, the Goliath beetle is the most colossal, brawniest, and heftiest kind of beetle in the world. Goliath beetles grow to a length of up to eight inches and may weigh as much as three and a half ounces. Most Goliath beetles are as large as a mouse. They have distinct vertical black bands, like the bars of a prison door, on the elytron that cover their wings. Some species may also have bright yellow, red, gray, or brown markings.

2. The Goliath beetle lives in flowers in the tropical rain forests of Africa. Goliath beetles have fearsome jaws that they use to slash, impale, and chomp food. Adult beetles primarily feed on sugary tree sap and fruit. Goliath beetles also have six powerful legs with sharp claws that can grip. The Goliath beetle uses its claws to gather food and to climb. In addition, the Goliath beetle has a pair of front and a pair of rear wings attached to its thorax. When it flies, it sounds like the whirl of a helicopter propeller.

3. Like other kinds of beetles, the Goliath beetle undergoes a metamorphosis—a four-stage process of change. This process takes place as the beetle develops. During the first stage, a female Goliath beetle lays its eggs in rotting wood or decaying plants. Once an egg hatches, the wormlike larva feeds on the wood or plant material until it is fully grown. The larva wraps itself in a cocoon like a suit of armor to protect itself. Then the pupa lives in the cocoon during the third stage. After several months, the cocoon breaks apart. An adult Goliath beetle steps forth to find a mate, and the four steps in the life cycle of a Goliath beetle are repeated.

4. Goliath beetles are truly the giants of the insect world, and their formidable presence leaves a lasting impression on those who view them.
Lesson 9

Hints

Think about whether this word is used for its technical, figurative, or connotative meaning.

The best way to convey a violent connotation is by describing actions.

What is the author’s attitude toward the Goliath beetle itself?

Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

1. Why has the author chosen to include the word *metamorphosis* in the text?
   - A. It highlights the comparison between the beetle and a helicopter.
   - B. It describes a biological process that the beetle undergoes.
   - C. It expresses the author’s objectivity about an unusual insect.
   - D. It explains why scientists are impressed with the beetle’s life cycle.

2. Which of the following is an example of the author using words that have a violent connotation?
   - A. She describes the vertical black bands on the elytron that cover Goliath beetles’ wings.
   - B. She compares the Goliath beetle cocoons to suits of protective armor.
   - C. The author details the four stages of the Goliath beetle’s life cycle.
   - D. She writes that Goliath beetles use their jaws to slash, impale, and chomp food.

3. Describe the overall tone of the account and the word choices the author uses to convey it. Cite at least three specific examples from the text to support your response.

   The Goliath Beetle by Eleanora Inez

   Named for the mythical giant Goliath, the Goliath beetle is the most colossal, brawniest, and heftiest kind of beetle in the world. Goliath beetles grow to a length of up to eight inches and may weigh as much as three and a half ounces. Most Goliath beetles are as large as a mouse. They have distinct vertical black bands, like the bars of a prison door, on the elytron that cover their wings. Some species may also have bright yellow, red, gray, or brown markings.

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