

6.10 Developing a literary thesis statement

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 18 marks**

KEY WORDS long text 长篇论点

Objective

Build the skills to write a thesis about a **long text** 长篇论点.

You must be able to:

- state what a thesis expresses and requires
- explain the particular difficulty of a long text
- state what the CED does not require
- narrow a thesis to something an essay can prove

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 difficulty

A long text invites a thesis too large to defend: “the novel explores the nature of freedom” cannot be proved in five paragraphs. The skill is narrowing.

■ What is not required

A thesis need not list points, elements or evidence. Narrowing is not the same as listing.

■ How to narrow

Attach the claim to something specific the text does — a pattern, a change, a contrast — rather than to a theme. “The novel’s three refusals of inheritance make freedom look like poverty” is defensible; “the novel explores freedom” is not.

2 Practice

2.1 Explain the particular difficulty of a thesis about a long text. [2]

2.2 State how to narrow a thesis. [2]

2.3 Narrowing is not listing.

(a) State the difference. [2]

(b) State what a thesis requires as defense. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A thesis about “the nature of freedom” in a novel is likely [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- A** too large to defend
B ideal
C too narrow
D a line of reasoning

3.2 A defensible thesis attaches its claim to [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- A** something specific the text does
B a general theme
C the author’s life
D the genre

3.3 A student writes: “This novel is about the conflict between duty and desire.”

- (a) State the problem. [1]
- (b) Rewrite it as a defensible thesis. [2]

3.4 Full free-response task. Choose a novel or play of literary merit in which a minor character appears in only two or three scenes but changes how the reader understands the protagonist. Write an essay that argues an interpretation of the work as a whole through that character's function.

Your thesis must make a claim about the **whole** text, not only about the scenes in which the character appears.

Marked on the AP 6-point rubric: **Row A — Thesis (1), Row B — Evidence and Commentary (4), Row C — Sophistication (1).**

[6]