

2.5 Identifying the overarching thesis

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 11 marks

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]

4 Go further

- work through the **2.5 Identifying the overarching thesis** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Audience, Thesis, and Supporting Evidence** section of the AP English Language handout on the **Know** page.

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.