Talking about books

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each precise term with its definition.

1 foreshadowing ____	**a** hints early in a story that suggest what will happen later
2 unreliable narrator ____	**b** a narrator whose account cannot be fully trusted
3 prose ____	**c** ordinary written language, as opposed to poetry
4 character arc ____	**d** the way a character changes over the course of a story
5 pacing ____	**e** the speed at which a story unfolds
6 exposition ____	**f** background information given to set up a story
7 denouement ____	**g** the final resolution of a story's plot
8 verisimilitude ____	**h** a believable, true-to-life quality
9 evocative ____	**i** strongly suggesting a feeling or atmosphere
10 gratuitous ____	**j** included without real purpose, purely for effect

2 Choose the word with the most suitable connotation.

1 For an early hint of what's to come: foreshadowing / spoiler.

2 For a narrator whose account can't be trusted: unreliable narrator / omniscient narrator.

3 For beautifully crafted writing: elegant prose / clumsy prose.

4 For a story that unfolds too slowly: poorly paced / well paced.

5 For background information at the start: exposition / climax.

6 For a believable, true-to-life quality: verisimilitude / artifice.

7 For writing that strongly evokes atmosphere: evocative / flat.

8 For violence included without real purpose: gratuitous / necessary.

3 Complete the literary collocations with one word.

1 subtle _____ (= early hints of what's to come)

2 an _____ narrator (= one whose account can't be trusted)

3 _____ prose (= elegant, well-crafted writing)

4 a compelling character _____ (= how a character develops)

5 brisk _____ (= a fast-moving story rhythm)

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6 a satisfying _____ (= a resolved, well-handled ending)

7 _____ imagery (= strongly suggestive of feeling)

8 _____ violence (= included without real purpose)

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4 Complete the case notes with words and phrases from the box.

character arc | denouement | evocative | exposition | foreshadowing | gratuitous | pacing | prose | unreliable narrator | verisimilitude

Case A: Critics praised the novel's 1 _____, noting subtle 2 _____ in the opening chapters that only made sense by the final 3 _____.
Case B: Some reviewers found the 4 _____ too dense, slowing the overall 5 _____ considerably.
Case C: The narrator's shifting account gradually revealed her as an 6 _____, complicating the reader's trust in the story.
Case D: The protagonist's 7 _____ over three volumes was widely praised as genuinely convincing, lending the series real 8 _____.
Case E: A few critics objected to scenes they considered 9 _____, arguing they added little beyond shock value, despite otherwise 10 _____ writing.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

The craft behind a satisfying ending

Readers often judge a novel most harshly by its ending, yet crafting a satisfying denouement is notoriously difficult. A resolution that ties up every loose thread can feel mechanical, while one that leaves too much unresolved risks frustrating readers who have invested significant time in the story. Skilled authors often rely on foreshadowing planted many chapters earlier, so that the ending feels inevitable in retrospect rather than arbitrary. Pacing matters considerably here too: rushing the final chapters can undercut emotional payoff, while lingering too long risks losing narrative momentum. Ultimately, critics suggest, a satisfying ending depends less on giving readers exactly what they expected than on honouring the internal logic the story has already established.

1 How do readers often judge a novel most harshly? _____
2 What can a resolution that ties up every loose thread feel like? _____
3 What do skilled authors often rely on? _____
4 Why does pacing matter considerably near the end? _____
5 What can rushing the final chapters undercut? _____
6 What does a satisfying ending depend on most, according to critics? _____

6 Rewrite each sentence using the word in capitals. Do not change the meaning.

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1 Early hints suggested what would happen later. FORESHADOWING _____

2 The narrator could not be fully trusted. UNRELIABLE _____

3 The ending felt believable and well earned. VERISIMILITUDE _____

4 The violent scene served no real purpose. GRATUITOUS _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 120-150 word critique of a novel's ending (real or imaginary), distinguishing what worked technically from your personal response.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Control connotation carefully. [ ] Avoid unsupported assumptions.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Precise terms

1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d 5 e 6 f 7 g 8 h 9 i 10 j

2 Connotation

1 foreshadowing 2 unreliable narrator 3 elegant prose 4 poorly paced 5 exposition 6 verisimilitude 7 evocative 8 gratuitous

3 Collocations

1 foreshadowing 2 unreliable 3 elegant 4 arc 5 pacing 6 denouement 7 evocative 8 gratuitous

4 Case notes

1 foreshadowing 2 foreshadowing 3 denouement 4 exposition 5 pacing 6 unreliable narrator
7 character arc 8 verisimilitude 9 gratuitous 10 evocative

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 By its ending.
2 Mechanical.
3 Foreshadowing planted many chapters earlier.
4 Rushing the final chapters can undercut emotional payoff, while lingering too long risks losing narrative momentum.
5 Emotional payoff.
6 Honouring the internal logic the story has already established.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 There was foreshadowing of what would happen later. 2 The narrator was unreliable.
3 The ending had real verisimilitude. 4 The violent scene was gratuitous.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check lexical precision, appropriate connotation and separation of fact from inference.