Style Annotation Guidelines

Select as many or as few styles as you want (though most words should have 1 or 2). Just put any mark in box to indicate that the word has that style. The word should be fairly definitively belong to that style; if in doubt, don't (it doesn't matter if some stuff that's a little bit one style doesn't get tagged, as long as all the really clear stuff does). If you find yourself wanting to tag opposite styles, then you can just leave both boxes blank. Try to base your annotation on the most common sense of the word, when that's clear. If the word has two equally common senses, do not annotate conflicting styles for those senses, except as noted below.

Basic definition of styles.

Colloquial: Words which are used primarily in very informal contexts, for instance slang words or internet abbreviations. Example: "dude"

Literary: Words you would expect to see primarily in literature, these words often feel old-fashioned or out-of-date. Example: "thine"

Concrete: Words which refer to events or objects in the real, physical world, things you would be able to see, hear, or touch. Example: "bench"

Abstract: Select this style for words which refer to something that has requires major psychological or cultural knowledge to grasp, something which can't really be defined in physical terms. Example: "restitution"

Subjective: Select this style for words which are emotional or reflect a personal opinion. Example: "foolish"

Objective: Select this style for words which are emotionally distant, which explicitly avoid any personal opinion, particularly compared to other words which mean roughly the same thing. Example: "dispose" (compared to "get rid of")

Detailed explanations:

Literary:

Be sure to annotate words that really only belong in literature (relative to current usage); if you can imagine it being used in another genre, it's not literary. The clearest example of literary words other than obviously archaic terms are poetic words with provide a certain grandeur (e.g. "hallowed"). A word that is about literature (e.g. "plot"), even a word that would only be used by a someone who is studying literature, is not the same as a literary word. Many literary words are subjective or concrete, so be careful to annotate those as well, when appropriate. Literary words should not generally also be colloquial or objective; literary words should not be in common usage, and they should have an exaggerated, poetic feel that is incompatible with academic/scientific discourse.

Questions to ask to include:

Is it a word that is no longer produced by modern speakers?
Would you expect to find it in an old novel?
Would it be appropriate for poetry?
Would it be appropriate for an old-fashioned (flowery) love letter?
Would you expect to see it only in religious texts?

Questions to exclude:

Would it be okay to use this word in the main text of an academic work?
Would someone say this word (in a non-ironic way)?

Abstract:

Abstract is the most difficult category to annotate, so spend extra time with it. Obvious examples of abstract include areas of human scientific inquiry, human institutions (like the law) and words which are closely tied to those institutions (that can be understood only in the context of understanding those institutions). Words that relate to reasonably complex social situations should also be labeled abstract (e.g. "indebted"). NOT all words related to human psychology should be labelled abstract, for instance raw emotions or simple psychological attributes should not be; however, human traits and states of minds which are tied to complex social situations should be labeled abstract. Words that describe complex mental process should be labelled abstract. A concept should also be labeled abstract if it is both invisible and requires an understanding of some non-trivial aspect of human culture or scientific understanding, even if it relates to the physical word in some important way (e.g. voltage, kinetics). Do NOT label words as abstract simply because they are vague, or broad. Do NOT label any specific physical objects or events as abstract, even if they require some cultural knowledge to fully understand their origins or purpose. A good rule of thumb is that abstract words should something that small children and animals would have difficultly grasping or (if possible) identifying. Do NOT label subjective words as abstract simply because they are vague; in general, abstract words are almost purely descriptive and should not overlap much with subjective. Since objective words distance, they often have an abstract feel (e.g. "lethargy"), but the underlying concept ("laziness", "sloth") here is not social or cultural enough to warrant an abstract tag (we could easily apply it to an animal, for instance, and it has obvious physical properties, i.e. lack of movement).

Include questions:

Would only an educated adult know this word, or at least what it means?
To understand this word, do you need to understand a bunch of other cultural concepts/institutions?
Does it primarily involve complex exchange of language?
Is it very difficult to explain the concept, or does it require a lot of verbiage to do so?

Exclude questions:

Is it just a fancy way of saying something that's actually simple?
Would a young child or animal understand the concept (even if they don't know the word)?

Does the abstractness of the word just come from the fact that it's vague, or is it actually difficult to grasp?

