Lesson 13  Part 1: Introduction

Determining Word Meanings: Figurative and Connotative

Would you rather trudge through the snow or stroll through the snow? The verbs have similar meanings, but each has a different **connotative meaning**, the feeling suggested by a word or phrase. *Trudge* connotes a struggle, but *stroll* suggests a relaxing walk.

Writers also use words in imaginative ways to create interesting effects. This kind of language is called **figurative language**. Figurative meanings are different from the usual meanings of the words. Look at this cartoon:

![Tears fell from her face like rain from the sky.](image)

**Circle what is being compared in the illustration above.**

Why do you think the writer compared the girl’s tears to rain? It’s not likely that water is pouring from the girl’s eyes. But the writer wants us to know that she is crying hard.

**Read the following chart to understand some different types of figurative language.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figurative Language</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>smile</td>
<td>a comparison using <em>like</em> or <em>as</em></td>
<td>She has a smile like sunshine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metaphor</td>
<td>a comparison that doesn’t use <em>like</em> or <em>as</em></td>
<td>He is a bear of a man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personification</td>
<td>giving human qualities to something nonhuman</td>
<td>The boiling tea kettle screeched its complaint.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Readers identify which ideas are being compared and what they have in common. They also consider the feelings that words create to appreciate what an author is trying to say.
Read the beginning of the short story below. Then read and answer the question that follows.

**The Gold Watch**  
*by Matthew Allen*

Sunlight burst through the window and woke Gabriel that bright summer day. He felt disoriented, as if he'd been sleeping for years. He didn't even know what time it was! But that was no surprise—he was always late. He pulled on his clothes and went out to the yard, where he found his mother sorting through boxes of old things.

“Why did you get all that junk out of the garage?” Gabriel asked.

“It’s not ‘junk,’” his mother answered. “These are things I’ve saved over the years, but it’s time to have a yard sale and let them go.”

Gabriel’s mother pulled a broken coffee maker out of one box, the electrical cord trailing behind it like a tail. Next, his mother held up a pocket watch as golden as a tiny sun.  

(continued)

**Figurative language often makes a comparison between two things. To what does the author compare the electrical cord, and how does this make you picture the coffee maker?**

The author compares the cord to a tail, which gives the coffee maker the qualities of an animal. Review the chart on the previous page. What type of figurative language does the author use here?

**Read the chart below and complete it using what you know about figurative language.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s Being Compared</th>
<th>How They Are Alike</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a pocket watch and the sun</td>
<td></td>
<td>The watch is ________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Now look at the first sentence of the story, “Sunlight burst through the window . . .” How does this personification help describe the sun’s effect on Gabriel? Write your answer below.**

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Continue reading the short story. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

(continued from page 130)

“This old thing was your grandfather’s,” she said, smiling at the watch like it was a familiar friend. “I don’t think it works. I suppose people would think it’s pretty worthless.”

But Gabriel asked his mother for the time, wound up the watch, and let it swing from its chain like a pendulum. The ticking sound it made was as steady as a heartbeat. Just then, some storm clouds crossed the sun, heavy with the rain of a summer storm. But Gabriel now had a new treasure, which he polished until it shined, and he tucked it carefully into his pocket so he would always know the time.

Circle the correct answer.

Which word from the story best describes how Gabriel feels about the watch?

A treasure  
B worthless  
C heartbeat  
D familiar

Show Your Thinking

Identify the similes and metaphor in the second paragraph. How do they help show how the boy feels about the watch?

With a partner, discuss what Gabriel and his mother say about “junk” at the start of the passage. What is the connotation of junk? What does his mother’s response reveal about her feelings?
Read the poem. Use the Study Buddy and Close Reading to guide your reading.

I wonder how the speaker feels about this storm. As I read, I'm going to underline words with strong connotations.

**Close Reading**

What are the birds doing in line 13? Are they actually putting up bars? Think about what the author means.

Remember that a simile is a comparison using *like* or *as*. Circle a simile used in the poem.

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**A Thunder–Storm**  
*by Emily Dickinson*

The wind begun to rock the grass  
With *threatening* tunes and low,—  
He flung a *menace* at the earth,  
A *menace* at the sky.

5 The leaves unhooked themselves from trees  
And started all abroad;  
The dust did scoop itself like hands  
And throw away the road.

