

3.1 What textual details reveal about a character

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ Total: 12 marks

KEY WORDS character 人物

Objective

Build the skills to read **character** 人物 across a long text.

You must be able to:

- explain how description creates expectations
- state what happens when a character meets or fails those expectations
- state the CED’s claim about shifting perspective
- explain what a comparison of one character to another reveals

1 Worked examples

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

■ Expectations

The description of a character creates certain expectations for that character’s behaviors; how a character does or does not meet those expectations affects a reader’s interpretation. Description is a promise the text may keep or break.

■ Depending on the narrator

Readers’ understanding of a character’s perspective may depend on the perspective of the narrator or speaker. What you learn is filtered by who is telling you.

■ Shifting

A character’s perspective may shift during the course of a narrative. In a long text this is the material of the analysis: the same character at two points is two pieces of evidence.

■ Comparison

When narrators, characters or speakers compare another character to something or someone else, they reveal their perspective on the compared character and may also reveal something innate about the compared character. Two findings from one comparison — and readers can infer a character’s motives from that character’s actions or inactions.

2 Practice

2.1 Explain how description creates expectations. [2]

2.2 State what a comparison of one character to another reveals. [2]

2.3 A character’s perspective may shift.

(a) State why this matters in a long text. [2]

(b) State what a reader can infer from action or inaction. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 How a character meets or fails expectations affects [1]

- A a reader’s interpretation
- B the page count
- C the genre
- D the publication date

3.2 Understanding of a character’s perspective may depend on

[1]

- **A** the narrator’s perspective
 - **B** the reader’s age
 - **C** the book’s length
 - **D** the title
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3.3 One character calls another “a hawk”.

(a) State the two things this may reveal.

[1]

(b) Explain how a reader keeps them apart.

[2]

Solutions

2.1 description creates expectations for behavior, and meeting or failing them affects the reader’s interpretation.

2.2 the speaker’s perspective on the compared character and possibly something innate about the compared character.

2.3 (a) the same character at two points supplies two pieces of evidence, which is how change is demonstrated rather than asserted. (b) that character’s motives.

3.1 A. the reader’s interpretation.

3.2 A. the narrator’s perspective.

3.3 (a) the speaker’s view of the other, and possibly something true of the other. (b) test the description against the character’s own actions elsewhere; where they agree it is evidence about the character, where they diverge it is evidence about the speaker.