



Description

This lesson is designed to help students understand and identify subtle differences in meaning among related words. As students work with shades of meaning that involve degree (such as **cool**, **cold**, and **frigid**), they begin to understand that words can be similar in their literal meanings (denotations) but also have differences in their implied meanings (connotations).

TEACHER TIPS

To fully understand shades of meaning, students should have a good grasp of synonyms and antonyms. Use the Warm-Up to determine students' understanding of these concepts. For students who struggle, refer to the *Synonyms and Antonyms* Lexia Lessons (Level 11).

Another important aspect of this lesson is the ability to sort words into categories. Students need to understand how certain words fit in the same category and identify a word that doesn't fit. For students who struggle, refer to the *CVC Word Categories* Lexia Lesson (Levels 6 and 9).

During discussions, remind students to listen to others, take turns, and speak in complete sentences. Some students may benefit from targeted oral language support to better understand and apply this concept. See the Adaptations section for suggestions.

PREPARATION/MATERIALS

- Index cards to create word cards for Guided Practice (word list included)
- Copies of the included word strips (for each student). The numbers in the upper-left corners can be used to keep related words together.


Warm-up

say I'm going to name pairs of words. Some pairs are synonyms. Synonyms are words that have the same meaning, like **cold** and **chilly**. Some pairs are antonyms. Antonyms are words that have opposite meanings, like **cold** and **hot**. I'm going to say some pairs of words. Do thumbs-up if the words have the same meaning. Do thumbs-down if the words are opposites.

Pairs to use: **leap/jump, big/little, light/heavy, quick/fast, wet/dry, gift/present, forget/remember, loud/noisy**

Use student responses to determine whether you move on to Direct Instruction or provide additional instruction using other Lexia Lessons as described in the Teacher Tips.


Direct Instruction

 Today we are going to learn about “shades of meaning.” Some words have meanings that are similar but also slightly different. These words are related to the same concept, but they describe different degrees or levels of that concept. We call those differences “shades of meaning.”


Write the word **warm** on the board.

 This word is connected to temperature and heat. A summer day can be **warm**.


Write the word **hot** on the board.

 This word is also connected to temperature and heat. A summer day can be **hot**. We can use both **warm** and **hot** to describe the temperature, but a **hot** day feels different from a **warm** day. The word **hot** describes a higher temperature than the word **warm**. So we can say that **hot** and **warm** show shades of meaning.


Write the word **boiling** on the board.

 This word is connected to temperature and heat, too. If we described a summer day as **boiling**, we would be saying that the temperature is even higher than it is on a hot day!


Draw arrows from **warm** to **hot** and from **hot** to **boiling**.


 These words are all connected to temperature and heat. In that way, they are similar. But each one has more heat than the last. In that way, they are slightly different. So **warm**, **hot**, and **boiling** all show shades of meaning related to temperature.

Guided Practice


 Now let's work together to figure out how other sets of words show shades of meaning. Each set contains three words.

Write these words in this order: **angry** / **annoyed** / **furious**. Read the words aloud.

 Think how you feel when you're angry . . . annoyed . . . or furious. Are you happy? (no) Are you sad? (no) How do you feel? (mad)

 All of these words describe the concept **mad**. Let's put them in order, from the least mad to the most mad.

Have students direct you how to list the three words **annoyed**, **angry**, **furious**. If necessary, prompt the students with these questions.

 Which word means “kind of mad”? (**annoyed**) Which word means “very, very mad”? (**furious**) These words are all connected to the emotion of feeling mad. **Annoyed**, **angry**, and **furious** all show shades of meaning related to feeling mad.

If students need more practice before moving on to Independent Application, follow a similar procedure using the word sets below (display words in the order shown here).

- **howl** / **sob** / **whimper** (all crying sounds; arrange from quietest to loudest)
- **street** / **path** / **highway** (all types of roads; arrange from smallest to biggest)
- **mat** / **rug** / **carpet** (all floor coverings; arrange from smallest to largest)
- **sometimes** / **often** / **always** (all about frequency; arrange from least to most)

Independent Application

Have students work independently or in pairs. Make copies and cut apart the words from strips 1-5 at the end of this lesson. Give students each a full set of words.

