

6.8 How a narrator’s reliability affects a narrative

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 13 marks**

KEY WORDS narrator reliability 可靠性

Objective

Build the skills to judge **narrator reliability** 可靠性.

You must be able to:

- state how readers can infer a narrator’s biases
- state the consequence of detecting bias
- state what reliability influences
- distinguish an unreliable narrator from a lying one

1 Worked examples

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

■ Inferring bias

Readers can infer narrators’ biases by noting which details they choose to include in a narrative and which they choose to omit.

■ The consequence

Readers who detect bias in a narrator may find that narrator less reliable. “May” — detecting bias is a reason for caution, not an automatic verdict.

■ What it influences

The reliability of a narrator may influence a reader’s understanding of a character’s motives. An unreliable account of why someone acted is the commonest consequence.

■ Unreliable and lying

An unreliable narrator need not lie. They may be mistaken, self-deceived, too young to understand, or reporting honestly from a limited position. The analysis should say which.

2 Practice

2.1 State how readers can infer a narrator’s biases. [2]

2.2 State what reliability influences. [2]

2.3 Unreliable is not the same as lying.

(a) Name three other possibilities. [3]

(b) State the force of “may find that narrator less reliable”. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Bias is inferred from which details a narrator includes and [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- A which they omit
B how long the book is
C the publisher
D the date

3.2 Reliability may influence a reader’s understanding of a character’s [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- A motives
B name
C age
D height

3.3 A child narrator reports events she does not understand.

(a) State whether she is lying. [1]

(b) Explain how an analysis should describe her. [2]
