

Short Fiction I
AP English Literature ■ Unit 1

AP English Literature

Short Fiction I
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

Short Fiction I
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.

Short Fiction I
What Textual Details Reveal About a Character

What Textual Details Reveal About a Character, continued

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.

Short Fiction I
What Textual Details Reveal About a Character

How far a detail goes

the **DETAIL** —
what is on the page

what it **SUPPORTS** —
an inference
the text will bear

what it **WILL NOT** support

quote it before
you interpret it

one gesture is not a
whole personality

Over-reading loses as many marks as under-reading. Say what the detail **establishes**, and stop where the evidence stops

2

Textual Details That Convey Setting

Short Fiction I
↳ Textual Details That Convey Setting

Textual Details That Convey Setting

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.

3

How Plot Orders Events

Short Fiction I
↳ How Plot Orders Events

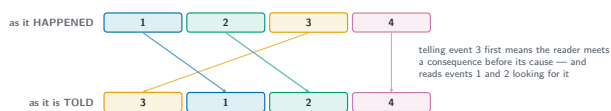
How Plot Orders Events

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.

- **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.

Short Fiction I
↳ How Plot Orders Events

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

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.

5

Identifying the Narrator or Speaker

What each point of view can and cannot give you

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
cannot report what they did not witness - or will not admit	cannot enter any consciousness; motive must be inferred	gives up the suspense of not knowing - and chooses whose thoughts to show anyway

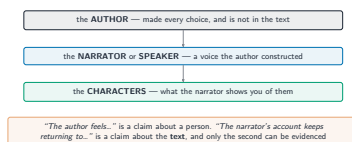
PERSPECTIVE is how they see. POINT OF VIEW is where they stand. The CED separates them, and so should you.

- **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...
- **A speaker or narrator is not necessarily the author**. Never write "the author feels" about a first-person narrator.

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- **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.
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Narrator, not author



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6

The Function of Point of View

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The analytical payoff is the *cannot*. A first-person narrator cannot report what they did not witness or will not admit, and every gap is meaningful. A limited third-person narrator confines you to one consciousness, which is a choice about whose experience counts.

- 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 are involved in the narrative**; their relationship to events and to other characters shapes what they can tell you.

Point of view: what it cannot give you

- **Third-person narrators are outside observers**, and their knowledge may range from **observational to all-knowing** 全知.
- The outside perspective of a third-person narrator **may not be affected by the events** of the narrative.

7

Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence

Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence

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

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

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.