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Lesson 5

DETERMINE FIGURATIVE, CONNOTATIVE,
AND TECHNICAL MEANINGS L.VL.6.3.B

WORDS TO KNOW

denotative

connotative

figurative

technical

INTRODUCTION

Real-World Connection

MUSIC CONNECTION

Nayeli, a reporter for the school's newspaper, is writing a review of a classmate's drum solo. Nayeli writes, "As the drummer hit the metal disc, a screeching sound arose that sounded like a beautiful melody to my ears." Nayeli's editor returns the article with many notes. She is using words with negative associations to describe a pleasant experience. She does not use specific words that relate to drumming. How can Nayeli revise her writing so that it is clearer? We will practice the skills in **Guided Instruction** and **Independent Practice**. Then at the end of the lesson, we will revisit Nayeli and her drums.



What I Am Going to Learn

- How understanding words that relate to a specific subject can help me understand that subject better
- How some words have associations beyond their dictionary definition and how these associations can help me understand the context of the text better
- How authors use words in a certain way to create mental pictures for readers

What I May Already Know

- I know words that have special meanings in different subject areas.
- I know words that generally improve my vocabulary.
- I know figurative meanings of words, including similes and metaphors.

Vocabulary in Action

You often form opinions or base decisions on what you read. When you are reading, remember that writers think carefully about the words they use. Sometimes they consider not only the dictionary definition of the words they choose but also their emotional impact on the reader or what the reader will associate with the word.

- The **denotative** meaning, or denotation, of a word is its strict, literal dictionary meaning. The words *economical*, *thrifty*, *miserly*, *stingy*, and *frugal* have almost the same denotation—not wanting to spend money.
- The **connotative** meaning, or connotation, of a word is the association and emotion that a word brings to mind. A connotation can be positive, negative, or neutral. The word *miserly*, for example, suggests that someone is selfish and will go out of his or her way to avoid spending money. Someone who is *frugal*, on the other hand, is careful about spending money and sticks to a budget but isn't necessarily selfish or stingy.
- The **figurative** meaning of a word or phrase goes beyond its literal meaning. Figurative language describes a thing or an idea by making a comparison. The purpose is to create images in your mind of what you are reading.
 - *Similes* are comparisons that use the word like or as. "She runs like a deer." "Her skin was soft as silk."
 - *Metaphors* are comparisons that say one thing is another thing. "She was a deer leaping gracefully across the meadow."
 - *Personification* gives human characteristics to nonhuman things. "Fog crept across the lawn and glanced in every window."
- The **technical** meaning of a word refers to its meaning when used in a particular subject or application of mathematics, science, or technology, such as the word *virus* when speaking of a computer.

THINK ABOUT IT

Think about an ad for a room to rent and the effect each of these adjectives might have.

Positive connotation – *cozy*

Denotation – *small*

Negative connotation – *cramped*

THINK ABOUT IT

The author says drumming before the drum set invention was inefficient. Does *inefficient* have a positive or negative connotation? Look at the clues in the text. Is the process before the drum set easy or difficult?

GUIDED INSTRUCTION

Nayeli researched to learn about more terms related to drumming and found an article about the history of drums. Underline technical words, circle words with positive or negative connotations, and highlight figurative language.

Where Did the Drum Set Come From?

Before the invention of the drum set, the process of creating a full, rich sound was inefficient. Bands had to use multiple drummers to get the sound they craved. Each drummer played a different type of drum. For example, one would play the snare drum. Another would play the bass. The drummers combined their sounds to create rhythms as steady as heartbeats.

In the early 20th century, the invention of the drum set transformed music and rhythm. This allowed drummers to play multiple instruments at the same time. First came the invention of stands to hold the drums. With the creation of the bass drum, drummers could play rhythms using their feet. Later came cymbals, which drummers could play by tapping their feet on pedals. Over the 20th century, drum sets improved and changed. Instead of just drumsticks, drummers used wire brushes to create specific sounds.

Today, with the combination of instruments available in a drum set, a single drummer can create a wide variety of sounds and rhythms.

Complete the chart by listing the words and phrases you found in the passage, the type of meaning (connotative or denotative), and the meaning or connotation.

