

When you read, you need to consider not only what words, images or phrases **mean** (their **denotation**), but what they might **imply or suggest** (their **connotation**). For example, the word 'red' literally means the colour red, but it also **connotes** passion, anger or romance – it is associated with all these things.

Getting you thinking

Here is a description of a scene in a girls' school.

The January term started with a scene of sheer disaster. A muddy excavator was chewing its way across the netball-court, breakfasting on the tarmac with **sinuous** lunges and terrifying swings of its yellow dinosaur neck. One of the stone balls had been knocked off the gate-posts, and lay in crushed fragments, like a Malteser trodden on by a giant. The entrance to the science wing was blocked with a pile of **ochreous** clay, and curved glazed drainpipes were heaped like school dinners' macaroni.

The girls hung round in groups. One girl came back from the indoor toilets saying Miss Bowker was phoning the Council, and using words that Eliza Bottom had nearly been expelled for last term...

The next girl came back from the toilet saying Miss Bowker was nearly crying.

Which was definitely a lie, because here was Miss Bowker now, come out to address them in her best sheepskin coat. Though she was wearing fresh make-up, and her eyes were suspiciously bright, her famous chin was up. She was brief, and to the point. There was an underground leak in the central heating; till it was mended, they would be using the old Harvest Road boys' school. They would march across now, by forms, in good order, in charge of the prefects.

- In groups, discuss what kind of atmosphere is built up in this passage.
- Pick three images from the passage that help to build up this atmosphere.

Remember

Denotation = what a word means literally

Connotation = what a word suggests or implies

Glossary

sinuous: supple or bending

ochreous: yellow or brown in colour