Course Companion

AP English Literature and Composition

Every topic handout in one volume

全部专题讲义合集

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Short Fiction I

AP English Literature and Composition

What Textual Details Reveal About a Character

In 1894 *Vogue* magazine printed a story of about a thousand words by Kate Chopin. Its first sentence tells us that Mrs Mallard has "heart trouble"; its last sentence tells us that her heart killed her. Everything between those two sentences changes what "heart trouble" means. That is what this unit trains you to see: how character, setting, order and narration work together.

AP English Literature reads texts in three **genres** 体裁 across nine units (**short fiction** 短篇小说, **poetry** 诗歌, and longer fiction or **drama** 戏剧), each visited three times at increasing difficulty. Unit 1 sets up the tools for all of them.

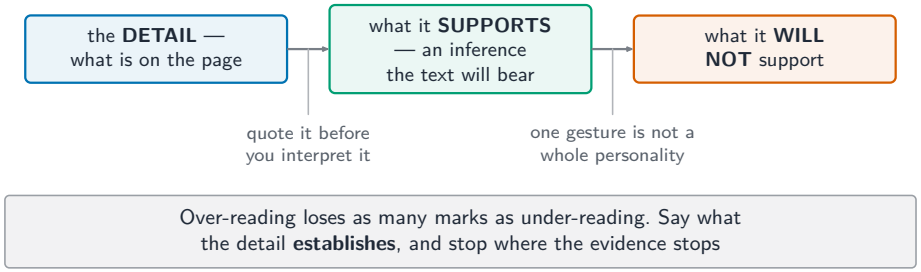
In this unit you will:

- read character through description, dialogue, behaviour and perspective;
- show setting doing something, not just being described;
- treat plot as the order of telling, and proportion as evidence;
- separate the narrator from the author and explain what a point of view cannot give;
- write a claim defended by details read in combination.

Character 人物 is revealed by three things, and the CED names them exactly:

- **Description** 描写, **dialogue** 对话 and **behaviour** 行为 reveal characters to readers.
- Descriptions may come from a **speaker** 说话者, a **narrator** 叙述者, other characters, or the characters themselves - so who is describing is part of the evidence.
- **Perspective** 视角 is **how narrators, characters, or speakers understand their circumstances**, informed by background, experience, and values.
- A character's perspective is **both shaped and revealed by relationships** with other characters, the environment, and events.

That last point is the one that turns character notes into analysis. A character is not a list of adjectives; a character is a way of seeing, which becomes visible in what they notice, what they misread, and how they respond.



Say what the detail establishes, and stop where the evidence stops

Textual Details That Convey Setting

Setting 背景 includes the **time and place** during which the events of the text occur. The CED's definition is deliberately minimal, and that is the trap. Setting earns marks not when it is described but when it is shown **doing something** - constraining a character, explaining a value, or contrasting with an interior state. A paragraph that establishes where a story happens has not yet made a claim.

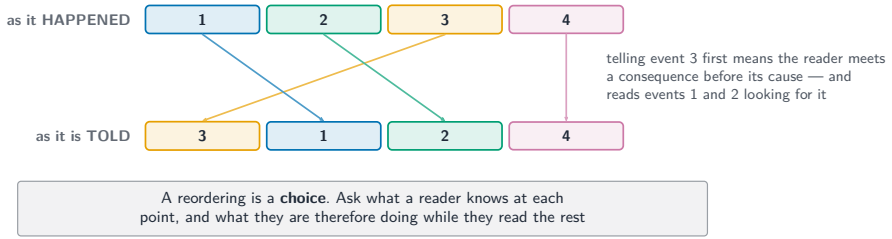
> **Worked example.** Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852–53) opens in London in November:
>
> > Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city.

The fog is real weather, but Dickens follows it to the Court of Chancery, where a lawsuit has dragged on for years and no one can see through it. The setting does something: it makes the confusion of the law visible and inescapable, before any character appears.

How Plot Orders Events

- **Plot** 情节 is the **sequence of events** in a narrative; events are connected, each building on those before it.
- The **dramatic situation** 戏剧情境 includes the **setting and action** of the plot and **how the narrative develops** to place characters in **conflict** 冲突.

The word *sequence* is doing work. Plot is not the events but their **order** - and an author who reveals something late that happened early has made a choice you can analyse.



The order events happened against the order you were told them - the difference is a choice

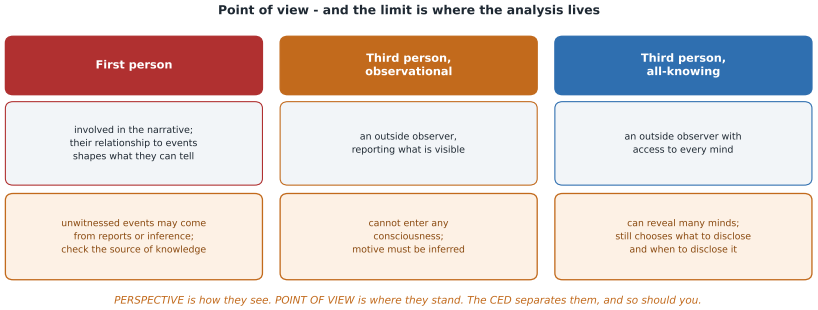
The Function of a Sequence of Events

Plot and the exposition 背景交代 **that accompanies it focus readers' attention on the parts of the narrative that matter most** to the text's meaning.

That sentence is the whole method for prose analysis: proportion is evidence. What the text lingers over, and what it passes in a clause, is the author telling you where to look.

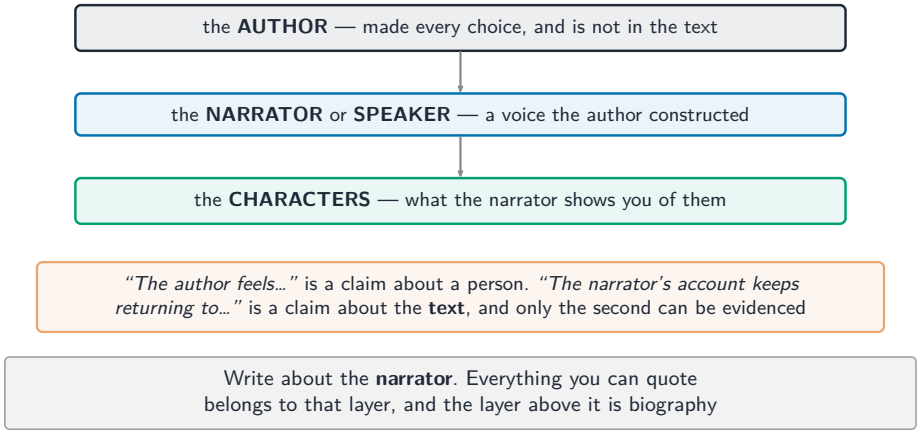
Identifying the Narrator or Speaker

- **Narrators or speakers** relate accounts and **establish a relationship between the text and the reader**.
- **Perspective** refers to **how** narrators, characters, or speakers see their circumstances; **point of view** 叙述视点 refers to **the position from which** they relate the account.
- **A speaker or narrator is not necessarily the author.** Never write "the author feels" about a first-person narrator.



Perspective is how they see; point of view is where they stand. The CED separates them, and so should you

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Write about the narrator: everything you can quote belongs to that layer

The Function of Point of View

- Point of view contributes to **what narrators can and cannot provide** in a text, based on their position.
- Narrators **may also be characters**, and that role may influence their perspective.
- **First-person narrators** 第一人称叙述者 **are involved in the narrative**; their relationship to events and to other characters shapes what they can tell you.
- **Third-person narrators** 第三人称叙述者 **are outside observers**, and their knowledge may range from **observational** (reporting only what can be seen) to **omniscient** 全知 (all-knowing).
- The outside perspective of a third-person narrator **may not be affected by the events** of the narrative.

The analytical payoff is the *cannot*. A first-person narrator may learn about unwitnessed events through reports or **inference** 推断. Distinguish that indirect knowledge from direct access to another mind, and explain a gap only when the surrounding text supports its significance. A **limited** third-person narrator confines you to one consciousness, which is a choice about whose experience counts.

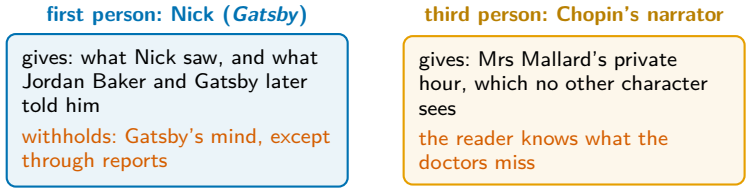
Worked example: two points of view on a hidden inner life.

- *First person, involved.* In *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Nick Carraway cannot see into Gatsby's mind. He learns that Gatsby loved Daisy five years earlier only when Jordan Baker tells him the story, and later from Gatsby himself. The reader receives Gatsby's past as Nick did: in pieces, second-hand, and coloured by the people telling it.

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- *Third person, with access.* In "The Story of an Hour" (1894), Chopin's narrator follows Mrs Mallard into a room no other character enters and reports what she feels there. The reader knows her secret joy; the doctors who see only the outside do not.

Nick's limit makes Gatsby a mystery that the reader must piece together, and invites doubt about Nick's admiration. Chopin's access creates **irony** 反讽: the reader knows more than every character in the story. In an essay, say what the chosen point of view lets the reader know, and what it holds back.



Different access to an inner life: the limit is what the analysis explains.

Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence

- In **literary analysis** 文学分析, writers **read a text closely to identify details that, in combination**, enable them to make and defend a claim.
- A **claim** 论点 is a statement that **requires defence with evidence from the text**.
- The initial components of a paragraph are the claim and the **textual evidence** 文本证据 that defends it.

Note *in combination*. A single detail rarely supports an interpretive claim; two or three details that point the same way do.

■ **A real opening: Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1860–61)**

> My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.

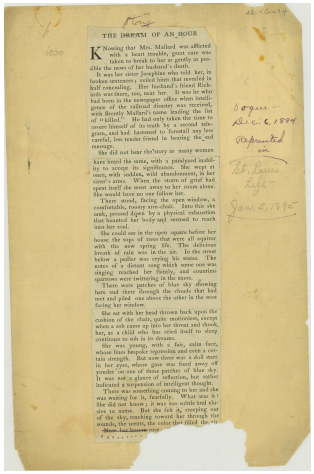
Worked analysis. The narrator is a first-person character, but he is grown up: "my infant tongue" is the phrase of an educated adult looking back at a small child. Two details work together. The long, formal first sentence sounds like an older man; the short second sentence, with "Pip" three times, sounds like the child's own simple name for himself. The opening sets up a double view that runs through the whole novel: the boy who lived the story and the man who tells it, with the man's knowledge shaping

every memory.

Claim: Dickens opens with a joke about a name to set up the novel's method: an older narrator looking back at a younger self, close enough to share his feelings and far enough to judge them.

■ A real text: Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" (1894)

Mrs Mallard is told that her husband has died in a railway accident. She goes to her room alone. An hour later he walks in through the front door, alive: he had been far from the accident and did not know about it. She sees him at the door and dies. The story opens and closes like this:



THE DREAM OF AN HOUR

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near by. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railway disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy arm-chair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Chopin's story as first printed in Vogue, 6 December 1894, under the title "The Dream of an Hour"

> Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.
>
> When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease–of joy that kills.

Worked analysis.

- **Setting.** Alone in her room she sees "the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life". The news is about death; the window shows new life. The setting tells us what she is feeling before she can say it.
- **Character through behaviour and dialogue.** Alone, she first whispers "free, free, free!" and later "Free! Body and soul free!" Her private words contrast with the public expectation of grief.
- **Plot and proportion.** The public events (the news, the return, the death) take a few lines each. The story spends most of its words on one private hour.

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- **Point of view.** The third-person narrator takes us into the room that no other character enters. The doctors see only the outside, so their "joy that kills" is an irony: they think she died of joy at his return, but the reader, who has watched her private hour, reads the death as the shock of losing the freedom she had just found.

Claim: Chopin's narrator lets the reader into the one room the other characters never enter, so the doctors' last sentence reads as a confident misreading of the woman everyone was trying to protect.

Common errors

- **Listing adjectives about a character.** Show the way of seeing: what the character notices, misreads and does.
- **Describing setting without a claim.** Say what the setting does: limits a character, explains a value, or contrasts with a feeling.
- **Treating plot as a summary.** Plot is the order of telling; a late reveal is a choice to analyse.
- **"The author feels..."** about a first-person narrator. Write about the narrator.
- **Ignoring what a narrator cannot know.** The limits of a point of view are often the analysis.
- **A claim with one detail.** Combine two or three details that point the same way.

Key terms

- **genre**: a type of literature, such as short fiction, poetry or drama.
- **perspective**: how a narrator, character or speaker understands their situation.
- **point of view**: the position from which a narrator tells the story.
- **narrator**: the voice that tells a story; not the same as the author.
- **setting**: the time and place of the events.
- **plot**: the sequence of events, in the order the text tells them.
- **dramatic situation**: the setting and action that place characters in conflict.
- **exposition**: the background information a story gives about its characters and situation.
- **omniscient**: describes a narrator who knows everything, including every character's thoughts.
- **inference**: a conclusion drawn from evidence rather than stated directly.
- **claim**: a statement that needs to be defended with evidence from the text.

Check yourself

Read this passage from the first chapter of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843):

> The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal.

1. What do the details reveal about Scrooge?
2. How does the setting add to the effect?
3. What is the narrator's attitude, and how can you tell?
4. Write one defensible claim about Scrooge that you could develop in an essay.

Answers: 1. He is mean and controlling: the door is open not for friendliness but "that he might keep his eye upon his clerk", and he keeps even the heat for himself. 2. The office is cold and cramped: the clerk works in "a dismal little cell", "a sort of tank". The setting turns Scrooge's meanness into the clerk's physical suffering. 3. The narrator is mocking: "so very much smaller that it looked like one coal" is comic exaggeration, which invites us to laugh at Scrooge as well as dislike him. 4. For example: "Dickens shows Scrooge's meanness through the space he controls: even the warmth in his office is measured out so that he has a little and his clerk has almost nothing."

Sources for this lesson

- College Board, *AP English Literature and Composition Course and Exam Description*, Unit 1.
- Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" (1894; first printed in *Vogue* as "The Dream of an Hour").
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925).
- Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1860–61), *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and *Bleak House* (1852–53).

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Poetry I

AP English Literature and Composition

What Textual Details Reveal About a Character

Shakespeare's sonnets were printed in 1609. Sonnet 18 ends by promising that the poem will keep its subject alive "So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see". More than four hundred years later you are reading it, so in one sense the promise has been kept. The poem makes that claim through its **structure** 结构: where it turns, and what its last two lines do.

In this unit you will:

- read a speaker's perspective in the words used, the details given and the details left out;
- explain what line breaks, stanza breaks and a shift do to the reader;
- analyse key words: reference, repetition and sound;
- handle **figurative language** 比喻性语言 precisely: main subject, comparison subject, and the quality that crosses over.

One point on character first: characters reveal their perspectives and **biases** 偏见 through **the words they use, the details they provide and the details they omit**.

The last item is the analytical opening. A meaningful **omission** 省略 can support an interpretation when the surrounding words give a reason to expect the missing detail. Do not invent an omitted fact.

> **Worked example.** In Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" (1842), a duke shows a visitor a portrait of his late wife. He complains that she smiled at everyone and was "too easily impressed". Then: *"I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together."* He never says what the commands were, or how she died. The omission, set beside his cold pride, invites the reader to suspect the worst; the Duke reveals himself by what he will not say.

The Function of Structure in a Text

- **Line breaks** 断行 and **stanza** 诗节 breaks contribute to the development and relationship of ideas in a poem.
- **The arrangement of lines and stanzas** contributes to that development.
- A text's structure **affects readers' reactions and expectations** by presenting the relationships among ideas.

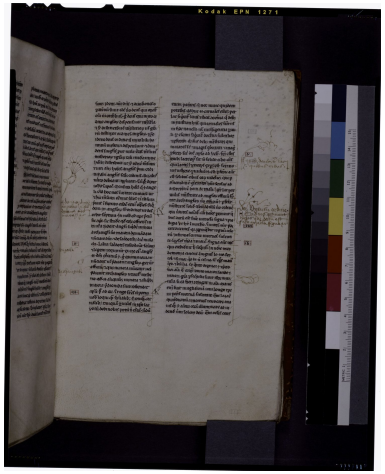
Structure in poetry is not decoration; it is punctuation for thought. Where a line breaks decides which words sit at the ends of lines, and a line ending can give a word weight, depending on **syntax** 句法, **rhythm** 节奏 and context. A sentence that runs

past a line break asks the reader to hold something unresolved; one that stops at the break closes it.

THE CHOICE	WHAT IT DOES	WHERE TO LOOK
a break — stanza, chapter, section	can separate stages or ideas; test the syntax	the line either side of the gap
a turn	can change how an earlier section is read	a conjunction, a shift of tense or address
a frame — a story inside a story	puts a teller between you and the events	the return to the outer voice
repetition with a difference	makes the difference the meaning	the second and third occurrences

Describing the shape is not naming the **function**. Say what the reader is made to do, and where in the text they are made to do it

Describing the shape is not naming the function - say what the reader is made to do



A page carrying its own commentary in the margins - close reading, several centuries early

The Function of Contrasts Within a Text

- **Contrast** 对照 can be introduced through focus, **tone** 语气, point of view, character or speaker perspective, and dramatic situation.
- Contrasts are the result of **shifts** 转折 or **juxtapositions** 并置, or both.
- **Shifts may be signalled by a word, a structural convention or punctuation.**
- Shifts may **emphasise contrasts between particular segments** of a text.

This is the most reliable route into an unseen poem. Find the shift (a *but*, a stanza break, a change of tense or address) and the poem divides into a before and an after. What changed, and what the change costs or gains, is very often the poem's argument.

BETWEEN CHARACTERS — a foil, showing what the other is by not being it

INSIDE ONE CHARACTER — what they say against what they do

BETWEEN SETTING AND FEELING — a cheerful room and a grief in it

BETWEEN PARTS OF THE TEXT — a scene that answers an earlier one

Four places to look, not one. The contrast **inside** a character is usually the one that carries a complexity question

Four places to look for contrast, not one

Worked example: structure and a shift. William Wordsworth, "A slumber did my spirit seal" (1800):

> A slumber did my spirit seal;
> I had no human fears:
> She seemed a thing that could not feel
> The touch of earthly years.
>
> No motion has she now, no force;
> She neither hears nor sees;
> Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
> With rocks, and stones, and trees.

- **The shift.** Three signals arrive together: the stanza break, the change from past tense ("did", "seemed") to present ("has", "now"), and the change from the speaker's feelings to her body. The poem divides into before and after her death, and the death itself is never stated.

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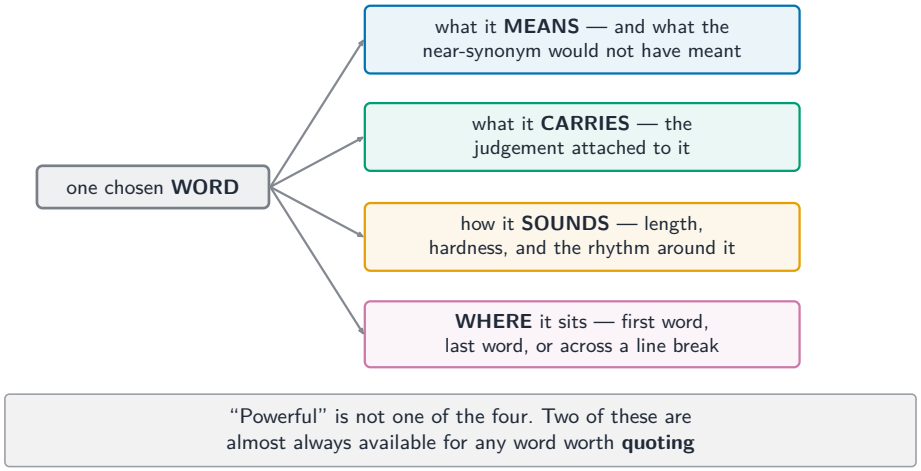
- **Repetition across the shift.** In stanza 1 she "seemed a thing that could not feel / The touch of earthly years": the speaker meant that she seemed ageless. In stanza 2 this becomes horribly true: she "neither hears nor sees". The same idea returns with its meaning reversed.
- **Line endings.** The last line is a list, "With rocks, and stones, and trees", and the commas slow it down. She has become one more thing in the list, turning with the earth.
- **Claim.** Wordsworth uses the stanza break as the silent moment of death, and makes the speaker's earlier hope that she could not feel time come true in the cruellest way.

