

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 deserves attention alongside earlier evidence.

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 can build across events that narrow possibilities; a single event can also create uncertainty or anticipation.

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>use what the text says; do not invent the missing scene</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>

**Connect an ending to your interpretation of the WHOLE work
- 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**.
- **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.

Check how offstage events affect what the text does show. What a text keeps offstage - a death that happened before the first page, a character who is discussed and never appears - may shape the events shown. Use the text's references to it as evidence; do not invent the missing scene.

RESOLVED	UNRESOLVED	DISSOLVED
a central question is answered or a conflict settled	the conflict stands, and the text ends anyway	the original stakes lose force or are reframed
The second and third are not failures of plot. Check which questions remain open and what the ending emphasizes instead		
A work can settle one question and leave another open. Use these distinctions, not a rigid three-way label for every ending		

Details, Diction, and Syntax Reveal Perspective

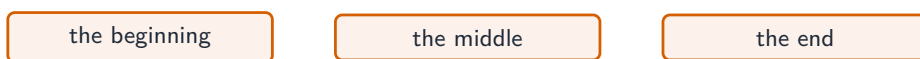
- **Multiple, and even contrasting, perspectives can occur within a single text** and contribute to its complexity.
- **A narrator or speaker may change over the course of a text** as a result of actions and interactions.
- **Changes and inconsistencies in a narrator's or speaker's perspective may contribute 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. A changed perspective may alter the meaning of earlier details; identify which wording supports that revision.

Developing a Literary Thesis Statement

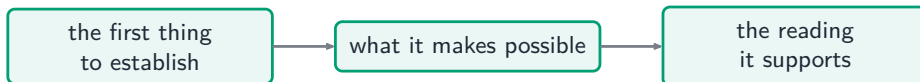
Unchanged: an **interpretation** requiring textual defence, which **may** preview the line of reasoning. At this stage, the thesis you are aiming for is one that could not be written before reading the whole work - a claim about how the parts add up.

ORDERED BY THE TEXT



page order alone supplies no argument; explain the relationships between events

ORDERED BY YOUR CLAIMS



Organise around **claims** and use evidence from across the work where needed.
A chronological argument can also work when it explains development

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.**

When a literary-argument prompt asks about the work as a whole, connect the selected event or character to a defensible interpretation of the full work. Follow the actual prompt rather than assuming that naming a device or an ending automatically answers 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

Each revision asks for an explanation. Check whether the draft also needs **more relevant evidence** before the claim is supported

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.

■ Original complete practice narrative: Monday

This short narrative is written for teaching, not taken from an AP paper or a published novel. It lets you practise ending analysis on a complete small work. For a longer-fiction literary argument, transfer the method to a suitable full work you have studied; this story is not a substitute for knowing that work.

After her brother's accident, Leah left the factory and waited for the inquiry's decision. "I will go back when they tell us what happened," she said. Each morning the postman put letters on the sill. Each morning she lifted the white envelopes, then put them down. On Friday, her aunt counted the coins in the kitchen jar. "Monday's rent," she said. Leah counted them again. The postman came with a catalogue and a bill. That evening, Leah took her factory coat from the hook. "Then you have your answer?" her aunt asked. "I have Monday," Leah said. At dawn she passed the empty sill and walked to the factory. The jar remained on the table.

Worked analysis: an ending with limits. Leah's return answers the practical question of whether she goes back to work, but the inquiry's decision remains unreported. Her earlier condition for returning is displaced by the need for rent. "I have

Monday” substitutes an immediate obligation for the explanation she had demanded. The final jar keeps that economic pressure present. Together these details support an interpretation in which ordinary survival continues without settling the demand for an account of the accident. They do not establish what caused the accident or that Leah has forgiven anyone.

Practice. Identify one question the ending answers and one it leaves open. Explain how Leah’s final words complicate her earlier promise, using at least two details. Then test the alternative claim that returning to work proves she is satisfied with the inquiry.

Exam tips

- Whether a character changes is **the ground of a reading**, not a fact to report.
- **How a character behaves at the ending** may complicate earlier expectations; explain the connection.
- Suspense **accumulates**. It may build through a series of narrowing possibilities; explain the actual sequence.
- **Offstage events** matter through what the text says about them. Do not invent missing evidence.
- An **unresolved ending** is a choice with meaning, not a failure to finish.
- Question 3 asks for “**the work as a whole**”. Connect the chosen evidence to that interpretation and follow the actual prompt.

Vocabulary card meanings

denouement: The closing movement in which the plot’s knots are untied.