Have students put the words in each set into order according to their shades of meaning. Allow students to share their answers and explain to the group how they determined the correct order.

Encourage students to use complete sentences and the term “shades of meaning” in their explanations.

As a group, work with students to identify the relationship among the three words in each set, and discuss how the shades of meaning relate to a single concept.

Note: Students may order the words from either least to most or most to least - you can use this as an opportunity to discuss the concept of a continuum, keeping in mind that either order can be correct.

Wrap-up

Check students’ understanding. Display these three words: **urge, encourage, suggest**. Have students read the words and explain how they are related (e.g., getting someone to do something). See if students can arrange these three words from least to most emphatic (suggest, encourage, urge).

Use students’ responses to guide your choice of activities in the Adaptations section below. To give students additional practice with shades of meaning that involve degree or to extend the lesson, see the Differences in Degrees word lists at the end of this lesson.

Adaptations

FOR STUDENTS WHO NEED MORE SUPPORT

Cut apart and display the words from any set of word strips at the end of this lesson.

- Read each word to students and discuss the meaning.
- Tell students what concept the three words are related to.
- Have students work with either “least” or “most” by asking them to identify which word describes either end of the spectrum.
- Follow up by having students work from that starting point to identify which word would come next in their order and, finally, which word would complete the continuum of the shades of meaning.
- Reinforce by using examples or acting out the words to show the subtle differences in meaning.

FOR STUDENTS READY TO MOVE ON

Option 1: Have students brainstorm other words that could be added to the groups of three related words in word strips 1-5.

Option 2: Have students use the Differences in Degrees word lists at the end of the lesson to write short stories or essays to demonstrate different connotations of a concept.

Option 3: Provide students with a list of negative and positive words. Suggested words: **nosy/curious, reckless/daring, cramped/cozy, hasty/quick, tricky/clever**

Explain that these words have similar meanings (denotations) but different implied meanings (connotations). One of the words has a positive sense (compliment); the other word has a negative sense (insult).

For each pair, have students put minus sign (-) next to the negative word and a plus sign (+) next to the positive word. Have students discuss their work, perhaps coming up with context sentences using each word and talking about how the two sentences are different.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ORAL LANGUAGE SUPPORT

- Facilitate collaborative discussions in which students build on each other’s ideas by asking open-ended questions. After posing a question, allow time for reflection before discussing answers. Encourage students to explain their ideas and understanding.
- Provide students with written, oral, and visual representations of words to reinforce pronunciation and meaning. Photographs, illustrations, and objects are especially helpful in making vocabulary concrete.
- Students whose native language is not English may not have as many opportunities to learn vocabulary indirectly, so explicit instruction is especially important. Use word walls, cognates, dictionaries, word maps, drawing, comparing, contrasting, and reviewing to teach and reinforce new vocabulary.

Differences in Degree

Least	Middle	Most	How Words Are Related
rest	doze	slumber	degrees of sleep
strict	harsh	cruel	tone while enforcing rules
drizzle	shower	downpour	amount of rainfall
suggest	direct	command	degree of direction
tired	weary	exhausted	degree of exhaustion
yelp	scream	shriek	loudness of a yell
clever	smart	brilliant	degrees of intelligence
run	rush	race	speed of movement
task	project	career	amount of time spent working
like	love	adore	levels of affection
quarrel	conflict	war	degree of disagreement
unusual	strange	bizarre	degree of oddness
sliver	chip	chunk	size of pieces
amuse	delight	enchant	degree of pleasure
some	enough	lots	amount of something
startled	frightened	shocked	degree of surprise
safe	risky	dangerous	level of danger



1

whopper

2

feast

3

terrified

4

shout

5

grin

1

lie

2

meal

3

alarmed

4

talk

5

smile

1

fib

2

snack

3

nervous

4

whisper

5

frown