

Longer Fiction or Drama I

AP English Literature and Composition

What Textual Details Reveal About a Character

Unit 3 is the first longer-fiction-or-drama unit, and the length changes what is analysable: characters can now **change**, conflicts can **intersect**, and setting acquires a **social and historical** dimension.

The CED's additions on character:

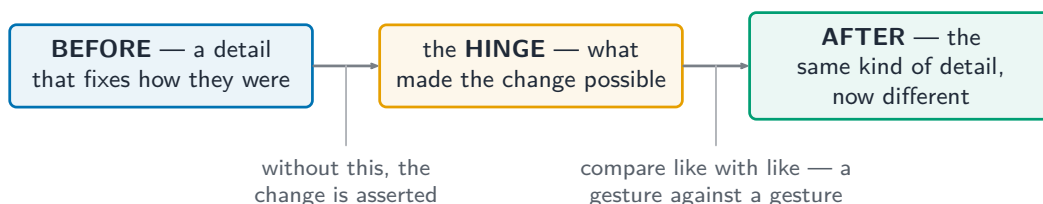
- The **description of a character creates expectations** for that character's behaviour, and **how a character meets or fails those expectations** is meaningful.
- Details associated with a character **contribute to a reader's interpretation** of them.
- A reader's understanding of a character's perspective **may depend on the perspective of the narrator**.
- **A character's perspective may shift** during the narrative.
- When narrators or characters **compare another character to something else**, they reveal their own perspective as much as the compared character's.
- **Readers can infer motive from a character's actions or inactions**.

That last word - *inactions* - is the one worth keeping. What a character declines to do is evidence, and it is usually more revealing than what they do.

Characters Who Change or Remain Unchanged

- A **dynamic character** 动态人物 develops over the narrative and often makes choices that directly or indirectly cause change.
- Character change can be **visible and external** - health, wealth, circumstance - or **internal**, in belief, value, or understanding.
- **Some characters remain unchanged** 静态人物 or are largely unaffected by events.

The unchanged character is not a failure of characterisation; it is often the measure by which the change in others is visible.



Three quotations, and the **middle** one is the one students omit.
A change with no hinge reads as two unrelated descriptions

Textual Details That Convey Setting

Setting now includes the **social, cultural, and historical situation** in which the events occur - not only time and place.

This widens what setting can do. A social setting supplies the constraints a character must act within, and constraint is what turns a choice into a revealing one.

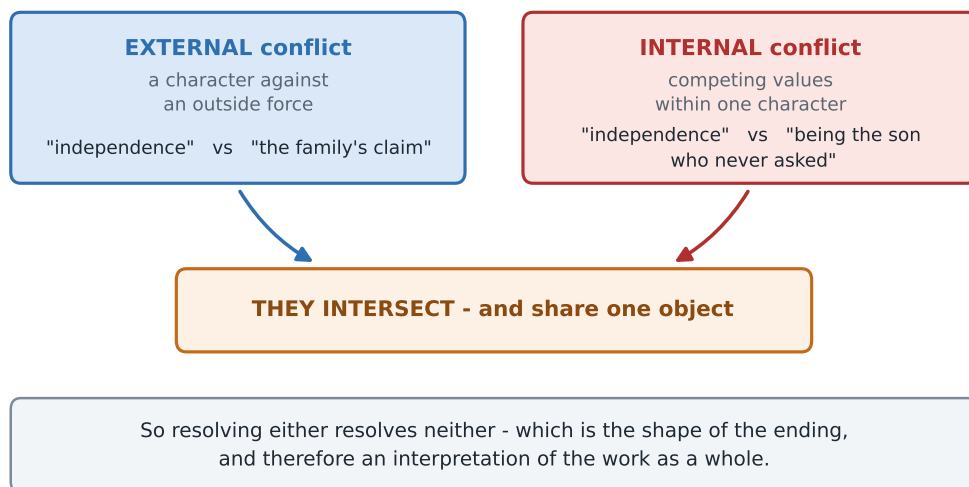
Significant Events in a Plot

- A narrative is delivered through a **series of events that relate to a conflict**.
- Events include **episodes, encounters, and scenes** that introduce and develop plot.
- **The significance of an event depends on its relationship to the narrative, the conflict, and character development.**

That third statement is the test for essay selection: an event matters to your argument only if you can say what it does to the conflict or to a character. Retelling a striking scene that does neither is plot summary, which earns nothing.

The Function of Conflict in a Text

Conflict is between competing VALUES - name them on both sides



A primary conflict heightened by an intersecting one is the standard shape of a novel or play

- **Conflict 冲突** is **tension between competing values**, either **within a character** - internal or psychological conflict - or **between a character and an external force**.
- **A text may contain multiple conflicts**, and often two or more **intersect 交叉**.
- **A primary conflict can be heightened by additional conflicts that intersect with it.**
- **Inconsistencies in a text may create contrasts** that represent conflicts of values or perspectives.