The wagons quickened on the streets,  
10 The thunder hurried slow;  
The lightning showed a yellow beak,  
And then a *livid*1 claw.

The birds put up the bars to nests,  
The cattle fled to barns;  
15 There came one drop of giant rain,  
And then, as if the hands  
That held the dams had parted hold,  
The waters wrecked the sky,  
But overlooked my father’s house,  
20 Just quartering2 a tree.

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1. *livid*: dark blue  
2. *quartering*: reaching
Look at your marked–up text. Then use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

1 How does the speaker feel about the storm?
   A  It is dangerous to animals.
   B  It is thrilling to watch.
   C  It is needed by grass and trees.
   D  It is just an ordinary rainfall.

2 The speaker uses personification to describe the birds’ activity in line 13. Which statement best explains what they are doing?
   A  They are hiding from the rain in their nests.
   B  They are building their nests despite the rain.
   C  They are closing the windows of their nests.
   D  They are keeping other birds out of their nests.

3 What two forms of figurative language are used in lines 7 and 8, and what do these lines mean? Use specific examples in your response.

   The wind begun to rock the grass
   With threatening tunes and low,—
   He flung a menace at the earth,
   A menace at the sky.

   The leaves unhooked themselves from trees
   And started all abroad;
   The dust did scoop itself like hands
   And throw away the road.

   The wagons quickened on the streets,
   The thunder hurried slow;
   The lightning showed a yellow beak,
   And then a livid claw.

   The birds put up the bars to nests,
   The cattle fled to barns;
   There came one drop of giant rain,
   And then, as if the hands
   That held the dams had parted hold,
   The waters wrecked the sky,
   But overlooked my father's house,
   Just quartering a tree.
Read the story. Then answer the questions that follow.

from “To Build a Fire”

by Jack London

1 The man flung a look back along the way he had come. The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were as many feet of snow. . . . North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white, save for a dark hair-line that curved and twisted from around the spruce-covered island to the south, and that curved and twisted away into the north, where it disappeared behind another spruce-covered island. . . .

2 But all this . . . made no impression on the man. It was not because he was long used to it. He was a new-comer in the land . . . and this was his first winter. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. . . . Fifty degrees below zero was to him just precisely fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head. . . .

3 At the man’s heels trotted a dog, a big native husky. . . . The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for travelling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man’s judgment. . . . The dog had learned fire, and it wanted fire. . . .

4 Empty as the man’s mind was of thoughts, he was keenly observant, and he noticed the changes in the creek, the curves and bends and timber–jams, and always he sharply noted where he placed his feet. . . .

5 And then it happened. At a place where there were no signs, where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through. It was not deep. He wetted himself half–way to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust.

6 He was angry, and cursed his luck aloud . . . . for he would have to build a fire and dry out his foot–gear. This was [urgent] at that low temperature—he knew that much; and he turned aside to the bank, which he climbed. On top, tangled in the underbrush about the trunks of several small spruce trees, was a high–water deposit of dry firewood. . . . He threw down several large pieces on top of the snow. . . . The flame he got by touching a match to a small shred of birch–bark that he took from his pocket. . . .

7 He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger. Gradually, as the flame grew stronger, he increased the size of the twigs with which he fed it. He squatted in the snow, pulling the twigs out from their entanglement in the brush and feeding directly to the flame. He knew there must be no failure. When it is seventy–five below zero, a man must not fail in his first attempt to build a fire—that is, if his feet are wet. . . .

8 There was the fire, snapping and crackling and promising life with every dancing flame. He started to untie his moccasins. They were coated with ice; the thick German socks were like sheaths of iron half–way to the knees; and the moccasin strings were like rods of steel all twisted and knotted. . . . For a moment he tugged with his numbed fingers, then, realizing the folly of it, he drew his sheath–knife.

9 But before he could cut the strings, it happened. It was his own fault or, rather, his mistake. He should not have built the fire under the spruce tree. . . . Now the tree under which he had done this carried a
weight of snow on its boughs. . . . It grew like an avalanche, and it descended without warning upon the man and the fire, and the fire was blotted out!

1. In paragraph 1, what connotation does the word *flung* add to the first sentence?
   A. caution
   B. haste
   C. terror
   D. anger

2. Read this example of personification from paragraph 3.
   
   Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man’s judgment.

