

5.3 The function of specific words and phrases

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to explain **hyperbole and understatement** 夸张与低调.

You must be able to:

- state what descriptive words do to a reader's interaction
- define hyperbole and understatement
- state what exaggerating or minimising does
- explain why understatement can be stronger than exaggeration

1 Worked examples

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

■ Descriptive words

Adjectives and adverbs qualify or modify the things they describe and affect readers' interaction with the text.

■ Two devices

Hyperbole exaggerates while understatement minimises. They are opposite operations on the same scale.

■ What both do

Exaggerating or minimising an aspect of an object focuses attention on that trait and conveys a perspective about the object. The same two effects from opposite means.

■ Why understatement can be stronger

Saying less than the case invites the reader to supply the rest, and what a reader supplies is felt more sharply than what they are told. "It was not a good year" after a death does more than an outburst.

2 Practice

2.1 Define hyperbole and understatement. [2]

2.2 State the two effects that both produce. [2]

2.3 Understatement can be stronger.

(a) Explain why. [2]

(b) State what adjectives and adverbs do to a reader. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Hyperbole and understatement are [1]

- **A** the same operation
- **B** opposite operations on the same scale
- **C** unrelated
- **D** forms of rhyme

3.2 Both focus attention on a trait and convey [1]

- **A** a perspective about the object
- **B** the date
- **C** the genre
- **D** the metre

3.3 A speaker calls a catastrophe "a bit of trouble".

(a) Name the device. [1]

(b) Explain the effect on the reader.

[2]

4 Go further

- work through the **5.3 The function of specific words and phrases** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Poetry II** section of the AP English Literature handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 hyperbole exaggerates; understatement minimises.

2.2 they focus attention on the trait and convey a perspective about the object.

2.3 (a) saying less invites the reader to supply the rest, and what a reader supplies is felt more sharply than what they are told. (b) they qualify or modify what they describe and affect the reader's interaction with the text.

3.1 B. opposite operations.

3.2 A. a perspective about the object.

3.3 (a) understatement. (b) the reader measures the gap between the words and the event, and the effort of supplying it makes the catastrophe more present than a direct statement would.