

4.11 Developing a literary thesis statement

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to write a thesis for a **short-fiction** 短篇小说 essay.

You must be able to:

- state what a thesis expresses and requires
- explain what makes a thesis interpretive rather than descriptive
- state what the CED does not require of a thesis
- test a draft thesis

1 Worked examples

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

■ The requirement

A thesis statement expresses an interpretation of a literary text and requires a defense through use of textual evidence and a line of reasoning, both of which are explained in an essay through commentary.

■ Interpretive

A thesis must be something a reasonable reader could dispute. If nobody could disagree, there is nothing to defend and the essay has no work to do.

■ What is not required

A thesis need not list the points of an interpretation, the literary elements to be analysed, or the specific evidence to be used. Previewing the line of reasoning is permitted, not mandatory.

■ The test

Ask: could someone who has read the story disagree with this? If not, it is a summary. Then ask: what would I have to show to prove it? If nothing comes to mind, it is too vague.

2 Practice

2.1 State what a thesis expresses and requires. [2]

2.2 Explain what makes a thesis interpretive. [2]

2.3 A draft thesis can be tested.

(a) State the two test questions. [2]

(b) State what the CED does not require. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A thesis a reasonable reader could not dispute is [1]

- **A** a summary
- **B** ideal
- **C** an interpretation
- **D** a line of reasoning

3.2 Previewing the line of reasoning is [1]

- **A** mandatory
- **B** permitted but not required
- **C** forbidden
- **D** the whole thesis

3.3 A student writes: "The story is about a family in winter."

(a) State why this is not a thesis. [1]

(b) Rewrite it as one.

[2]

4 Go further

- work through the **4.11 Developing a literary thesis statement** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Short Fiction II** section of the AP English Literature handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 an interpretation of a literary text requiring a defense through textual evidence and a line of reasoning.

2.2 a reasonable reader could dispute it, so there is something for the essay to defend.

2.3 (a) could someone who read the story disagree with this; what would I have to show to prove it. (b) it need not list points, elements or specific evidence.

3.1 A. a summary.

3.2 B. permitted, not required.

3.3 (a) nobody could dispute it. (b) any arguable interpretation, e.g. "the story uses the family's silence about the cold to show how they avoid speaking about the loss it stands for".