   What does it mean that the dog’s instinct “told it a truer tale”?
   A. The dog did not believe that the man could build a fire.
   B. The dog’s sharper hearing could tell where the ice was thin.
   C. The dog had a better sense of the danger they were in.
   D. The dog remembered another time when the man got wet.
Part 5: Common Core Practice

Lesson 13

3

Read this sentence from the story.

They were coated with ice; the thick German socks were like sheaths of iron half-way to the knees; and the moccasin strings were like rods of steel all twisted and knotted.

What do the two similes in this sentence show?

A  The man’s feet are stuck in the frozen ground.
B  The man is too weak to remove his own socks.
C  The man’s socks and laces are made of metal.
D  The man’s wet clothes have frozen solid.

4

In paragraph 5, the author says that “the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath.” What type of figurative language is this, and what does it mean? Support your answer with details from the story.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Self Check  Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 127.
Lesson 13  (Student Book pages 129–136)

Determining Word Meanings: Figurative and Connotative

Theme: Out in the Elements

LESSON OBJECTIVES

• Identify different types of figurative language.
• Determine the figurative or connotative meaning of words and phrases in a literary text.

THE LEARNING PROGRESSION

• Grade 5: CCLS RL.5.4 asks students to determine the figurative meaning of words and phrases used in literary texts.
• Grade 6: CCLS RL.6.4 broadens the Grade 5 standard to include determining the connotative meaning of words and phrases.
• Grade 7: CCLS RL.7.4 expands to include sound devices such as rhyme and repetition.

PREREQUISITE SKILLS

• Understand that figurative language compares one thing to another.
• Identify examples of similes and metaphors and recognize the comparison made.
• Understand the meaning suggested by similes and metaphors.

TAP STUDENTS’ PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

• Tell students they will be working on a lesson about the figurative meaning of words and phrases. Remind them that figurative language is used to compare things. The figurative meaning of the language is different from the meaning of the individual words.
• Tell students that they hear figurative language every day. For example, when parents tell them that their room looks like a tornado hit it, they are using figurative language. Ask students what they think of when they hear the word tornado. (a violent whirlwind that leaves a path of destruction behind it)
• Explain that the parent doesn't really think a tornado hit the room. Ask students what this figurative language means. (The room is untidy.)
• Explain to students that they will also learn in this lesson about the connotative meanings of words. Explain that connotative meaning refers to the feeling suggested by a word or phrase.
• Tell students the words brisk and frigid refer to cold temperatures; but brisk has a positive connotation associated with feeling energized and invigorated, whereas frigid has a negative connotation of feeling so cold you can’t wait to get back inside.
• Remind students that writers use figurative language and words that have a certain connotation in order to create vivid mental pictures for readers.

Ready Toolbox

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prerequisite Skills</th>
<th>RL.6.4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ready Lessons</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools for Instruction</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Tutorials</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CCLS Focus

RL.6.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings ....

ADDITIONAL STANDARDS: RL.6.1, RL.6.2, RL.6.5, RL.6.7; W.6.3, W.6.4, W.6.11; SL.6.1, SL.6.2, SL.6.4; L.6.4.a, L.6.4.b, L.6.5.a (see page A31 for full text)
AT A GLANCE

Through an illustration, students learn to recognize figurative language. They learn about different types of figurative language and their purposes in literary texts.

STEP BY STEP

• Read the first paragraph that includes the definition of connotative meaning. Discuss examples of similar words with different connotations, such as smell/fragrance, proud/vain, and snoop/investigate. Have students tell what feelings or images the words bring to mind. You might have them pantomime actions to convey their idea of each word’s connotation.

• Then read the second paragraph, which includes the definition of figurative language. Direct students to look at the illustration and read the caption. Tell them to determine what is being compared and circle those words in the caption.

• Explain that the chart defines three types of figurative language commonly used in literary texts.

• Read the first two columns of the chart. Then use the first example to model how to analyze figurative language. Ask what is being compared. (a smile and sunshine) Have students suggest ways smiles and sunshine are similar. (often described as bright; associated with happy feelings) Explain that just as sunshine brightens a day, a smile brightens a face.

• Have students tell the meaning of the second and third examples. (The man is large—tall and broad; The boiling tea kettle sounded like a whining or complaining person.)

