

6.2 The function of contrasting characters

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

KEY WORDS foil 衬托人物 • foil characters 陪衬人物

Objective

Build the skills to explain a **foil** 衬托人物.

You must be able to:

- define a foil in the CED’s terms
- state the mechanism by which a foil works
- distinguish a foil from an antagonist
- identify what a foil is illuminating

1 Worked examples

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

■ Definition

Foil characters (foils) serve to illuminate, through contrast, the traits, attributes, or values of another character.

■ The mechanism

Through contrast. A foil does not oppose; it stands beside, and the difference makes something in the other character visible.

■ Foil and antagonist

An antagonist **opposes** the protagonist (4.2); a foil **illuminates** another character. A character can be both, but the two functions are different and the analysis should name which is in play.

■ What is illuminated

The useful question is: what would we not see in the main character if this foil were absent? The answer is the foil’s function.

2 Practice

2.1 Define a foil in the CED’s terms. [2]

2.2 Distinguish a foil from an antagonist. [2]

2.3 A foil illuminates something.

(a) State the question that finds it. [2]

(b) State the mechanism a foil uses. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A foil works through [1]

- **A** contrast
- **B** opposition
- **C** repetition
- **D** rhyme

3.2 An antagonist’s function is to [1]

- **A** oppose the protagonist
- **B** illuminate another character
- **C** narrate
- **D** describe the setting

3.3 A cautious friend accompanies a reckless protagonist throughout a novel.

(a) State the friend's function. [1]

(b) Explain what would be lost without the friend. [2]

Solutions

2.1 a character who illuminates, through contrast, the traits, attributes or values of another character.

2.2 an antagonist opposes the protagonist; a foil illuminates another character through contrast.

2.3 (a) what would we not see in the main character if this foil were absent. (b) contrast.

3.1 A. contrast.

3.2 A. opposition.

3.3 (a) a foil. (b) the protagonist's recklessness would have nothing to be measured against, so the reader would have no scale for how far it goes.