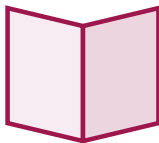


Longer Fiction or Drama II

AP English Literature ■ Unit 6

AP English Literature



What we will cover

- 1 What Textual Details Reveal About a Character
- 2 The Function of Contrasting Characters
- 3 Choices, Actions, and Speech Reveal Complexity
- 4 How Plot Orders Events
- 5 The Function of a Sequence of Events
- 6 The Function of Contrasts Within a Text



What Textual Details Reveal About a Character

Unit 6 is the second longer-fiction-or-drama unit and it adds the two most sophisticated tools in the course: **narrator reliability** and the **symbol**.

In a long work with several perspectives, the discrepancies between them are not a problem to reconcile.



The Function of Contrasting Characters

A foil is not an antagonist. A foil may be an ally, a sibling, a friend – what makes them a foil is that they are similar enough for the difference to be visible.

The useful question is always:
*what does this character have
that the protagonist lacks, and
what does the text do with
that gap?*



Choices, Actions, and Speech Reveal Complexity

This is where AP Literature parts company with simpler reading. Inconsistency is not a flaw in a character; it is the evidence that the character has an interior. A character who always acts on what they think is a position, not a person.

- **Inconsistencies between the private thoughts of characters and their actual behaviour reveal tensions .**
- **A character's competing, conflicting, or inconsistent choices contribute to complexity .**

Complexity, in quotable signs

SAYS ONE THING, DOES ANOTHER
— and the gap is not explained away

WANTS TWO INCOMPATIBLE THINGS — and cannot give up either

PAYS A COST for the choice,
and the text lets you see it

CHANGES THEIR MIND —
and the reader is shown why

Each of these is **quotable**. “The character is complex” asserts what these four demonstrate, and the rubric marks the demonstration

Contrast: between characters, and inside a text

Foil characters

Foil characters serve to **illuminate, through contrast, the traits, attributes, or values** of another character.

Not an antagonist

A foil may be an ally, a sibling, a friend. What makes them a foil is being *similar enough* for the difference to show.

The useful question

What does this character have that the protagonist lacks – and what does the text do with that gap?

Contrast within a text

Contrasts often represent contradictions or inconsistencies that introduce **nuance, ambiguity, or contradictory interpretations**.

The CED explicitly allows more than one reading. An essay that names a competing interpretation and shows why its own is better is doing what the sophistication point rewards.



How Plot Orders Events

Some narrative structures **interrupt the chronology** of a plot: **flashback** , **foreshadowing** , and **in medias res** .



The Function of a Sequence of Events

Those interrupting structures **affect the reader's experience** of the narrative – what is known when, and therefore what is felt when.

A flashback withholds until a later point, so the earlier scenes are read twice – once in ignorance and once in retrospect.

What a reader knows, and when

- A narrator's or speaker's **tone toward events or characters influences readers' interpretations.**
- The **syntactical arrangement** of phrases and clauses can **emphasise details or ideas.**

What a reader knows, and when, in detail

THE DEVICE	WHAT IT DOES TO ORDER	WHAT THE READER DOES
FLASHBACK	an earlier event arrives late	re-reads what they already know in its light
FORESHADOWING	a later event is signalled early	watches for it, and reads the interval as delay
IN MEDIAS RES	the beginning is withheld	assembles the cause while following the effect
A WITHHELD FACT	one thing is kept back to the end	revalues every scene it was absent from

The **syntactical arrangement** of phrases and clauses can **emphasise details or ideas**.



The Function of Contrasts Within a Text

Note the last phrase. The CED explicitly permits a text to support more than one reading.

An essay that acknowledges a competing interpretation and shows why its own is better is doing exactly what the sophistication point rewards.



Details, Diction, and Syntax Reveal Perspective

- A narrator's or speaker's **tone toward events or characters** influences readers' **interpretations**.
- The **syntactical arrangement** of phrases and clauses can **emphasise details or ideas**.
- **Information included and not included conveys the perspective** of characters and narrators.
- A narrator's perspective **may influence the details and the amount of detail** in a text.