Notice that each point names a structural choice and then says what it makes the reader feel or expect. "There is a stanza break" alone would earn nothing.

The Function of Specific Words and Phrases

- An **antecedent** 先行词 is the word, phrase or clause to which a pronoun refers. A **referent** 指代对象 is the person, thing or idea an expression points to.
- A pronoun's reference is **ambiguous** 有歧义的 if more than one antecedent is possible, which affects **interpretation** 解读.
- **Repetition** 重复 of words or phrases can emphasise ideas or **associations** 联想.
- **Alliteration** 头韵 is the repetition of the same first sound in nearby words, which emphasises those words.

Test both readings of an ambiguous pronoun against context before claiming a deliberate effect.



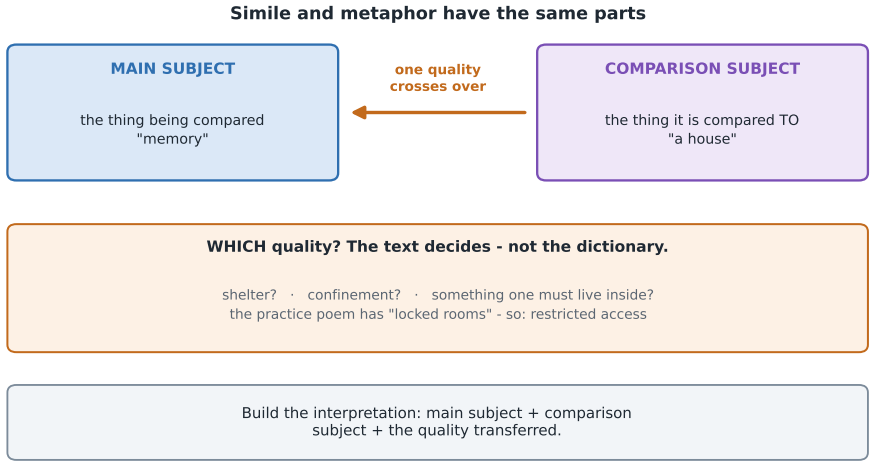
One chosen word is doing up to four things - 'powerful' is not one of them

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Worked examples.

- **Referent.** Sonnet 18 ends "So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." "This" has no noun beside it; its referent is the poem you are holding. The pronoun points at the page, which is the whole argument of the couplet.
- **Alliteration.** Alfred Tennyson's "The Eagle" (1851) opens: *"He clasps the crag with crooked hands."* The hard *c/k* sounds (clasps, crag, crooked) are harsh and gripping, like the claws they describe.

The Function of a Simile



Name the main subject, name the comparison subject, then say which quality crossed over

- A **simile** 明喻 uses **"like" or "as"** to compare two objects or ideas.
- Similes compare two different things **to transfer the traits or qualities of one to the other**.
- In a simile, the thing **being compared** is the **main subject** 本体; the thing **to which it is compared** is the **comparison subject** 喻体.

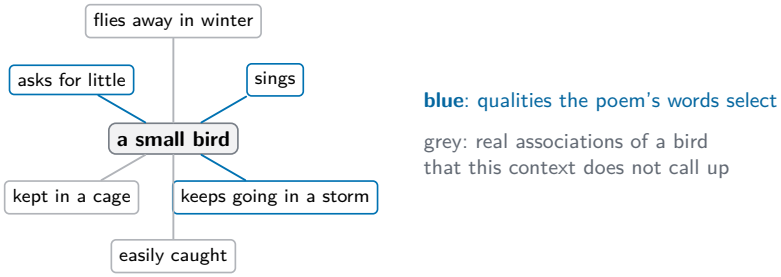
Those two terms are the whole method. A strong answer names the main subject, names the comparison subject, and then says **which quality was transferred**, because that quality is the claim the poem is making.

Worked example. Wordsworth, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (1807): *"I wandered lonely as a cloud / That floats on high o'er vales and hills."* The main subject is the speaker; the comparison subject is a single cloud. The qualities transferred are drifting without purpose, being alone, and being high above the world. So the simile shows a man detached from life, which makes the sudden sight of "a host, of golden daffodils" a real change: the lonely cloud finds company.

The Function of a Metaphor

- A **metaphor 隐喻 implies similarities between two usually unrelated ideas** to reveal or emphasise qualities of the main subject.
- The same main-subject and comparison-subject structure applies.
- Comparisons **draw on the experiences and associations readers already have** with the comparison subject, which is why a metaphor can fail with readers who lack those associations.
- **Interpretation of a metaphor may depend on the context of its use**: what is happening in the text may decide which of the comparison subject's qualities is meant.

The last point protects you from the commonest error, which is bringing in every association a word has. A bird can migrate, be caged or be caught; a poem about hope may use none of these. The text decides which qualities count.



The context chooses which qualities count: Dickinson's bird sings, keeps going in a storm and asks for little

Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence

As in Unit 1: a **claim** that requires defence, the **textual evidence**, and details identified **in combination**.

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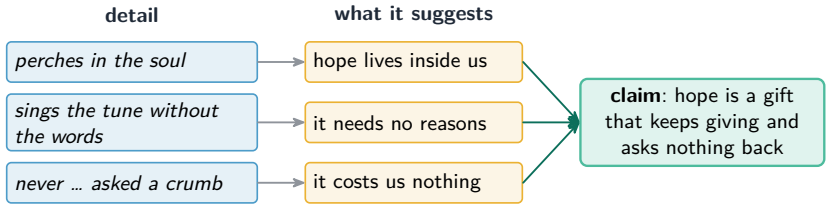
■ A real poem: Emily Dickinson, "'Hope' is the thing with feathers" (written about 1861, published 1891)

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

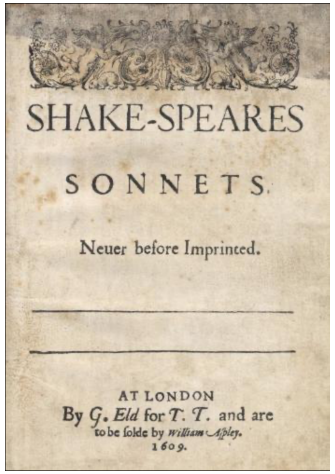
Worked analysis. Hope is the main subject and a small bird is the comparison subject, though the word "bird" is held back until line 7. It "perches in the soul", so hope lives inside us; it sings "without the words", so it needs no reasons; it is "sweetest - in the Gale", so it is strongest when times are worst. The last stanza turns on "Yet": in the hardest places it "never ... asked a crumb - of me". Together these details make one claim: hope is a gift that keeps giving and asks nothing back. Context supports these qualities, not every possible quality of a bird: Dickinson's bird never migrates or sits in a cage.



Details in combination build the claim: three phrases from Dickinson's poem

Model paragraph. *Dickinson makes hope generous by keeping it small. The "little Bird" is easily overlooked, yet only a "sore" storm could "abash" it, and the dashes around "never" in the last stanza slow the reader down to stress the point: in "Extremity" it "asked a crumb - of me". A bird that should need feeding instead feeds the speaker's spirit, so the poem ends with a quiet debt that the speaker can never repay.*

■ A real text: William Shakespeare, Sonnet 18 (1609)


SHAKE-SPEARES

SONNETS.

Neuer before Imprinted.

AT LONDON
By G. Eld for T. T. and are
to be solde by William Aspley.
1609.

Shake-speares Sonnets, the 1609 quarto: the first printing of Sonnet 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
...
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
...
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Worked analysis.

- **Form.** A **sonnet** 十四行诗 has fourteen lines. Shakespeare's pattern is three groups of four lines and a final **couplet** 对句.
- **The comparison.** The poem opens by offering an open comparison ("compare thee to a summer's day") rather than a standard like-or-as simile, and at once finds that it does not fit: summer is too short and too rough ("Rough winds", "darling buds" that get shaken). Lines 1–8 list summer's faults.
- **The turn.** Line 9 begins with "But". This **volta** 诗中转折 develops the earlier comparison into a contrast and a metaphor: the person now *has* an "eternal summer", one that will not end.
- **The couplet.** The last two lines move the source of that permanence from the person to "this", the poem itself. The repeated "So long" and the two uses of "this" press the point home.

Claim: Sonnet 18 begins as praise of a person and ends as praise of poetry: the turn at line 9 makes the person's beauty depend on the lines that record it.

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Common errors

- **Naming a feature without its function.** "There is enjambment" earns nothing; say what it makes the reader do.
- **Missing the shift.** Look first for a *but*, a stanza break, or a change of tense or address.
- **Listing every association** of a comparison subject. Use only the qualities the context selects.
- **Forgetting the main subject.** A simile or metaphor is about the main subject, not the comparison subject.
- **Inventing an omission.** Explain a missing detail only when the surrounding words create an expectation of it.

Key terms

- **structure**: the way a text is arranged, such as its lines, stanzas and turns.
- **figurative language**: words used beyond their literal sense, such as a comparison.
- **line break**: the point where a line of poetry ends.
- **stanza**: a group of lines in a poem, separated by a space.
- **contrast**: a sharp difference the writer sets up on purpose.
- **shift**: a change in a text, such as in tone, time or speaker.
- **juxtaposition**: placing two things side by side so they are compared.
- **antecedent**: the word a pronoun refers back to.
- **alliteration**: the same first sound repeated in nearby words.
- **main subject**: the thing being described in a comparison.
- **comparison subject**: the thing it is compared to.
- **volta**: the turn in a sonnet.
- **enjambment**: a sentence running on past the end of a line of poetry.

Check yourself

Read Robert Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay" (1923):

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

1. What contrast organises the poem?

2. Where is the first shift, and what signals it?
3. How do the **rhyme** 押韵 pairs shape the ending?
4. Write a **thesis** 论题 about the poem's view of time.

Answers: 1. The brief "gold" of first beginnings (spring leaves, Eden, dawn) against the ordinary state that follows (leaf, grief, day). 2. Line 4, "But only so an hour": the word "But" turns the praise of the first flower into loss. 3. The poem is four rhymed couplets, each closing firmly; the last, "day / stay", ends on a short line of four words that sounds like a final rule. Lines running on past the line end (**enjambment** 跨行) are absent, so every line closes like a door. 4. For example: "Frost compresses the whole history of loss, from a spring leaf to the fall of Eden, into eight short lines, so that the poem itself passes as quickly as the gold it describes."

Sources for this lesson

- College Board, *AP English Literature and Composition Course and Exam Description*, Unit 2.
- William Shakespeare, Sonnet 18, in *Shake-speares Sonnets* (1609).
- Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess" (1842).
- William Wordsworth, "A slumber did my spirit seal" (1800) and "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (1807).
- Alfred Tennyson, "The Eagle" (1851).
- Emily Dickinson, "'Hope' is the thing with feathers" (published 1891).
- Robert Frost, "Nothing Gold Can Stay" (1923).

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Longer Fiction or Drama I

AP English Literature and Composition

What Textual Details Reveal About a Character

Jane Austen's first draft of *Pride and Prejudice*, written in 1796–97, was called *First Impressions*. The old title names the novel's subject: a clever young woman judges two men quickly, gets both wrong, and has to change her mind. A long work has room for this kind of change, and Unit 3 is about tracing it.

In this unit you will:

- read a character through description, details and what the character does **not** do;
- show a change with three quotations, not one;
- treat setting as a social and historical situation, not only a place;
- name a conflict as a clash of **values** 价值观 and show how two conflicts intersect;
- write a literary thesis that states an interpretation and defend it with sufficient evidence.

The CED's points on character:

- The description of a character creates **expectations** 期待 for that character's behaviour, and **how a character meets or fails those expectations** is meaningful.
- Details associated with a character **contribute to a reader's interpretation** of them.
- A reader's understanding of a character's perspective **may depend on the perspective of the narrator**.
- **A character's perspective may shift** during the narrative.
- When narrators or characters **compare another character to something else**, they reveal their own perspective as much as the compared character's.
- Readers can infer **motive** 动机 from a character's actions or **inactions**.

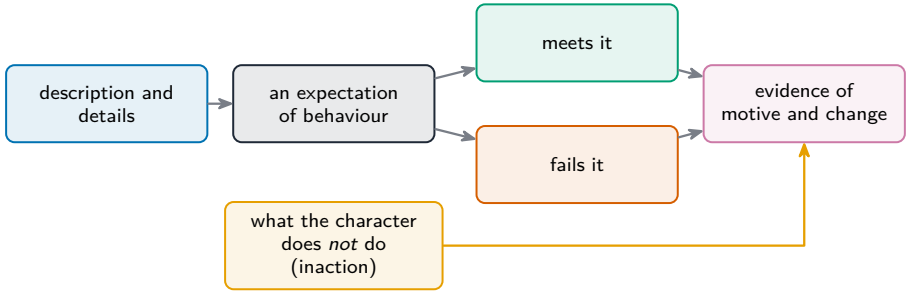
That last word, *inactions*, is the one worth keeping. What a character declines to do is evidence, and it is often more revealing than what she does.

Worked example: a detail, an expectation and an inaction. Katherine Mansfield's short story "Miss Brill" (1920) follows an English teacher living alone in a French town on her Sunday visit to the public gardens. It opens:

> Although it was so brilliantly fine–the blue sky powdered with gold and great spots of light like white wine splashed over the Jardins Publiques–Miss Brill was glad that she had decided on her fur.

She takes the old fur out of its box and talks to it: *"Dear little thing! It was nice to feel it again."*

- **Expectation.** A woman who speaks to her fur as a pet is lonely, but she is also cheerful and observant. We expect her to enjoy the afternoon.
- **The detail.** The fur is her companion and her pride. Later a young couple on her bench laugh at it: *"It's exactly like a fried whiting."* The same object that showed her happiness now shows how the world sees her.
- **The inaction.** On Sundays she usually buys a slice of honey-cake. This time *"she passed the baker's by"* and went straight home. She says nothing and does nothing dramatic; the missing cake is the evidence of her hurt.



Expectations make behaviour meaningful, including what a character declines to do.

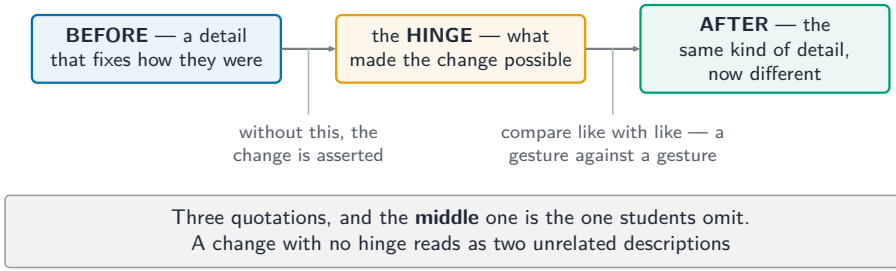
Characters Who Change or Remain Unchanged

- A **dynamic character** 动态人物 develops over the narrative and often makes choices that directly or indirectly cause change.
- Character change can be **visible and external** (health, wealth, circumstance) or **internal**, in belief, value or understanding.
- A **static character** 静态人物 remains unchanged or is largely unaffected by events.

An unchanged character is not a failure of **characterisation** 人物塑造. It is often the measure by which the change in others becomes visible. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mrs Bennet is the same at the end as at the start, and that makes Elizabeth's growth easy to see.

To prove a change you need three quotations: one **before**, one at the **turning point**, and one **after**. Students usually give the first and last only, so the change is reported but not explained.

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Three quotations, and the middle one is the one students omit

> **Worked example: Scrooge in three moments.** Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (1843).

1. **Before.** The narrator piles up verbs: *"Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind-stone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!"* Seven words for holding on to money.
2. **Turning point.** At his own neglected grave he cries to the last Spirit: *"I am not the man I was."* The change is caused by seeing what his life will lead to.
3. **After.** *"Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father."*

Analysis. Scrooge is a **dynamic** character, and the change is internal before it is external: he first understands, then gives. The middle quotation is the evidence that the change has a cause. Without it, an essay can only say that he is "different" at the end.

Textual Details That Convey Setting

Setting now includes the **social, cultural and historical situation** in which the events take place, not only the time and the place.

This widens what setting can do. A social setting gives the limits a character must act within, and those limits are what turn a choice into a revealing one.

> **Worked example.** In "Miss Brill" the setting is a Sunday band concert in the Jardins Publiques at the start of the season. Mansfield fills it with people Miss Brill watches: couples, children, *"odd, silent, nearly all old"* people on the benches. Two details make the setting social, not just pretty:

- Miss Brill imagines the whole scene as a play: *"Oh, how fascinating it was!"*, and she has a part in it. The setting is her community, or she believes it is.
- She does not see that she belongs to the group she describes as old and odd. The setting holds up a mirror she does not look into.

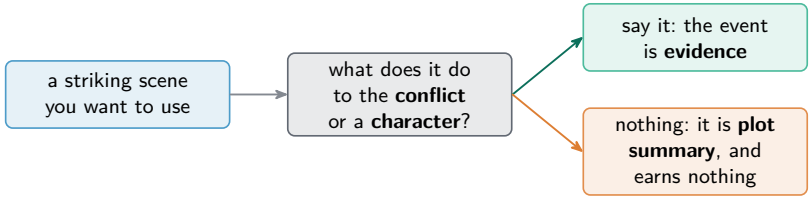
So when the young couple mock her, the setting itself turns against her: the public

stage where she felt she had a part is where she is told she has none.

Significant Events in a Plot

- A narrative is delivered through a **series of events that relate to a conflict**.
- Events include **episodes** 情节片段, encounters and **scenes** 场景 that introduce and develop the plot.
- The significance of an event depends on its relationship to the narrative, the conflict and **character development** 人物发展.

The third point is the test for choosing evidence in an essay: an event matters to your argument only if you can say what it does to the conflict or to a character. Retelling a striking scene that does neither is **plot summary** 情节概述, which earns nothing.



An event counts only for what it does

> **Worked example: which events count?** Take three moments from *A Christmas Carol*.

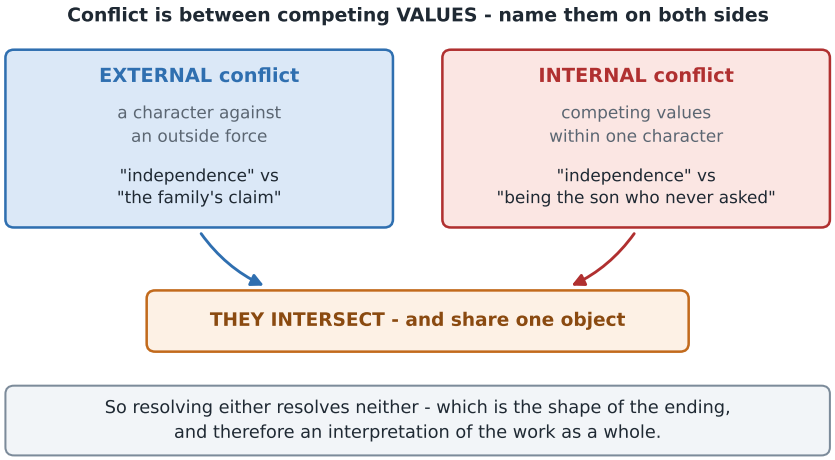
Event	What it does	Use it?
Marley's face appears in the door knocker	Sets a ghostly tone; changes nothing in Scrooge yet	Only briefly
Fezziwig's Christmas party, seen by the young Scrooge	Shows the kind, generous employer Scrooge could have become, and makes him regret his treatment of his own clerk	Yes: it starts the change
Scrooge sees strangers dividing his possessions after his death	Shows the result of his life; it leads straight to "I am not the man I was"	Yes: it is the turning point

The Function of Conflict in a Text

- **Conflict** 冲突 is tension between competing **values**, either **within a character** (an **internal conflict** 内心冲突) or **between a character and an external force** (an **external conflict** 外部冲突).

