

From “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” – Jonathan Edwards

Persuasive Writing > Rhetorical Devices > Connotation

INTRODUCTION:

Persuasive writing often contains LOADED LANGUAGE—words with strong CONNOTATIONS, or emotional associations. For example, contrast the word *child* with the more loaded words *brat* and *cherub*. A writer would use *brat* to create a negative feeling in the reader and *cherub* to create a positive feeling. Part of what makes Jonathan Edwards’s sermon so effective is his choice of loaded words.

ASSIGNMENT:

Choose a passage from the sermon of significant length that you think is especially persuasive or contains forceful language. Choose TEN words or phrases from the passage that arouse strong emotions.

1. Retype or copy/paste the excerpt from “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” You may search the entire text online for your passage:
<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/history/spurgeon/web/edwards.sinners.html>
2. **Highlight** or **Underline** the TEN loaded words in the excerpt. These words should be powerful, highly connotative, negative words. Remember the purpose of Edwards’ sermon: to use fear to motivate his audience to repent.
3. Rewrite/Retype the passage by replacing the loaded words and phrases with more neutral ones. Again, **Highlight** or **Underline** the loaded words in the rewritten excerpt. Be sure your neutral words have the same meaning in the context of the sentence! Do not simply replace the word with a synonym.
4. Choose FIVE of the changed words and in few sentences for each, explicate, or discuss the impact of the more neutral words versus the loaded ones. Be as precise as possible in describing/explaining your choice of words.
5. The assignment must be typewritten.

Partial Example (please follow this format):

PARTIAL PASSAGE EXCERPT WITH LOADED WORDS HIGHLIGHTED:

*O sinner! Consider the fearful **danger** you are in: 'tis a great furnace of **wrath**, a wide and bottomless **pit**...*

PARTIAL REWRITTEN EXCERPT WITH REPLACEMENT/NEUTRAL WORDS HIGHLIGHTED:

*O sinner! Consider the fearful **difficulty** you are in: 'tis a great furnace of **discontent**, a wide and bottomless **hole in the ground**...*

FIRST (OF FIVE) EXPLICATIONS FOR “SINNER” = “OFFENDER”:

1). I replaced the word “sinner” with “offender.” The word “sinner” immediately suggests evil and images of Hell and punishment. “Offender,” on the other hand, is a much more formal and generic term and lacks the religious overtones associated with “sinner.” By replacing “sinner” with “offender,” the accusatory tone of the sentence is immediately diminished by a small degree.

***Note that quotation marks are used when quoting in context a specific word.**