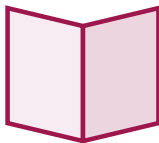


Longer Fiction or Drama III

AP English Literature ■ Unit 9

AP English Literature



What we will cover

- 1 Characters Who Change or Remain Unchanged
- 2 Choices, Actions, and Speech Reveal Complexity
- 3 Significant Events in a Plot
- 4 The Function of Conflict in a Text
- 5 Details, Diction, and Syntax Reveal Perspective
- 6 Developing a Literary Thesis Statement



Characters Who Change or Remain Unchanged

Unit 9 is the final unit, and its subject is **how texts end** – and what an ending lets a reader conclude about the whole work.

- **Minor characters often remain unchanged** because the narrative does not focus on them; they may serve other functions.
- **Readers' interpretations are often affected by a character changing – or not – and by the nature of that change.**

Characters Who Change or Remain Unchanged, continued

The second is the interpretive move the whole course has been building toward.

Whether a character changes is not a fact to report; it is the ground on which a reading of the work stands.



Choices, Actions, and Speech Reveal Complexity

How a character behaves *after* the crisis is resolved is often the most compressed evidence in a text, and it is almost always overlooked, because by then the reader is finishing.

- A character's responses to the resolution of the narrative – in words or in actions – are revealing.
- Inconsistencies and unexpected developments in a character affect readers' interpretations.



Significant Events in a Plot

Note *accumulate*. Suspense is not produced by a single event but by a series that narrows what can still happen.

- Significant events often illustrate competing value systems related to a conflict in the text.
- Events collide and accumulate to create anticipation and suspense .



Three things to establish about any ending

For any ending, establish the **denouement** , what stayed offstage, and whether the plot actually resolves.

Three things to establish about any ending, in detail

Three things to establish about any ending

1. The denouement

the resolution of the anticipation, suspense, or central conflicts

what was settled - and for whom

2. What is never shown

an unseen character, an action that preceded the first page

the least-used evidence in the course, and often the strongest

3. Whether it resolves at all

some plots have unresolved endings

an unresolved ending is a CHOICE, not a failure to finish

**Question 3 asks for "an interpretation of the work as a WHOLE"
- and an ending is how the parts add up.**

What was resolved, what was never shown, and whether the text resolves at all

The Function of Conflict in a Text

The middle point is the least used and often the most powerful. What a text keeps offstage – a death that happened before the first page, a character who is discussed and never appears – shapes everything the reader is shown, and is textual evidence like any other.

- The resolution of the anticipation, suspense, or central conflicts of a plot may be called the **denouement** .
- Sometimes things not actually shown in a narrative – an **unseen character**, a **preceding action** – affect the interpretation of what is shown.
- **Although most plots end in resolution, some have unresolved endings** , and those affect interpretation too.

Three ways a conflict ends

RESOLVED

one side gives way,
and the text says so

UNRESOLVED

the conflict stands, and
the text ends anyway

DISSOLVED

what was at stake stops
mattering to the characters

The second and third are not failures of plot. A text that refuses to resolve is making a claim about the **kind** of problem it has shown you

Say which of the three you have, and why the text chose it. “In the end everything is resolved” is the reading that fits fewest texts



Details, Diction, and Syntax Reveal Perspective

A narrator who changes is doubly analysable: as a character who developed, and as a lens that altered. When the lens changes, everything seen through it before is retrospectively re-lit.

- Multiple, and even contrasting, perspectives can occur within a single text and contribute to its complexity.
- A narrator or speaker may change over the course of a text as a result of actions and interactions.
- Changes and inconsistencies in a narrator's or speaker's perspective may contribute to irony or to a reader's judgement of reliability.



Developing a Literary Thesis Statement

Unchanged: an **interpretation** requiring textual defence, which **may** preview the line of reasoning.

At this stage, the thesis you are aiming for is one that could not be written before reading the whole work – a claim about how the parts add up.

Order by claim, not by chapter

ORDERED BY THE TEXT

the beginning

the middle

the end

evidence for the top row comes in page order, which is what makes it retelling

ORDERED BY YOUR CLAIMS

the first thing
to establish

what it makes possible

the reading
it supports

The bottom row may take all three quotations from the last page. Order by **claim**, and summary becomes structurally difficult



Developing Commentary

For the Question 3 literary argument in particular, the phrase in the prompt is almost always "*an interpretation of the work as a whole*". That phrase is a requirement: your claim must be about the whole, and the passage or character you analyse must be shown to bear on it.

- A **line of reasoning** is the sequence of claims defending the thesis, communicated through **commentary**.
- More sophisticated literary arguments explain the significance or relevance of an interpretation.

Four habits, and their revisions

- A **line of reasoning** is the sequence of claims defending the thesis, communicated through **commentary**.
- **More sophisticated literary arguments explain the significance or relevance of an interpretation.**

Four habits, and their revisions, in detail

THE HABIT	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	TURN IT INTO
SUMMARY	<i>"Then she leaves and the house is sold."</i>	what the ORDER of those two facts does
DEVICE-SPOTTING	<i>"The poet uses a simile here."</i>	what the ground of the comparison commits to
BIOGRAPHY	<i>"The author had lost her own home."</i>	what the narrator's account keeps returning to
FEELING REPORTED	<i>"This makes the reader feel sad."</i>	the words that would produce it, quoted

Four habits, and the revision each one becomes - none needs new evidence



Selecting Relevant and Sufficient Evidence

Evidence used **strategically**; **effective** with commentary; **sufficient** in quantity and quality; and interpretation developed **recursively**, revised when the evidence does not support it.

Worked example – what an ending withholds

A Question 3 prompt asks how a character's response to the resolution contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole.

- **Weak:** “[a description of the ending]”
- **Scoring:** “The novel refuses a denouement: the verdict is never given, and the brother whose death set the plot in motion never appears. What we are shown is the protagonist returning to work the following Monday – so that ordinary Monday becomes the only available measure of what has happened.”

An unresolved ending is a choice. Ask what the text *withholds*, and what it offers in place of it.

Exam tips

- Whether a character changes is **the ground of a reading**, not a fact to report.
- **How a character behaves after the crisis** is compressed evidence, and almost always overlooked.
- Suspense **accumulates**. It comes from a series that narrows what can still happen, not from one event.
- **What is never shown** – an unseen character, a prior action – is textual evidence. Use it.
- An **unresolved ending** is a choice with meaning, not a failure to finish.
- Question 3 asks for **"the work as a whole"**. That is a requirement, and it is where most answers fall short.



Unit 9 – key takeaways

1

Change

the ground of a reading, not a fact to report

2

After the crisis

how the character behaves – compressed evidence

3

Suspense

accumulates as options narrow

4

Unresolved

a choice with meaning, not a failure to finish

Check yourself

- 1 Whether a character changes is what?
- 2 What evidence is almost always overlooked?
- 3 Where does suspense come from?
- 4 What is an unresolved ending?

Answers: the ground of a reading ▪ behaviour after the crisis ▪ a series that narrows what can happen ▪ a choice with meaning