Words With Attitude

Use context to hear the judgment behind a word.

11.4.R.2 "Students will use context clues, connotation, and denotation to determine or clarify the meaning of words or distinguish among multiple-meaning words."

NAME _____ DATE _____

POSITIVE CONNOTATION

A word with a positive connotation suggests approval beyond its basic dictionary meaning, or denotation. Check the nearby details for clues that support that feeling.

A **radiant** sunrise brightened the valley.

NEGATIVE CONNOTATION

A word with a negative connotation suggests criticism beyond its denotation. Check the nearby details for clues that support that judgment.

A **dreary** drizzle dimmed the valley.

1 SORT

8 items

In SORT, circle POSITIVE or NEGATIVE for the bold word in each sentence; in PROVE IT, choose two numbered items and explain which context clues support your choices.

1.	The journalist's **thorough** investigation checked every source before publication.	POSITIVE NEGATIVE
2.	The architect offered an **inventive** solution that saved space without cutting access.	POSITIVE NEGATIVE
3.	The candidate's **smug** grin suggested that she thought the debate was already won.	POSITIVE NEGATIVE
4.	The mediator gave an **impartial** account, even when her friend was involved.	POSITIVE NEGATIVE
5.	The editor called the essay **rambling** because it wandered away from its main claim.	POSITIVE NEGATIVE
6.	The company gave a **flimsy** excuse for losing the records, with no evidence to support it.	POSITIVE NEGATIVE
7.	The witness's **candid** reply revealed a mistake she could have hidden.	POSITIVE NEGATIVE
8.	The committee called the plan **reckless** because it ignored clear safety warnings.	POSITIVE NEGATIVE

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

In MAKE YOUR OWN, write one sentence with a positive connotation and one with a negative connotation; underline the word you chose and include a context clue in each sentence.

POSITIVE _____

NEGATIVE _____

CHALLENGE

Write two sentences about the same action, changing one word to make the action sound approving in one sentence and disapproving in the other; underline the changed words and add one sentence explaining the shift.

ANSWER KEY

Words With Attitude

GRADE 11 · 11.4.R.2

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	The journalist's **thorough** investigation checked every source before publication.	**POSITIVE**	Checking every source supports approval of the investigation's care.
2	The architect offered an **inventive** solution that saved space without cutting access.	**POSITIVE**	The solution solves a problem without creating a new one.
3	The candidate's **smug** grin suggested that she thought the debate was already won.	**NEGATIVE**	Assuming victory before the debate ends suggests excessive self-satisfaction.
4	The mediator gave an **impartial** account, even when her friend was involved.	**POSITIVE**	Giving a fair account despite a personal connection supports approval.
5	The editor called the essay **rambling** because it wandered away from its main claim.	**NEGATIVE**	Wandering from the main claim supports criticism of the essay's lack of focus.
6	The company gave a **flimsy** excuse for losing the records, with no evidence to support it.	**NEGATIVE**	The lack of evidence supports criticism of the excuse.
7	The witness's **candid** reply revealed a mistake she could have hidden.	**POSITIVE**	Admitting a mistake she could have hidden supports approval of her honesty.
8	The committee called the plan **reckless** because it ignored clear safety warnings.	**NEGATIVE**	Ignoring safety warnings supports criticism of the plan.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **POSITIVE**: The lab partner was resourceful, building a working model from leftover materials.
- **NEGATIVE**: The landlord was callous, ignoring tenants' requests for heat during the cold snap.

Challenge: Sam was frugal, bringing lunch from home every day to save money. Sam was miserly, bringing lunch from home every day to save money. Frugal suggests sensible saving, while miserly suggests an excessive unwillingness to spend.

A PROVE IT response for items 2 and 6 might cite “saved space without cutting access” to support POSITIVE and “no evidence to support it” to support NEGATIVE. Accept other explanations that connect a specific context clue to the bold word's connotation.