

Exercise walk-through

How a narrator's reliability affects a narrative ■ 6.8

eXercise

You must be able to

- state how readers can infer a narrator's biases
- state the consequence of detecting bias
- state what reliability influences
- distinguish an unreliable narrator from a lying one

Method — Inferring bias

Readers can infer narrators' biases by noting which details they choose to include in a narrative and which they choose to omit.

Method — The consequence

Readers who detect bias in a narrator may find that narrator less reliable.

“May” — detecting bias is a reason for caution, not an automatic verdict.

Method — What it influences

The reliability of a narrator may influence a reader's understanding of a character's motives. An unreliable account of why someone acted is the commonest consequence.

Method — Unreliable and lying

An unreliable narrator need not lie. They may be mistaken, self-deceived, too young to understand, or reporting honestly from a limited position. The analysis should say which.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State how readers can infer a narrator's biases.

Solution 2.1

Method: Inferring bias

Worked steps

by noting which details they choose to include **B1** and which they choose to omit **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

State what reliability influences.

Solution 2.2

Method: What it influences

Worked steps

a reader's understanding of a character's motives **B2**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 3 marks

Unreliable is not the same as lying.

(a) Name three other possibilities.

(b) State the force of “may find that narrator less reliable”.

Solution 2.3

Worked steps

(a) mistaken; self-deceived; too young to understand; reporting honestly from a limited position **B3** *for any three*. (b) detecting bias is a reason for caution rather than an automatic verdict **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

Bias is inferred from which details a narrator includes and

- A** which they omit
- B** how long the book is
- C** the publisher
- D** the date

Solution 3.1

A which they omit



B how long the book is

C the publisher

D the date

Worked steps

A. what they omit.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

Reliability may influence a reader's understanding of a character's

A motives

B name

C age

D height

Solution 3.2

Method: What it influences

A motives



B name

C age

D height

Worked steps

A. motives.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 1 mark

A child narrator reports events she does not understand.

- (a) State whether she is lying.
- (b) Explain how an analysis should describe her.

Solution 3.3

Method: Unreliable and lying

Worked steps

(a) no **B1**. (b) as an unreliable narrator whose limitation is comprehension rather than honesty **B1**, so the reader reconstructs what she reports without understanding **B1**.