The ending of a novel

Narrative - Montgomery et al. *Ways of Reading*

The narrative arc: from lack to resolution

1. Typically, what are narratives about? (p.49)

2. What often brings about change? (p.49)

3. Study the explanation on p.49 of ‘lack’ leading to ‘restoration’. Then analyse the lacks and restorations (narrative arc) in *Pride and Prejudice*. Make a note of your thoughts.

4. Linked to the idea of restoration is closure. What is closure? (p.49)

5. What does the existence or non-existence of closure reveal? (p.51)

How narratives begin and end

1. What are exit strategies (also known as ‘coda’)? (p.52)

2. Find four examples of coda below (p.52)

3. Answer question 4 on p.53.

Ending - David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction*

1. According to George Eliot, why are endings of novels troublesome to writers? (p.18)

2. What does the traditional ending of a novel consist of, according to Henry James? (p.18)

3. How does the reader know that a novel is about to end? (p.18)

4. How did John Fowles try to trick the reader about the ending of his novel? (p.18)

5. How did Golding change his readers’ thoughts with the final chapter of *Pincher Martin*? (p.18)

6. Why was the last word in *The Paper Men* so important? (p.19)

7. What is the difference between the ending of a short story and the ending of a novel? (p.19)

8. In what way did Golding use irony to end *Lord of the Flies*? (p.20)

9. Why did David Lodge decide to end *Changing Places* in the form of a film script (two reasons)? (pp.21-22)

10. Now analyse the ending of *Pride and Prejudice*. Which of the above endings is employed?
Closure

1. What does Eaglestone claim is ‘absolutely vital to all stories’? (pp.156-7)

2. What question does he ask us to prove how important the ending is? (p.157)

3. ‘Stories are teleological’. What does this mean?

4. Name some examples from everyday life where we have closure. (p.157)

5. However, life goes on, with continuous events and stories. According to Henry James, what is the artist’s choice? (p.158)
The ending of a novel

Teacher’s copy: Answers

Narrative - Montgomery et al. *Ways of Reading*

The narrative arc: from lack to resolution
1. Typically, narratives are about change. (p.49)
2. Change is often brought about by human actions. (p.49)
3. Any selection of ‘lack’ leading to ‘restoration’ is suitable.
4. Closure is the ‘tying up of the narrative’, whereby loose ends are dealt with, problems solved and questions answered. (p.49)
5. The existence or non-existence of a closure can reveal a moral or ideological position e.g. if the major characters get married, we might have a message about the virtues of marriage. (p.51)

How narratives begin and end
1. Exit strategies, also known as ‘coda’, are ways of ending the text once the ‘lack’ has been resolved. (p.52)
2. Four examples of coda are (p.52):
   1. ‘abstract’ (final summary)
   2. ‘orientation’ (describing some kind of departure from the scene)
   3. Stereotyped ending e.g. ‘And they all lived happily ever after’
   4. Filling the gap between the end of the text and now.

Ending - David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction*
1. According to George Eliot, the endings of novels were troublesome to writers due to pressure from readers and publishers to provide a happy ending. (p.18)
2. The traditional ending of a novel consists of the ‘wind-up’: ‘a distribution at the last of prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs and cheerful remarks’, according to Henry James? (p.18)
3. The reader knows that a novel is about to end because there are fewer pages left to read (‘the telltale compression of pages’). (p.18)
4. John Fowles tried to trick the reader about the ending of his novel by finishing the story three quarters of the way through the novel and then presented the reader with two possible endings, inviting the reader to choose between them. (p.18)
5. We realise that because Golding’s narrator in *Pincher Martin* dies with his boots on, he is dead. Therefore, his story has to be reinterpreted ‘as some kind of drowning vision or purgatorial experience after death’. (p.18)
6. The last word in *The Paper Men* is so important because it is unfinished as it is interrupted by a bullet. (p.19)
7. Short stories are more likely to have a last-minute twist. Because we tend to read short stories in one sitting, they are more ‘end-orientated’ and we expect to reach the conclusion soon. With novels, we are usually sorry to come to the end of the story. (p.19)
8. Golding uses irony to end *Lord of the Flies* as the adult’s gaze at the ‘cruiser’ shows complicity in institutionalized violence (warfare). This links to the boys’ primitive violence. (p.20)
9. David Lodge chose to end *Changing Places* in the form of a film script as he wanted ‘to provide variety and surprise for the reader’ (p.21) so each chapter was written in a different style or format. The film script format ‘satisfied the need for a climactic deviation from ‘normal’ fictional discourse’ (p. 22). It also freed him from the obligation to pass judgement on the four main characters.
10. Class discussion

Narrative and Closure - Eaglestone, *Doing English*

Closure
1. Eaglestone claims ‘wanting to know how things end’, in other words, ‘closure’, is ‘absolutely vital to all stories? (pp.156-7)
2. To prove how important the ending is, Eaglestone asks, ‘Would you read a book or see a film if you knew the ending was missing?’(p.157)
3. ‘Stories are teleological’. This means they begin with an end in mind.
4. Relationships, graduation day, funerals are some examples from everyday life where we have closure (p.157)
5. According to Henry James, the artist’s choice is ‘where and how to end, how to construct a sense of closure.’ (p.158)