Reliability is judged from inside the text

- **Readers can infer narrators' biases** by noting **which details they choose to include** and which they omit.
- **Readers who detect bias in a narrator may find that narrator less reliable .**
- **The reliability of a narrator may influence a reader's understanding of a character's motives.**

Reliability is judged from inside the text, in detail

Reliability is judged from the text, in three steps

**1. What is included -
and what is left out**

he records every slight in exact detail;
his own conduct gets one clause

**2. The bias that
asymmetry implies**

the pattern points toward
self-exculpation

**3. What you therefore
cannot conclude**

his account of the OTHER characters'
motives cannot be taken at face value

**"The narrator is unreliable" skips steps 1 and 2
- which is where the marks are.**

Bias is inferred from what is included and omitted. Detected bias reduces reliability. Reduced reliability changes what you can conclude about motive

How a Narrator's Reliability Affects a Narrative

- Readers can infer narrators' biases by noting which details they choose to include and which they omit.
- **Readers who detect bias in a narrator may find that narrator less reliable .**
- The reliability of a narrator may influence a reader's understanding of a character's motives.

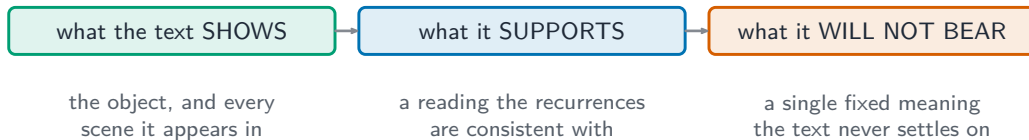


The Function of a Symbol

The last point is a warning. A conventional symbol arrives with meanings attached, and the text may be using them, refusing them, or inverting them. Check what the text does before importing the convention.

- When a **material object** comes to represent an idea or concept, it becomes a **symbol**.
- When a **character** comes to represent an idea, that character becomes **symbolic**.
- A symbol is an object that **represents a meaning**, so it is said to be symbolic or representative of that meaning.
- **Certain symbols are so common and recurrent** that readers bring associations to them before reading.

How much a symbol will carry



Write the middle band. "*The river is associated with...*" is defensible; "*the river represents time*" usually is not



Developing a Literary Thesis, Commentary, and Evidence

Unchanged from Units 3-5: an **interpretation** requiring textual defence; a **line of reasoning** of claims communicated through **commentary**; evidence used **strategically**, **effective** with commentary, **sufficient** in quantity and quality, developed recursively.



Control Over the Elements of Composition

Writers convey ideas through the strategic selection and placement of phrases and clauses.

Writers use words that enhance the clear communication of an interpretation.

Punctuation conveys relationships between parts of a sentence.

Worked example – unreliability, shown not asserted

A Question 3 prompt asks how an unreliable narrator contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole.

- **Weak:** *“The narrator is unreliable because he lies.”*
- **Scoring:** *“He records every slight he received in exact detail and summarises his own conduct in a clause – ‘there was an argument, and I left’. The asymmetry of detail implies a bias toward self-exculpation, so his account of the others’ motives cannot be taken at face value.”*

The novel then asks the reader to reconstruct a story the narrator is committed to not telling – which is where the interpretation lives.

Exam tips

- Discrepancies between perspectives are **the method**, not a problem to reconcile.
- A **foil** is similar enough for the difference to show. Ask what they have that the protagonist lacks.
- **Inconsistency is evidence of an interior**. A perfectly consistent character is a position, not a person.
- For any structural interruption, ask **what the reader knows at that moment**. That is the effect.
- Reliability is a **chain**: inclusion and omission, then bias, then what you cannot conclude. Show all three.
- With a **conventional symbol**, check whether the text uses, refuses, or inverts the association before importing it.



Unit 6 – key takeaways

1

Discrepancy

the method, not a problem to reconcile

2

Foil

similar enough for the difference to show

3

Inconsistency

evidence of an interior

4

Reliability

inclusion, omission, bias, then what you cannot conclude

Check yourself

- 1 Discrepancies between perspectives are what?
- 2 What makes a foil work?
- 3 What is a perfectly consistent character?
- 4 Reliability is a chain of what?

Answers: the method ■ similarity plus a visible difference ■ a position, not a person ■ inclusion/omission, bias, limits