

7.8 The function of a symbol

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 13 marks

Objective

Build the skills to explain a **symbolic setting** 象征性场景.

You must be able to:

- state when a setting becomes symbolic
- name the kinds of abstraction a setting may be associated with
- state the CED's claim about universal associations
- distinguish a place from what it has come to mean

1 Worked examples

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

■ Becoming symbolic

A setting may become symbolic when it is, or comes to be, associated with abstractions such as emotions, ideologies, and beliefs. "Comes to be" allows a place to acquire the association within the text.

■ Abstractions

Emotions, ideologies and beliefs —not objects. A symbolic setting stands for something that cannot be pointed at.

■ Universal associations

Over time, some settings have developed certain associations such that they almost universally symbolise particular concepts. "Almost" —the CED does not claim a fixed code.

■ Place and meaning

A setting keeps working as a place while it symbolises. An analysis that treats the house only as an idea has lost the literal level that makes the symbol persuasive.

2 Practice

2.1 State when a setting becomes symbolic.

[2]

2.2 Name the kinds of abstraction a setting may be associated with. [3]

2.3 A symbolic setting is still a place.

(a) Explain why this matters. [2]

(b) State the force of "almost universally". [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 "Comes to be associated" allows a place to acquire its meaning [1]

- **A** within the text
 - **B** before writing
 - **C** never
 - **D** only in poetry
-

3.2 Settings symbolise abstractions such as emotions, ideologies and [1]

- **A** beliefs
 - **B** furniture
 - **C** dates
 - **D** names
-

3.3 A student writes only about what a house "represents".

(a) State what has been lost. [1]

(b) Explain why the literal level matters. [2]

4 Go further

- work through the **7.8 The function of a symbol** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Short Fiction III** section of the AP English Literature handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 when it is, or comes to be, associated with abstractions such as emotions, ideologies and beliefs.

2.2 emotions; ideologies; beliefs.

2.3 (a) the setting continues to work as a place, and the literal level is what makes the symbolic reading persuasive. (b) the CED does not claim a fixed code of universal meanings.

3.1 A. within the text.

3.2 A. beliefs.

3.3 (a) the house as an actual place in the story. (b) the symbolic meaning grows out of what the house literally is and does, so removing that leaves the reading unsupported.