

5.5 Word choice, comparisons, and syntax

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 17 marks**

KEY WORDS syntax 句法 • diction 用词 • parallel structure 平行结构 • repetition 重复
• style 文体

Objective

Build the skills to analyse **diction** 用词, **comparison** and **syntax** 句法.

You must be able to:

- describe the connotation of a word choice, not only its meaning
- explain what a metaphor or analogy asks the reader to accept
- describe a syntactic pattern and its effect
- link any of these to purpose

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Connotation

“Firm” and “stubborn” describe the same behaviour and evaluate it oppositely. Naming the connotation, and what it does for the writer’s purpose, is the analysis; naming the word is not.

■ What a comparison claims

Every metaphor imports a structure. Calling a debate a “battle” makes opponents enemies and compromise a defeat. Ask what the comparison licenses the reader to think.

■ Syntax

Short sentences after long ones create emphasis. A long periodic sentence that delays its main verb builds suspense. Repetition of a structure — parallelism — makes items feel equivalent and complete.

2 Practice

2.1 State the difference between a word’s meaning and its connotation. [2]

2.2 Explain what calling a debate a “battle” asks the reader to accept. [2]

2.3 A paragraph of long sentences ends with a three-word sentence.

(a) State the effect. [1]

(b) State how you would link it to purpose. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Choosing “stubborn” rather than “firm” mainly changes [1]

- **A** the denotation
- **B** the evaluation carried by the word
- **C** the sentence length
- **D** the audience

3.2 Parallel structure across three clauses tends to make the items feel [1]

- **A** unrelated
- **B** equivalent and complete
- **C** contradictory
- **D** hypothetical

- (a) State what the metaphor imports. [1]
- (b) Explain what it forecloses. [2]

Write an essay that analyses how the writer's diction and syntax convey her attitude towards the quarry.

Solutions

2.1 meaning is what the word refers to; connotation is the evaluation or association it carries.

2.2 that the parties are enemies rather than participants, and that compromise would be a defeat rather than an outcome.

2.3 (a) emphasis — the short sentence lands hard after the long ones. (b) state what is emphasised and why the writer wants that point to land.

3.1 B. the denotation is the same; the evaluation is not.

3.2 B. parallelism suggests equivalence and closure.

3.3 (a) rescue from drowning — urgency and the absence of alternatives. (b) it forecloses debate about whether the policy is the right remedy, since refusing a lifeline is not a position anyone can defend.

3.4 Row A — Thesis (1). Must state an interpretation of the **attitude** that the language choices support. **Earns it:** “The writer’s syntax grants the quarry’s recovery the long, unpunctuated time it actually took, while reserving the short sentence for extraction — so the prose enacts the difference between what is done to a place and what a place does for itself.” **Does not:** “The writer uses diction and syntax to show her feelings about the quarry.”

Row B — Evidence and Commentary (0–4). Each claim needs a specific quoted or named choice plus commentary on its **effect**. Strong responses read “*asleep*” as a metaphor that grants the machinery a future rather than an end, and note the deliberate refusal of “*derelict*”, a word that would have made the place a ruin. Sentence length must be analysed as meaning, not merely noticed: the long sentences resist stopping, which is what recovery is; the clipped ones cut, which is what quarrying is. The nine-word close earns commentary about the **weight of position** — after long sentences, brevity reads as finality. An essay that identifies each device correctly but explains only that it “creates imagery” caps at 2.

Row C — Sophistication (1). Earned by the recognition that the essay’s sympathies are structured rather than stated — the writer never argues that the quarry should have been left alone, and the reader concludes it anyway. Awarding it requires that this complexity is sustained, not asserted once.