

2.2 The function of structure in a text

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 18 marks**

KEY WORDS line and stanza breaks 行与诗节的断开 • poetic structure 结构 • contrast 对照

Objective

Build the skills to explain **poetic structure** 结构.

You must be able to:

- state what line and stanza breaks contribute
- state what the arrangement of lines and stanzas contributes
- explain how structure affects reactions and expectations
- write about a break as a choice

1 Worked examples

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

■ Breaks

Line and stanza breaks contribute to the development and relationship of ideas in a poem. A break is a place where an idea is interrupted or joined.

■ Arrangement

The arrangement of lines and stanzas contributes to the development and relationship of ideas. Not only where the breaks fall but the shape they make.

■ Reactions and expectations

A text's structure affects readers' reactions and expectations by presenting the relationships among the ideas of the text via their relative positions and their placement within the text as a whole.

■ A break as a choice

Ask what the line would mean without the break, and what the break adds. A break that separates a subject from its verb makes the reader wait, and the waiting is the effect.

2 Practice

2.1 State what line and stanza breaks contribute. [2]

2.2 State how structure affects readers. [2]

2.3 A break is a choice.

(a) State the question to ask about it. [2]

(b) Give one effect a break can produce. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Structure presents relationships among ideas via their relative positions and their [1]

- **A** placement within the text as a whole
- **B** alphabetical order
- **C** length
- **D** rhyme only

3.2 A break between a subject and its verb makes the reader [1]

- **A** wait
- **B** stop reading
- **C** skip ahead
- **D** reread the title

3.3 A stanza ends mid-sentence.

- State what the reader experiences. [1]
- Explain what an analysis should say about it. [2]

3.4 Full free-response task. A sonnet’s first eight lines describe a garden in a single unbroken sentence. Line 9 begins “*But*” and the remaining six lines are four short sentences. The rhyme scheme is regular throughout until the final couplet, where the rhyme is a half-rhyme.

Write an essay that analyses how the poem's structure contributes to its meaning.

Marked on the AP 6-point rubric: **Row A** — Thesis (1), **Row B** — Evidence and Commentary (4), **Row C** — Sophistication (1).

[6]

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Solutions

2.1 the development and relationship of ideas in a poem.

2.2 it affects readers' reactions and expectations by presenting relationships among ideas through their relative positions and placement in the whole.

2.3 (a) what the line would mean without the break and what the break adds. (b) any defensible effect, e.g. making the reader wait, or joining two ideas across a gap.

3.1 A. placement within the whole.

3.2 A. the delay is the effect.

3.3 (a) an idea suspended across the gap. (b) name the effect of the suspension and relate it to the poem's argument at that point.

3.4 Row A — Thesis (1). A defensible interpretive claim tying **structure** to meaning. **Earns it:** "The poem gives its garden a single sentence and its loss four, so the sestet does not merely change the subject — it changes the speaker's capacity to sustain a thought."

Does not: "The poem is a sonnet with an octave and a sestet, and this structure helps the poem's meaning."

Row B — Evidence and Commentary (0–4). Each structural feature must be named **and** interpreted. The unbroken octave enacts continuity: nothing in the garden is finished, so no sentence finishes. The volta at "*But*" is placed at the traditional turn, so the poem's rupture is also its most conventional gesture — the form absorbs the shock the speaker cannot. Four short sentences in six lines make the sestet arrive in pieces. The half-rhyme in the couplet withholds the closure a sonnet promises: the poem ends on time but not in tune. Responses that label octave, sestet and volta correctly but explain only that they "create contrast" cap at 2.

Row C — Sophistication (1). Earned by holding the paradox that the poem's most disordered content arrives inside its most ordered form, and that the single failure of rhyme carries more weight than any image because everything else has obeyed. One sentence of insight in an otherwise plain essay does not earn the point.