Note the definition: conflict is between **competing values**, not merely between people. Two characters who want the same object are in a dispute; two characters who want *incompatible goods* are in a conflict, and only the second produces meaning.

Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence

Unchanged from Units 1 and 2: a **claim** requiring textual defence, **textual evidence**, and details identified **in combination**.

Developing a Literary Thesis Statement

- A **thesis statement** expresses an **interpretation** of a literary text and **requires defence** through textual evidence.

- It **may preview the development or line of reasoning** of that interpretation - but is **not required** to list the reasons.

The key word is *interpretation*. A thesis that states what happens in the text is not a thesis; it is a summary. A thesis must say what the text **means** or **does**, which is by definition arguable.

SUMMARY

The narrator remembers her childhood home and then learns that it has been sold.

reports what happens; every paragraph can only report more

A LITERARY THESIS

By giving the memory more space than the loss, the narrator makes the reader feel the house as present before it is taken away.

names a **choice** and its effect, so the evidence is the text's own shape

A literary thesis is about what the text **does**, not what it contains.
That is also what stops an essay drifting back into summary

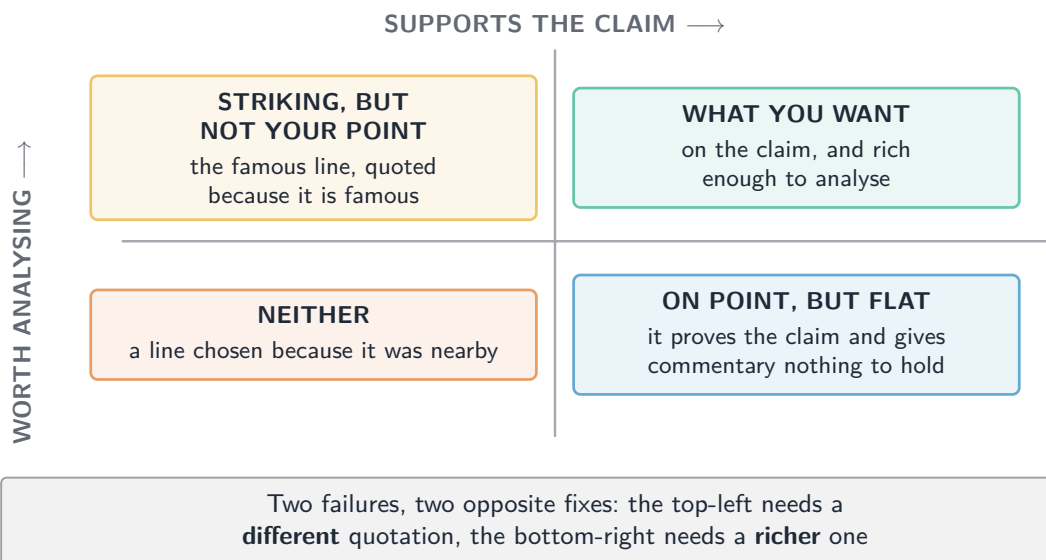
Developing Commentary

- A **line of reasoning** 推理线索 is the **logical sequence of claims** that together defend the overarching thesis.
- It is communicated through **commentary explaining the logical relationship** between evidence and claim.

Selecting Relevant and Sufficient Evidence

- Writers use evidence **strategically** - to illustrate, clarify, exemplify, associate, or amplify.
- Evidence is **effective** when commentary explains its logical relationship to the claim.
- Evidence is **sufficient** when its **quantity and quality** provide apt support.
- **Developing an interpretation is a recursive process**: an interpretation can emerge, and change, as you read and write.

That last point is permission worth taking. If your reading changes while you draft, revise the thesis to match it.



Control Over the Elements of Composition

Grammar and mechanics that follow established conventions allow writers to communicate clearly. On this exam, control of language is not a separate mark but a condition of the others: an unclear sentence cannot deliver commentary a reader can credit.

Worked example (a real AP exam task). A Question 3 literary-argument prompt asks you to choose a work and analyse how a character’s conflict contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. A weak answer narrates the plot around the conflict. A scoring answer identifies **competing values** and lets them intersect: *“The protagonist’s external conflict with his family over the inheritance is heightened by an internal one: he wants the independence the money would buy, and he wants to remain the son who never asked for it. Because the two conflicts share a single object, resolving either resolves neither - which is why the novel ends with a choice that satisfies no one, including him.”* Two conflicts, named as values, and an interpretation of the whole.

Exam tips

- **Inactions reveal motive.** What a character declines to do is often the strongest evidence available.
- The **unchanged character** is the measure by which change in others becomes visible.
- Setting now includes the **social and historical** situation - it supplies the constraint that makes choices meaningful.

- Conflict is between **competing values**, not merely between people. Name the values.
- An event matters only if you can say **what it does to the conflict or to a character**. Otherwise it is plot summary.
- A thesis must state an **interpretation**, not what happens. Summary cannot be defended.