

Exercise walk-through

How a narrator's reliability affects a narrative ■ 7.7

eXercise

You must be able to

- state what some narrators can provide that others cannot
- state what multiple narrators may provide
- explain what a reader does with contradictory accounts
- distinguish contradiction from difference of emphasis

Method — Different capacities

Some narrators or speakers may provide details and information that others do not or cannot provide. “Do not” and “cannot” are different: one is a choice, the other a limit.

Method — Contradiction

Multiple narrators or speakers may provide contradictory information in a text.

The CED states it plainly and does not tell you how to resolve it.

Method — What to do

Treat both accounts as evidence about their narrators. Then ask whether the text gives any means of deciding between them; if it does not, the contradiction itself is the subject.

Method — Contradiction and emphasis

Two accounts that differ in what they emphasise are not contradictory. Reserve the word for accounts that cannot both be true, because that is a much stronger finding.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State the difference between “do not” and “cannot” provide.

Solution 2.1

Method: Different capacities

Worked steps

“do not” is a choice not to provide **B1**; “cannot” is a limit on what the narrator has access to **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

State what a reader does with contradictory accounts.

Solution 2.2

Worked steps

treat both as evidence about their narrators **B1**, then ask whether the text supplies a means of deciding between them **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 2 marks

Contradiction is a strong word.

- (a) Distinguish it from difference of emphasis.
- (b) State what to do when the text offers no way to decide.

Solution 2.3

Method: Contradiction and emphasis

Worked steps

(a) contradictory accounts cannot both be true **B1**; differing emphasis can be two true accounts of one event **B1**. (b) treat the contradiction itself as the subject **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

“Cannot provide” indicates

- A** a limit
- B** a choice
- C** a lie
- D** an omission by the author

Solution 3.1

Method: Different capacities

A a limit



B a choice

C a lie

D an omission by the author

Worked steps

A. a limit.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

Two accounts that differ in emphasis are

A not necessarily contradictory

B always contradictory

C identical

D unreliable

Solution 3.2

Method: Contradiction and emphasis

A not necessarily contradictory



B always contradictory

C identical

D unreliable

Worked steps

A. not necessarily.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 1 mark

Two narrators give incompatible accounts of one night.

- (a) State what each account is evidence about.
- (b) Explain the next analytical step.

Solution 3.3

Method: What to do

Worked steps

(a) about the narrator who gives it **B1**. (b) look for anything in the text that would decide between them **B1**, and if there is nothing, analyse what the text gains by leaving it undecided **B1**.