

5.8 Developing a literary thesis statement

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ Total: 12 marks

KEY WORDS poem 诗歌论点

Objective

Build the skills to write a thesis about a **poem** 诗歌论点.

You must be able to:

- state what a thesis expresses and requires
- explain what a poetry thesis must avoid
- state what the CED does not require
- test a poetry thesis

1 Worked examples

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

■ The requirement

A thesis expresses an interpretation of a literary text and requires a defense through textual evidence and a line of reasoning, explained through commentary.

■ What to avoid

A poetry thesis that names devices — “the poet uses imagery, metaphor and structure” — is a list, not an interpretation. It could be written about almost any poem, which is the test that it says nothing.

■ What is not required

A thesis need not list the points of an interpretation, the literary elements to be analysed, or specific evidence.

■ The test

Could this thesis be written about a different poem? If yes, it is not yet about this one. A good poetry thesis names what this poem does that another does not.

2 Practice

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

2.2 Explain what a poetry thesis must avoid. [2]

2.3 A thesis can be tested.

(a) State the test question. [1]

(b) State what a good poetry thesis names. [2]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A thesis that could be written about almost any poem [1]

- **A** says nothing specific
- **B** is ideal
- **C** is an interpretation
- **D** is a line of reasoning

3.2 The CED says a thesis need not list [1]

- **A** the literary elements to be analysed
- **B** the title
- **C** the poet
- **D** the date

3.3 A student writes: “The poet uses imagery and metaphor to convey emotion.”

(a) State why this fails. [1]

(b) Rewrite it as a thesis. [2]

Solutions

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

2.2 naming devices rather than making an interpretive claim, since a device list could be written about almost any poem.

2.3 (a) could this thesis be written about a different poem. (b) what this poem does that another does not.

3.1 A. it is not about this poem.

3.2 A. the elements to be analysed.

3.3 (a) it names devices instead of stating an interpretation. (b) any specific arguable claim, e.g. “the poem’s images of enclosure make the speaker’s freedom at the end read as loss rather than release”.