WORD OR PHRASE	TYPE OF MEANING	MEANING OR CONNOTATION
inefficient	connotative	negative

Part A

What does the word **bass** mean as it is used in paragraph 1?

- (A) a type of fish that drummers like to eat
- (B) the lowest note that a drummer can play
- (C) the very low singing voice of a drummer
- (D) a type of drum that is played with the feet

Part B

Underline the sentence in paragraph 2 that best supports the answer to Part A.

Write the simile used in the first paragraph. What does it suggest?

THINK ABOUT IT

Ask yourself, “How does the context of the text help you figure out the word’s technical meaning?”

TIPS AND HINTS

Which sentence talks about the bass drum?

▶ TURN AND TALK

With a partner, write a short text on learning how to ride a bicycle. In addition to technical words, use one simile, one metaphor, and one personification. Label each to identify them.

Color in the traffic signal that shows how you are doing with the skill.



How Am I Doing?

What questions do you have?

Write an example of a simile, a metaphor, or personification.

How do you and your friends use technical words or connotations in your everyday conversations?

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Read the article. Then, answer the questions that follow.

From Ska to Soca and Rap to Reggae: The Music of Jamaica

by Ann Stalcup | Genre: Magazine Article

Jamaica is an island in the West Indies, south of Cuba. In Jamaica, music is an important part of everyday life. This article tells about four different styles of popular Jamaican music.

- 1 Music is everywhere in Jamaica. It pours out of buses, cars, taxis, and stores. In small towns and villages, loudspeakers atop tall poles blast out the latest craze. Even on remote country roads where the air is silent except for birds singing, people walk as if they are moving to music.
- 2 Jamaican music has its roots in the folk music brought by African slaves in the 1700s. Although slave owners tried hard to stamp out the African culture, traditional music survived. The burru, or “talking drums,” passed information from one plantation to the next, just as they had passed information from village to village in Africa. In the sugar cane fields, where singing helped distract workers from the pain of backbreaking labor, folk songs developed. The songs described how hard life and working conditions were for the Africans in their new land.
- 3 Although the old songs were kept alive, European influences gradually entered the music. European musical instruments such as fifes, flutes, horns, and fiddles were introduced. But through it all, Jamaicans retained unique sounds and styles of their own, styles that became popular the world over.
- 4 During the last 250 years, one style of music has developed after another. As they’ve developed, the styles have shared one thing in common. Each tells a story. Many songs offer social commentary on issues about which Jamaicans, especially the poor, feel strongly.
- 5 Africans first brought mento to Jamaica in the 1700s. It reached the height of its popularity in the 1950s when it changed somewhat and became ska. Mento involved singing, dancing, and drumming. In the late 1800s, it even incorporated influences from the French quadrille and the English Maypole Dance. Initially, its sound was slow and rhythmic, but the music became much faster later in its history. Added to the mix were Cuban musical instruments such as guitars, banjos, shakers, and a rumba box. (This instrument is similar to the African thumb piano.)
- 6 Calypso was at its most popular in the 1950s and early 1960s. Like mento, every song tells a story. Often, the stories describe work or

◀ TIPS AND HINTS

Sometimes, words on a test might be in bold letters or underlined. Pay attention to these words. Look for clues that help you understand their meaning.



READING NOTES

romance. Calypso is associated with Jamaica because Jamaican-born singer Harry Belafonte introduced it to the world with two songs in particular—"Jamaica Farewell" and "The Banana Boat Song." Although calypso is heard frequently in Jamaica, the style, and its steel drums, belong to the Caribbean island of Trinidad.