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- **A text may contain multiple conflicts**, and often two or more **intersect** 交叉.
- A **primary conflict** 主要冲突 can be heightened by additional conflicts that intersect with it.
- **Inconsistencies** 不一致之处 in a text may create contrasts that represent conflicts of values or perspectives.



A primary conflict heightened by an intersecting one is the standard shape of a novel or play

Note the definition: conflict is between **competing values**, not merely between people. Ask which desires or values the struggle exposes. The two values need not be equally admirable.

> **Worked example: two conflicts that intersect.** Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1860–61).

- **External conflict.** Pip, a village boy raised by the blacksmith Joe Gargery, meets the rich and proud Estella, who sneers: *"He calls the knaves, Jacks, this boy!"* Social class stands between them.
- **Internal conflict.** Pip wants to be a gentleman so that Estella will respect him. When Joe visits him in London, Pip is ashamed of Joe's manners and clothes, and he is ashamed of being ashamed.
- **Where they meet.** Every step up in class takes Pip further from Joe. Joe sees this and leaves with a kind explanation: *"Pip, dear old chap, life is made of ever so many partings welded together."*
- **The values.** Gentility against loyalty. The novel treats the wish to rise as natural, but it shows that Pip's way of rising costs him the love that mattered most.

Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence

As in Units 1 and 2, a paragraph needs a **claim** that requires defence, **textual evidence**, and details read **in combination**.

Model paragraph. *Mansfield shows Miss Brill's hurt through what she stops doing. Every Sunday she buys a slice of honey-cake on her way home, but after the couple mock her fur "she passed the baker's by". The missing treat matters more than any tears would, because it shows that the small pleasures of her week have lost their meaning. When she puts the fur away, "she thought she heard something crying": she gives her own grief to the fur, as she cannot yet admit it is hers.*

Claim, two pieces of evidence read together, and a final sentence that explains the link.

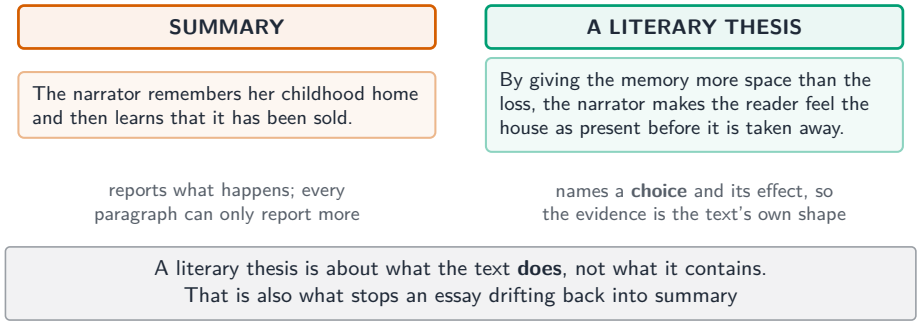
Developing a Literary Thesis Statement

- A **thesis statement** 论题句 **expresses an interpretation** of a literary text and **requires defence** through textual evidence.
- It **may preview the line of reasoning** of that interpretation, but it is **not required** to list the reasons.

The key word is *interpretation*. A thesis that states what happens in the text is not a thesis; it is a summary. A thesis says what the text **means** or **does**, so a reader could disagree with it.

Summary (not a thesis)	Thesis
Scrooge is visited by three ghosts and becomes kind.	Dickens makes Scrooge's change depend on seeing, not on being told: each Spirit shows him a scene, and only the sight of his own death finishes the work that warnings could not.
Miss Brill is upset by a young couple.	Mansfield lets Miss Brill discover her loneliness through the very scene she thought made her part of a community.

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A literary thesis is about what the text does, not what it contains

Developing Commentary

- A **line of reasoning** 推理线索 is the **logical sequence of claims** that together defend the thesis.
- It is communicated through **commentary** 评析 that explains the logical relationship between evidence and claim.

> **Worked example.** Thesis: *Dickens makes Scrooge's change depend on seeing, not on being told.* A line of reasoning in three claims:

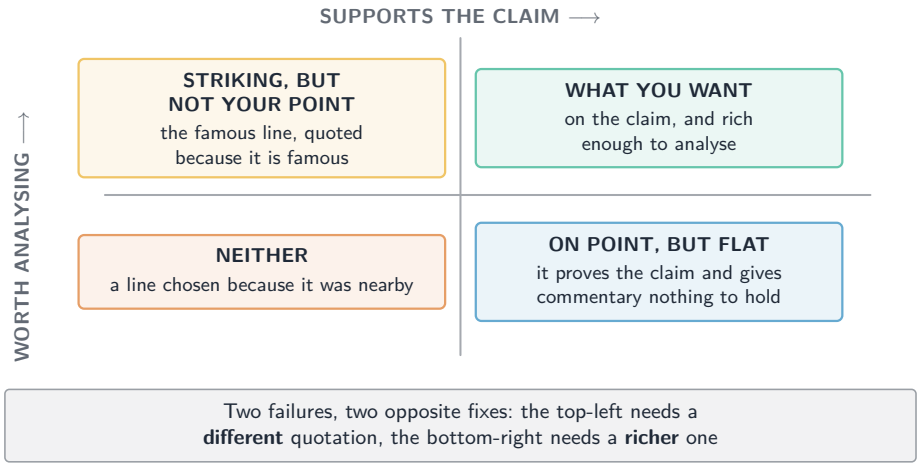
1. Words fail first: Marley's ghost warns Scrooge directly, and Scrooge still argues.
2. Scenes from the past begin the change: at Fezziwig's party Scrooge remembers kindness and regrets how he treats his clerk.
3. Only the scene of his own death completes it: "I am not the man I was" follows a sight, not an argument.

Each claim adds a step; together they move from "warnings fail" to "sight succeeds", which is the thesis.

Selecting Relevant and Sufficient Evidence

- Writers use evidence **strategically**: to illustrate, clarify, exemplify, associate or amplify.
- Evidence is **effective** when commentary explains its logical relationship to the claim.
- Evidence is **sufficient** 充分的 when its **quantity and quality** give apt support.
- **Developing an interpretation is a recursive process**: an interpretation can emerge, and change, as you read and write.

The last point is permission worth taking. If your reading changes while you draft, revise the thesis to match.



Two failures with two opposite fixes: a different quotation, or a richer one

Worked example: two weak choices. Claim: *Pip's rise in class costs him Joe.*

- *Irrelevant evidence:* a quotation about Miss Havisham's stopped clocks. It is striking, but it says nothing about Pip and Joe. Fix: choose a different quotation.
- *Insufficient evidence:* "Pip is embarrassed by Joe." True, but too thin to carry the claim. Fix: a richer quotation, such as Joe's "life is made of ever so many partings welded together", which shows that Joe understands the distance and accepts it.

Control Over the Elements of Composition

Grammar 语法 and mechanics that follow established conventions allow writers to communicate clearly. On this exam, control of language is not a separate mark but a condition of the others: an unclear sentence cannot deliver commentary that a reader can credit.

Worked example: a Question 3 paragraph. A literary-argument prompt asks you to choose a work and analyse how a character's conflict contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. A weak answer retells the plot around the conflict. A strong answer names **competing values** and lets them intersect:

"In Great Expectations, Pip's external conflict with the class that Estella represents is sharpened by an internal one: he wants the gentility that would make her respect him, and he still loves the blacksmith who raised him. Because every gain in the first is a loss in the second, Dickens turns a story of social success into a story of moral failure, and Pip can only recover himself by turning back to Joe."

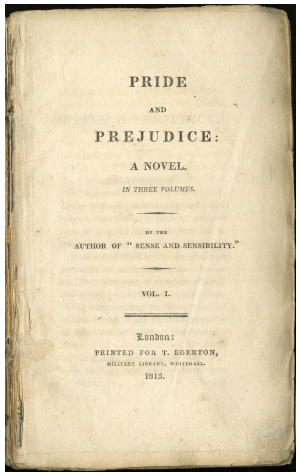
Two conflicts named as values, and an interpretation of the whole work, in clear

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sentences.

■ **A real text: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)**

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.


PRIDE
AND
PREJUDICE:
A NOVEL.
IN THREE VOLUMES.
BY THE
AUTHOR OF "SENSE AND SENSIBILITY."
VOL. I.
London:
PRINTED FOR T. EGERTON,
MILITARY LIBRARY, WHITEHALL.
1813.

Title page of the first edition (1813), published anonymously as by the author of Sense and Sensibility

"Till this moment, I never knew myself."

Worked analysis.

- **The narrator's voice.** The first sentence sounds like a law of nature, but the next pages show that it is really the wish of mothers with unmarried daughters, Mrs Bennet above all. The narrator states a "truth" in order to laugh at it.
- **Setting with social and economic weight.** The Bennets' house will pass to a male cousin, Mr Collins, when Mr Bennet dies, so the five daughters need to marry. Money and marriage are the pressure under every polite conversation.
- **Conflicts that intersect.** The external conflict is social: rank and money divide Elizabeth from Darcy. The internal conflict is her own quick judgement: she believes Wickham's story against Darcy because it fits her first dislike.
- **The significant event is reading.** Darcy's letter tells her the facts about Wickham. Her words to herself, "Till this moment, I never knew myself", mark the change: she sees that her famous judgement was pride.

Claim: Austen makes Elizabeth's turning point an act of reading rather than an action, so the novel's real conflict is not between two lovers but between a quick first judgement and the patience to revise it.

Common errors

- **Reporting a change without its cause.** Quoting the start and the end only. Give the turning point too.
- **Calling a static character a weakness.** An unchanged character often shows the change in others.
- **Treating setting as scenery.** Ask what social limits the setting puts on the character.
- **Conflict as "person against person".** Name the values in tension, such as gentility against loyalty.
- **A summary in place of a thesis.** If no reader could disagree with it, it is not a thesis.
- **Retelling a vivid scene** that does nothing to the conflict or to a character.
- **Ignoring inactions.** What a character does not do (Miss Brill passing the baker's) is often the best evidence.

Key terms

- **dynamic character**: a character who changes in an important way during the story.
- **static character**: a character who stays the same from start to end.
- **motive**: the reason behind what a character does or does not do.
- **internal conflict**: a struggle between values inside one character.
- **external conflict**: a struggle between a character and an outside force, such as a person or society.
- **primary conflict**: the main conflict that the work is organised around.
- **intersect**: to meet or cross, as two conflicts can.
- **plot summary**: retelling events without saying what they mean.
- **thesis statement**: a sentence that states an interpretation of the text that needs defending.
- **line of reasoning**: the sequence of claims that together defend the thesis.
- **commentary**: the writer's explanation of how the evidence supports the claim.
- **sufficient**: enough, in quantity and quality, to support the claim.

Check yourself

Read the end of James Joyce's short story "Araby" (1914). A boy has promised to bring a present from the Araby bazaar to the girl he admires. He arrives late, as the stalls are closing, and buys nothing.

> I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out.
> The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.
> Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.

1. Has the boy changed? Use a detail from the passage.
2. How does the setting reflect a **theme** 主题 of the story?
3. Write a thesis that connects the character to the setting.

Answers: 1. Yes, and the change is internal: he now sees his romantic quest as "vanity". The words "saw myself" show that the change is a new self-knowledge, like Elizabeth's "I never knew myself". 2. The bazaar he imagined as a magical, Eastern place is a closing hall with the lights going out. The darkness shows the end of his illusion, so the setting reflects the theme of romantic dreams meeting a dull reality. 3. For example: "Joyce lets the bazaar go dark at the moment the boy's dream fails, so the place he imagined as magical becomes the place where he first sees himself clearly."

Sources for this lesson

- College Board, *AP English Literature and Composition Course and Exam Description*, Unit 3.
- Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).
- Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and *Great Expectations* (1860–61).
- Katherine Mansfield, "Miss Brill" (1920), collected in *The Garden Party* (1922).
- James Joyce, "Araby", in *Dubliners* (1914).

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Short Fiction II

AP English Literature and Composition

What Textual Details Reveal About a Character

O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi" appeared in a New York newspaper at Christmas 1905. Its plot fits in one sentence, and many readers know the twist before they read it. They still remember the story, mainly because of its narrator, who talks to you directly, jokes, and then in the last paragraph changes his tone completely.

In this unit you will:

- read characters through their choices, which reveal what they value;
- see protagonist and antagonist as holders of contrasting values;
- read setting for mood, atmosphere and information about character;
- treat the order of telling as a choice with an effect;
- use **narrative distance** 叙述距离 to explain a narrator's attitude.

The CED's points on character:

- The significance of characters is often revealed through their **agency** 能动性 and through **nuanced** 细腻的 descriptions.
- **Characters' choices, in speech, action and inaction, reveal what they value.**

The second statement is the most practical sentence in the course for essay-writing. Whenever you need a claim about a character, look at a choice and ask what must be true for that choice to have made sense to them.

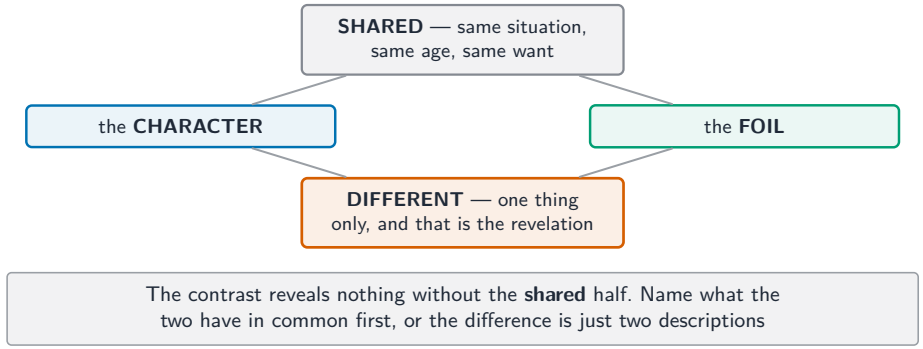
> **Worked example.** Della has $1.87 and wants to buy Jim a Christmas present. She sells her long hair, the thing she is proudest of, for twenty dollars and buys a platinum chain for his gold watch. For that choice to make sense, Della must value Jim's happiness above her own beauty. No description of her love could be as strong as this one action.

The Function of Contrasting Characters

- The main character is the **protagonist** 主人公; the **antagonist** 对立者 opposes them.
- **Protagonists and antagonists may represent contrasting values.**

The word *may* matters. An antagonist is not always a **villain** 反派. The strongest antagonists hold a value the reader can also see as good, which is why the conflict is a real conflict and not an easy victory.

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A contrast reveals nothing without the shared half - name it first

> **Worked example.** In Sophocles' *Antigone* (c. 441 BCE), King Creon forbids anyone to bury Polynices, who attacked the city. Antigone buries her brother anyway. Creon is her antagonist, but he is not simply cruel: he defends the law and the safety of the state. Antigone defends family duty and the laws of the gods. Because both values are serious, the tragedy is that both cannot win.

Nuances in Characters' Relationships

Conflict among characters often arises from tensions generated by their different value systems 价值体系.

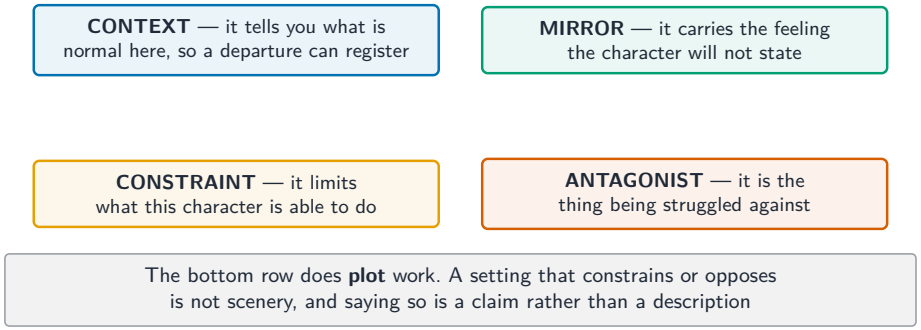
This is Unit 3's definition applied to relationships. Two characters in a long disagreement usually disagree about something deeper than the argument they are having.

> **Worked example.** In *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Mr and Mrs Bennet argue in almost every scene they share. The surface quarrels are about visits, balls and suitors. Underneath, their values differ: Mrs Bennet values getting her daughters married, because without husbands they will be poor; Mr Bennet values a quiet library and a good joke. Each is partly right, and the daughters suffer from the gap.

The Function of Setting in a Narrative

A setting may help establish the **mood** 情绪基调 and **atmosphere** 氛围 of a narrative.

Mood is the reader's feeling; atmosphere is the quality the text creates around events. Both come from selection: which details of a place the text mentions, and which it leaves out.



Setting does four jobs, and the bottom row does plot work

The Relationship Between Character and Setting

The environment a character inhabits provides information about that character.

This is a second route into character that avoids guessing about feelings. A room described through its neglect, its order or its borrowed furniture tells you about the person who lives there, and it is textual evidence, not speculation.

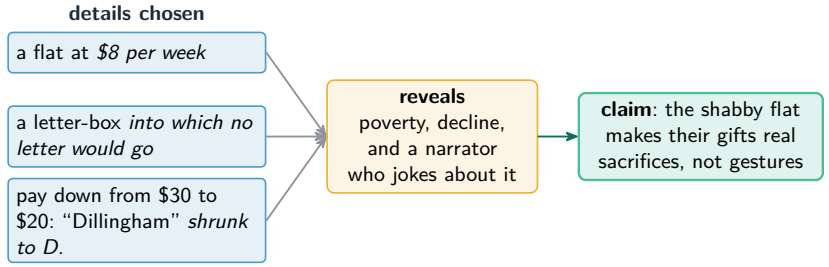
Worked example: reading a flat. O. Henry describes where Della and Jim live:

> A furnished flat at $8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

He adds a letter-box "into which no letter would go" and a doorbell no finger could make ring. The name card says "Mr. James Dillingham Young", but "Dillingham" was added when Jim earned $30 a week; now that his pay has * "shrunk to 20"*, the name seems ready to shrink to "D.".

- **Details chosen:** cheap, broken, and slowly getting worse.
- **What they reveal:** the couple are poor and falling, and the narrator treats it with jokes ("beggar description" becomes a real beggar), not tears.
- **Claim:** the shabby flat makes the gifts real sacrifices: in this setting, selling hair and a watch costs the couple the only fine things they own.

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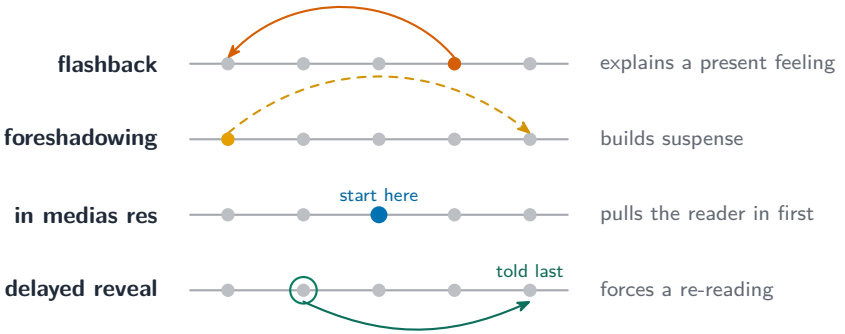


The flat speaks before the characters do

How Plot Orders Events

Some patterns in dramatic situations are so common that they are called **archetypes** 原型, and readers bring associations to them. "The Gift of the Magi" uses the archetype of the gift that costs everything.

Use archetypes carefully: recognising one is a starting point, and the interesting analysis is almost always where a text **departs** from the pattern.



