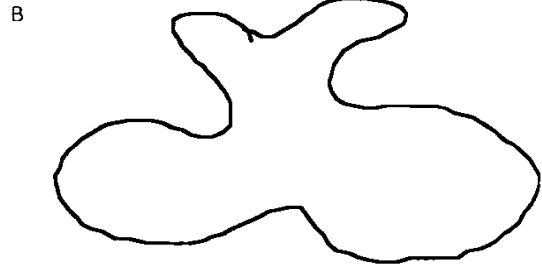
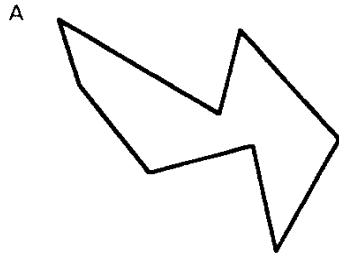


# Semantics: Connotation vs. Denotation

Study figures A and B. and answer the questions below.



Decide if each word below is best associated with Figure A or Figure B and write the letter beside it:

\_\_\_kepick

\_\_\_oona

\_\_\_swurrel

\_\_\_gattod

\_\_\_implore

\_\_\_doxy

\_\_\_trioxide

\_\_\_boyar

Of the above words which word would best name Figure A? \_\_\_\_\_ Figure B? \_\_\_\_\_

Which of the figures is male? \_\_\_\_\_ Female? \_\_\_\_\_

If these two figures represented a brand of gasoline and a brand of oil, which would be gasoline? \_\_\_ Oil? \_\_\_

Which of the two figures represent a lemon? \_\_\_\_\_ a melon? \_\_\_\_\_

Which figure is red? \_\_\_\_\_ blue? \_\_\_\_\_

Which of the two figures sounds like a cymbal? \_\_\_ violin? \_\_\_ saxaphone? \_\_\_ trumpet? \_\_\_ the wind? \_\_\_ dog's bark \_\_\_

*"It is an odd and significant fact that nineteen out of twenty people will give identical answers." (Minot 21)*

For the sake of this assignment, name the two figures Oona and Kepic. Think of the two as figures meeting for the first time. Compose four more nonsense names relating to these figures. Now try a few lines of very free verse describing Oona and Kepick. (Jabberwocky, the da da poems and your Box of Words poem were similar assignments.)

Here is a sample:

Oona looks feenly in the shane

But Kepick kacks his bip,

slads and zabots.

Then all the lovely leems lorouge.

Considering the connotative sound of the words what might this "poem" mean?

Write your lines here:

You should be seeing by now that there is more to a word than meets the eye. Words are alive, powerful, tricky, changeable—fun. A word has its **actual dictionary meaning (denotation)** which is important to know. But many words also have more **subtle meanings. Their associations, size, shape, sounds cause us to see extra meanings in their use. This is connotation**, and it is such an important skill for a good writer to know and develop. Mark Twain commented that one should use the exact word needed, not its second cousin. He was right!

For fun, see if you can repair these “near misses” in word choice:

- Moby Richard
- Mandibles
- My So-So Lady
- Billy the Youngster
- Star Trip
- Doc, Dopey, Sleepy, Sneezzy, Happy, Bashful, and Annoyed

## Point of View

Words that are similar in meaning may be miles apart in their effect because of the connotations they carry. *Your son is rash, but my son is adventurous. Your house is a mess, but my house is lived-in.* The situations or conditions described may be identical, but the point of view is different, and words are chosen to indicate that different view point. We discovered this in 6<sup>th</sup> grade when we did the exercises on being **selectively specific**. I hope you remember.

In this exercise, show contrasting points of view by completing the following list with words that have the same meaning but show a **favorable connotation**. You may add as many words as you think of. The first one is done for you.

1. You are stubborn, but I am firm, constant, steadfast, determined, persistent, principled
2. You are mediocre, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
3. You are parsimonious, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
4. You are gullible, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
5. You are overbearing, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
6. You are childish, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
7. You are abrupt, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
8. You are sanctimonious, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
9. You are submissive, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
10. You are arrogant, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
11. You are apathetic, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
12. You are meddlesome, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
13. You are peculiar, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
14. You are reckless, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
15. You are sly, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
16. You are slow, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
17. You are talkative, but I am \_\_\_\_\_
18. You are timid, but I am \_\_\_\_\_

