

9.4 The function of conflict in a text

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to explain **resolution and catharsis** 净化.

You must be able to:

- define catharsis in the CED's terms
- state what unseen elements may do
- state the CED's claim about unresolved endings
- explain why a lack of resolution can be meaningful

1 Worked examples

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

■ Catharsis

The resolution of the anticipation, suspense, or central conflicts of a plot may be referred to as the moment of catharsis or emotional release.

■ Unseen elements

Sometimes things not actually shown in a narrative, such as an unseen character or a preceding action, may be in conflict with or result in conflict for a character. What the text does not show can still act.

■ Unresolved endings

Although most plots end in resolution of the central conflicts, some have unresolved endings, and the lack of resolution may contribute to interpretations of the text.

■ Meaningful absence

An unresolved ending withholds the release the reader has been prepared for. That withholding is a choice, and it usually says something about whether the conflict was the kind that admits resolution.

2 Practice

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

2.2 State what unseen elements may do. [2]

2.3 Some endings are unresolved.

(a) State the CED's claim. [2]

(b) Explain why the absence can be meaningful. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Catharsis is the resolution of anticipation, suspense or [1]

- **A** central conflicts
- **B** page numbers
- **C** allusions
- **D** rhyme

3.2 The CED says lack of resolution [1]

- **A** may contribute to interpretations of the text
- **B** is always a flaw
- **C** never occurs
- **D** ends the analysis

3.3 A novel ends without settling its central conflict.

(a) State what the reader is denied. [1]

(b) Explain what the denial may say about the conflict.

[2]

4 Go further

- work through the **9.4 The function of conflict in a text** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Longer Fiction or Drama III** section of the AP English Literature handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 the resolution of the anticipation, suspense or central conflicts of a plot, also called the moment of emotional release.

2.2 things not shown, such as an unseen character or a preceding action, may be in conflict with or result in conflict for a character.

2.3 (a) most plots resolve their central conflicts, but some endings are unresolved and the lack of resolution may contribute to interpretations. (b) the withholding is a choice that says something about the conflict.

3.1 A. central conflicts.

3.2 A. it may contribute to interpretation.

3.3 (a) the catharsis or emotional release. (b) that the conflict may not be the kind that admits resolution, so a settled ending would have misrepresented it.