Four ways to order the telling

The **order** in which a story tells events is a choice, separate from the order in which they happened:

Ordering	What it is	A common effect
chronological	events told in the order they happened	the reader learns as the character does
flashback 倒叙	a jump back to an earlier event	explains a present feeling, or delays a key fact
foreshadowing 伏笔	an early hint of a later event	builds suspense; makes the ending feel prepared
in medias res 从中间开始	the story opens in the middle of the action	pulls the reader in before giving context
a delayed reveal	a fact held back until late	creates surprise, and makes the reader re-read what came before

Worked example: ordering in "The Gift of the Magi". Both sacrifices are made for the same Christmas, but the story does not tell them side by side. We follow Della as she sells her hair and buys the chain; Jim's sale of the watch is revealed only after Della opens the combs and offers him the chain. Because of this order, the reader shares Della's worry about how Jim will react to her short hair, first discovers that the combs cannot be used yet, then learns that the chain has no watch to hold. The delayed reveal turns two separate sacrifices into one irony, and that shared irony lets the narrator call them "the wisest" in the last paragraph.

The Function of Contrasts Within a Text

- The differences highlighted by a contrast emphasise particular **traits** 特征 in the things contrasted.
- **Contrasts often represent conflicts in values** related to character, narrator or speaker perspectives.

Worked example. O. Henry measures the couple's two treasures against the riches of kings: if the Queen of Sheba lived across the airshaft, Della would hang her hair out of the window to make the queen's jewels look poor; if King Solomon were the janitor, Jim would check his watch every time he passed, just to make the king envious. The contrast between a cheap flat and royal wealth shows what the hair and the watch mean to their owners: not money, but pride.

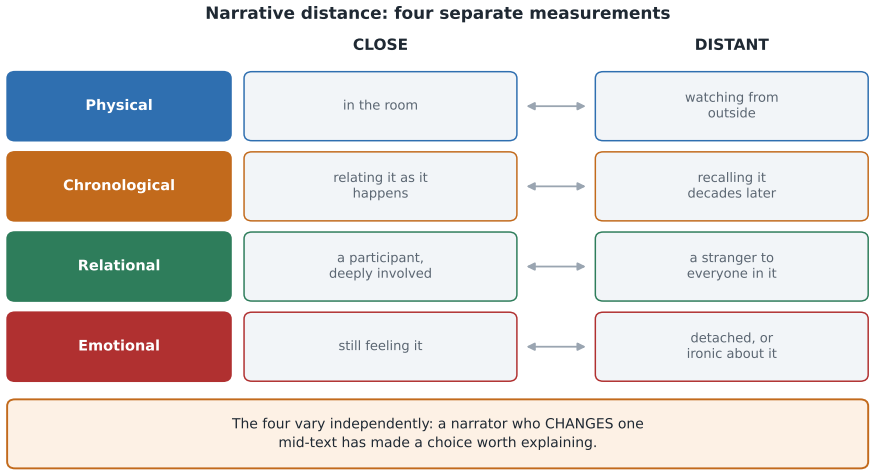
Identifying the Narrator or Speaker

Narrators may function as characters who directly address readers, and who either recall events or relate them as they occur.

Jane Eyre, in Charlotte Brontë's novel (1847), recalls her life years later and speaks to us directly: *"Reader, I married him."* Pip in *Great Expectations* also recalls, as an older man, the boy he was. "Recalling" and "relating as they occur" is the first axis of narrative distance below.

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The Function of Point of View



A narrator's position is not one fact but four, and any of them can be the analysis

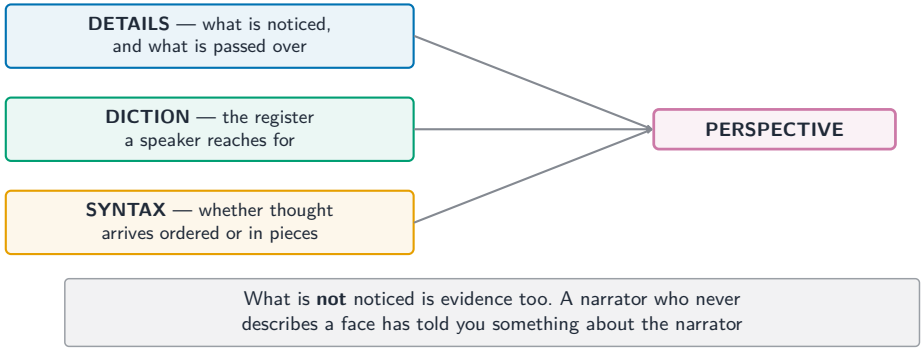
- Narrative distance refers to the **physical distance, chronological distance, relationships or emotional distance** between the narrator and the events or characters.
- **Stream of consciousness** 意识流 is narration in which a character's thoughts are given as a continuous flow, often with little conventional ordering.

Narrative distance is the most powerful and least-used tool in this course. A narrator telling about their childhood forty years later is distant in time, and that distance can supply **irony** 反讽 that the child could not see. A narrator relating events as they happen may create closeness, but this does not automatically remove irony or create **unreliability** 不可靠性.

Worked example: stream of consciousness. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) begins: *"Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself."* Within a page, Clarissa's mind moves from the June morning in London to a summer morning at Bourton when she was eighteen, with no chapter break and no "she remembered". The emotional distance is almost zero: we are inside her thoughts as they jump.

Details, Diction, and Syntax Reveal Perspective

- Narrators' and characters' **backgrounds and perspectives shape the tone** they convey.
- **Descriptive words**, the writer's **diction** 措辞, not only describe things but **convey a perspective** toward them.
- The **attitude** 态度 **of a narrator or speaker toward an idea, character or situation emerges** from these choices.



Perspective is built from three observable things - and what is not noticed counts

Worked example. The story's first lines are fragments:

> One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies.

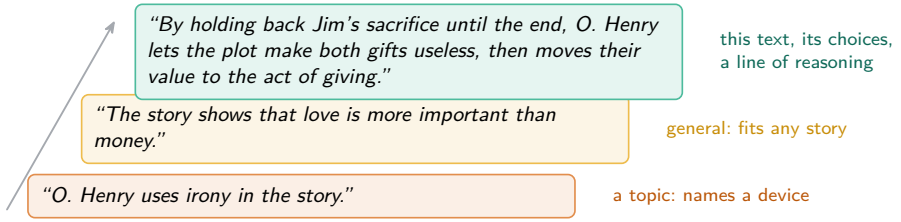
The short, flat sentences sound like Della counting again and again. The diction ("all", "pennies") shows how little the money is. The narrator's attitude here is sympathetic and close; later he steps back and jokes. The change in syntax marks the change in distance.

Developing a Literary Thesis Statement

As before: a thesis **expresses an interpretation** and requires textual defence; it **may** preview the line of reasoning.

Worked example: three theses on "The Gift of the Magi".

- *"O. Henry uses irony in the story."* A topic, not an interpretation: it names a device and says nothing about meaning.
- *"The story shows that love is more important than money."* An interpretation, but so general it could fit many stories, and it ignores how the text makes the point.
- *"By holding back Jim's sacrifice until the end, O. Henry lets the plot make both gifts useless, and then uses his narrator's last judgement to move their value from the objects to the act of giving."* An interpretation of this text, tied to specific choices, and it previews the line of reasoning: the order, then the irony, then the narrator.



From topic to arguable thesis

Developing Commentary

- A **line of reasoning** is the logical sequence of claims defending the thesis, communicated through **commentary**.
- **Body paragraphs** 主体段 **develop the reasoning and justify claims** using evidence.
- Effective paragraphs are **cohesive** 衔接紧密的 and often use **topic sentences** 主题句 to state a claim and explain the reasoning.

Model body paragraph. *Topic sentence:* The narrator's jokes about the flat make the couple's poverty concrete without making it tragic. *Evidence:* The flat "did not exactly beggar description", and its letter-box will not take a letter. *Commentary:* By laughing at the room rather than at the couple, the narrator keeps our sympathy with Della and Jim while showing exactly how little they have, so the reader understands that the hair and the watch are their only riches.

Selecting Relevant and Sufficient Evidence

The same four points as Unit 3: evidence used **strategically**; **effective** when commentary explains the relationship; **sufficient** in quantity and quality; and interpretation as a **recursive** process.

Check. For the thesis above, the delayed reveal needs two pieces of evidence (Della's purchase told first, Jim's sale told last). One quotation about the combs alone would show the irony but not the order, so it would be insufficient for that claim.

Control Over the Elements of Composition

Coherence 连贯性 **occurs at different levels** (within a sentence, between sentences, across the essay), and writers achieve it when the **arrangement of reasons, evidence and details** makes the line of reasoning easy to follow.

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Worked example: a prose-fiction paragraph. A prompt asks how the author's narrative choices convey the narrator's attitude to a remembered event in James Joyce's "Araby" (1914). A weak answer: *"The narrator is nostalgic and uses descriptive language."* A strong answer uses narrative distance:

"The adult narrator retells his boyhood love in the boy's own grand terms: on a shopping trip with his aunt, 'I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes.' The distance in time lets the man quote the boy's romance with a quiet irony the boy could not feel, so that when the bazaar goes dark at the end and he sees himself 'driven and derided by vanity', the judgement belongs to both: the boy's sudden shame and the man's settled view."

Distance, how it changes, and the attitude it produces.

■ A real text: O. Henry, "The Gift of the Magi" (1905)

Della and Jim are poor and young. To buy Jim a chain for his gold watch, Della sells her long hair. To buy Della combs for her hair, Jim sells his watch.



William Sydney Porter, who wrote as O. Henry

> One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies.
>
> The magi, as you know, were wise men–wonderfully wise men–who brought gifts to the Babe in the Manger.

Worked analysis.

- **Narrative distance.** The opening fragments put us very close to Della, counting the coins with her. The narrator then steps back and talks to "you", like a friendly storyteller.

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- **Choices reveal values.** Each gives up the one thing they are proudest of. The choices, not any description, tell us what they value.
- **Contrast.** The narrator calls the pair "two foolish children" who "most unwisely" sacrificed their treasures, then ends: "of all who give gifts these two were the wisest". The plot's irony makes both gifts useless; the ending judges the givers wise.

Claim: O. Henry lets the twist make the gifts worthless and then uses his narrator's final judgement to move the value from the objects to the act of giving.

Common errors

- **Describing a character instead of reading a choice.** Ask what a choice shows the character values.
- **Calling every antagonist a villain.** The strongest antagonists hold a value the reader can respect.
- **Setting as background.** Use the place as evidence about the people in it.
- **Naming an archetype and stopping.** The analysis is where the text departs from the pattern.
- **Ignoring narrative distance.** Say how far the narrator is from the events, and what that distance allows.
- **A thesis that fits any story.** Tie it to this text's choices.

Key terms

- **agency**: a character's power to choose and to act.
- **protagonist**: the main character.
- **antagonist**: the person or force that opposes the main character.
- **villain**: a wicked character; not every antagonist is one.
- **value system**: the set of beliefs about what matters that guides a character.
- **mood**: the feeling a text creates in the reader.
- **atmosphere**: the quality a text creates around a place or event.
- **archetype**: a pattern so common in stories that readers recognise it at once.
- **narrative distance**: how far a narrator stands from the events, in place, time, relationship or feeling.
- **stream of consciousness**: writing that follows thoughts as they occur, with little tidying.
- **diction**: a writer's choice of words.
- **topic sentence**: a sentence that states the claim of a paragraph.
- **coherence**: the quality of writing whose ideas connect clearly.

Check yourself

Read the opening dialogue of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813):

> "My dear Mr. Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?"
> Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.
> "But it is," returned she; "for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it."
> Mr. Bennet made no answer.
> "Do you not want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife impatiently.
> "*You* want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it."

1. How do Mr and Mrs Bennet contrast?
2. What does Mr Bennet's last reply suggest about their relationship?
3. What does his silence ("made no answer") reveal, as an inaction?

Answers: 1. Mrs Bennet is eager and talkative; her speeches are long and full of news. Mr Bennet answers briefly or not at all. 2. He turns her question back on her: he knows she is desperate to tell him and teases her by agreeing only to "hear" it. The relationship is one of long habit, where he enjoys her impatience. 3. His silence is a choice: by giving her nothing, he makes her work for his attention. It shows that he values his own amusement more than her concerns, which the novel later shows has a cost for their daughters.

Sources for this lesson

- College Board, *AP English Literature and Composition Course and Exam Description*, Unit 4.
- O. Henry, "The Gift of the Magi" (1905).
- Sophocles, *Antigone* (c. 441 BCE).
- Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).
- Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847).
- Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1860–61).
- Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925).
- James Joyce, "Araby", in *Dubliners* (1914).

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Poetry II

AP English Literature and Composition

The Function of Structure in a Text

Emily Dickinson published only about ten poems in her lifetime. After she died in 1886, her sister Lavinia found nearly 1,800 poems in her room, about 800 of them copied into forty small hand-sewn booklets. The first editors, in 1890, changed her dashes and capital letters to look "normal", gave the poems titles, and even cut whole stanzas. Later editions put her choices back, because they are part of how the poems mean. Small choices of form, wording and punctuation are the subject of this unit.

In this unit you will:

- tell closed from open forms and explain what a pattern, or a break in it, does;
- separate literal meaning from **connotations** 内涵义 and test each against context;
- analyse descriptive words, understatement and **hyperbole** 夸张;
- trace imagery, metaphor and **personification** 拟人 through a whole poem;
- explain an **allusion** 典故 by what it brings into the new poem.

Most of the unit works on one poem, so that every tool is tested on the same text. Read it now; the line numbers are for reference.

1 Because I could not stop for Death –
2 He kindly stopped for me –
3 The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
4 And Immortality.

5 We slowly drove – He knew no haste
6 And I had put away
7 My labor and my leisure too,
8 For His Civility –

9 We passed the School, where Children strove
10 At Recess – in the Ring –
11 We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
12 We passed the Setting Sun –

13 Or rather – He passed Us –
14 The Dews drew quivering and Chill –
15 For only Gossamer, my Gown –
16 My Tippet – only Tulle –

17 We paused before a House that seemed
18 A Swelling of the Ground –
19 The Roof was scarcely visible –
20 The Cornice – in the Ground –

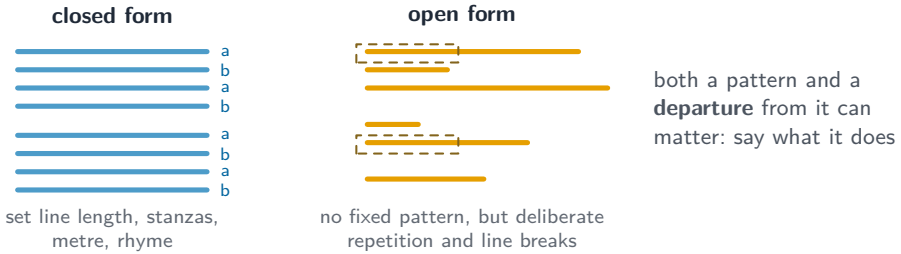
21 Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet

22 Feels shorter than the Day
23 I first surmised the Horses' Heads
24 Were toward Eternity –

Emily Dickinson, written about 1863. A tippet is a short shoulder cape; tulle is a thin net fabric; a cornice is the decorated top edge of a wall.

The CED's points on form:

- **Closed forms** 格律诗体 use set patterns of lines, **stanzas** 诗节, **metre** 格律 or **rhyme** 押韵.
- **Open forms** 自由诗体 do not follow a fixed traditional pattern, but they can still use deliberate **repetition** 重复 and arrangement.
- Structures can combine to emphasise ideas. Both a regular pattern and a break from it can matter; neither gives an **interpretation** 解读 by itself.



Closed and open forms

Worked reading: a closed form. Dickinson's poem is six four-line stanzas in near-hymn metre: lines of eight and six syllables take turns ("Because I could not stop for Death" / "He kindly stopped for me"). The **end rhymes** 尾韵 are mostly half-rhymes (me / Immortality, away / Civility, Chill / Tulle), so the music is steady but never quite settles. The pattern of the ride is broken once, at line 13: after three lines beginning "We passed", the speaker corrects herself, "Or rather – He passed Us". The form slips at the moment the **speaker** 说话者 realises that she is no longer moving through life; life is moving past her.

Worked reading: an open form. Walt Whitman's "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" (1865) has no rhyme or regular metre. Four lines begin "When", and they grow longer and more crowded ("When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me"), like the lecture itself. Then the speaker walks out, and the last line is short and quiet: *"Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars."* The poem has no fixed pattern, but its arrangement still argues: measured knowledge is long and noisy; wonder is brief and silent.

Literal and Figurative Meaning

Words can have a **literal meaning** 字面意义 and several connotations. Test each possible meaning against the surrounding words; that a dictionary allows a meaning is not enough. You may defend one reading or explain a tension between two.

> **Worked example.** Literally, lines 1–12 describe a slow carriage ride on a fine day with a polite gentleman. Line 17 offers "a House", and lines 18–20 describe it: its roof "scarcely visible", its cornice "in the Ground". A house sunk into the earth is a grave. That detail turns the whole ride into a **figurative reading** 比喻性解读: the journey from life to the grave, told as a social outing. The literal meaning stays alive beside it, which is why the poem feels calm and strange at once.

The Function of Specific Words and Phrases

Descriptive words 描述性词语 qualify what they describe and influence how it is seen. **Hyperbole** exaggerates; **understatement** 低调陈述 says less than the situation deserves. Neither is always stronger: explain the scale and the context.

> **Worked example: understatement.** Death "kindly stopped" (line 2), and the speaker gives up her work and play "For His Civility" (line 8). These are words for good manners, used for dying. The understatement lets the reader feel the gap: Death's politeness hides the fact that the speaker had no choice.

> **Worked example: hyperbole.** Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" (1681) tells a woman how long he would praise her if they had time: *"An hundred years should go to praise / Thine eyes."* The exaggeration is deliberate and comic, and it sets up the poem's turn: they do not have that time, so they should love now.

The Function of an Image or Imagery

An **image** 意象 can describe a literal sensory detail or work through a comparison. Descriptive words build **sensory imagery** 感官意象 through sight, sound, touch, taste or smell. A collection of images can develop an idea across a text; one well-placed image can also carry much of the meaning.

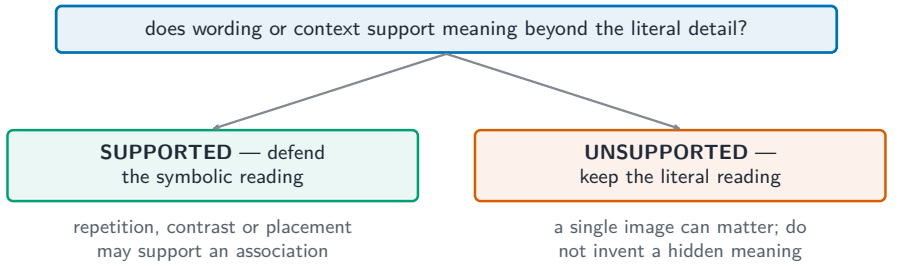
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	What it is	What it DOES to the reader
Hyperbole	exaggerates	may amplify a feeling; check the scale and context
Understatement	minimises	a small word for a large event may suggest restraint or irony
Imagery	sensory description	a detail or pattern can shape a view of the subject
Extended metaphor	a developed comparison	trace transferred qualities; a change is not required
Personification	a human trait given to a nonhuman subject	explain the specific trait in its passage
Allusion	a reference to another source	connect supported source associations to the new text

Definitions start the analysis. Explain the particular wording with textual evidence.

Device definitions are starting points; their effects depend on the actual wording.

Worked example. Stanza 3 is three images in a row: children playing "in the Ring" at school, "Fields of Gazing Grain", "the Setting Sun". Each is a stage of a life: childhood, ripeness, the end of the day. Stanza 4 adds touch: "The Dews drew quivering and Chill", and her gown is "only Gossamer", her cape "only Tulle". She is dressed for a pleasant drive, perhaps for a wedding, and she is cold. The repeated "only" makes the thinness felt. Imagery and **symbolism** 象征手法 can overlap here: the "Setting Sun" is a real sunset and also the end of a life.



Repetition is neither necessary nor sufficient. Imagery and symbolism can overlap

A symbolic reading needs contextual evidence; repetition is one possible clue.

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The Function of a Metaphor

A **metaphor** 隐喻 transfers particular qualities between a main subject and a comparison subject. An **extended metaphor** 延伸隐喻 develops related comparisons across a passage or a whole text. Trace the qualities transferred and their limits.