Genre Focus

Literary Texts: Realistic Fiction

Tell students that in this lesson they will read realistic fiction. Explain that realistic fiction is literary text with characters, settings, and situations that are believable but a story that is made up. Discuss these characteristics of realistic fiction with students:

• interesting, believable characters
• details that clearly establish a setting
• plot events that could really happen
• language that paints vivid mental images

Based on these characteristics, have students name some examples of realistic fiction they have read. Ask them if the Harry Potter or Hunger Games stories are realistic fiction. Why or why not? Discuss the similarities and differences between types of fiction, such as historical fiction, science fiction, and fantasy.

Explain that “The Gold Watch” is a short realistic fiction story about finding treasure in an unexpected place. Another realistic story in this lesson is an excerpt from “To Build a Fire” by Jack London. It is a gripping portrait of a man caught out in below-zero weather, faced with a life-threatening situation. “A Thunder-Storm” by Emily Dickinson is a poem that uses figurative language to describe an approaching thunderstorm.
AT A GLANCE
Students identify and analyze figurative language in a short passage of realistic fiction.

STEP BY STEP
• Remind students that they just learned about figurative language and how to determine what a figurative expression means.
• Tell students that in this lesson they will learn how to analyze figurative language in a story.
• Read aloud “The Gold Watch.”
• Then read the statement and question: “Figurative language often makes a comparison between two things. To what does the author compare the electrical cord, and how does this make you picture the coffee maker?”
• Now tell students you will use a Think Aloud to demonstrate a way of answering the question.

Think Aloud: The author is comparing the cord to a tail, which gives the coffee maker the qualities of an animal. The word like tells me that this is a simile. The comparison makes me picture the coffee maker as a cat with a tail that drags along the ground.

• Direct students to the chart and explain that it shows a way of determining what an example of figurative language means.

Think Aloud: In the last sentence, the pocket watch is compared to the sun: “a pocket watch as golden as a tiny sun.” How are the watch and the sun alike? They are both golden in color, and the sun and gold objects are both bright and shiny.

• Have students fill in the second column of the chart to tell how the watch and the sun are alike.

Think Aloud: Now I’ll think about what this comparison means. I think the author wants me to understand that the watch is bright gold and shines in the light.

• Have students complete the third column of the chart to tell the meaning in their own words.

• Finally, have students answer the question at the bottom of the page. Invite volunteers to share their answers with the class. Sample response: The author uses the simile to show Gabriel’s feelings about the watch. Words such as golden, tiny, and sun have a positive connotation, so the simile helps readers understand that the watch is special.

Tier 2 Vocabulary: Disoriented
• Direct students to the word disoriented in paragraph 1. Point out the prefix dis-, meaning “not,” and the base word orient.
• Ask students what context clue in the sentence might help them figure out the meaning of disoriented. (“sleeping for years”)
• Ask students to imagine how someone might feel waking up after a very, very long sleep. (confused, not sure where they were or what day it was)
• Based on the clue and the prefix dis-, ask students what they think disoriented means. (“confused, not able to tell what your position is in relation to your surroundings”) (RL.6.4; L.6.4.a)
AT A GLANCE

Students continue reading about Gabriel and the watch. They answer a multiple-choice question and analyze the figurative language in the story that helped them select the correct answer.

STEP BY STEP

- Tell students they will continue reading about Gabriel and the gold watch.
- Close Reading will help students focus on the descriptive details that the author uses. The Hint will help them analyze the effect of the words and phrases on the passage’s meaning.
- Have students read the passage and mark up positive and negative descriptions of the watch.
- Ask volunteers to share the descriptions they circled and boxed and the feeling each description conveys.
- Have students circle the answer to the question. Then have them review the definition of metaphor on page 129 before responding to the Show Your Thinking. Guide them to understand that “had a new treasure” is a metaphor in which the watch is compared to treasure.

ANSWER ANALYSIS

Choice A is correct. The last sentence shows that Gabriel thinks of the watch as a new treasure.

Choice B is incorrect. It is Gabriel’s mother, not Gabriel, who expresses the opinion that some people would think the watch is worthless.

Choice C is incorrect. A heartbeat is not how Gabriel thinks of the watch. Rather, this description conveys the idea of the sound of the watch as comforting and dependable—like a steady heartbeat.

