

6.5 Word choice, comparisons, and syntax

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 11 marks

Objective

Build the skills to analyse **stylistic choice** as evidence about purpose.

You must be able to:

- use a pattern of diction as evidence about attitude
- explain what an extended comparison commits a writer to
- describe a syntactic pattern across a paragraph, not one sentence
- avoid device-spotting without argument

1 Worked examples

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

■ A pattern, not one word

One loaded word may be chance; a run of them is evidence. Where a writer repeatedly chooses terms from one field —medical, legal, military —that pattern says something about how they want the subject understood.

■ Extended comparison

An analogy carried through several sentences commits the writer to its structure. If a policy is a "treatment", then the public are "patients" and the government "the doctor" —and that hierarchy comes with it, whether intended or not.

■ Syntax across a paragraph

Describe the pattern: three short declaratives, then a long qualifying sentence. That shape is analysable; one inverted clause on its own usually is not.

2 Practice

2.1 State why a pattern of diction is stronger evidence than a single word.

[2]

2.2 Explain what an extended comparison commits a writer to. [2]

2.3 A paragraph uses "diagnosis", "symptom" and "remedy" for a social problem.

(a) Name the field of the diction. [1]

(b) State what it invites the reader to assume. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Describing a policy as a "treatment" positions the public as [1]

- **A** doctors
- **B** patients
- **C** observers
- **D** legislators

3.2 Device-spotting becomes analysis when it is linked to [1]

- **A** sentence length
- **B** the writer's purpose and its effect on the reader
- **C** the date
- **D** the number of devices

3.3 A passage uses three short declarative sentences and then one long qualifying sentence.

(a) Describe the pattern. [1]

(b) Explain its likely effect. [2]

4 Go further

- work through the **6.5 Word choice, comparisons, and syntax** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Evidence, Thesis, and Stylistic Choices** section of the AP English Language handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 one word may be chance; a run of terms from one field is a choice and therefore evidence.

2.2 to the structure of the comparison, including the roles it assigns to everyone involved.

2.3 (a) medical. (b) that the problem has a technical cause and an expert remedy, rather than being a matter of contested values.

3.1 B. the metaphor's structure assigns the passive role to the public.

3.2 B. effect on the reader, tied to purpose, is what makes it analysis.

3.3 (a) short declaratives establishing points, then a long sentence qualifying them. (b) the short sentences read as settled fact, so the qualification arrives as a reasonable adjustment rather than a retreat.