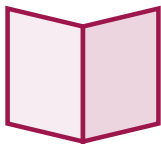


Short Fiction I

AP English Literature ■ Unit 1

AP English Literature



What we will cover

- 1 What Textual Details Reveal About a Character
- 2 Textual Details That Convey Setting
- 3 How Plot Orders Events
- 4 The Function of a Sequence of Events
- 5 Identifying the Narrator or Speaker
- 6 The Function of Point of View

1

What Textual Details Reveal About a Character

What Textual Details Reveal About a Character

AP English Literature reads texts in three genres across nine units – **short fiction, poetry, and longer fiction or drama**, each visited three times at increasing difficulty. Unit 1 installs the tools for all of them.

- **Description, dialogue, and behaviour** 描写、对话与行为 reveal characters to readers.
- Descriptions may come from a **speaker, narrator, 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.

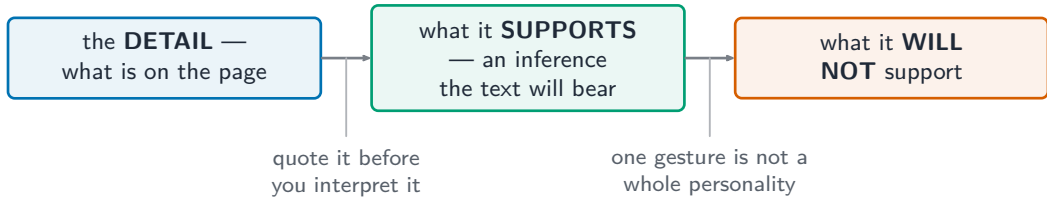
What Textual Details Reveal About a Character, continued

Original teaching passage — not an exam extract

On the last evening before the station closed, I waited beside its locked ticket window. “You could still post it,” Mara said. I folded the letter until her name disappeared inside.

“There is nothing left to say,” I told her. Years later, I call that silence kindness. Mara’s answer, if she gave one, is the part I no longer remember.

How far a detail goes



Keep interpretation within the evidence. Say what the detail **establishes**, and stop where the evidence stops

2

Textual Details That Convey Setting

Textual Details That Convey Setting

- 1 Locate** The station is closing; its ticket window is locked. These details establish time and place.
- 2 Connect** The narrowing setting accompanies an opportunity the narrator declines: Mara says the letter could still be posted.
- 3 Interpret** The setting reinforces the pressure of a final opportunity. It does not prove that posting the letter was physically impossible.

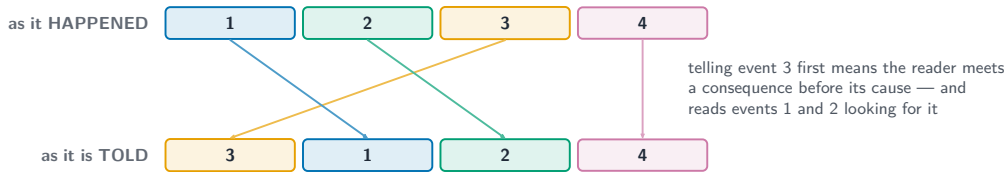
3

How Plot Orders Events

How Plot Orders Events

Detail	Interpretation and limit
Events	A last evening at the station; a folded letter; a later retelling.
Disclosure order	The scene appears first. Only later does “Years later identify retrospective judgement.
Reader effect	The claim that silence was kindness becomes a later explanation of an earlier action, which readers can compare with the scene.

Story against plot



A reordering is a **choice**. Ask what a reader knows at each point, and what they are therefore doing while they read the rest

4

The Function of a Sequence of Events

The Function of a Sequence of Events

- 1 **Proportion** The passage pauses over the folded letter and the disappearance of Mara's name.
- 2 **Selection** Mara's response receives no direct account; the narrator instead gives a later memory claim.
- 3 **Function** The contrast directs attention towards the narrator's choices and limits, rather than supplying a complete record of the exchange.

What plot and exposition are for

the claim

plot and the exposition that accompanies it **focus readers' attention** on the parts of the narrative that matter most

selection

what is included, and at what length, is an argument about importance

omission

what is left out is equally a choice, and often the more revealing one

order

the sequence in which information arrives shapes what the reader believes at each moment

exposition

the background supplied – and *when* it is supplied, which changes how earlier events are reread

Do not summarise the plot. Ask what the **arrangement** of it makes the reader notice – that is the analysis the rubric rewards.

5

Identifying the Narrator or Speaker

What each point of view can and cannot give you

Detail	Interpretation and limit
First person	A participant can give personal judgement, reports and inferences. Check how the narrator knows an unwitnessed event.
Third person, observational	Reports external action and speech; motives may need inference.
Third person, limited	May enter a selected consciousness without entering all others.
Third person, all-knowing	Can reveal several minds and times. Still selects what to disclose; the label alone does not settle reliability.

