

8.6 The function of an allusion

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

KEY WORDS shared knowledge 共有知识

Objective

Build the skills to explain an allusion's **shared knowledge** 共有知识.

You must be able to:

- state what allusions create and why
- explain what 'shared knowledge' presupposes
- distinguish emotional from intellectual associations
- handle an allusion whose reference you must reconstruct

1 Worked examples

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

■ The claim

Because of shared knowledge about a reference, allusions create emotional or intellectual associations and understandings.

■ Shared knowledge

The allusion works only if the reader has the reference. A poet alluding to a sacred text assumes a readership that knows it, so the allusion is also evidence about the poem's assumed audience.

■ Two kinds of association

An **emotional** association brings a feeling attached to the reference; an **intellectual** one brings an idea or an argument. Many allusions do both.

■ Reconstructing

When the reference is unfamiliar, find out what it is known for, then ask which part of that the poem's context needs. That is 5.7's method, applied where the shared knowledge is no longer shared.

2 Practice

2.1 State what allusions create and why. [2]

2.2 Distinguish emotional from intellectual associations. [2]

2.3 Shared knowledge is an assumption.

(a) State what it reveals about the poem. [2]

(b) State the method when the reference is unfamiliar. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Allusions work because of [1]

- **A** shared knowledge about a reference
- **B** rhyme
- **C** length
- **D** punctuation

3.2 An emotional association brings [1]

- **A** a feeling attached to the reference
- **B** an argument
- **C** a definition
- **D** a date

3.3 A modern reader misses an allusion a contemporary reader would have caught.

(a) State what has changed. [1]

(b) Explain what the reader should do.

[2]

Solutions

2.1 emotional or intellectual associations and understandings, because of shared knowledge about the reference.

2.2 an emotional association brings a feeling attached to the reference; an intellectual one brings an idea or argument.

2.3 (a) that the poem assumes a readership possessing the reference, which is evidence about its intended audience. (b) find what the reference is known for and ask which part the context needs.

3.1 A. shared knowledge.

3.2 A. a feeling.

3.3 (a) the knowledge is no longer shared. (b) reconstruct what the reference was known for and determine which part of it the poem's context requires.