

8.7 Developing a literary thesis statement

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to write a thesis on an **unseen poem** 未见过的诗.

You must be able to:

- state what a thesis expresses and requires
- explain the difficulty of an unseen poem
- state what the CED does not require
- build a thesis from a first reading

1 Worked examples

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

■ The requirement

An interpretation of a literary text requiring defense through textual evidence and a line of reasoning, explained through commentary.

■ The unseen difficulty

With no prior knowledge, the thesis must come from the poem in front of you in minutes. There is no context to fall back on, which is why the reading itself must generate the claim.

■ What is not required

No list of points, elements or evidence. Under exam conditions this matters: the shortest arguable sentence is the best use of the time.

■ From a first reading

Note the poem's clearest shift—in tone, structure or address—and state what it accomplishes. A shift is the easiest reliable source of an arguable claim in a poem you have just met.

2 Practice

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

2.2 Explain the difficulty of an unseen poem. [2]

2.3 A first reading can generate a thesis.

(a) State the method. [2]

(b) State why the shortest arguable sentence is best under exam conditions. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 With an unseen poem the claim must come from [1]

- **A** the poem in front of you
- **B** memorised context
- **C** the poet's biography
- **D** the anthology's introduction

3.2 The easiest reliable source of a claim in an unseen poem is [1]

- **A** its clearest shift
- **B** its date
- **C** its length
- **D** its title

3.3 A poem's tone changes sharply in its final stanza.

(a) State what to build the thesis on. [1]

(b) Explain how to turn the shift into a claim.

[2]

4 Go further

- work through the **8.7 Developing a literary thesis statement** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Poetry III** section of the AP English Literature handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

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

2.2 the thesis must come from the poem in minutes, with no context to fall back on.

2.3 (a) note the poem's clearest shift in tone, structure or address and state what it accomplishes. (b) it earns the same credit and leaves more time for the body.

3.1 A. the poem itself.

3.2 A. its clearest shift.

3.3 (a) the shift. (b) state what the poem was doing before it and what the change accomplishes for the reader.