

2.4 The function of specific words and phrases

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to explain **words and phrases** 词语 at work.

You must be able to:

- define an antecedent and a referent
- state what makes a referent ambiguous and why it matters
- state why words or phrases are repeated
- define alliteration and its purpose

1 Worked examples

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

■ Antecedent and referent

An antecedent is a word, phrase or clause that precedes its referent. Referents may include pronouns, nouns, phrases or clauses —the referent points back, the antecedent is what it points to.

■ Ambiguity

Referents are ambiguous if they can refer to more than one antecedent, which affects interpretation. Ambiguity is not an error here: an unresolvable "it" may be doing work.

■ Repetition

Words or phrases may be repeated to emphasise ideas or associations. The second occurrence is read against the first.

■ Alliteration

The repetition of the same letter sound at the beginning of adjacent or nearby words to emphasise those words and their associations or representations. The point is the emphasis, not the pattern.

2 Practice

2.1 Define an antecedent and a referent. [2]

2.2 State what makes a referent ambiguous and its consequence. [2]

2.3 Define alliteration.

(a) State the definition. [2]

(b) State its purpose in the CED's terms. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 An ambiguous referent is one that [1]

- **A** can refer to more than one antecedent
- **B** has no antecedent
- **C** is alliterative
- **D** is repeated

3.2 Repetition is used to emphasise ideas or [1]

- **A** associations
- **B** page numbers
- **C** rhyme schemes
- **D** dates

3.3 A poem uses "it" where two nouns could be meant.

(a) State what this creates. [1]

(b) Explain why this is not necessarily a fault.

[2]

4 Go further

- work through the **2.4 The function of specific words and phrases** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Poetry I** section of the AP English Literature handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 an antecedent is a word, phrase or clause that precedes its referent; the referent points back to it.

2.2 it can refer to more than one antecedent, which affects interpretation.

2.3 (a) the repetition of the same letter sound at the beginning of adjacent or nearby words. (b) to emphasise those words and their associations or representations.

3.1 A. more than one possible antecedent.

3.2 A. associations.

3.3 (a) an ambiguous referent. (b) the ambiguity may be doing work, holding two readings together where the poem does not want to choose.