

Exercise walk-through

The function of specific words and phrases ■ 8.3

eXercise

You must be able to

- state the CED's claim about ambiguity
- explain why different readers may read differently
- distinguish productive ambiguity from imprecision
- defend a reading of an ambiguous text

Method — The claim

Ambiguity allows for different readings and understandings of a text by different readers. The CED presents it as an allowance, not a defect.

Method — Different readers

5.2 said a symbol's meaning depends partly on the reader's experiences. Ambiguity makes room for that: the text supports more than one reading and does not choose.

Method — Productive and imprecise

Ambiguity is productive when each available reading is supported by the text and the difference between them matters. It is imprecision when the text simply fails to say anything definite.

Method — Defending a reading

Say which reading you are taking, show the text supports it, and acknowledge the other. Acknowledging a rival reading is 7.13's sophistication move, and here it is nearly obligatory.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State the CED's claim about ambiguity.

Solution 2.1

Method: The claim

Worked steps

it allows for different readings and understandings **B1** of a text by different readers **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

Distinguish productive ambiguity from imprecision.

Solution 2.2

Method: Productive and imprecise

Worked steps

productive ambiguity supports each reading and the difference matters **B1**; imprecision supports none definitely **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 3 marks

An ambiguous text still needs a reading.

- (a) State the three steps in defending one.
- (b) State which earlier skill this uses.

Solution 2.3

Method: Defending a reading

Worked steps

(a) state which reading you take; show the text supports it; acknowledge the other **B3**. (b) 7.13's discussion of alternative interpretations **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

The CED presents ambiguity as

- A** an allowance for different readings
- B** a defect
- C** an error
- D** a rhyme scheme

Solution 3.1

Method: The claim

A an allowance for different readings



B a defect

C an error

D a rhyme scheme

Worked steps

A. an allowance.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

Ambiguity is imprecision when the text

A fails to say anything definite

B supports two readings

C is short

D is old

Solution 3.2

Method: Productive and imprecise

A fails to say anything definite



B supports two readings

C is short

D is old

Worked steps

A. nothing definite.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 1 mark

A poem's final image supports two readings and the poem gives no way to choose.

- (a) State what to do.
- (b) Explain why acknowledging the other reading strengthens the essay.

Solution 3.3

Method: Defending a reading

Worked steps

(a) take one reading and defend it while naming the other **B1**. (b) it shows the ambiguity was recognised rather than missed **B1**, and that the chosen reading was preferred on grounds rather than by default **B1**.