

Exercise walk-through

Literal and figurative meaning ■ 5.2

eXercise

You must be able to

- state what words with multiple meanings add
- distinguish a meaning from a connotation
- explain why ambiguity can be an asset
- defend a reading that keeps two senses

Method — The claim

Words with multiple meanings or connotations add nuance or complexity that can contribute to interpretations of a text.

Method — Meaning and connotation

A **meaning** is what a word denotes; a **connotation** is what it carries with it.
“Slender” and “scrawny” can denote the same thing and connote opposite judgments.

Method — Ambiguity as asset

If a word can mean two things and both fit the poem, the poem may be holding both. Choosing one and discarding the other can lose what the line is doing.

Method — Defending a double reading

Show that each sense is supported by something in the text, and then say what the poem gains by not resolving between them.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State what words with multiple meanings add.

Solution 2.1

Method: The claim

Worked steps

nuance or complexity **B1** that can contribute to interpretations of the text **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

Distinguish a meaning from a connotation.

Solution 2.2

Method: Meaning and connotation

Worked steps

a meaning is what the word denotes **B1**; a connotation is the judgment or association it carries **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 2 marks

Ambiguity can be an asset.

- (a) Explain when.
- (b) State how a double reading is defended.

Solution 2.3

Worked steps

(a) when both senses are supported by the text **B1**, so the poem may be holding both rather than choosing **B1**. (b) show each sense is supported and say what the poem gains by not resolving **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

A connotation is what a word

- A** denotes
- B** carries with it
- C** rhymes with
- D** replaces

Solution 3.1

Method: Meaning and connotation

A denotes

B carries with it



C rhymes with

D replaces

Worked steps

B. what it carries with it.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

“Slender” and “scrawny” differ mainly in

A denotation

B connotation

C length

D origin

Solution 3.2

Method: Meaning and connotation

A denotation

B connotation



C length

D origin

Worked steps

B. connotation.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 1 mark

A poem's key word can mean two things and both fit.

- (a) State what an analysis should do.
- (b) Explain why choosing one might lose something.

Solution 3.3

Method: Ambiguity as asset

Worked steps

(a) keep both senses and show each is supported **B1**. (b) the poem may be using the doubleness deliberately **B1**, so resolving it substitutes the reader's tidiness for the text's effect **B1**.