

Longer Fiction or Drama III

AP English Literature and Composition

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.**

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

- **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.**

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.

Significant Events in a Plot

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

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

The Function of Conflict in a Text

Three things to establish about any ending		
1. The denouement	the resolution of the anticipation, suspense, or central conflicts	<i>what was settled - and for whom</i>
2. What is never shown	an unseen character, an action that preceded the first page	<i>the least-used evidence in the course, and often the strongest</i>
3. Whether it resolves at all	some plots have unresolved endings	<i>an unresolved ending is a CHOICE, not a failure to finish</i>
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 resolution of the anticipation, suspense, or central conflicts of a plot may be called the **denouement** 结局.
- **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.

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.

RESOLVED	UNRESOLVED	DISSOLVED
one side gives way, and the text says so	the conflict stands, and the text ends anyway	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

- **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.

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.

Developing a Literary Thesis Statement

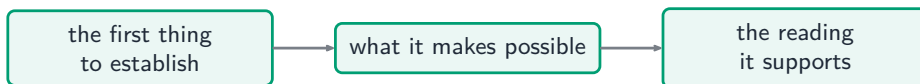
Unchanged: an **interpretation** requiring textual defence, which **may** preview the line of reasoning. At this stage, the thesis you are aiming for is one that could not be written before reading the whole work - a claim about how the parts add up.

ORDERED BY THE TEXT



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

ORDERED BY YOUR CLAIMS



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

Developing Commentary

- 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.**

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.

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

Every row on the right is a **revision** of the sentence on the left — none of them requires new evidence, only a different question asked of it

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 (a real AP exam question). A Question 3 prompt asks you to select a work in which a character's response to the resolution contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. A weak answer describes the ending. A scoring answer uses the unresolved ending and the offstage: *"The novel refuses a denouement: the trial's verdict is never given, and the brother whose death set the plot in motion never appears. What we are shown instead is the protagonist returning to work the following Monday. Because the text withholds both the verdict and the origin, that ordinary Monday becomes the only available measure of what has happened - and the interpretation the novel supports is that the loss was never going to be settled by an outcome, only absorbed."* An unresolved ending, an offstage cause, and a claim about the whole.

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.