

5.9 Developing commentary

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

KEY WORDS commentary on a poem 诗歌评述

Objective

Build the skills to write **commentary on a poem** 诗歌评述.**You must be able to:**

- define a line of reasoning
- state how it is communicated
- explain what poetry commentary must do that prose commentary need not
- avoid paraphrase in place of commentary

1 Worked examples

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

■ Line of reasoning

The logical sequence of claims that work together to defend the overarching thesis statement.

■ How communicated

Through commentary that explains the logical relationship between the thesis and the claims and evidence within the body of the essay.

■ Poetry's extra job

Because a poem's evidence is a few words, commentary must first establish what the words are doing before it can say what that supports. Prose commentary can often assume the sense of a quoted sentence; poetry commentary usually cannot.

■ Not paraphrase

Restating a line in ordinary words is not commentary. Paraphrase tells the reader what the line says; commentary tells them what it does and why it matters to the claim.

2 Practice

2.1 Define a line of reasoning and state how it is communicated. [2]

2.2 Explain what poetry commentary must do first. [2]

2.3 Paraphrase is not commentary.

(a) State the difference. [2]

(b) State why poetry commentary cannot assume the sense. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Paraphrase tells the reader what the line [1]

- **A** says
- **B** does
- **C** proves
- **D** implies about the thesis

3.2 A line of reasoning is a sequence of [1]

- **A** claims
- **B** quotations
- **C** paraphrases
- **D** titles

3.3 A student quotes a line and restates it in plain words.

(a) State what is missing. [1]

(b) Explain what should follow the restatement.

[2]

Solutions

2.1 the logical sequence of claims defending the thesis, communicated through commentary explaining the relationship between thesis, claims and evidence.

2.2 establish what the words are doing before saying what that supports.

2.3 (a) paraphrase says what the line says; commentary says what it does and why it matters to the claim. (b) a poem's sense is often not obvious from the quotation alone.

3.1 A. what it says.

3.2 A. claims.

3.3 (a) the commentary. (b) a statement of what the line's wording does and how that supports the paragraph's claim.