

Exercise walk-through

Identifying the overarching thesis ■ 4.3

eXercise

You must be able to

- distinguish the thesis from a strongly worded sub-claim
- test candidates against the whole passage
- state a thesis in one sentence in your own words
- explain why the weaker candidate is subordinate

Method — Strong wording is not the test

The most emphatic sentence is often a sub-claim: writers raise their voice where they expect resistance. The thesis is the claim everything else serves, whether or not it is the loudest.

Method — Testing candidates

Take two candidates and ask of each paragraph which it supports. The one supported throughout is the thesis; the other will be supported by a section.

Method — Saying why

An answer that only names the thesis is incomplete. Say what the rejected candidate does instead — usually it is one step in the argument for the real thesis.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State why the most emphatic sentence may not be the thesis.

Solution 2.1

Method: Strong wording is not the test

Worked steps

emphasis marks where resistance is expected **B1**, which is often a sub-claim rather than the overall argument **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

State the test for choosing between two candidate theses.

Solution 2.2

Worked steps

ask of each paragraph which candidate it supports **B1**; the one supported throughout is the thesis **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

A passage's boldest sentence is supported by two paragraphs; a quieter one by all six.

- (a) State which is the thesis.
- (b) State the role of the other.

Solution 2.3

Method: Testing candidates

Worked steps

(a) the quieter one **B1**. (b) it is a sub-claim — a step in the argument for the thesis **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

Writers often raise their voice where they expect

A agreement

B resistance

C boredom

D confusion

Solution 3.1

Method: Strong wording is not the test

A agreement

B resistance 

C boredom

D confusion

Worked steps

B. emphasis anticipates objection.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

The thesis is the claim that

- A** is stated most forcefully
- B** everything else in the passage serves
- C** appears first
- D** is longest

Solution 3.2

Method: Strong wording is not the test

- A is stated most forcefully
- B everything else in the passage serves** 
- C appears first
- D is longest

Worked steps

B. subordination, not volume, identifies the thesis.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 1 mark

Two candidate theses are each supported by half the passage.

- (a) State what this suggests.
- (b) Explain how you would resolve it.

Solution 3.3

Worked steps

(a) that the real thesis is a claim that includes both **B1**. (b) construct a single sentence that both halves support **B1** and test it against every paragraph **B1**.