

CONNOTATION AND ANNOTATION IN JEAN WEBSTER'S DADDY-LONG-LEGS

Webster made the book extremely interesting with positive, negative, and neutral connotations– a literary device that allowed the author to convey her ideas and create deeper meanings without directly stating them.

Here are some examples from the novel.

Example 1: “lots of very clever men get smashed up in Wall Street.”

Though literal – also known as denotative – meaning of smashed up is to be damaged by violent action, as a negative connotation it means to get financially ruined. Based on the context, it's clear that the phrase is supposed to be interpreted figuratively and not literally.

Example 2: “I’ve made the basketball team and you ought to see the bruise on my left shoulder.”

The denotative meaning of made is to have created or formed something, whereas as a positive connotation, it means to have won acceptance as Judy was accepted into the basketball team.

Example 3: “You only wanted to hear from me once a month, didn't you? And I've been peppering you with letters every few days!”

In this case, there are two connotative words – hear and peppering – and both are neutral. Hear as a denotation means to be able to perceive a sound, but as a connotation, it is used to express gaining information. As for peppering, it literally means to sprinkle or season with pepper, but here, it's used to represent an action that is done often, almost repeatedly.