Worked example. The poem's extended metaphor is dying as a carriage ride with a gentleman caller. The carriage "held but just Ourselves – / And Immortality", like a courting couple with a chaperone; the speaker has "put away" her work; they drive slowly. Each detail carries a quality of courtship across to death: it is calm, polite, perhaps even romantic. The grave as "a House" extends the metaphor to its end: the ride arrives at a new home. What the metaphor leaves out (pain, fear, a deathbed) is part of what it says.

The Function of Personification

Personification gives a human trait to a nonhuman object, animal or idea. Name the exact trait before explaining what it does.

Worked example. Death is a gentleman: he "kindly stopped", he "knew no haste", he has "Civility". The trait is politeness, and its function is double. It makes death less frightening, and it hides force behind manners: one does not refuse a kind gentleman. By line 13 the courtesy no longer comforts: "He passed Us" makes the speaker passive as the cold comes in.

POSSIBLE FUNCTION	WORDING TO CHECK	QUESTION TO ASK
gives a thing INTENTION	it now acts, rather than merely happening	does the context suggest intention or blame?
makes a setting FEEL	the landscape may reflect or contrast with a mood	whose perspective shapes the description?
makes an abstraction ACT	an abstract idea receives a human trait	which human quality is being transferred?
sets the scale	a small thing given a will can dominate a passage	what has been made large, and what small

Name the human trait, then explain its contribution with evidence from the actual passage

Explain the specific human trait and its contribution in context.

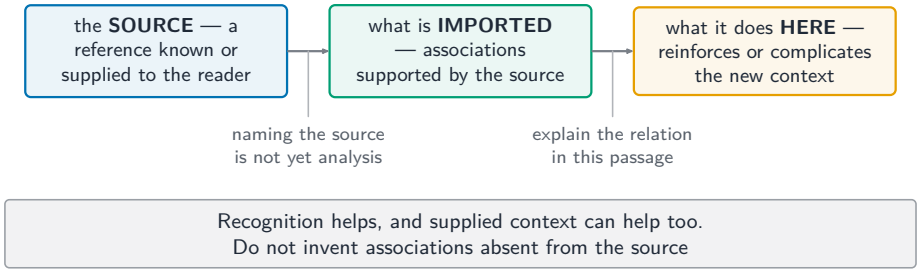
The Function of an Allusion

Allusions refer to other works, myths, sacred texts, art or historical events. A recognised reference brings its associations into the new text. Given context can help a reader understand it; do not invent knowledge of the source.

> **Worked example.** Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est" (written 1917, published 1920) describes soldiers in a gas attack and a man dying in agony. It ends:
>
> My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
> To children ardent for some desperate glory,
> The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
> Pro patria mori.

Context: the Latin is from the Roman poet Horace (Odes 3.2): "It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country." The line was well known in Owen's time and was used to encourage young men to fight.

- **What the allusion imports.** Two thousand years of honour, a schoolroom motto, the voice of tradition.
- **What the new poem does with it.** Owen sets the motto after the image of a choking man, so "sweet" and "fitting" become impossible to believe. He calls it "The old Lie".
- **The effect.** The allusion is not decoration: the poem's whole argument is the clash between the quoted ideal and the described death.



Use source associations and new context together; recognition alone is not analysis.

Developing a Literary Thesis Statement

A **thesis** 论题 presents an interpretation that can be defended with **textual evidence** 文本证据. It may preview the line of reasoning; a list of **literary devices** 文学手法 alone does not explain a meaning.

Prompt. Explain how structure and figurative language convey the speaker's changing understanding of death in "Because I could not stop for Death".

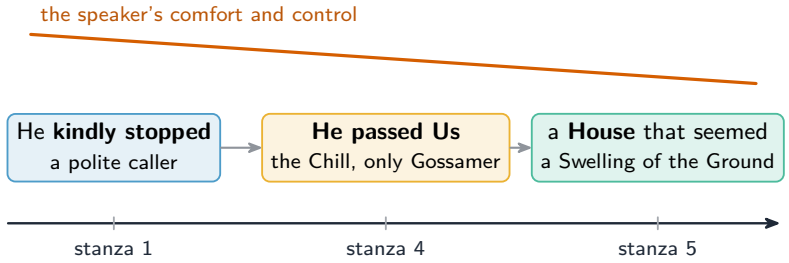
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- **Weak start:** "The poem uses personification, imagery and rhyme." This names features but gives no interpretation.
- **Defensible thesis:** "Dickinson presents death as a polite gentleman caller, but as the ride passes from children and sunlight into cold and a sunken house, the poem lets the reader see what the courteous metaphor was hiding: the speaker had no choice and no return." It can be tested against the verbs, the imagery and the break at line 13.

Developing Commentary

A **line of reasoning** 推理线索 links claims in support of the thesis. **Commentary** 评析 explains how particular evidence supports each claim; it goes beyond **paraphrase** 转述 and naming devices.

Worked paragraph. *Dickinson first makes death feel like a favour. Death "kindly stopped", and the speaker gave up her "labor and my leisure too, / For His Civility", as if accepting an invitation. The pattern of the ride then breaks: after three lines of "We passed", she corrects herself, "Or rather – He passed Us". The correction moves her from traveller to object, and the cold arrives in the same stanza: "quivering and Chill", in a gown of "only Gossamer". The politeness of the opening is not false, but it was never protection; it was the manner in which she was taken.*



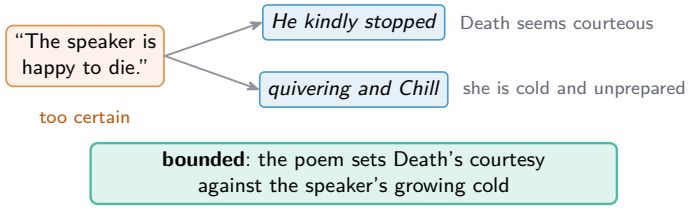
The verbs carry the commentary: from "kindly stopped" to "He passed Us" to a house in the ground

Selecting Relevant and Sufficient Evidence

Choose evidence for the claim you are making. Evidence must be accurate, relevant and sufficient, with commentary explaining what it contributes. Interpretation is recursive: revise a claim when another line complicates it. No fixed number of quotations fits every task.

Worked revision. "The speaker is happy to die" is too certain. "He kindly stopped" supports courtesy, but "quivering and Chill" and "only Gossamer" show that she is cold and unprepared. A better, bounded claim: the poem sets Death's courtesy against

the speaker's growing cold. A paragraph about change needs evidence from more than one moment, not only the first stanza.



Let the evidence bound the claim: courtesy in stanza 1, cold in stanza 4

Control Over the Elements of Composition

Transitional elements 过渡成分 link ideas through words, clauses, sentences or paragraphs. Choose a connection that matches the reasoning; a connector cannot create a relation the text does not support.

Worked connection. "In stanza 1, Death 'kindly stopped' for the speaker. **By contrast**, in stanza 4 'He passed Us', and she is left in the cold." The contrast lies in the two quoted actions. "Therefore" would need a cause, not just a change from one stanza to another.

■ The poem's history: what the first editors changed



Emily Dickinson in her only authenticated adult photograph, a daguerreotype of about 1847

When the poem was first printed in 1890, the editors titled it "The Chariot", removed most of the dashes, and left out stanza 4 entirely. They also rewrote lines 9–10 as "We passed the school where children played, / Their lessons scarcely done": the children no longer "strove" (struggled), and the circle of the "Ring" disappeared.

Worked analysis.

- **The missing stanza.** Without stanza 4, there is no "Or rather – He passed Us" and no cold. The poem becomes a gentle ride to a gentle grave, and the break in the pattern is gone.
- **The dashes.** Dickinson's dashes interrupt the movement, so the ride feels measured and uneasy at once. Smoothing them out makes the poem sound more certain than it is.
- **The ending.** "Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet / Feels shorter than the Day": the speaker has been dead for centuries, but they feel shorter than the single day she first "surmised" (guessed) where the horses were heading. The moment of understanding outlasts eternity.

Claim: The editors' changes show what Dickinson's version achieves: by keeping the stanza where the ride turns cold, she makes the poem not a comfort about death but a slow discovery of what the comfort concealed.

Common errors

- **Naming a form without its function.** Say what the pattern, or the break in it, does to the reader.
- **Keeping every meaning a word can have.** Test each meaning against the context.
- **Treating understatement as weak.** Saying less can make the reader feel more.
- **Analysing one image at a time.** Look for the sequence that images build.
- **Spotting an allusion and stopping.** Explain what it brings in and what the new text does with it.
- **A thesis that lists devices.** State what the poem means and how.

Key terms

- **closed form**: a poem that follows a set pattern of metre or rhyme.
- **open form**: a poem that does not follow a fixed pattern of metre or rhyme.
- **metre**: the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line.
- **end rhyme**: rhyme between the last words of lines.
- **connotation**: a feeling or idea that a word suggests beyond its literal meaning.
- **hyperbole**: deliberate exaggeration.
- **understatement**: saying less than the situation deserves, so the gap carries meaning.
- **sensory imagery**: detail that lets a reader see, hear, touch, taste or smell a scene.

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- **extended metaphor**: a comparison that is carried through several lines or a whole poem.
- **personification**: giving human actions or feelings to something that is not human.
- **allusion**: a brief reference to another text, person or event the reader may know.
- **transitional element**: a word or phrase that shows how two ideas are related.

Check yourself

Read Ezra Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" (1913), written after Pound saw a crowd of faces in a Paris underground station:

> The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
> Petals on a wet, black bough.

1. What is the main subject and what is the comparison subject? Is this a simile or a metaphor?
2. Which qualities are transferred?
3. How does the poem's structure support the comparison?

Answers: 1. The faces in the crowd are the main subject; petals on a wet, black branch are the comparison subject. There is no "like" or "as", so it is a metaphor (some readers call it an implied simile). 2. Paleness and brightness against darkness, delicacy, and the briefness of something seen for a moment; "apparition" adds a ghostly quality, as if the faces appear and vanish. 3. The poem is only two lines. The first line, with the semicolon, presents the scene; the second gives the image, with no verb at all. Placing them side by side, without explaining, makes the reader see the faces and the petals at once, as quickly as Pound saw them.

Sources for this lesson

- College Board, *AP English Literature and Composition Course and Exam Description*, Unit 5.
- Emily Dickinson, "Because I could not stop for Death" (written about 1863; first printed 1890 as "The Chariot").
- Walt Whitman, "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" (1865).
- Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress" (1681).
- Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est" (1920); Horace, *Odes* 3.2.
- Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the Metro" (1913).

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Longer Fiction or Drama II

AP English Literature and Composition

What Textual Details Reveal About a Character

When *The Great Gatsby* came out in 1925 it sold disappointingly, and when F. Scott Fitzgerald died in 1940 he believed it had failed. Today it is one of the most taught novels in American schools, largely because of two things this unit studies: a narrator you cannot fully trust, and a green light.

In this unit you will:

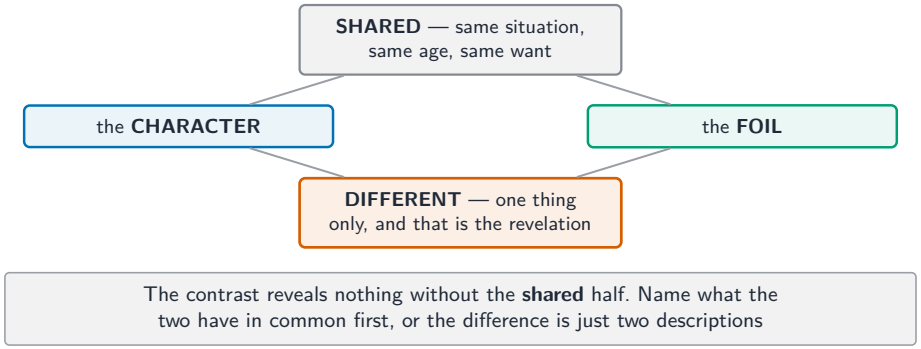
- use a **foil** to show what a character has or lacks;
- treat a character's inconsistencies as evidence of complexity;
- explain what flashback, foreshadowing and *in medias res* do to what the reader knows;
- judge **narrator reliability** 叙述者可靠性 through a chain of evidence;
- build the meaning of a **symbol** 象征 from what the text does with it.

Different character, narrator or speaker perspectives often reveal different information and develop different interpretations of the same events. In a long work with several perspectives, the differences between them are not a problem to tidy away. They are the text's method.

> **Worked example.** Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) reaches us through two narrators. Mr Lockwood, a London visitor, misreads almost everything he sees at the Heights; Nelly Dean, the housekeeper, tells him the family's history, but she took part in it and often defends her own choices. The reader learns Heathcliff's story only through these two partial views, so every judgement of Heathcliff is also a judgement of the person telling it.

The Function of Contrasting Characters

Foil characters 陪衬人物 **illuminate, through contrast, the traits, attributes or values** of another character.



A foil shares enough for the difference to show

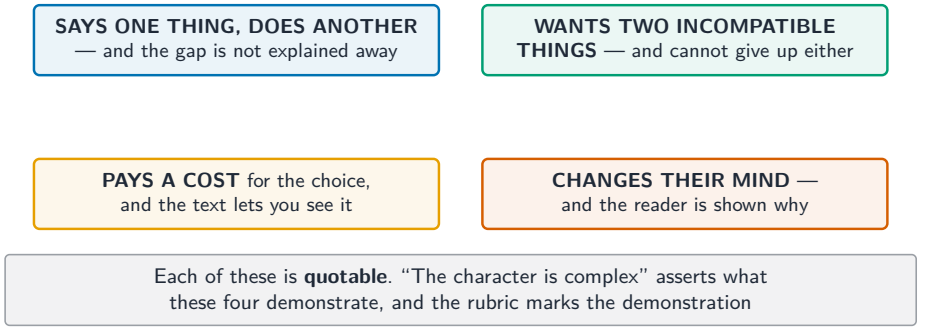
A foil need not be an enemy, though one character can be both. A foil may be an ally, a sibling or a friend. What makes them a foil is that they are similar enough for the difference to be visible. The useful question is always: *what does this character have that the protagonist lacks, and what does the text do with that gap?*

> **Worked example: Tom and Gatsby.** In *The Great Gatsby*, Tom Buchanan and Jay Gatsby want the same woman, Daisy, and both are very rich. The one difference is where the money came from: Tom was born into it; Gatsby made his, partly through crime, to win Daisy. Tom's careless confidence shows what Gatsby can never buy: the security of belonging. Gatsby's hope shows what Tom lacks: any belief that the world could be different. When Daisy stays with Tom, the novel suggests that in this society old money beats new hope.

Choices, Actions, and Speech Reveal Complexity

- **Inconsistencies between the private thoughts of characters and their actual behaviour reveal tensions.**
- A character's **competing, conflicting or inconsistent choices contribute to complexity** 复杂性.

This is where AP Literature parts company with simpler reading. Inconsistency is not a flaw in a character; it is the evidence that the character has an inner life. A character who always acts on what he thinks is a position, not a person.



Four quotable patterns - the rubric marks the demonstration, not the assertion

> **Worked example: Hamlet.** In Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c. 1600), the prince swears to avenge his murdered father, then delays. Alone, he attacks himself: *"O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!"* He decides to test the king first: *"The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."* When the play proves Claudius guilty and Hamlet finds him alone at prayer, he still does not kill him, reasoning that a man killed while praying might go to heaven. His thoughts demand action; his choices keep finding reasons to wait. That gap is the play's subject.

How Plot Orders Events

Some narrative structures interrupt the **chronology** 时间顺序 of a plot:

- **Flashback** 倒叙: a scene from an earlier time placed later in the telling. *Wuthering Heights* is mostly one long flashback told by Nelly Dean.
- **Foreshadowing** 伏笔: hints of later events. The Prologue of *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) tells the audience that "A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life" before the first scene begins.
- **In medias res** 从中间开始: starting in the middle of the action. Homer's *Odyssey* opens ten years after the fall of Troy, with Odysseus stuck on Calypso's island; his earlier adventures are told later, by Odysseus himself.

The Function of a Sequence of Events

These structures **affect the reader's experience** of the narrative: what is known when, and therefore what is felt when.

The analytical move is always to ask **what the reader knows at that moment**. Foreshadowing creates **suspense** 悬念 or dread. In *Romeo and Juliet* the audience knows from the Prologue that the lovers will die, so every happy scene is watched with dread: the question is not *whether* but *how*. A flashback holds back information, so

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earlier scenes are read twice: once without knowing and once in **retrospect** 回顾.

THE DEVICE	WHAT IT DOES TO ORDER	WHAT THE READER DOES
FLASHBACK	an earlier event arrives late	re-reads what they already know in its light
FORESHADOWING	a later event is signalled early	watches for it, and reads the interval as delay
IN MEDIAS RES	the beginning is withheld	assembles the cause while following the effect
A WITHHELD FACT	one thing is kept back to the end	revalues every scene it was absent from

Answer in the **third** column. A sequence question is about what a reader knows and when, not about the order of events

Answer in the third column: what a reader knows, and when

Worked example. In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick tells us late in the novel that Gatsby was born James Gatz, a poor farmer's son, and that he met Daisy years earlier as a young officer. Because this comes after the famous parties, the reader first sees Gatsby as a glamorous mystery, then rereads him as a man who built a whole self to recover a lost moment. The order of telling turns admiration into pity.

The Function of Contrasts Within a Text

Contrasts often represent **contradictions** 矛盾 or inconsistencies that introduce **nuance** 细微差别, **ambiguity** 歧义 or contradictory interpretations.

Note the last phrase. The CED allows a text to support more than one reading. An essay that recognises a competing interpretation and shows why its own is stronger is doing exactly what the sophistication point rewards.

Worked example. In the first act of *Hamlet*, the queen asks why Hamlet's grief "seems" so strong. He answers: *"Seems, madam? Nay, it is. I know not 'seems.'"* The court is all appearance (a new king, a quick wedding, mourning put away); Hamlet claims to be all reality. Yet he soon pretends to be mad. The contrast between seeming and being runs through the whole play, and Hamlet stands on both sides of it.

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Details, Diction, and Syntax Reveal Perspective

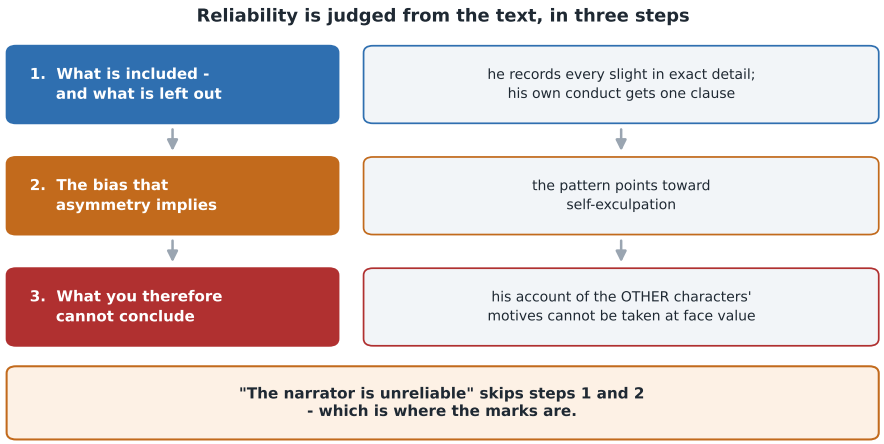
- A narrator's or speaker's **tone toward events or characters influences readers' interpretations**.
- The **syntactical arrangement** of phrases and clauses can **emphasise details or ideas**.
- **Information included and not included conveys the perspective** of characters and narrators.
- A narrator's perspective **may influence the details and the amount of detail** in a text.

Worked example. Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843) opens:

> True!–nervous–very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?

- **Syntax.** Dashes break the sentence into short bursts, and "very, very dreadfully" repeats itself. The sentence sounds like panic.
- **Diction.** The narrator admits to being "nervous" but rejects "mad". He is arguing with a listener who has already accused him.
- **Perspective.** The man insists he is calm, but his own sentence shows the opposite. The syntax tells us more than his claims do.

