

7.7 How a narrator’s reliability affects a narrative

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

KEY WORDS multiple narrators 多重叙述者

Objective

Build the skills to handle **multiple narrators** 多重叙述者.

You must be able to:

- state what some narrators can provide that others cannot
- state what multiple narrators may provide
- explain what a reader does with contradictory accounts
- distinguish contradiction from difference of emphasis

1 Worked examples

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

■ Different capacities

Some narrators or speakers may provide details and information that others do not or cannot provide. “Do not” and “cannot” are different: one is a choice, the other a limit.

■ Contradiction

Multiple narrators or speakers may provide contradictory information in a text. The CED states it plainly and does not tell you how to resolve it.

■ What to do

Treat both accounts as evidence about their narrators. Then ask whether the text gives any means of deciding between them; if it does not, the contradiction itself is the subject.

■ Contradiction and emphasis

Two accounts that differ in what they emphasise are not contradictory. Reserve the word for accounts that cannot both be true, because that is a much stronger finding.

2 Practice

2.1 State the difference between “do not” and “cannot” provide. [2]

2.2 State what a reader does with contradictory accounts. [2]

2.3 Contradiction is a strong word.

(a) Distinguish it from difference of emphasis. [2]

(b) State what to do when the text offers no way to decide. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 “Cannot provide” indicates [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- A** a limit
B a choice
C a lie
D an omission by the author

3.2 Two accounts that differ in emphasis are [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- A** not necessarily contradictory
B always contradictory
C identical
D unreliable

3.3 Two narrators give incompatible accounts of one night.

(a) State what each account is evidence about.

[1]

(b) Explain the next analytical step.

[2]
