

4.2 The function of contrasting characters

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

KEY WORDS antagonist 对立者 • protagonist 主人公 • protagonist and antagonist 主角与对手

Objective

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

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

2.1 Define protagonist and antagonist. [2]

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

2.3 An antagonist need not be a villain.

(a) Explain why. [2]

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

3 Exam-style questions

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

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

3.2 The definition of antagonist is [1]

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

3.3 A story's antagonist is a drought.

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

(b) Explain what values the opposition might represent. [2]
