

5.3 The function of specific words and phrases

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 18 marks

KEY WORDS understatement 低调陈述 • hyperbole 夸张
• hyperbole and understatement 夸张与低调

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 | B |
| C | D |
- 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 | B |
| C | D |
- 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]

3.4 Full free-response task. A comic novel’s narrator says of a minor character: *“He had been described, by people who loved him, as difficult.”* Two pages later, the same narrator says of a disaster that has destroyed a family: *“It was, everyone agreed, a shame.”*

Write an essay that analyses how the novel's use of hyperbole and understatement conveys its attitude to its characters.

Marked on the AP 6-point rubric: **Row A — Thesis (1), Row B — Evidence and Commentary (4), Row C — Sophistication (1).**

[6]