Objective:

Objective words are fancy words which are used mainly to establish authority by simultaneously asserting education (because the word used is rarer than a more common term) and objective disinterest. Do NOT annotate words as objective simply because they are neutral (non-subjective), words that would be used in everyday conversation among equals should NOT be tagged objective; they should have distinctly formal feel relative to synonymous options. Words can occasionally be both subjective and objective, but annotate this way only if they both express a strong emotion/opinion AND they clearly distance themselves from said emotion/opinion. Objective and abstract can overlap, but only when they both clearly apply; abstract words often describe concepts that are only fully understood by experts, but that alone is not enough to make it objective, particularly when the word is the only option to refer to this concept. In particular, words that refer to general areas of human inquiry should not be labeled objective, nor should words that are used almost exclusively within particular domains (e.g. the law or medicine) to refer to something specific in that domain for which any other word would be poor substitute (e.g. "prosecutor" or "lymphoma"), such that people taking informally would likely still use the term. However, a word like "injection" could be considered objective since there is an obvious, commonly used alterative, i.e. "shot", and so a doctor or nurse might use the word "injection" to demonstrate their authority.

Include Questions:

Would you expect someone in authority to use this kind of language?
Is it appropriate language for legal/government/official documents?
Is it appropriate language for academic writing?
Is it just a fancy way of saying something simple?
Is there another word that means the same thing but is less formal?
Does it suggest social distance between the person who use the word and his or her audience?
Would using in a text make the writing seem cool and aloof?

Exclude Questions:

Is there strong emotion suggested by this word?
Would it be appropriate in a poem or other flowery genre?
Is it a word people would use everyday?

Colloquial:

Colloquial words include slang and internet acronyms. They should be fairly easy to identify. Do not lump everyday words in with colloquial words, colloquial should have a particularly informal feel, such that they would not be appropriate in a lot of kinds of texts. As with objective, there should usually be a more common (or least less informal) way of expressing the same basic idea. Words that appear in a colloquial expression but are not (outside of that context) colloquial should not be marked colloquial.

Include questions:

Is it an offensive word?
Is it an internet acroymn?
Would this word only be used by kids?
Is it a word that would only be used among friends?
Is it a word that people shout out when highly emotional?
Is it a slang term?

Concrete:

There are three kinds of words that should be labelled concrete: words which refer to objects which can be identified based on their physical properties (general classes of things which are defined entirely according to their role in human society should NOT be included); words that refer to actions which occur entirely within the physical realm (which have no strong social component, understanding language should not be required); and words that directly describe physical properties. Note that some concrete words are often used metaphorically, but label the word concrete provided its base meaning is concrete (i.e. it is clear that the other uses of the word are metaphorical extensions). Physical descriptions of people (e.g. "portly") are concrete, but groups of people in general should NOT be labeled concrete, unless their defining characteristics are entirely physical.

Include questions:

Is it a physical object?
Is it a physical action?
Is it a word which describes the physical property of an object, including people?

Exclude questions:

Is an "object" which is too vague or general to be recognized by their physical properties?
Is it an "action" which mostly involves a specific kind of talking?
Is it a physical property which is too vague (or invisible) to be recognized by the senses?
Is it a type of person which is defined by something other than purely physical properties?

Subjective:

Do not annotate words which have only a mildly positive or negative connotation, particularly if they are also colloquial (almost all colloquial words have a slightly subjective feel). For subjective words, it's positive or negative character should be a primary part of its semantics. A word that is used to simply describe a something that may have real-world positive or negative connotations (e.g. "battle", "break", "rush") should not be labelled subjective, particularly if there is emotional distancing involved (e.g. "military engagement", "fracture"), though words which refer to things in a way which are unambiguously positive or negative can be included (e.g. "slaughter"). Words that people tend to shout out when in a strong emotional state (interjections) should be marked subjective (e.g. "wow"), but words that describe purely physical processes which may (or may not) be related to emotional states should not (e.g "shudder").

Include questions:

Does it express the strong opinions about the thing it is applied to?
Does it reflect the strong emotions of the person who is using it?

Exclude questions:

Is it primarily a physical property that is only suggestive of an underlying emotional state?
Is it primarily a word that offers an objective description, even if the object has a positive or negative connotation?
Is it a word which has only a slight positive or negative connotation, such that other aspects of the word are much more primary?
Is it only subjective because it has a colloquial feel?