

2.5 Identifying the overarching thesis

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 11 marks

KEY WORDS thesis 论点

Objective

Build the skills to identify a passage's **thesis** 论点.

You must be able to:

- distinguish a thesis from a topic and from an opening sentence
- locate a thesis that is stated late or implied
- state a thesis in your own words in one sentence
- test a candidate thesis against the whole passage

1 Worked examples

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

■ Thesis, not topic

A **topic** names the subject; a **thesis** makes a disputable claim about it. “The history of the census” is a topic. “The census has always measured what the state wished to control” is a thesis.

■ Where it hides

A thesis may open the passage, close it, or never be stated outright. Where it is implied, construct it: what single sentence would every paragraph be supporting?

■ The test

A candidate thesis is right if each paragraph can be shown to serve it. If two paragraphs do not, either the thesis is wrong or you have found a genuine digression — and saying which is part of the analysis.

2 Practice

2.1 State the difference between a topic and a thesis. [2]

2.2 State the test for whether a candidate thesis is correct. [2]

2.3 A passage never states a thesis outright.

(a) State what you should do. [1]

(b) State the evidence you would use. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 “The rise of the suburb” is best described as [1]

- **A** a thesis
- **B** a topic
- **C** commentary
- **D** evidence

3.2 Two paragraphs do not serve your candidate thesis. This means [1]

- **A** the passage is badly written
- **B** either the thesis is wrong or those paragraphs are a digression
- **C** the thesis is proved
- **D** there is no thesis

3.3 A passage’s final sentence states a strong claim not made earlier.

(a) State whether this can be the thesis. [1]

(b) Explain how you would check.

[2]

Solutions

2.1 a topic names the subject; a thesis makes a disputable claim about it.

2.2 each paragraph should be shown to serve it; if several do not, the candidate is wrong.

2.3 (a) construct it: write the one sentence every paragraph supports. (b) the claims of the individual paragraphs.

3.1 B. it names a subject without claiming anything.

3.2 B. both possibilities remain open and must be tested.

3.3 (a) yes — a thesis may be stated late. (b) check whether each earlier paragraph can be read as building toward it; if they can, it is the thesis rather than a new point.