

6.3 Identifying the overarching thesis

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to identify a thesis in a passage that **qualifies** 限定 it.

You must be able to:

- state a thesis together with the limits the writer places on it
- distinguish a qualified thesis from a hedged one
- notice a thesis that narrows as the passage proceeds
- write a one-sentence statement that includes the qualification

1 Worked examples

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

■ Qualification is part of the thesis

"Charter schools raise attainment **where the intake is not selected**" is one claim, not a claim plus an excuse. Reporting it without the clause misstates the passage.

■ Qualified against hedged

A **qualified** claim states where it holds. A **hedged** claim states nothing definite anywhere. "In dense cities" is a qualification; "possibly, in some cases" is a hedge.

■ Narrowing thesis

Some passages begin broad and narrow as the evidence is examined. The thesis is the final position, and describing the narrowing is often the best answer available.

2 Practice

2.1 State why a qualification belongs in a statement of the thesis. [2]

2.2 State the difference between a qualified and a hedged claim. [2]

2.3 A passage opens with a broad claim and ends with a narrower version.

(a) State which is the thesis. [1]

(b) State what should be said about the change. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 "Possibly, in some cases, this may be true" is [1]

- **A** a qualified claim
 - **B** a hedged claim
 - **C** a thesis
 - **D** a concession
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3.2 Reporting a thesis without its limiting clause [1]

- **A** makes it clearer
 - **B** misstates the passage
 - **C** strengthens it
 - **D** is required
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3.3 A writer claims a remedy works, then adds three conditions.

(a) State the thesis in one sentence. [2]

(b) Explain why the conditions strengthen rather than weaken it. [2]

4 Go further

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- work through the **6.3 Identifying the overarching thesis** lesson on the **Learn** page;
 - read the **Evidence, Thesis, and Stylistic Choices** section of the AP English Language handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 the qualification states where the claim holds, so omitting it reports a claim the writer did not make.

2.2 a qualified claim states definite limits; a hedged claim states nothing definite anywhere.

2.3 (a) the narrower final version. (b) describe the narrowing as part of the argument—the evidence forced it.

3.1 B. it commits to nothing.

3.2 B. the reported claim is broader than the one made.

3.3 (a) the claim stated together with its conditions in a single sentence. (b) the conditions specify where it holds, which makes it testable and shows the writer has considered the cases where it does not.