Choice D is incorrect. As in B, it is Gabriel’s mother, not Gabriel, who describes the watch as a “familiar friend.”

ERROR ALERT: Students who did not choose A may have confused Gabriel’s feelings about the watch with his mother’s. Point out that all the choices are words that someone might use to describe an old watch, but only A tells how Gabriel feels about it.

ELL Support: Suffixes

- Explain to students that a suffix is a group of letters added to the end of a word to change the word’s meaning. Some common suffixes are -ful (meaning “full of,” as in helpful) and -able (meaning “can be,” as in dependable). Another suffix is -less, which means “without.” Tell students that knowing the meanings of suffixes can help them figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words.

- Direct students to the word worthless in paragraph 1. Guide them to identify the suffix (-less) and the base word (worth). Then ask them to use what they know about the suffix -less to tell what this word means. (“without worth or value”)

- Have students check this meaning in the sentence to be sure it makes sense. Reinforce that it makes sense that some people might think an old watch has no value. (RL.6.4; L.6.4b)
AT A GLANCE

Students read a poem about a storm twice. After the first reading, you will ask three questions to check your students’ comprehension of the poem.

STEP BY STEP

• Have students read the poem silently without referring to the Study Buddy or Close Reading text.

• Ask the following questions to ensure students’ comprehension of the text:

Who is the “he” referred to in line 3 of the poem? (the wind) What are the “tunes”? (the sounds of the wind)

What do you think the poet means by saying the lightning “showed” a beak and a claw? (The jagged lightning was in the shape of a beak and a claw.)

Describe the progress of the storm in order, according to the poem. (First, the wind began to blow, scattering leaves and dust everywhere. Next, thunder and lightning occurred. Then the rain came in torrents.)

• Ask students to reread the first stanza and look at the Study Buddy think aloud. What does the Study Buddy help them think about?

• Have students read the rest of the poem. Tell them to follow the directions in the Close Reading.

• Finally, have students answer the questions on page 133. Use the Answer Analysis to discuss correct and incorrect responses.

Tip: The Study Buddy suggests that students underline words with connotations that suggest the power of the coming storm. Guide them to look in the last four stanzas for words that convey a feeling of danger. The first stanza provides models.

Tier 2 Vocabulary: Hurried

• Read lines 9 and 10 of the poem with students. Ask what the author is trying to convey here. (People traveling on the roads rushed to get out of the storm.)

• Ask students what hurried means. (“rushed or moved quickly”) Guide them to identify context clues that help them understand this meaning. (“quickened”) (RL.6.4; L.6.4.a)
STEP BY STEP

• Have students read questions 1–3, using the Hints to help them answer those questions.

**Tip:** If students have trouble answering question 1, remind them that writers use certain words to convey a feeling or idea they want the reader to understand. Ask, “What words in the poem help you understand how the speaker feels about the storm?”

• Discuss with students the Answer Analysis below.

**ANSWER ANALYSIS**

1  The correct choice is B. The poet uses words that connote the dangerous thrill of a storm. Choice A is incorrect. The poet writes that the animals seek shelter, not that they are in danger. Choice C is incorrect. The poem doesn’t say the trees and grass need rain. Choice D is incorrect. The descriptions convey a serious storm, not an ordinary rainfall.

2  The correct choice is A. Putting up bars suggests the idea of hiding. Choice B is incorrect. The bars suggest hiding, not building. Choice C is incorrect. The question asks for an explanation, not another example of personification. Choice D is incorrect. The birds are hiding from the rain, not necessarily keeping out other birds.

3  Sample response: The speaker says the dust scoops “like hands,” so this is a simile. She also says that it “throws away” the road, which is personification. It means that the wind has carried so much dust into the air that the road cannot be seen.

**RETEACHING**

Use the chart to answer question 3. Draw the chart below, and have students fill in the boxes. Sample responses are provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s Being Compared?</th>
<th>How Are They Alike?</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dust and hands</td>
<td>perform the action of scooping</td>
<td>The wind caused dust to swirl up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dust and the ability to throw</td>
<td>can throw</td>
<td>The wind covers the road in dust.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Integrating Standards**

Use these questions to further students’ understanding of “A Thunder-Storm.”