What each point of view can and cannot give you, in detail

Point of view - and the limit is where the analysis lives

First person	Third person, observational	Third person, all-knowing
involved in the narrative; their relationship to events shapes what they can tell	an outside observer, reporting what is visible	an outside observer with access to every mind
unwitnessed events may come from reports or inference; check the source of knowledge	cannot enter any consciousness; motive must be inferred	can reveal many minds; still chooses what to disclose and when to disclose it

PERSPECTIVE is how they see. POINT OF VIEW is where they stand. The CED separates them, and so should you.

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

Identifying the Narrator or Speaker

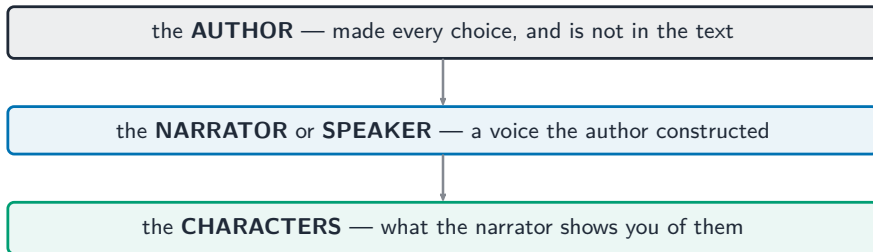
- 1 **Point of view** “I waited places the teller inside the scene: first person.
- 2 **Perspective** “I call that silence kindness gives the teller’s interpretation, not a neutral description.
- 3 **Reader relationship** The account gives access to self-justification while admitting a memory gap.
- 4 **Attribution** Write “the narrator calls it kindness. The passage does not establish the author’s personal feelings.

Narrator, not author

Your turn — return to the projected passage

Does Mara agree that the silence was kind? Identify the evidence available and what is withheld. Then explain why a claim about Mara's thoughts would need qualification.

Narrator, not author, in detail



*"The author feels..." is a claim about a person. "The narrator's account keeps returning to..." is a claim about the **text**, and only the second can be evidenced*

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

6

The Function of Point of View

The Function of Point of View

Detail	Interpretation and limit
"kindness"	The narrator's present label can be compared with the earlier refusal to speak.
Folded name	The physical action suggests avoidance; it does not independently establish a complete motive.
Missing answer	The account does not supply Mara's reaction. The narrator's memory claim limits the evidence available.

Point of view: what it cannot give you

A qualified conclusion

The narrator presents the silence as kindness, but the folded letter and missing response leave that judgement open to question. First person alone does not prove deception; these particular details create the tension.

7

Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence

Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence

- 1 **Claim** The narrator presents avoidance as kindness.
- 2 **Evidence** Connect “her name disappeared with “nothing left to say.
- 3 **Commentary** The actions suggest withdrawal, complicating the later generous description.
- 4 **Qualification** Mara’s response is unavailable; the account does not prove that she accepted the silence.

Worked example – what a narrator cannot tell you

Model paragraph on the original practice passage

The narrator's description of silence as "kindness is complicated by the scene itself. Folding the letter until Mara's name disappears suggests avoidance, while "nothing left to say closes the exchange. The later admission that Mara's answer is no longer remembered prevents the reader from treating the narrator's judgement as shared agreement. The account therefore presents self-justification whose certainty exceeds the evidence it supplies.

Exam tips

- Character is a **way of seeing**, not a list of adjectives. Analyse what they notice and misread.
- **Setting must do something**. Describing where a story happens is not yet a claim.
- Plot is the **order** of events. A late revelation of an early event is an authorial choice worth analysing.
- **Proportion is evidence**. What the text lingers over is where the meaning is.
- **The narrator is not the author**. Never write "the author feels" about a first-person narrator.
- The analytical gold in point of view is what the narrator **cannot** provide.

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Recap

Unit 1 – key takeaways

1

Character

a way of seeing, not a list of adjectives

2

Setting

must do something – location is not yet a claim

3

Plot

the *order* of events is an authorial choice

4

Narrator

is not the author – never “the author feels”

Retrieval practice

- 1 What should you analyse in a character?
- 2 When is setting not yet a claim?
- 3 What is plot, exactly?
- 4 Never write what about a first-person narrator?

Write your answers before advancing.

Check your reasoning

- 1 Character: connect the chosen details with what the character notices, values or avoids.
- 2 Setting: explain how time and place affect possibilities or create a contrast.
- 3 Plot: explain the arrangement of events and disclosures, not only what happened.
- 4 Attribution: distinguish a narrator's judgement from the author's personal beliefs.

Check yourself

- 1 In the station passage, which two details complicate the narrator's claim of kindness?
- 2 How does the later retelling change your reading of the earlier scene?
- 3 What would you need before claiming that Mara agreed?