

Poetry III

AP English Literature and Composition

The Function of Structure in a Text

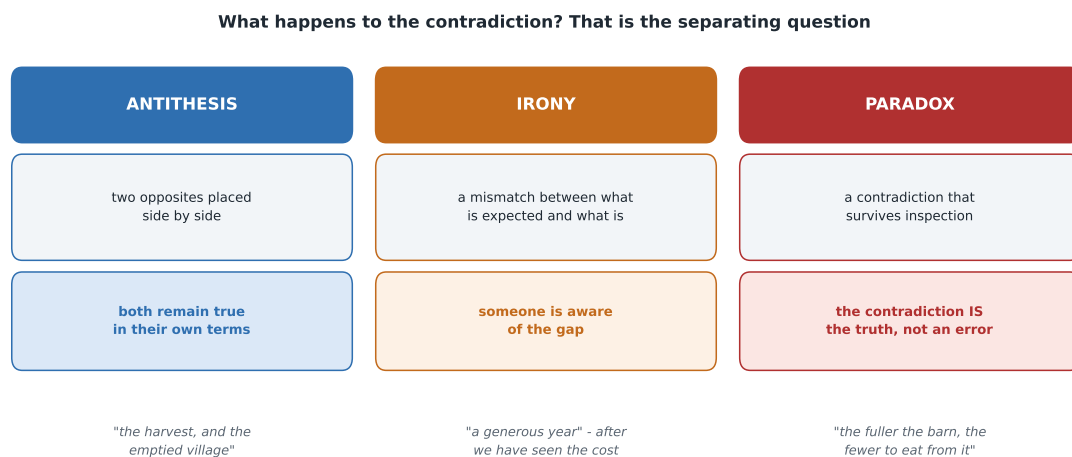
Unit 8 is the last poetry unit and it handles the hardest material in the course: the family of devices built on **contradiction**.

- **Ideas and images in a poem may extend beyond a single line or stanza** 跨行跨节.
- **Punctuation is often crucial** to understanding a text.
- **When structural patterns are created, any interruption in the pattern creates a point of emphasis** 中断即强调.

That third statement is the most efficient reading tool in the course. Establish what the poem has been doing, then find the moment it stops doing it. That moment is where the poem points.

Punctuation deserves the emphasis it gets. In a poem, a semicolon and a full stop are different claims about how tightly two statements are joined, and a poem without punctuation has made a decision about how you must read it.

The Function of Contrasts Within a Text



Calling all three "irony" is the commonest lost mark in this unit.

Antithesis sets opposites side by side. Irony is a mismatch. A paradox contradicts and is still true

- **Juxtaposition may create or demonstrate an antithesis** 对立.
- **Situational or verbal irony** 情境反讽与言语反讽 is created when events or statements are **inconsistent with what is expected**.

- **Paradox 悖论** occurs when **seemingly contradictory elements are juxtaposed, but the contradiction - which may be at odds with ordinary logic - reveals a deeper truth.**

The distinction matters and students routinely collapse it. An **antithesis** places two opposed things together, and both remain true in their own terms. An **irony** is a gap between the expected and the actual - and someone, the writer or the reader, is aware of the gap. A **paradox** looks like a contradiction and survives inspection: the contradiction is the point, not an error.

The Function of Specific Words and Phrases

Ambiguity allows for different readings and understandings of a text by different readers 含混.

In this course, ambiguity is a resource. An essay that identifies a genuinely ambiguous element, explores both readings, and then argues for one is doing exactly what the sophistication point rewards - far more than an essay that pretends the text is simpler than it is.

The Function of a Symbol

Symbols in a text, and the way they are used, may imply that a narrator, character, or speaker has a particular perspective.

A symbol is not free-floating. Someone in the text is treating that object as meaningful, and asking *who* attaches this meaning is often more productive than asking what the meaning is.

The Function of a Metaphor

- A **conceit 奇喻** is a form of **extended metaphor**, common in poetry, developing **complex comparisons.**
- Conceits are often used to make **complex comparisons between the natural world and an individual.**
- **Multiple comparisons, representations, or associations may combine to affect one another** in complex ways.

A conceit is an extended metaphor that has been pushed further than seems reasonable, and the strain is deliberate. When analysing one, follow how far the poet takes the comparison and where it starts to resist - the resistance is usually the poem's real subject.

The Function of an Allusion

Because of shared knowledge about a reference, allusions create emotional or intellectual associations in readers who recognise them.

Note the condition: *shared knowledge*. An allusion is a bet on the reader's memory, and a poem that alludes heavily has chosen its audience.

Developing a Literary Thesis, Commentary, and Evidence

- A thesis expresses an **interpretation** requiring textual defence.
- **More sophisticated literary arguments explain the significance or relevance of an interpretation** - the sophistication point, stated by the CED.
- Evidence: **strategic, effective** with commentary, **sufficient** in quantity and quality, developed **recursively**.

Control Over the Elements of Composition

Writers must acknowledge the words, ideas, images, texts, and intellectual property of others through attribution and citation 归属与引用.

Worked example (a real AP exam task). A poetry-analysis prompt asks how the poet's use of contrast conveys a complex attitude. A weak answer calls everything irony. A scoring answer separates the devices: *"The poem places the harvest against the emptied village - an antithesis, in which both are simply true. But the speaker calls the year 'generous', and the surrounding stanzas have shown what the generosity cost; that mismatch is verbal irony. The final line is neither: 'the fuller the barn, the fewer to eat from it' is a paradox, and it is the only statement the poem does not undercut - the contradiction is exactly the truth the speaker has arrived at."* Three devices, correctly distinguished, and an interpretation that needs all three.

Exam tips

- **Establish the pattern, then find the interruption.** The interruption is where the poem points.
- **Punctuation is a claim** about how tightly statements are joined. A poem without it has made a decision too.
- **Antithesis, irony, paradox are not synonyms.** Learn the three definitions precisely; conflating them costs marks.
- **Ambiguity is a resource.** Explore both readings, then argue for one. That is the sophistication point.
- Ask **who attaches the meaning** to a symbol. It is usually more productive than asking what it means.
- A **conceit** is a comparison pushed past comfort. Follow it to where it resists - that is the subject.