1  What is the theme of “A Thunder-Storm”? Use details from the poem in your answer.  **(RL.6.2)**

The theme of the poem is that weather has the power to thrill and excite and to affect all living things. The description of the approaching storm as “threatening” and “a menace” conveys drama, and the images of animals and people seeking shelter show the power of the storm over all living things.

2  Explain how the third stanza contributes to the development of the theme.  **(RL.6.5)**

The third stanza tells of people in wagons trying to escape the approaching storm, which makes its presence known by the sound of thunder and menacing images created by jagged streaks of lightning. These vivid images build on the sense of drama and excitement created by the powerful descriptions of the wind in the first two stanzas.
Read the story. Then answer the questions that follow.

**from “To Build a Fire”**

by Jack London

1. The man flung a look back along the way he had come. The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were as many feet of snow. . . .

2. But all this . . . made no impression on the man. It was not because he was long used to it. He was a new-comer in the land . . .

3. At the man’s heels trotted a dog, a big native husky . . . The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for travelling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man’s judgment . . .

4. Empty as the man’s mind was of thoughts, he was keenly observant, and he noticed the changes in the creeks, the curves and bends and timber-jams, and always he sharply noted where he placed his feet . . .

5. And then it happened. At a place where there were no signs, where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through. It was not deep. He waded himself half-way to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust.

6. He was angry, and cursed his luck aloud . . . for he would have to build a fire and dry out his foot-gear.

7. He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger. Gradually, as the flame grew stronger, he increased the size of the twigs with which he fed it. He squatted in the snow, pulling the twigs out from their entanglement in the brush and feeding directly to the flame. He knew there must be no failure. When it is seventy-five below zero, a man must not fail in his first attempt to build a fire—that is, if his feet are wet. . . .

8. There was the fire, snapping and crackling and promising life with every dancing flame. He started to sit in his mosquitoes. They were coated with ice; the thick German socks were like sheaths of iron half-way to the knees; and the moccasin strings were like rods of steel all twisted and knotted. . . . For a moment he tugged with his numbed fingers, then, realizing the folly of it, he drew his shudder-knot.

9. But before he could cut the strings, it happened. It was his own fault or, rather, his mistake. He should not have built the fire under the spruce tree. . . .

**ANSWER ANALYSIS**

1. **In paragraph 1, what connotation does the word flung add to the first sentence?**

   - A. caution
   - B. haste
   - C. terror
   - D. anger

   **Choice B is correct.** The word flung indicates that the man looks hastily over his shoulder. Choice A is incorrect. The story does not suggest he looked with caution. Choices C and D are incorrect. The beginning of the passage does not suggest the man is afraid or angry. Rather, the text says the severe cold meant nothing to the man.

2. **Read this example of personification from paragraph 3.**

   Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man’s judgment.

   What does it mean that the dog’s instinct “told it a truer tale”?  

   - A. The dog did not believe that the man could build a fire.  
   - B. The dog’s sharper hearing could tell where the ice was thin.  
   - C. The dog had a better sense of the danger they were in.  
   - D. The dog remembered another time when the man got wet.

   **Choice C is correct.** The story says, “The dog had learned fire,” which implies it had seen the man build a fire before. Choices B and D are incorrect. The passage doesn’t say the dog had an ability to sense thin ice or that it knew it had seen the man build a fire before. Choice A is incorrect. It does not suggest the man was afraid or angry. Rather, the text says the severe cold meant nothing to the man.

**Theme Connection**

- How do all the texts in this lesson relate to the theme of being out in the elements?  
- Describe the role weather plays in each text.
3 Choice D is correct. The similes compare the man's frozen socks to sheaths, or cases, of iron and the laces of his moccasins to twisted rods of steel. The socks and laces are not really made of metal. This figurative language helps the reader understand that the frigid temperatures had turned the wet clothing into solid ice. Choice A is incorrect. The sequence of the story is that the man broke through some ice but quickly climbed out of the water. Then he made a fire. The man could not have made a fire if his feet were stuck in the ground. Choice B is incorrect because the problem is not the man's strength but his numbed fingers and frozen clothes. Choice C rephrases the figurative language used in the story. It does not explain what the figurative language means.

