

# Changes in Word Meanings

Consider using with *Voyages in English 2011*

Grade 6—Chapter 1, Lesson 5 or Chapter 7, Lesson 4

Grade 7—Chapter 1, Lesson 4 or Chapter 8, Lesson 5

Grade 8—Chapter 1, Lesson 5 or Chapter 8, Lesson 5



## Teach

Explain to students that some words have multiple meanings. Discuss the following points:

- Sometimes the connotation of a word is more important than its denotation.
- Some words are culturally dependent; different words are used for the same idea or object.
- The use of slang changes the meaning of some words.
- Over time, some accepted vocabulary falls out of favor and becomes incorrect.

## Practice

Guide students to recognize that the English language evolves over time. Ask students what *awful* means. Then explain that long ago this word meant “full of awe.” Over time its meaning changed, and today the meaning is completely negative. Point out that technological advances have also affected language. *Mouse* used to mean a rodent. Now it also means a computer’s input device. Geography affects language. In England, a *lift* is an elevator and a *biscuit* is a cookie. Popular culture affects language. *Cool*, *groovy*, *cat*, *dude*, and *bad* are words whose slang meanings are different from their literal meanings.

Have students identify at least two meanings for each of these words: *guts*, *bug*, *tight*, *surf*, *web*, *bomb*, *wicked*, *flat*, and *crisp*.

## Apply

Have students work in pairs to write a short dialogue between two characters having a misunderstanding due to certain words that each character is interprets differently. Point out that they should use at least two words whose meanings have changed over time or that have different meanings due to cultural differences.

## Assess

Check that each skit includes two words with multiple meanings and that the words are used correctly in each context.

*Listening and Speaking Connection:* Have students perform their skits for the class. Ask the audience to identify the cause of the misunderstanding and to identify the words that were the basis of the misunderstanding.