

7.1 Characters who change or remain unchanged

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to explain an **epiphany** 顿悟.

You must be able to:

- define an epiphany in the CED's terms
- state where a change in character often comes from
- state how an epiphany may affect the plot
- distinguish sudden from gradual change

1 Worked examples

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

■ Definition

Characters can change suddenly as the result of a moment of realization, known as an epiphany. An epiphany allows a character to see things in a new light and is often directly related to a central conflict of the narrative.

■ Where change comes from

Often the change in a character emerges directly from a conflict of values represented in the narrative, and changes in a character's circumstances may lead to changes in that character.

■ Effect on plot

An epiphany may affect the plot by causing a character to act on his or her sudden realization. The realisation is not the whole event; the action following it is.

■ Sudden and gradual

Characters can change gradually over the course of a narrative as well. In short fiction, the epiphany is the common form because there is not room for a gradual one—a structural fact worth noticing.

2 Practice

2.1 Define an epiphany in the CED's terms. [2]

2.2 State where a change in character often emerges from. [2]

2.3 An epiphany can affect the plot.

(a) State how. [2]

(b) State why the epiphany is common in short fiction. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 An epiphany is often directly related to [1]

- **A** a central conflict of the narrative
- **B** the title
- **C** the setting only
- **D** the author's life

3.2 The plot is affected when the character [1]

- **A** acts on the realization
- **B** forgets it
- **C** repeats it
- **D** describes it

3.3 A character understands something in the last paragraph and does nothing.

(a) State whether the plot is affected. [1]

(b) Explain what the story gains from the inaction.

[2]

4 Go further

- work through the **7.1 Characters who change or remain unchanged** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Short Fiction III** section of the AP English Literature handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 a sudden change resulting from a moment of realization that allows a character to see things in a new light, often related to a central conflict.

2.2 a conflict of values represented in the narrative; or changes in the character's circumstances.

2.3 (a) by causing the character to act on the sudden realization. (b) short fiction lacks room for a gradual change.

3.1 A. a central conflict.

3.2 A. acting on it.

3.3 (a) not by the CED's mechanism, since no action follows. (b) the reader holds the realisation the character will not act on, which makes the ending a judgment on the character rather than a resolution.