Preparing for the

AP English Literature & Composition Exam

Wednesday, May 6, 2020 @ 8:00am

**Section I - Multiple Choice**

Section Overview:

* 4-5 passages – works of poetry, prose, and/or drama
* 55 questions
* 1 hour - allocate about 12 minutes to each passage
* 45% of exam score

*Scoring:*

* The MC section tests your reading comprehension abilities; the format is similar to SAT/ACT.
* You receive credit for every correct answer; there is NO PENALTY for incorrect answers or unanswered questions.

*Types of passages and specific strategies for each:*

* POETRY - *Consider each poem’s speaker, audience, purpose, and ultimate argument (theme); consider the literary devices and techniques each author uses in shaping the poem’s meaning.*
* PROSE - *Annotate carefully to identify literary devices and to consider the structural development of the passage. Consider each passage’s speaker, audience, purpose, and ultimate argument (theme). Also consider the literary devices and techniques each author uses in shaping the passage’s meaning and developing tension within the passage. Finally, pay close attention to how things such as the narrator’s attitude, the descriptions, the argument, and characterization are developed from one paragraph to the next.*
* DRAMA – *For* ***dialogue****, pay close attention to the way the characters are presented and developed in the passage. Look for tension between them and identify those lines that best highlight the tension. Consider the causes and the ramiﬁcations of the tension. If the passage is a* ***monologue****, most likely a soliloquy, consider the same strategies used when approaching a poetry prompt. What do you know about the speaker? What is the speaker’s purpose? What key details about the play or its theme are divulged in the passage?*

*General Strategies for the Multiple-Choice Section:*

* DETERMINE YOUR TEST-TAKING APPROACH AHEAD OF TIME. Closely read the passage first, then tackle the questions OR skim the questions first, then closely read the passage. Answer questions in order OR answer easier questions first. Do what works best for you, but have a plan in place *before* test day.
* ANNOTATE THE PASSAGES – Make note of time period of the passage (or infer the time period based on diction). Paraphrase in the margins. Identify **tone, literary terms, literary devices, figurative language, themes, author’s strategies, and structure/organization** (i.e., stanzas in a poem, paragraph arrangement in prose).
* ACCEPT THE BEST POSSIBLE ANSWER – There are five (5) answer choices for each question. More than one answer may seem correct; choose the answer that is best supported by the passage. Remember, incorrect answers do not count against you; make a reasoned decision and move on. ***Don’t over think – FIND the best answer****!*

**Section I – Multiple Choice (cont.)**

* WATCH OUT FOR DISTRACTORS! The College Board will try to trick you with some questions. Pay attention to capitalized words such as “ALL” or “EXCEPT”; read the questions carefully.
* GUESS IF YOU MUST – Again, incorrect answers don’t count against you. Use the process of elimination to narrow down answer options and increase your odds of guessing correctly.
* REMEMBER, YOU ARE WORKING AGAINST TIME! You have only 1 hour. Read the passages closely, identify and annotate what you can, and move on to the questions. Manage your time.

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**Section II – Free Response**

Section Overview:

* 3 free-response essay prompts
* 2 hours - allocate about 40 minutes to each essay
* 55% of exam score

*Scoring:*

* Each essay is graded on 0-9 scale; each essay has its own grading rubric
* Graders reward you for what you do well. Grading is forgiving for grammatical and mechanical errors – graders know you have a limited amount of time to write your responses
* When responding, DO MORE WITH LESS! Write well in 2 paragraphs instead of getting trapped in a 5-paragraph structure. Focus on working several elements into one paragraph instead of dedicating 1 paragraph to each element.
* There is no one RIGHT answer, but there ARE wrong answers! Support your responses with textual evidence, literary devices, etc.
* You won’t necessarily receive a higher score with a longer essay, but the highest-scoring essays are typically well-developed, well-organized, and thorough.

*Types of Essays:*

* A literary analysis of a given poem/paired poems –*See step-by-step guidelines for this section.*
* A literary analysis of a given passage of prose fiction (this may include drama) - *See step-by-step guidelines for this section.*
* An analysis that examines a specific concept, issue, or element in a work of literary merit that you select*. See step-by-step guidelines for this section.*

*Strategies:*

FOLLOW A THREE-STEP APPROACH:

1. Carefully read and annotate the prompt AND the passage.
2. Organize your thoughts before you begin writing; outline your essay – THIS IS VITAL!
3. Write/edit your essay. Respond to all parts of the prompt in a thorough manner with strong support from the passage.
* CONSIDER THE ESSAY YOUR “FIRST DRAFT” - Essay graders do not expect perfection in your writing; you are writing under time constraints and they know it. Your success is based in part on

**Section II - Free Response (cont.)**

your recognition of a work’s primary argument and purpose, as well as your understanding of at least a few of the literary devices used to develop that argument and purpose.