- 7 Ska, the music with roots in the mento style of the 1950s, developed from the boogie-woogie and rhythm and blues that were popular in the United States. Uniquely Jamaican, it uses a horn and involves dancing at double the normal speed. Since most ska were social protest songs, it was a musical style popular with the poorest members of Jamaica's population. Bob Marley was famous for ska, but he later moved to reggae, making it world-famous. Rock steady is ska slowed down to half speed, and is much more melodic. Though popular when it was first introduced, it lasted only four years—from 1966 to 1970.
- 8 Reggae developed from both mento and calypso. It was born in the poorest areas of Kingston, Jamaica's capital. Marley became such a famous reggae performer that he brought the world's attention to Jamaica and its music. Kingston earned the nickname, "Nashville of the Third World." Reggae's lyrics tell stories that are religious, social, or political. Some songs are filled with anger and violence. Jamaicans say that the word "reggae" means "comin' from de people."
- 9 Reggae is believed to have influenced the music of many world-famous musicians, such as the Rolling Stones, Stevie Wonder, and Elton John. Its rhythms and sounds still have their roots in the singing, dancing, and drumming of its performers' African ancestors. Unfortunately, Marley died in 1981 while still a young man. However, his contributions to world music are legendary and he will not be forgotten. Some of his children, such as Ziggy Marley, are keeping their father's musical tradition alive.
- 10 Soca has been popular on the island for the past 25 years. Its origins lie in Trinidad. Fast-paced, its sounds are a mix of both soul and calypso. Like every other form of Jamaican music, it tells a story, one that describes the deepest feelings and concerns of the Jamaican people. However, the songs are about less serious issues than the earlier styles of music. Some say that reggae makes you think, whereas soca makes you dance.

1. Part A

Read this sentence from paragraph 2.

The burru, or “talking drums,” passed information from one plantation to the next, just as they had passed information from village to village in Africa.

Which best describes the burru music’s function in the African culture?

- (A) method of entertainment
- (B) communication device
- (C) form of protest
- (D) religious expression



Part B

Which evidence from the passage best supports the answer to Part A?

2. Part A

What is the meaning of *backbreaking* as it is used in paragraph 2 of the passage?

- (A) harmful
- (B) boring
- (C) distracting
- (D) difficult

TIPS AND HINTS

Read answer choices carefully. Often, wrong answer choices change the meaning of the original passage. Once you choose your answer, check it against the passage and make sure it maintains the original meaning.

 **Part B**

Which sentence from paragraph 2 best supports the answer to Part A?

- (A) “Jamaican music has its roots in the folk music brought by African slaves in the 1700s.”
- (B) “Although slave owners tried hard to stamp out the African culture, traditional music survived.”
- (C) “The burru, or ‘talking drums,’ passed information from one plantation to the next, just as they had passed information from village to village in Africa.”
- (D) “The songs described how hard life and working conditions were for the Africans in their new land.”

3. Which example of figurative language should the writer use to best describe the **unique sounds** discussed in paragraph 3?

- (A) as new as a baby
- (B) as angry as a hornet
- (C) as loud as a thunderstorm
- (D) as individual as a snowflake

4. Part A

What does the word **quadrille** mean as it is used in paragraph 5?

- (A) a type of song
- (B) a type of dance
- (C) a type of drum
- (D) a type of guitar

Part B

Which two details from paragraph 5 best support the answer to Part A?

- (A) “Africans first brought mento to Jamaica in the 1700s.”
- (B) “. . . reached the height of its popularity in the 1950s . . .”
- (C) “Mento involved singing, dancing, and drumming . . .”
- (D) “. . . and the English Maypole Dance.”
- (E) “Added to the mix were Cuban musical instruments . . .”
- (F) “. . . similar to the African thumb piano.”

5. Read the words and decide which meaning they match. Write the word in the appropriate location of the table.

calypso
mento
ska

WORD	MEANING
	music from Africa popular in Jamaica in the 1950s that involved singing, dancing, and drumming
	music unique to Jamaica that developed from boogie-woogie and rhythm and blues
	music popular in Jamaica in the 1950s and 1960s that tells a story, usually about work or romance

6. What connotative meaning does the word “legendary” have in paragraph 9, and what does it describe?

EXIT TICKET

L.VL.6.3.B

Now that you know how to use figurative, connotative, and technical meanings, let's revisit the **Real-World Connection**. Imagine you attended the drum performance with Nayeli. Revise Nayeli's original sentence for her article, using appropriate technical terms, connotations, and figurative language. Nayeli's original sentence was, "As the drummer hit the metal disc, a screeching sound arose that sounded like a beautiful melody to my ears."