How a Narrator's Reliability Affects a Narrative



Bias is inferred from what is included and omitted. Detected bias reduces reliability. Reduced reliability changes what you can conclude about motive

- **Readers can infer narrators' biases** by noting **which details they choose to include** and which they omit.
- **Readers who detect bias in a narrator may find that narrator less reliable.**
- **The reliability of a narrator may influence a reader's understanding of a character's motives.**

The CED gives this as a chain, and following the chain is what makes an answer analytical rather than a matter of feeling. You do not simply say that a narrator is unreliable; you show the pattern of inclusion and omission, name the bias it suggests, and then say what that bias stops you from concluding.

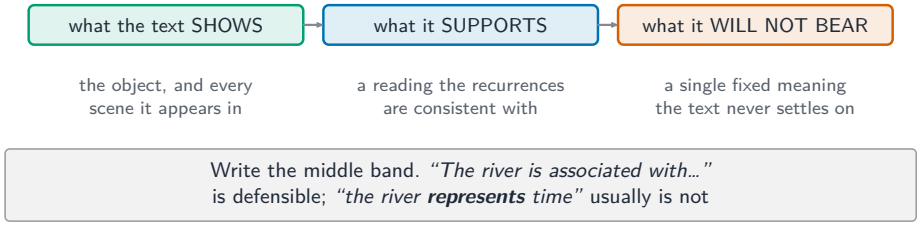
> **Worked example: following the chain in "The Tell-Tale Heart".** The narrator tells how he killed an old man he lived with:
>
> > Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this!
>
> - **Inclusion and omission.** He describes his own care in detail: each night for a week he opens the old man's door so slowly that it takes him an hour to put his head inside. But he gives no reasonable motive, only "his eye".
> - **Bias.** He tells the story to prove he is sane: *"observe how healthily–how calmly I can tell you the whole story."* Every detail of his patience is offered as proof.
> - **Reliability.** The details he chooses prove the opposite. A sane man does not murder because of an eye, and the man who boasts of his calm ends by screaming at the police: *"I admit the deed!–tear up the planks!"*
> - **What it changes.** We cannot accept his account of himself, or his explanation that the beating heart under the floor was real. The story's subject is not the murder but a mind that cannot see itself.

The Function of a Symbol

- When a **material object** comes to represent an idea or concept, it becomes a symbol.
- When a **character** comes to represent an idea, that character becomes **symbolic** 有象征意义的.
- A symbol is an object that **represents a meaning**, so it is said to be symbolic or representative of that meaning.
- **Certain symbols are so common and recurrent** that readers bring associations to them before reading.

The last point is a warning. A **conventional symbol** 常规象征 arrives with meanings attached, and the text may be using them, refusing them or turning them upside down. Check what the text does before bringing in the usual meaning.

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Write the middle band - 'is associated with' is defensible where 'represents' is not

> **Worked example: Miss Havisham's clocks.** In Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1860–61), the boy Pip visits Satis House and meets Miss Havisham, still in her wedding dress. He notices that *"her watch had stopped at twenty minutes to nine, and that a clock in the room had stopped at twenty minutes to nine."* The wedding cake still stands on the table, rotting.
>
> - **Weak:** "The clocks represent time." True of every clock, and it ignores the novel.
> - **Stronger:** "The stopped clocks are associated with Miss Havisham's refusal to live past the moment she was jilted: she has kept the room, the dress and the cake exactly as they were. By stopping time, she has let it destroy her more slowly, as the yellowed dress and rotting cake show."

The stronger reading is built from what the text does with the object (stopped at one moment, kept for years, surrounded by decay), not from what clocks usually mean.

Developing a Literary Thesis, Commentary, and Evidence

The skills from Units 3–5 continue: an **interpretation** that requires defence; a **line of reasoning** of claims communicated through **commentary**; evidence used **strategically**, **effective** when explained, **sufficient** in quantity and quality, and developed **recursively**.

Model thesis. *Poe lets his narrator's calm, careful sentences testify against him, so the story's real horror is not the murder but a mind that mistakes its own madness for reason.* It is arguable, it names an effect, and the reliability chain above supplies its line of reasoning.

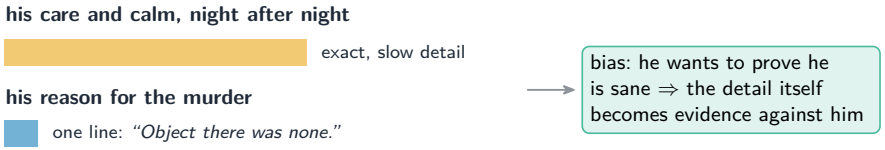
Control Over the Elements of Composition

- Writers convey ideas through the **strategic selection and placement of phrases and clauses**.
- Writers use **words that enhance the clear communication of an interpretation**.
- **Punctuation** 标点 **conveys relationships** between parts of a sentence.

Worked example: a Question 3 paragraph. A literary-argument prompt asks how an **unreliable narrator** 不可靠叙述者 contributes to an interpretation of a work as a whole. A weak answer says: *"The narrator is unreliable because he lies."* A strong answer runs the CED's chain:

"In Kazuo Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day (1989), the butler Stevens describes in exact detail how he served the guests at a great conference while his father lay dying upstairs, but he gives his own feelings only a sentence or two, and he later remembers that night with pride. The gap in detail suggests a bias: he must believe his service was worth the cost. So we cannot take his account of his own motives at face value, and the novel becomes the story Stevens is trying not to tell, about a life given away to duty."

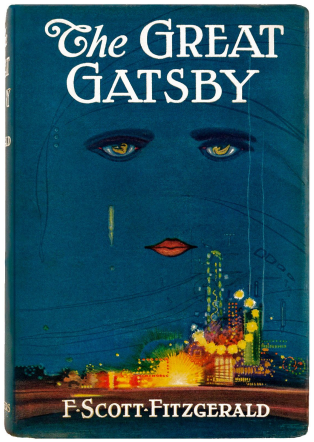
Inclusion and omission, the bias inferred, and what that bias prevents us from concluding.



Unreliability shows in what gets detail: in "The Tell-Tale Heart", pages for the narrator's care, one line for his motive

■ A real text: F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

The narrator, Nick Carraway, begins with his father's advice:



The first edition of The Great Gatsby, 1925: Francis Cugat's cover of eyes above a glowing city, painted before the novel was finished

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> "Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone," he told me, "just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had."

He says this has made him "inclined to reserve all judgements". After an evening at the Buchanans' early in the novel, he sees Gatsby, his neighbour, stretch out his arms across the dark water:

> Involuntarily I glanced seaward–and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock.

Worked analysis.

- **Reliability.** Nick says he reserves judgement, but he soon judges almost everyone (Gatsby himself, he says on the first page, "represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn"), and later he calls himself "one of the few honest people that I have ever known". Praising your own honesty is weak evidence of it. Nick's account, told after Gatsby's death, favours Gatsby, so the reader must test his judgements against what the characters do.
- **The symbol grows.** At first the light is only "the end of a dock", and Nick is not even sure ("might have been"). Later we learn it is at the end of Daisy's dock, across the bay from Gatsby's house. Only then can it be associated with Gatsby's hope of winning back Daisy and the past.

Claim: Fitzgerald gives the green light its meaning slowly, through a narrator whose admiration for Gatsby complicates his promise to reserve judgement, so the reader has to do the judging that Nick said he would hold back.

Common errors

- **"The narrator is unreliable" with no chain.** Show what is included and omitted, the bias, and what you cannot conclude.
- **Treating a foil as any other character.** A foil must be similar enough for one difference to stand out.
- **Calling inconsistency a mistake by the author.** It is usually the evidence of a complex character.
- **Naming a device without its effect.** Say what the reader knows, or does not know, at that moment.
- **Importing a symbol's usual meaning.** Build the meaning from what the text does with the object.
- **Writing "represents" too early.** "Is associated with" is easier to defend until the text makes the link clear.

Key terms

- **narrator reliability**: how far the reader can trust a narrator's account.
- **unreliable narrator**: a narrator whose account the reader has reason to doubt.
- **foil character**: a character set beside another so the contrast makes both clearer.
- **complexity**: the quality of a character with conflicting thoughts, values or choices.
- **chronology**: the order in which events happen in time.
- **flashback**: a scene that jumps back to an earlier time.
- **foreshadowing**: a hint of something that will happen later.
- **in medias res**: beginning in the middle of the action.
- **suspense**: the tension a reader feels while waiting to learn what happens.
- **retrospect**: looking back on earlier events with later knowledge.
- **ambiguity**: the quality of having more than one possible meaning.
- **symbol**: an object, person or action that comes to stand for an idea.
- **conventional symbol**: a symbol whose meaning readers already know, such as a dove for peace.

Check yourself

Read the first sentence of Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815):

> Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.

1. Which word quietly undercuts the praise, and how?
2. What does the narrator's perspective suggest the novel will do to Emma?
3. Write a claim about how the sentence characterises Emma.

Answers: 1. "Seemed": the narrator does not say that Emma *has* the best blessings, only that she appears to, so the praise is the world's view, not necessarily the truth. 2. "Very little to distress or vex her" suggests that she has never been tested; the narrator prepares us for a story in which she will be, and her confidence will be shaken. 3. For example: "Austen's opening praises Emma in the language of good fortune and then, with 'seemed', warns that a heroine who has never been troubled has not yet learned to see herself clearly."

Sources for this lesson

- College Board, *AP English Literature and Composition Course and Exam Description*, Unit 6.
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925).
- Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847).
- William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) and *Hamlet* (c. 1600).

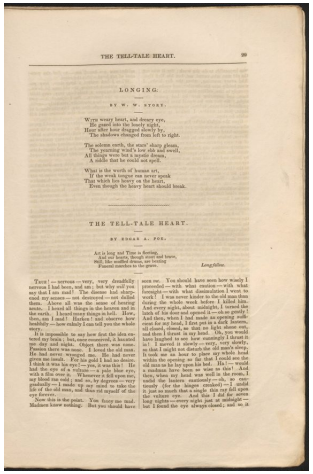
- Homer, *The Odyssey*.
- Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843).
- Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1860–61).
- Jane Austen, *Emma* (1815).
- Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (1989).

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Short Fiction III

AP English Literature and Composition

Characters Who Change or Remain Unchanged



THE TELL-TALE HEART. 99

LONGING.

BY W. W. STORY.

Were weary heart, and dreary eye,
Be gazed into the beauty night,
How after how dragged slowly by,
The shadows dimpled from left to right.

The solemn earth, the stars' sharp gleam,
The mystic splendors of the dead swell,
All things were but a mocker dream,
A riddle that he could not spell.

What is the worth of human wit,
If the weak tongue can never speak
That which lies heavy on the heart,
Even though the heavy heart should break.

THE TELL-TALE HEART.

BY EDGAR A. POE.

Art is long and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

Longfellow.

The Tell-Tale Heart as first printed in The Pioneer, January 1843

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843) opens with a narrator arguing with you. He says he is not mad, and the proof he offers is how calmly he can tell you how he killed an old man. Every sentence he speaks is evidence against him.

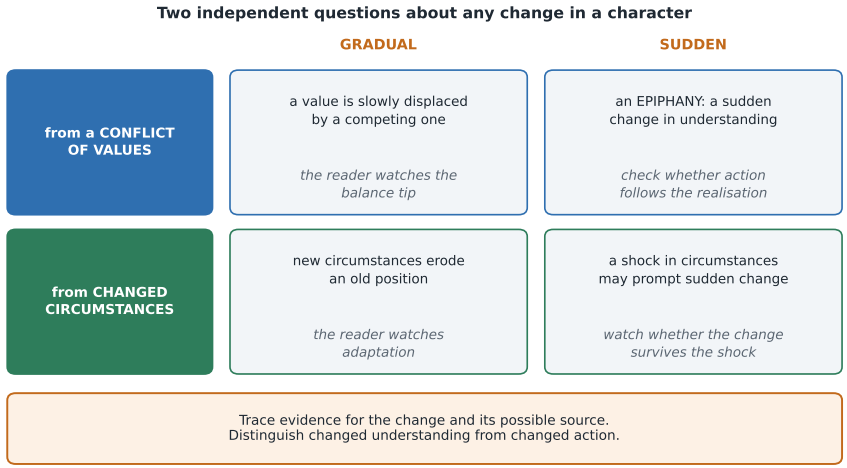
In this unit you will:

- trace where a change in a **character** 人物 comes from and how fast it arrives;
- read a group or a whole community as a character;
- use contrasted settings and a character's behaviour in a place as evidence;
- measure **pacing** 节奏 and say what it makes the reader feel;
- tell a **motif** 母题 from a **symbol** 象征, and analyse a **simile** 明喻 by its two halves.

The CED's points on change:

- Often the change in a character comes directly from a **conflict of values** 价值冲突 represented in the **narrative** 叙事.
- Changes in a character's **circumstances** 处境 may lead to changes in that character.
- Characters can change **gradually**, but they can also change **suddenly**.
- An **epiphany** 顿悟 may affect the **plot** 情节 by causing a character to act on a sudden **realisation** 领悟.

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Trace the evidence for a change, its possible source and its consequences or limits.

The two questions (where a change comes from, how fast it arrives) are independent. A change caused by a conflict of values can arrive gradually or in a moment, and an epiphany can change a character's understanding even if no action follows. Say separately whether it changes the plot; the absence of action may itself matter.

> **Worked example: an epiphany with no action.** James Joyce's "The Dead" (1914) ends after a Christmas party in Dublin. Gabriel Conroy learns that his wife Gretta once loved a boy, Michael Furey, who died young, perhaps for her. Gabriel, proud and self-conscious all evening, suddenly sees himself as "a ludicrous figure". He does nothing: he lies in a hotel room and watches the snow. The change is sudden and internal, it comes from a conflict of values (his vanity against her deep feeling for the dead boy), and its result is not an act but a new way of seeing.

Nuances in Characters' Relationships

- **A group or force can function as a character.**
- Readers should examine **how a character interacts with other characters**.
- **The relationship between a character and a group, including their inclusion in or exclusion from it, is significant.** Being shut out of a group is **exclusion** 排斥.

Take the group-as-character idea literally. A town, a family or an institution can hold values, put pressure on people and oppose a **protagonist** 主人公 exactly as an individual **antagonist** 对立者 would. Reading it this way often unlocks a story with no obvious enemy.

Worked example. In Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" (1948), no single villain kills Tessie Hutchinson. The whole village does, following a yearly custom. The villagers chat, joke and gather stones together. The antagonist is the community and its tradition, and Tessie's protest that the draw "wasn't fair" comes only when she is excluded by it.

WHAT TO WATCH	EARLY IN THE TEXT	LATER
who speaks first	one of them always begins	the initiative has moved, or nobody begins
how they are addressed	a name, a title, an endearment	the same person, named differently
what is said aloud	the disagreement is spoken	it is understood and not mentioned
physical distance	where each is placed in a room	the same room, arranged differently

A shift is shown by **the same thing measured twice**. Two quotations of the same kind, far apart, are worth more than any adjective

A shift is shown by the same thing measured twice, far apart

The Function of Setting in a Narrative

- When a **setting** 背景 changes, **it may suggest other movements, changes or shifts** in the narrative.
- **Settings may be contrasted** to establish a **conflict of values or ideas** associated with them.

Contrasted settings may carry competing values. Show the link through description and behaviour; do not assume that every change of place stands for a conflict.

Worked example. In *Wuthering Heights* (1847), the two houses are opposites. Wuthering Heights stands on the open moor, battered by wind, rough and dark. Thrushcross Grange sits in a sheltered park, with carpets, a chandelier and a lit drawing room. When young Catherine is taken in at the Grange and returns five weeks later as a fine lady, the change of setting marks a change in her: she has begun to choose comfort and rank over the wildness she shared with Heathcliff.

The Relationship Between Character and Setting

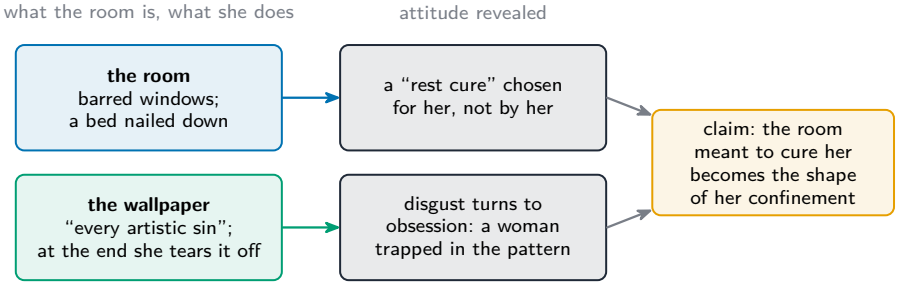
- The way characters interact with their **surroundings** 周围环境 gives insight into them.
- The way characters **behave in or describe** their surroundings **reveals an attitude** toward those surroundings.

Worked example. In Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), a young mother is ordered to rest in an upstairs room with barred windows, chosen by her doctor husband. She describes the wallpaper with disgust:

> I never saw a worse paper in my life. One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin.

- **What she does in the room.** She is forbidden to write, so she studies the paper for hours. Slowly she begins to see a woman trapped behind its pattern; at the end she tears the paper off the walls and creeps around the room.
- **What that reveals.** Her attitude moves from disgust to obsession to identification: the trapped woman in the paper is herself.
- **A claim with commentary.** "The narrator's changing behaviour toward the wallpaper shows that the 'rest cure' her husband chose is the cause of her illness, not its cure: the room meant to heal her becomes the shape of her confinement."

The claim is about the **character**, and the evidence is how she **behaves in** the setting. Describing the room alone ("the room has barred windows") would only summarise the setting.



Behaviour in a setting reveals an attitude: "The Yellow Wallpaper"

How Plot Orders Events

Pacing is the **manipulation of time in a text**. Several factors produce it: the length given to an event, the **compression** 压缩 of long periods, and interruptions to chronology.

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> **Worked example.** Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) spends its long first part on a single afternoon and evening with the Ramsay family. The short middle part, "Time Passes", covers about ten years. Mrs Ramsay's death, the centre of the family, is given in one sentence in square brackets:
>
> > [Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty.]
>
> The technique is scene against summary: a hundred pages for one evening, a bracketed clause for a death. The effect is shock. A life that filled the first part is gone in an aside, and the reader feels how time empties a house.

The Function of a Sequence of Events

Narrative pacing may evoke an emotional reaction in readers by the order in which information is revealed.

Pacing can be measured, so it is very useful evidence. Count the pages a text gives to an afternoon and to the following decade, then interpret the difference alongside **syntax** 句法, **chronology** 时间顺序 and context. Length alone does not prove which event matters most.

> **Worked example.** In "The Tell-Tale Heart" the narrator spends a whole week of nights on the slow opening of a door, then tells the murder itself in a few lines. The order slows the reader to his own obsessive pace and makes the sudden violence more shocking.

How a Narrator's Reliability Affects a Narrative

Some narrators or speakers may provide details and information that others do not or cannot provide.

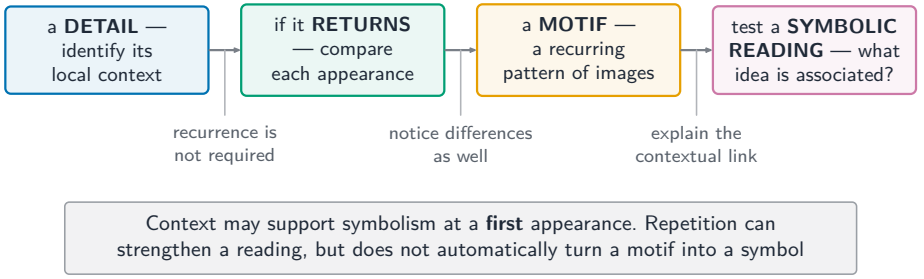
Compare **narrators** 叙述者 when a text offers more than one. Differences in access, emphasis or contradiction show how the text directs the reader. Different access alone does not prove dishonesty.

> **Worked example.** Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) has three narrators inside one another: the explorer Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the creature. Victor calls the creature a "wretch" and a "daemon". Only the creature's own story tells us that he first loved and helped the people he watched in secret, and turned violent after they drove him away. The second narrator gives what the first cannot, and the reader must judge between them.