* ***ANALYZE***, DON’T SUMMARIZE or PARAPHRASE! In the rush to complete an essay in a timed setting, students often paraphrase the work in question. Make sure you focus on analyzing the

work’s central argument and the literary devices used to accentuate it. Do not use broad or general statements; be specific and thorough in your response.

* KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE – Assume essay scorers will have a preexisting knowledge of the work(s) of literature to which you respond. Do not spend time writing about information or definitions the reader will already know; focus your energies on responding to the prompt.
* GIVE BACK THE PROMPT in the opening sentences of your essay. It’s OK to reuse elements from the prompt to focus your writing.
* FOCUS ON TONE – In addition to identifying an author’s use of literary devices, focusing on the author’s tone and how it is advance in the work is a solid way to demonstrate your understanding of a text.

* STRETCH YOUR USE OF TRANSITION WORDS. Go beyond those typically used: **and**, **but**, **also**, **in addition**, and **however**. (See handout of *Transition Words and Phrases*.)
* STAY FOCUSED – don’t try to impress your readers with your vocabulary, humor, or personal feelings/opinions. Respond clearly to the prompt, and cite/explain textual evidence to support your response.
* WRITE CLEARLY AND NEATLY – make sure your writing is legible, your paragraph breaks are clear, and your references to titles are correct (enclose titles of poems and short stories in “quotation marks”; *italicize* or underline the titles of major works such as novels or plays).
* MANAGE YOUR TIME! You have 2 hours to write 3 essays. Spend no more than 10 minutes reading/annotating the passage, annotating the prompt, and planning your essay. That will allow you about 30 minutes to write and edit each essay.

*Citations:*

Joliffe, Steven F. and Richard McCarthy. *Pearson Education AP\* Test Prep Series AP Literature and Composition.* Pearson Education, Inc., 2012. [AP%20English%20Lit/AP%20English% 20Lit%20Exam/ pearson\_ap\_literature\_test\_prep\_workbook.pdf](file:///C%3A/Users/Andrea/Documents/WCHS/AP%20English%20Lit/AP%20English%20Lit%20Exam/%20pearson_ap_literature_test_prep_workbook.pdf).

“AP English Literature and Composition Exam Day 2017.” *Exam Dates and Information – AP Students – The College Board*, The College Board, 2016, apstudent.collegeboard.org/apcourse/ap-english-literature-and-composition/about-the-exam.

*The Ultimate Student’s Starter Kit to AP English Literature and Composition.* Albert.io, 2016. AP%20 English%20Lit/AP%20English%20Lit%20Exam/The-Ultimate-Student’s-Starter-Kit-to-AP-English-Literature-and-Composition.pdf

*Additional Resources:*

* <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/exam/exam_information/2002.html> - Exam information and practice tests
* <http://appass.com/calculators/englishliterature> - calculate your projected score on the AP Lit Exam
* Multiple practice exams can be found online.

**AP English Literature and Composition**

**Free-Response: Poetry Analysis Essay**

*You may be given a prompt that asks you to carefully analyze a single poem. You may, on the other hand, be confronted with a prompt that asks you to compare and contrast two poems. If the latter situation arises, the paired poems will likely share a similar subject matter (love, death, etc.), but each may have a unique perspective. With either format, you need to be able to articulate the way in which an author uses literary devices to help shape an argument.*

The **TP-CASTT** method we have used in class is an effective way to analyze poetry:

TITLE: what might the poem be about? What does the title literally mean?

PARAPHRASE: tell the story of the poem in your own words.

CONNOTATION: what words have multiple meanings? Is there a deeper meaning (beyond the literal)?

ATTITUDE (Tone): what attitude does the speaker take toward the subject?

SHIFTS: are there shifts/changes in tone? Where do shifts occur? How is the meaning of poem changed?

TITLE (revisited): are there any new insights into the title after reading?

THEME: what greater message did the poet hope to convey? What is poet’s purpose in writing?

 *Suggested Approach:*

1. Read the prompt carefully and underline the essential task. Put boxes around key words such as *speaker’s view, diction, ﬁgurative language,* and the like. Additionally, you should underline key words or phrases that reveal pertinent thematic information about the passage. These key words will help you to focus your analysis and annotations when reading the passage, and should also shape the formation of your thesis.

