

Exercise walk-through

The function of contrasting characters ■ 6.2

eXercise

You must be able to

- define a foil in the CED's terms
- state the mechanism by which a foil works
- distinguish a foil from an antagonist
- identify what a foil is illuminating

Method — Definition

Foil characters (foils) serve to illuminate, through contrast, the traits, attributes, or values of another character.

Method — The mechanism

Through contrast. A foil does not oppose; it stands beside, and the difference makes something in the other character visible.

Method — Foil and antagonist

An antagonist **opposes** the protagonist (4.2); a foil **illuminates** another character. A character can be both, but the two functions are different and the analysis should name which is in play.

Method — What is illuminated

The useful question is: what would we not see in the main character if this foil were absent? The answer is the foil's function.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

Define a foil in the CED's terms.

Solution 2.1

Worked steps

a character who illuminates, through contrast **B1**, the traits, attributes or values of another character **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

Distinguish a foil from an antagonist.

Solution 2.2

Method: Foil and antagonist

Worked steps

an antagonist opposes the protagonist **B1**; a foil illuminates another character through contrast **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 2 marks

A foil illuminates something.

- (a) State the question that finds it.
- (b) State the mechanism a foil uses.

Solution 2.3

Method: The mechanism

Worked steps

(a) what would we not see in the main character if this foil were absent **B2**. (b) contrast **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

A foil works through

A contrast

B opposition

C repetition

D rhyme

Solution 3.1

A contrast



B opposition

C repetition

D rhyme

Worked steps

A. contrast.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

An antagonist's function is to

- A** oppose the protagonist
- B** illuminate another character
- C** narrate
- D** describe the setting

Solution 3.2

A oppose the protagonist



B illuminate another character

C narrate

D describe the setting

Worked steps

A. opposition.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 1 mark

A cautious friend accompanies a reckless protagonist throughout a novel.

- (a) State the friend's function.
- (b) Explain what would be lost without the friend.

Solution 3.3

Method: What is illuminated

Worked steps

(a) a foil **B1**. (b) the protagonist's recklessness would have nothing to be measured against **B1**, so the reader would have no scale for how far it goes **B1**.