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The Function of a Symbol

- A setting may become **symbolic** 有象征意义的 when it is associated with **abstractions** 抽象概念: emotions, ideas, times of life.
- **Over time, some settings have developed associations** so strong that they almost always symbolise something.



Test symbolic meaning against context; recurrence can strengthen a reading but is not required

> **Worked example.** At the end of "The Dead", snow falls over all of Ireland, on the living and on the grave of Michael Furey. Snow has old associations (cold, death, stillness), and the story uses them: it covers everyone alike. But the story also makes it gentle and shared, so the snow can be associated not only with death but with a common human end that makes Gabriel's pride look small.

The Function of an Image or Imagery

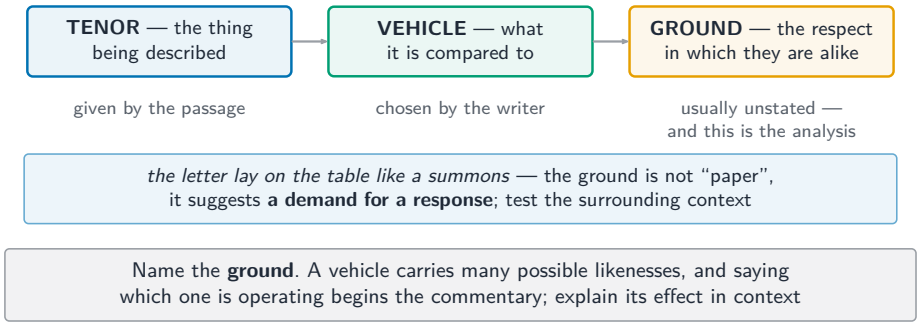
A motif is a unified pattern of **recurring** 反复出现的 objects or images used to emphasise a significant idea.

A motif differs from a symbol because it need not stand for one thing. It builds up: each return adds to what the pattern means, so compare what changes across its appearances, including exceptions. Repetition makes a motif; a single detail can carry symbolic meaning when its context supports it.

> **Worked example: blood in *Macbeth*.** After killing King Duncan, Macbeth looks at his hands: *"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand?"* Lady Macbeth answers that "A little water clears us of this deed." Late in the play, sleepwalking, she rubs her hands: *"Out, damned spot!"* and *"all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand."* The motif changes: first Macbeth cannot wash the blood away while his wife thinks it easy; at the end she is the one who cannot. The pattern traces guilt passing from one partner to the other.

The Function of a Simile

The function of a simile **relies on the choice of the objects being compared as well as the traits transferred.** Both halves are choices, and both can be analysed.



Name the ground - a vehicle carries many possible likenesses

Worked example. T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915) begins:

> Let us go then, you and I, When the evening is spread out against the sky
> Like a patient etherized upon a table;

The object chosen is not a sunset or a painting but a patient made unconscious for surgery. The traits carried across are stillness, helplessness and waiting for something painful. So the simile tells us more about the speaker than the sky: he sees the world as numbed and sick, and the poem's first image already shows a man who cannot act.

The Function of Personification

The CED adds the reverse move here: **giving the qualities of a nonhuman object, entity or idea to a person or character**, describing a person as a machine, as weather, as an animal.

Watch for it, because it usually signals a judgement. In *Great Expectations*, Pip says the clerk Wemmick has "such a post-office of a mouth that he had a mechanical appearance of smiling". A man whose mouth is a letter slot is a man who has turned himself into part of the office, and the novel later shows the warm private self he hides at home.

Developing a Literary Thesis, Commentary, and Evidence

- As before: a **thesis** 论题 expresses an **interpretation** 解读 that requires textual defence.

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- New: **more sophisticated literary arguments may explain the significance or relevance of an interpretation**: why this reading matters, not only that it can be supported. Explain the significance with evidence; no single phrase guarantees a scoring point.
- New: **textual evidence may require revision to an interpretation** if the evidence does not support it.

■ A real text for the whole unit: James Joyce, "The Dead" (1914)

The story's last paragraphs:

> A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again.
>
> Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland.
>
> His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.

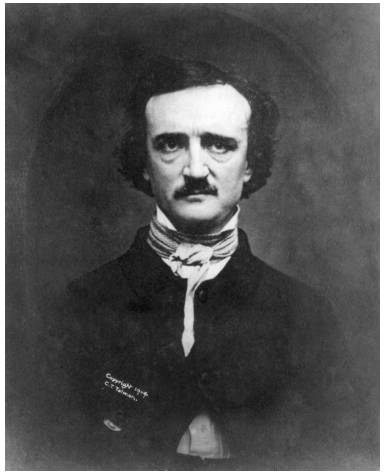
Worked analysis: change and its limits. Gabriel's realisation is an epiphany: he sees his own vanity and the depth of a love he never felt. But the story stops before any action. It does not show whether he will act differently tomorrow, so a strong essay does not claim that he is "transformed"; it claims that he has seen, and leaves the rest open.

Worked analysis: setting and imagery. The setting moves from a warm, crowded party to a cold hotel room, then out through the window to all of Ireland. The snow, "general all over Ireland", can be associated with a shared end that levels everyone. "Faintly falling" and "falling faintly" repeat with the words reversed, so the sentence itself seems to drift down like snow.

Worked analysis: pacing and significance. The party takes most of the story, hour by hour; the epiphany takes one paragraph. The long build-up of small talk and speeches makes the ending's silence stronger. Its significance: Joyce ends a story about public performance with a private moment no one else sees.

■ Another real text: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843)

> True!–nervous–very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?



Edgar Allan Poe in a photograph from the late 1840s

> It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed.

Worked analysis.

- **Reliability.** The narrator claims calm, but his first sentence breaks into dashes and repeats "very, very". The way he speaks contradicts what he says.
- **Pacing.** One hour for one movement of the head: the story slows time almost to a stop. The narrator gives this detail as proof of his care and good sense; the reader sees obsession.
- **Symbol.** He wants to kill the old man only because of his "vulture" eye. At the end he hears a heart beating under the floor and cries to the police, "tear up the planks!" The sound can be associated with his guilt, since no one else hears it.
- **Change.** He moves from total control to collapse, and the cause is inside him: at first he takes the officers' calm manner as a sign that they suspect nothing; their private thoughts are never reported.

Claim: Poe makes the narrator's own pacing and punctuation testify against him, so the story he tells to prove his sanity becomes the reader's evidence of his madness and guilt.

Common errors

- **"He changes" with no source.** Say what causes the change: a conflict of values, new circumstances, or an epiphany.
- **Assuming an epiphany leads to action.** Check whether the text shows any; often it does not.

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- **Looking only for individual antagonists.** A community or a custom can be the opposing force.
- **Calling every repeated object a symbol.** A motif builds up meaning; follow how it changes.
- **Analysing only the second half of a simile.** Say why this object was chosen and which traits carry across.
- **Measuring pacing without interpreting it.** Count the pages, then say what the difference makes the reader feel.

Key terms

- **epiphany**: a sudden moment when a character understands something important.
- **conflict of values**: a struggle between two things a character or group believes matter.
- **circumstances**: the conditions of a character's life, such as money, place or health.
- **exclusion**: being shut out of a group.
- **pacing**: the speed at which a text tells events, controlled by how much space each gets.
- **compression**: telling a long period of time in a few words.
- **abstraction**: an idea that cannot be touched, such as love, death or freedom.
- **motif**: an object, image or idea that keeps coming back in a text and gathers meaning.
- **symbol**: an object, person or place that comes to stand for an idea.
- **simile**: a comparison using "like" or "as".
- **interpretation**: a reading of what a text means that needs to be defended.

Check yourself

Read the end of James Joyce's "Eveline" (1914). Eveline, a young Dublin woman, has agreed to sail to Buenos Aires with Frank, a sailor who loves her. At the dock, as the ship is boarding, she grips the iron railing and will not move. Frank calls to her to come.

> She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.

1. Has Eveline changed? What kind of change, or failure to change, does the ending show?
2. What does the simile "like a helpless animal" carry across?
3. Why does the ending give Eveline no words?

Answers: 1. The story has built towards a change of circumstances (escape to a new life), but at the last moment she cannot act. The change that happens is the reverse of an epiphany: she freezes, and her old life holds her. 2. The object chosen is a

trapped animal, not a person deciding. The traits transferred are fear, helplessness and lack of choice, so the simile suggests she is not refusing Frank but is unable to move. 3. Silence matches her paralysis: words would be a decision, and she can make none. Her blank eyes, with "no sign of love or farewell or recognition", show that she has withdrawn even from herself.

Sources for this lesson

- College Board, *AP English Literature and Composition Course and Exam Description*, Unit 7.
- Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843).
- James Joyce, "The Dead" and "Eveline", in *Dubliners* (1914).
- Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery" (1948).
- Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847).
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892).
- Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927).
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818).
- William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (c. 1606).
- T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915).
- Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1860–61).

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Poetry III

AP English Literature and Composition

The Function of Structure in a Text

Robert Frost wrote "The Road Not Taken" in 1915 (collected in *Mountain Interval* in 1916) partly as a joke on his friend, the poet Edward Thomas, who on country walks would worry afterwards that they should have taken the other path. Frost later warned audiences that it was "a tricky poem". It is often read at graduations as praise of the brave person who chooses differently, which is close to the opposite of what a careful reading supports.

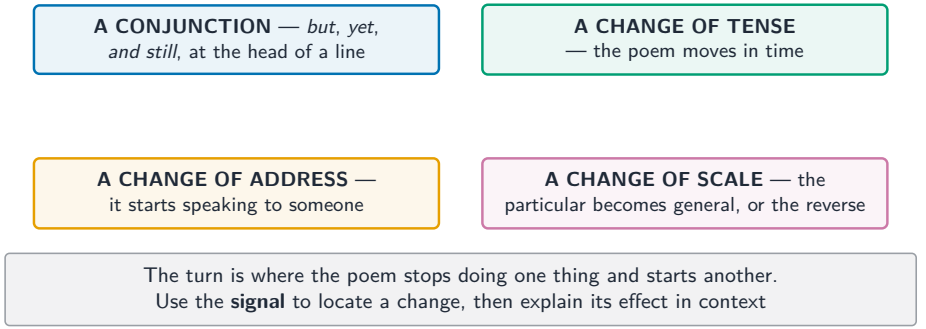
In this unit you will:

- find a pattern in a poem and explain the point where it breaks;
- tell antithesis, irony and **paradox** 悖论 apart;
- treat **ambiguity** 歧义 as a resource, showing both readings;
- trace a **conceit** 奇喻 and explain what an allusion brings into a poem;
- quote and cite poetry correctly.

The CED's points on structure:

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

Establish the pattern before interpreting the interruption. In a poem, a **semicolon** 分号 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.



Four signals that mark where a poem changes direction

Worked example: a pattern and its break. Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (1923):

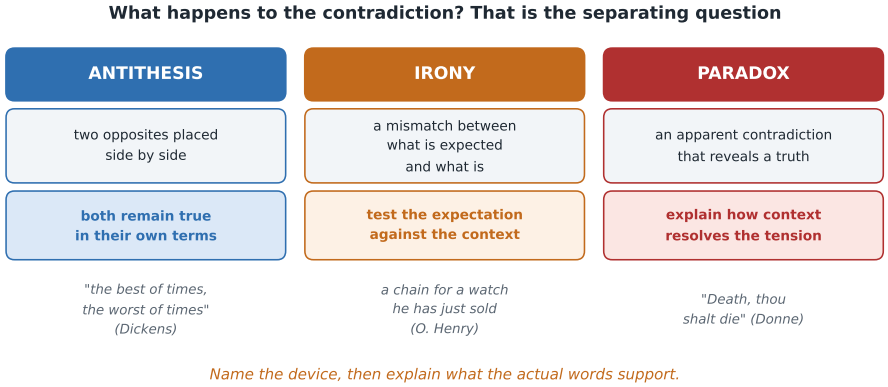
> Whose woods these are I think I know.
> His house is in the village though;
> He will not see me stopping here
> To watch his woods fill up with snow.
>
> My little horse must think it queer
> To stop without a farmhouse near
> Between the woods and frozen lake
> The darkest evening of the year.
>
> He gives his harness bells a shake
> To ask if there is some mistake.
> The only other sound's the sweep
> Of easy wind and downy flake.
>
> The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
> But I have promises to keep,
> And miles to go before I sleep,
> And miles to go before I sleep.

- **The pattern.** Each stanza rhymes *aaba*, and the odd line out sets the rhyme for the next stanza: "here" leads to "queer", "lake" leads to "shake", "sweep" leads to "deep". The poem keeps moving forward, like a traveller.
- **The break.** The last stanza rhymes *dddd*: there is no new sound to lead on, and the final line simply repeats. The chain stops, just as the speaker stops in the woods.
- **The emphasis.** The repetition makes the last line heavier. The first time, "miles to go" is a plain fact about the journey; the second time, it sounds like a whole life still to be lived.

The Function of Contrasts Within a Text

- **Juxtaposition** 并置 may create or demonstrate an **antithesis** 对偶.
- **Situational irony** 情境反讽 or **verbal irony** 言语反讽 is created when events or statements are **inconsistent with what is expected**.
- **Paradox** occurs when **seemingly contradictory elements are juxtaposed, but the contradiction, which may be at odds with ordinary logic, reveals a deeper truth**.

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

Students often confuse these three. Ask what happens to the **contradiction** 矛盾:

Device	What happens to the contradiction	Real example
antithesis	two opposites stand side by side, and both are true	"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" (Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, 1859): one age held both
situational irony	events turn out against what was expected	Della buys a chain for Jim's watch; Jim has sold the watch ("The Gift of the Magi", 1905)
verbal irony	the words mean something different from what they say	Owen calls "It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country" "The old Lie" after showing a gassed soldier dying
paradox	it looks impossible, but it is true in a deeper sense	"Death, thou shalt die" (John Donne, Holy Sonnet 10, published 1633): after resurrection, death itself will end

Worked example: a paradox explained. Donne's sonnet "Death, be not proud" argues that death is only "one short sleep" before eternal life: *"One short sleep past, we wake eternally / And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die."* Death cannot literally die. But if every death leads to waking, then death will one day have no one left to take. The contradiction is the argument: it turns death from a ruler into a servant who will be dismissed.

The Function of Specific Words and Phrases

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

In this course, ambiguity is a resource. Explore readings that the text really supports and explain what each would mean. You may defend one or explain a tension that lasts.

AMBIGUITY — in the text	**VAGUENESS** — in the reading
two readings, and the text supports both	one reading, not yet worked out
you can quote for each	"this could symbolise many things"
explain the implications of each reading	no quotation would settle it either way

Claiming ambiguity is a **commitment** to show both readings. Use textual evidence for each and explain whether one is stronger or the tension remains

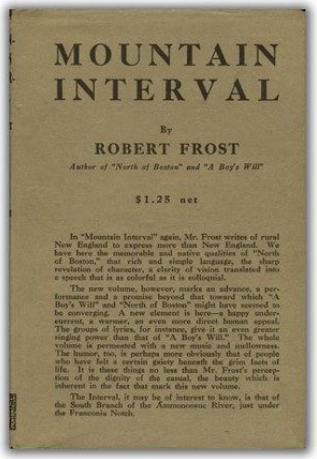
Claiming ambiguity is a commitment to show both readings

> **Worked example.** "And miles to go before I sleep." *Sleep* can be the night's rest at the end of the journey, or death at the end of a life. The first reading fits the horse, the snow and the "promises to keep"; the second fits "The darkest evening of the year" and the pull of the "lovely, dark and deep" woods. Both readings are supported, and the repetition holds them together: the second line seems to move from the first meaning to the second. A strong essay shows both and explains what the tension adds: a quiet moment of temptation that the speaker resists.

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.

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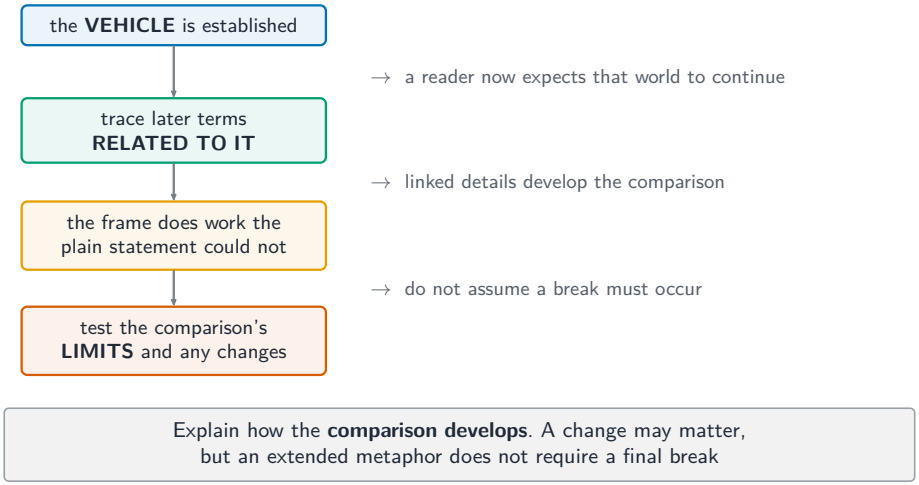
Mountain Interval (1916), the collection that opens with The Road Not Taken

A symbol is not free-floating. Ask how the wording sets up the association and whose perspective it expresses.

> **Worked example.** In "Stopping by Woods" the woods are "lovely, dark and deep". For the owner, who lives "in the village", they are property; for the horse, a strange place to stop; for the speaker, something beautiful and dangerous that he wants to stay in. The woods become symbolic through the speaker's perspective: they stand for rest, beauty or even death, set against the "promises" of ordinary life.

The Function of a Metaphor

- A **conceit** is a form of **extended metaphor** 延伸隐喻, common in poetry, that develops **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.



Trace the comparison and its limits without assuming a compulsory break.

> **Worked example: Donne's compasses.** In "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" (published 1633), a man leaving on a journey tells his wife not to grieve. He compares their two souls to the two legs of a pair of compasses, the tool for drawing circles:
>
> If they be two, they are two so
> As stiff twin compasses are two;
> Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
> To move, but doth, if the other do.
>
> He ends: *"Thy firmness makes my circle just, / And makes me end where I begun."*

- **Main subject and comparison subject.** Their love is the main subject; a scientific instrument is a surprising comparison subject.
- **Qualities transferred.** The two legs are joined at the top, so they are one object; the fixed foot leans towards the moving one as it travels; and the fixed foot lets the circle close, bringing the traveller back.
- **Why it is a conceit.** The comparison is unexpected and worked out in detail over three stanzas. Its strangeness is the point: their love is not ordinary passion but a precise, unbreakable connection.

The Function of an Allusion

Because readers share knowledge of a reference, **allusions** 典故 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.

> **Worked example.** Frost's "'Out, Out–'" (1916) tells how a boy cutting wood in Vermont loses his hand to a buzz saw and dies. Its title alludes to Macbeth's speech on hearing that his wife is dead.

Context: Macbeth says, "Out, out, brief candle! / Life's but a walking shadow", and calls life "a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing."

- **What the allusion imports.** The idea that life is short and can be put out like a candle, and Macbeth's bleak view that it means nothing.
- **What the poem does with it.** The poem ends: *"And they, since they / Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs."* The family returns to work at once. The allusion invites the reader to ask whether Frost shares Macbeth's despair, or shows people who must keep going because the farm must go on.

Developing a Literary Thesis, Commentary, and Evidence

- A thesis expresses an **interpretation** that requires textual defence.
- **More sophisticated literary arguments explain the significance or relevance of an interpretation**: show with evidence why the reading matters.
- Evidence must be **strategic**, **effective** with commentary, **sufficient** in quantity and quality, and developed **recursively**.

Model thesis with significance. *In "Stopping by Woods", Frost lets the rhyme scheme stop at the same moment as the speaker, so the poem enacts the pull of rest before turning back to duty; its significance is that the choice to go on is made quietly, without anyone seeing it, which makes it more honest than a public act of courage.*

Control Over the Elements of Composition

Writers must acknowledge the words, ideas, images, texts and **intellectual property** 知识产权 of others through **attribution** 注明出处 and **citation** 引用.