2. Read and annotate the passage.

3. Consider the **MIST** acronym; as you read, highlight suitable points of evidence that respond to the acronym.

 MOOD: What is the mood of the poem?

 IMAGERY: What types of imagery are being used (this includes ﬁgurative language) and how do they impact the mood?

 SHIFTS: Look for shifts in tone, point of view, and tense.

 TENSION: What conﬂict creates tension in the passage? How is it developed?

4. Consider the form of the poem. Is the poem formal or informal? Does it have a set rhyme pattern and metrical form or is it written in free verse? How are the stanzas organized? Is it a sonnet or another common verse form (i.e., terza rima, Spenserian stanzas, villanelle)?

5. What is the title? How does the title elucidate the meaning of the poem?

6. Consider the punctuation used in the poem. Does the poem make frequent use of questions, dashes, or capitalization? For what effect?

7. Consider the diction of the poem. Does the poem use formal or informal language?

8. After you have ﬁnished the passage, make a list of things that you really want to touch on in terms of ideas and evidence in the essay. This list should include any key words that you boxed in the prompt.

9. Create a brief outline with thesis and key supporting points.

10. Write; proofread if you have time, but resist the temptation to scribble out or make margin notes with lots of lines and arrows.

**AP English Literature and Composition**

**Free-Response: Prose Analysis Essay**

*The selection for the prose essay prompt will come from either a short story or a novel or, on occasion, from a drama selection. The passage will most likely emphasize one of the following: character development, the creation of tension or suspense, the mood or tone, and the narrator’s point of view. You may also be asked to consider how the author addresses a thematic issue within the passage.*

*Suggested Approach:*

1. Read the prompt carefully and underline the essential task. Put boxes around key words such as mood, character development, tone, and the like. Additionally, you should underline key words or phrases that reveal pertinent thematic information about the passage. These key words will help you to focus your analysis and annotations when reading the passage, and should also shape the formation of your thesis.

2. Read and annotate the passage.

3. Consider the **MIST** acronym; as you read, highlight suitable points of evidence that respond to the acronym.

 MOOD: What is the mood of the passage?

 IMAGERY: What types of imagery are being used (this includes figurative language), and how do they impact the mood?

 SHIFTS: Look for shifts in tone, point of view, and tense.

 TENSION: What conflict creates tension in the passage? How is it developed?

4. After you have finished the passage, make a list of things that you really want to touch on in terms of ideas and evidence in the essay. This list should include any key words that you boxed in the prompt.

5. Create a brief outline with thesis and key supporting points.

6. Write; proofread if you have time, but resist the temptation to scribble out or make margin notes with lots of lines and arrows.

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**AP English Literature and Composition**

**Free-Response: Open Essay Prompt**

*You must demonstrate a nuanced understanding of and appreciation for at least one work that meets the prompt’s criteria. It is important that your knowledge of the book encompasses the key characters, themes, plot points, setting, conflicts, and narrative style. Refer to your collection of Major Works Data Sheets. You should be able to articulate both the meaning of the work as a whole and analyze the work’s central theme.*

*Suggested Approach:*

1. Show up having a firm grasp of **four different novels**, representing a wide range of books and writing styles. Refer to your collection of MWDSs; select novels you feel confident in discussing.

2. Read the prompt carefully and underline the essential task. Put boxes around key words such as *mood, character development, tone*, and the like. These key words should shape the formation of your thesis.

**Free-Response: Open Essay Prompt (cont.)**

3. Make of list of things that you really want to touch on in terms of ideas and evidence in the essay. This includes characters, pertinent evidence, key words, and anything else that you need to use in the discussion to illustrate expertise with the novel.

4. Compose a brief outline.

5. Write; proofread if you have time, but resist the temptation to scribble out or make margin notes with lots of lines and arrows.

Free-Response Essay suggestions adapted from:

Joliffe, Steven F. and Richard McCarthy. *Pearson Education AP\* Test Prep Series AP Literature and Composition.* II: A REVIEW OF TOPICS WITH SAMPLE QUESTIONS*.* Pearson Education, Inc., 2012. [AP%20English%20Lit/ AP%20 English% 20Lit%20Exam/ pearson\_ap\_literature\_test\_prep\_workbook.pdf](file:///C%3A/Users/Andrea/Documents/WCHS/AP%20English%20Lit/AP%20English%20Lit%20Exam/%20pearson_ap_literature_test_prep_workbook.pdf).