4 Sample response: This is an example of personification. Snow is not human, so it cannot really advertise, which means “to make public” or “call attention to.” This figurative language makes me understand that there was nothing, no sign such as snow with holes or indentations, to show that the snow might have water below it. All indications were that the snow was perfectly solid, as indicated by the text “soft, unbroken snow.”

**Integrating Standards**

Use these questions and tasks as opportunities to interact with “To Build a Fire.”

1 Using details from the passage, how would you describe the man? *(RL.6.1)*

   *He is a man “without imagination” and seems not to have realized the danger of being out in severely cold weather. He is also described as “keenly observant,” and he is not without survival skills. He looks for signs of thin ice, and he knows how to make a fire. Most important, he knows he might not survive if he doesn't dry his wet clothes quickly.*

2 What probably caused the “avalanche” that buried the man's fire? *(RL.6.1)*

   *The man built the fire under a tree with a lot of snow on its boughs. The heat from the fire would have warmed the snow, causing it to melt. I know that when snow melts, it expands and gets heavier. The weight of the melting snow probably caused it to slip off the tree boughs and onto the fire.*

3 Summarize: Write a summary of this passage. *(RL.6.2; W.6.4)*

   *Sample response: A man and a dog are traveling along the Yukon River in subzero weather. The dog senses it is too cold for traveling, but the man seems unaware of the potential danger. Suddenly, the man falls through the snow into icy water. He makes a fire to dry out his clothes as quickly as possible, but snow from the tree above it falls into the fire and puts it out.*

4 Discuss in small groups: Why do you think the author chose not to tell the name of the man? Does this affect your understanding or appreciation of the passage? If so, how? *(SL.6.1)*

   *Discussions will vary. Encourage students to consider the roles of the dog and the elements in the story. They are not named, but they are important characters too, aren't they? Is there any significance to the namelessness of the characters?*
**Writing Activities**

**Another Point of View (W.6.3)**
- Challenge students to think about how the dog would describe the man and the events of the passage. Would the dog express opinions or simply state the facts?
- Have students write about the events of the passage from the dog’s point of view. Allow time for students to share their stories with the class.

**Figurative Language (L.6.5.a)**
- Direct students to this sentence on page 134: “There was the fire, snapping and crackling and promising life with every dancing flame.” Ask students what type of figurative language this sentence is an example of. (personification) Review that personification gives human qualities to nonhuman things.
- Ask what are the two qualities being attributed here to fire. (the ability to promise and the ability to dance) Discuss with students the meaning of the phrase. (The flickering flames of the fire may save the man’s life by giving him a chance to dry his clothes.)
- Have students write a short paragraph about one of the elements of nature, using at least one example of personification.

**LISTENING ACTIVITY (SL.6.2)**

**Listen Closely/Conveying Meaning**
- Have student pairs review “A Thunder-Storm.”
- Have one student read aloud the poem, using his or her voice to convey its meaning. For example, the student might use a low, quiet voice to convey the danger of the approaching storm. Listeners then describe what they heard.
- Have partners switch roles and repeat the activity.

**DISCUSSION ACTIVITY (SL.6.1)**

**Talk in a Group/Discuss Connotations**
- Have students list the elements described in “To Build a Fire.” (cold, snow, water, ice, fire) Point out that these elements may have positive and negative aspects—instances when they are critical to survival and other times when they can be extremely destructive forces of nature.
- Have small groups of students make a chart that lists words associated with each element. Challenge them to include words that convey positive connotations and negative connotations.
- Allow 10 to 15 minutes for discussion. Then have each group share its results with the class.

**MEDIA ACTIVITY (RL.6.7)**

**Be Creative/Depict Figurative Language**
- Have students review the illustration on page 129. Ask them to describe how the illustration helps viewers better understand the figurative language.
- Encourage students to choose an example of figurative language from “To Build a Fire.” Then have them enhance the figurative language example through a different format. They may choose to draw an illustration or to act out the meaning through pantomime.

**RESEARCH ACTIVITY (W.6.4; SL.6.4)**

**Research and Present/Severe Weather Alert**
- Have students choose a type of weather from one of the passages and use the description in the passage to write a weather alert.
- Ask students to research weather reports about their chosen topic to determine the kind of scientific information they might include as well as the potential effects of the weather.
- Encourage students to include figurative language in their alerts.
- Have students present their alerts to the class.