How to quote and cite poetry.

- Mark a line break with a slash: "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, / But I have promises to keep".
- Give line numbers after a quotation when they are available: "And miles to go before I sleep" (line 15).
- Name the poet and the poem the first time: Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening".
- Put a critic's idea in your own words, and still name the critic: *As Frost himself said, it is "a tricky poem".*

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■ **A real text: Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken" (1915; collected 1916)**

Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
...
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I–
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Worked analysis.

- **The contradiction.** In the second stanza the two roads are worn "really about the same". In the last stanza the speaker says he took "the one less traveled by". The later claim does not fit the earlier near-equality.
- **Structure and tense.** The last stanza moves into the future: "I shall be telling this". The famous ending is a story the speaker will tell one day, not a fact about the roads.
- **Punctuation.** The dash and the repeated "I– / I" show him hesitating as he shapes that story.
- **Ambiguity.** A "sigh" can be regret or satisfaction, and "all the difference" does not say whether the difference was good.
- **Symbol.** The road is a common symbol of a life choice. The title points us to the road he did *not* take.

Claim: Frost's poem is less about a brave choice than about how people later turn a chance choice into a story of meaning: the last stanza shows the speaker inventing the difference his choice "has made".

Common errors

- **Interpreting a break before showing the pattern.** Describe the pattern first; then the interruption means something.
- **Using "irony", "paradox" and "antithesis" as the same word.** Ask what happens to the contradiction.
- **"The poem is ambiguous" with no readings.** Give both readings, with evidence, and say what the tension adds.
- **A symbol without a perspective.** Say whose view makes the object symbolic.
- **Naming a conceit without tracing it.** Follow each detail of the comparison and the qualities it carries.
- **Quoting poetry without line breaks or line numbers.**

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Key terms

- **emphasis**: special weight given to a word, line or idea.
- **juxtaposition**: placing two things side by side so they are compared.
- **antithesis**: two opposite ideas placed together, often in balanced phrases.
- **situational irony**: events turn out the opposite of what is expected.
- **verbal irony**: words that mean something different from what they say.
- **paradox**: a statement that seems self-contradictory yet reveals a truth.
- **ambiguity**: the quality of having more than one supported meaning.
- **conceit**: a surprising, detailed comparison worked out over several lines.
- **allusion**: a brief reference to another text, person or event.
- **attribution**: saying whose words or ideas you are using.
- **citation**: a reference that shows exactly where a quotation comes from.

Check yourself

Read the opening and the ending of Shakespeare's Sonnet 130 (1609):

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
...
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

Context: love poets of the time usually compared a woman's eyes to the sun, her lips to coral and her walk to a goddess's.

1. What pattern does the sonnet set up in its first twelve lines, and where does it turn?
2. Is the opening line irony, antithesis or paradox? Explain.
3. What does the allusion to other love poems add?

Answers: 1. Line after line denies the usual comparisons ("nothing like the sun", "Coral is far more red"), ending with a plain fact: she "treads on the ground". The turn comes at "And yet" in line 13: the couplet says his love is as rare as any woman praised with false comparisons. 2. It is closest to verbal irony aimed at other poets: it seems to insult her, but the poem's real target is the exaggerated praise of other sonnets. It is not a paradox, because nothing impossible turns out to be true. 3. The poem only works if the reader knows the standard comparisons. Against them, Shakespeare's honesty becomes a better compliment: he loves a real woman, not a "false compare".

Sources for this lesson

- College Board, *AP English Literature and Composition Course and Exam Description*, Unit 8.
- Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken" (1915), "'Out, Out–'" (1916) and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (1923).
- Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859).
- O. Henry, "The Gift of the Magi" (1905).
- Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est" (1920).
- John Donne, Holy Sonnet 10 ("Death, be not proud") and "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" (published 1633).
- William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (c. 1606) and Sonnet 130 (1609).

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Longer Fiction or Drama III

AP English Literature and Composition

Characters Who Change or Remain Unchanged

F. Scott Fitzgerald's gravestone in Rockville, Maryland, carries the last sentence of *The Great Gatsby*: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." An ending can become what a whole book means to people. This unit asks how an ending does that, and whether the final judgement a text offers is the whole truth.

In this unit you will:

- read change, or the lack of it, as the ground of an interpretation;
- use what characters do after the crisis as evidence;
- explain how events build suspense and how offstage events shape what is shown;
- read open and closed endings, and a narrator who changes;
- write a thesis about the work as a whole, and aim for the sophistication point.

The CED's points:

- **Minor characters 次要人物 often remain unchanged** because the narrative does not focus on them; they may serve other functions.
- **Readers' interpretations are often affected by a character changing, or not, and by the nature of that change.**

The second point is the move the whole course has been building toward. Whether a character changes is not a fact to report; it is the ground on which a reading of the work stands.

> **Worked example: an unchanged minor character.** In *The Great Gatsby*, a man in owl-eyed glasses appears at Gatsby's first party, amazed that the library books are real. He appears again at Gatsby's funeral, the only party guest who comes, and says: "The poor son-of-a-bitch." He has not changed at all, and that is his function: hundreds enjoyed Gatsby's parties, and one stranger mourns him. The minor character measures the emptiness of Gatsby's world.

Choices, Actions, and Speech Reveal Complexity

- A character's responses to the **resolution 解决** of the narrative, in words or in actions, are revealing.
- **Inconsistencies and unexpected developments in a character affect readers' interpretations.**

How a character behaves *after* the **crisis 危机** is resolved is often the most concentrated evidence in a text.

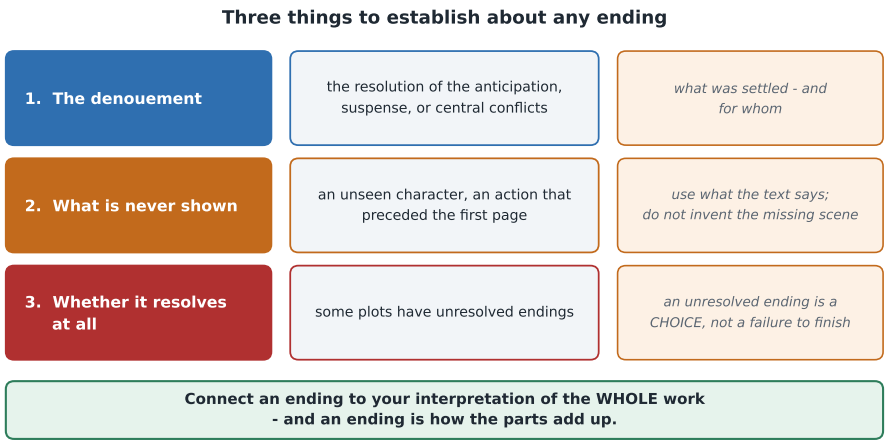
Worked example. After Gatsby's death, Nick organises the funeral, phones everyone who came to the parties, and finds that almost no one will come. Then he leaves New York for the Midwest: "After Gatsby's death the East was haunted for me." His response to the resolution (loyalty, then withdrawal) shows that the story has changed him: the man who said he reserved judgement has judged the East and left it.

Significant Events in a Plot

- **Significant events often illustrate competing value systems** related to a conflict in the text.
- Events collide and **accumulate** 累积 to create **anticipation** 期待感 and **suspense** 悬念.

Worked example. In *Macbeth*, King Duncan arrives at Macbeth's castle as a guest. Before the murder, Macbeth lists why he should not do it: Duncan is "here in double trust", since Macbeth is both his subject and his host. The event sets ambition against loyalty and hospitality. The suspense accumulates through the witches' prophecy, Lady Macbeth's pressure and the dagger Macbeth sees in the air, each step narrowing his choices until the murder seems certain.

The Function of Conflict in a Text



What was resolved, what was never shown, and whether the text resolves at all



Fuseli's three witches (about 1783): the prophecy starts Macbeth's inner conflict between ambition and conscience

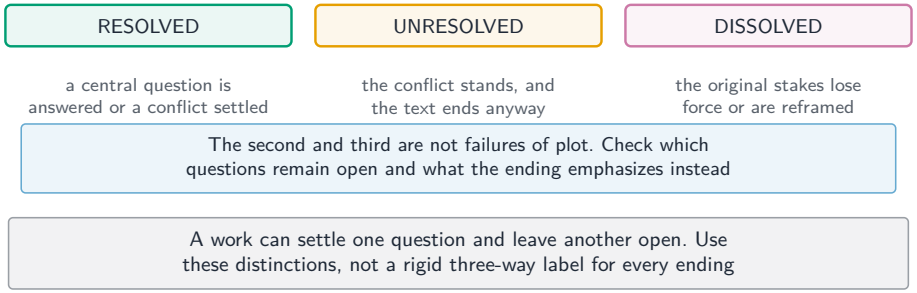
- The resolution of the anticipation, suspense or central conflicts of a plot may be called the **denouement** 结局.
- **Sometimes things not actually shown** in a narrative, such as an **unseen character** 未出场人物 or a **preceding action**, **affect the interpretation** of what is shown.
- Although most plots end in resolution, some have **unresolved endings** 开放式结局, and those affect interpretation too.

Check how **offstage** 幕后 events affect what the text does show. Use the text's references to them as evidence; do not invent the missing scene.

Worked examples.

- **Offstage action.** Shakespeare never shows Duncan's murder. We see Macbeth go out and come back with bloody daggers, saying "I have done the deed." Lady Macbeth's death is also offstage, reported in one line: "The queen, my lord, is dead." Keeping the deaths out of sight focuses the play on what they do to Macbeth's mind.
- **Unseen character and an open ending.** In Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953), two men wait for a Godot who never arrives. Each act ends with them deciding to leave and not moving. The absent character controls the whole play, and the unresolved ending is the meaning: waiting is their life.

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A work can settle one question and leave another open.

Details, Diction, and Syntax Reveal Perspective

- **Multiple, and even contrasting, perspectives can occur within a single text** and contribute to its complexity.
- **A narrator or speaker may change over the course of a text** as a result of actions and interactions.
- **Changes and inconsistencies in a narrator's or speaker's perspective may contribute to irony** or to a reader's judgement of reliability.

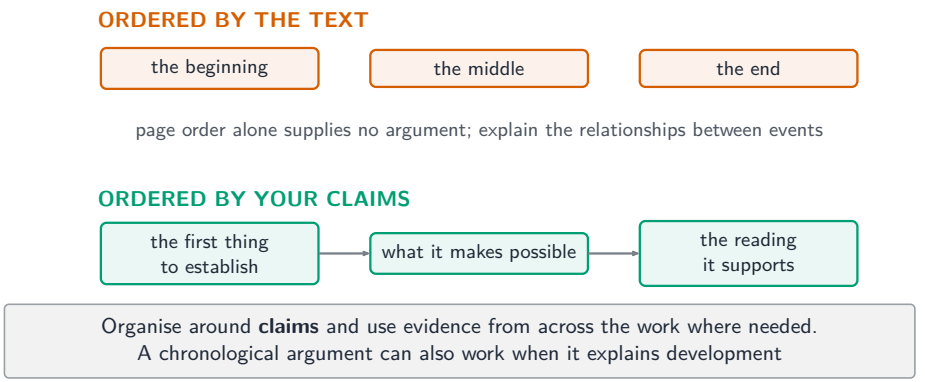
A narrator who changes can be analysed twice: as a character who developed, and as a lens that altered.

> **Worked example.** In *Great Expectations*, the older Pip tells the story of young Pip's snobbery. When young Pip is ashamed of Joe's visit to London, the older narrator admits it plainly: he wanted to pay money to keep Joe away. The perspective of the man who has changed makes the boy's behaviour ironic: we see his shame through the eyes of someone who is now ashamed of it.

Developing a Literary Thesis Statement

As before: an **interpretation** that requires textual defence, which **may** preview the line of reasoning. At this stage, aim for a thesis that could not be written before reading the whole work: a claim about how the parts add up.

Example. *Fitzgerald ends The Great Gatsby not with Gatsby's death but with Nick's reflection on "boats against the current", turning one man's failed dream into a picture of everyone's struggle against time; the ending makes Gatsby's story a general human one.* It needs the whole novel to defend, and it names what the ending does to the rest.



Organise claims and explain development; chronology alone supplies no argument.

Developing Commentary

- A **line of reasoning** is the sequence of claims defending the thesis, communicated through **commentary**.
- **More sophisticated literary arguments explain the significance or relevance of an interpretation.**

When a literary-argument prompt asks about the work as a whole, connect the chosen event or character to an interpretation of the full work. Follow the actual prompt.

THE HABIT	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	TURN IT INTO
SUMMARY	*"Then she leaves and the house is sold."*	what the ORDER of those two facts does
DEVICE-SPOTTING	*"The poet uses a simile here."*	what the ground of the comparison commits to
BIOGRAPHY	*"The author had lost her own home."*	what the narrator's account keeps returning to
FEELING REPORTED	*"This makes the reader feel sad."*	the words that would produce it, quoted

Each revision asks for an explanation. Check whether the draft also needs **more relevant evidence** before the claim is supported

Explain the reasoning and check whether more evidence is needed.

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Selecting Relevant and Sufficient Evidence

Evidence used **strategically**; **effective** with commentary; **sufficient** in quantity and quality; and interpretation developed **recursively**, revised when the evidence does not support it.

■ A complete short story: Guy de Maupassant, "The Necklace" (1884)

The story is only a few pages long, so it is ideal for practising how an ending works on a whole text.

Mathilde Loisel, the wife of a poorly paid clerk in Paris, dreams of luxury. Invited to a grand ball, she borrows a diamond necklace from her rich friend Madame Forestier. She is the success of the evening, but on the way home she loses the necklace. Too ashamed to confess, she and her husband buy a replacement for 36,000 francs, borrowing the money at high interest. They spend ten years of hard work paying it back; Mathilde loses her beauty and becomes a rough, strong working woman. One Sunday she meets Madame Forestier, still young and lovely, and tells her the whole story. Madame Forestier is deeply moved and tells her that the original necklace was fake, worth at most five hundred francs. The story ends there.

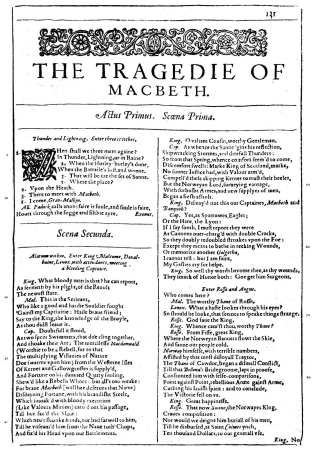
Worked analysis: what the ending answers and what it leaves open.

- **Answered.** The last lines reveal that ten years of sacrifice were unnecessary. Every earlier event is reread in this light: the decision to hide the loss was the real disaster.
- **Left open.** The story ends on Madame Forestier's words. We never see Mathilde's reaction, whether the money is returned, or whether she regrets her pride. The silence forces the reader to supply the response.
- **Change.** Mathilde has changed outwardly (poor, hard-working, older) and perhaps inwardly: she now speaks openly and with pride about paying the debt. But her first fault, caring how things look, caused the whole disaster, and the ending makes that fault devastating.
- **Claim:** Maupassant ends at the moment of revelation, not after it, so the reader is left holding the full weight of a ten-year sacrifice made for a fake, and must judge whether Mathilde's honest hard work redeemed the pride that caused it.

■ A real text: William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (about 1606)

I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

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THE TRAGEDIE OF
MACBETH.

Actus Primus. Scena Prima.

Scena Secunda.

The opening page of Macbeth in the First Folio (1623), the earliest printed text of the play

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;

Worked analysis.

- **Change.** In Act 1 Macbeth tells his wife, "We will proceed no further in this business." By Act 3 (the first extract) he has killed the king and had his friend Banquo murdered, and he sees himself halfway across a river of blood: going back is as hard as going on. The choice to continue is made in this image.
- **Conflict.** The inner conflict (conscience against ambition) drives the outer one (a country at war with its king). As the inner conflict dies, so does his feeling.
- **Numbness.** In Act 5, when he hears that his wife is dead, he answers with a **soliloquy** 独白 (the second extract): time becomes repetition without meaning.
- **The ending's verdict.** The play's last speech, by the new king Malcolm, calls him "this dead butcher" and his wife a "fiend-like queen". The verdict is true to his acts, but the audience has heard his soliloquies.

Claim: *Macbeth* ends with a public verdict that is accurate but incomplete: the gap between "butcher" and the man who spoke "Tomorrow, and tomorrow" is what the ending asks the audience to judge.

How the three essays are scored. Each free-response essay is marked out of 6: a **thesis** (1 point), **evidence and commentary** (up to 4 points) and **sophistication** 思辨深度 (1 point). The sophistication point is the hardest to earn. It goes to an argument that does one of these things *as part of the argument*: explores a tension or complexity in the work, places the reading in a broader context, accounts for another interpretation, or keeps a vivid, persuasive style throughout.

Worked example: developing sophistication. Two closing moves for an essay on the *Macbeth* claim above.

- *Hint only (no point):* "While another reader may see Macbeth as a victim, he is clearly a villain." This names another reading and drops it. The scoring guidelines say that only hinting at another interpretation does not earn the point.
- *Explored:* "Malcolm's verdict is the one the kingdom needs: a usurper must be named a butcher so that order can return. The play, though, has given the audience something Malcolm never hears. We have listened to Macbeth's soliloquies, so we know the conscience he killed in himself. The ending therefore holds two judgements at once, a political one that is correct and a human one that is sadder, and the tragedy lies in the distance between them."

The second version keeps the tension (accurate verdict, incomplete verdict) inside the argument and explains why it matters. It does not need difficult words to do it.

Common errors

- **Reporting change as a fact.** Use change, or its absence, as the ground of an interpretation.
- **Stopping at the climax.** What characters do after the crisis is evidence too.
- **Inventing offstage scenes.** Use only what the text says about events it does not show.
- **Treating an open ending as a failure.** Explain what the lack of resolution means.
- **Trusting the final verdict completely.** Compare the ending's judgement with what the reader has seen.
- **One sentence about "another reading".** For sophistication, develop the tension inside the argument.

Key terms

- **minor character**: a character the story does not focus on, who often stays the same.
- **resolution**: the point where the main conflict is settled.
- **crisis**: the moment of greatest tension, when the conflict must turn one way or another.
- **anticipation**: the feeling of expecting something to happen.
- **denouement**: the closing part of a story, in which the plot's knots are untied.
- **unseen character**: a character who is talked about but never appears.
- **offstage**: happening out of the reader's or audience's sight.
- **unresolved ending**: an ending that leaves the main question open.

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- **soliloquy**: a speech in a play in which a character, alone, speaks their thoughts aloud.
- **sophistication**: in AP scoring, a developed argument that explores complexity or other readings.

Check yourself

Charles Dickens first ended *Great Expectations* with Pip and Estella meeting briefly in a London street, years later, and parting for good. His friend, the novelist Edward Bulwer-Lytton, persuaded him that this was too sad, and Dickens rewrote it. In the published ending (1861), they meet in the ruins of Satis House, and the novel's last sentence is:

> I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place; and, as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so, the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw no shadow of another parting from her.

1. Is the published ending resolved or unresolved? Explain.
2. How does the setting contribute to the ending?
3. Write a thesis about how the published ending affects the meaning of the novel as a whole.

Answers: 1. It seems resolved (they leave together), but "I saw no shadow of another parting" only says what Pip *saw*, not what happened. The careful wording leaves the future open, so the ending is softly unresolved. 2. The "ruined place" is Satis House, where Pip's false hopes began; leaving it suggests leaving those illusions behind. The "evening mists" echo the "morning mists" of his first departure from the forge, so the novel comes full circle, from morning to evening. 3. For example: "Dickens's revised ending offers Pip a hope rather than a certainty: by letting him see 'no shadow of another parting' in a ruined house at evening, it rewards the humbler man Pip has become while keeping the novel's lesson that great expectations are not to be trusted."

Sources for this lesson

- College Board, *AP English Literature and Composition Course and Exam Description*, Unit 9, and the free-response scoring guidelines.
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925).
- William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (c. 1606).
- Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (1953).
- Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1860–61).
- Guy de Maupassant, "The Necklace" ("La Parure", 1884).