

## 4.2 The function of contrasting characters

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Total: 12 marks

### Objective

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Build the skills to explain **protagonist and antagonist** 主角与对手.

**You must be able to:**

- define protagonist and antagonist
- name the four things an antagonist may be
- state what protagonists and antagonists may represent
- explain why an antagonist need not be a villain

### 1 Worked examples

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

#### ■ Definitions

**The main character in a narrative is the protagonist; the antagonist opposes the protagonist** —a functional definition, about opposition, not about morality.

#### ■ Four possibilities

The antagonist **may be another character, the internal conflicts of the protagonist, a collective (such as society), or nature.**

#### ■ What they represent

**Protagonists and antagonists may represent contrasting values.** The opposition is often between what each holds important, not merely between two people.

#### ■ Not a villain

If the antagonist can be society or nature or the protagonist's own conflicts, then 'villain' is the wrong word. An answer calling every antagonist evil has substituted a moral category for a structural one.

### 2 Practice

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**2.1** Define protagonist and antagonist. [2]

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**2.2** Name the four things an antagonist may be. [2]

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**2.3** An antagonist need not be a villain.

(a) Explain why. [2]

(b) State what the two may represent. [1]

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### 3 Exam-style questions

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**3.1** The antagonist may be another character, a collective, nature, or [1]

- **A** the protagonist's internal conflicts
- **B** the narrator only
- **C** the author
- **D** the reader

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**3.2** The definition of antagonist is [1]

- **A** moral
- **B** functional
- **C** biographical
- **D** historical

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**3.3** A story's antagonist is a drought.

(a) State which of the four possibilities this is. [1]

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(b) Explain what values the opposition might represent.

[2]

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#### 4 Go further

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- work through the **4.2 The function of contrasting characters** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Short Fiction II** section of the AP English Literature handout on the **Know** page.

## Solutions

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**2.1** the protagonist is the main character; the antagonist opposes the protagonist.

**2.2** another character; the internal conflicts of the protagonist; a collective such as society; nature.

**2.3** (a) the definition is about opposition rather than morality, and society, nature or the protagonist's own conflicts cannot be villains. (b) contrasting values.

**3.1 A.** internal conflicts count.

**3.2 B.** functional.

**3.3** (a) nature. (b) any defensible pair, e.g. human planning against indifference, which the drought embodies by being unresponsive to any argument.