

# \* AP Literature Exam

Tips for Success

- \* Length: 3 hours
- \* Structure: Two Sections
  - \* Section I: Multiple Choice (55 questions), 1 hour
  - \* Generally alternating prose and poetry passages, 10-13 questions each
- \* Section II: Three Essays, 2 hours
  - \* One question on fiction passage and literary techniques
  - \* One question on a poem and poetic techniques
  - \* One question (free response) where students use a novel or drama to respond
- \* Percentage: Multiple Choice, 45%; Essays, 55%

\* What manner of  
Beast?

- \* The multiple choice questions are designed to assess your understanding of
  - \* The meaning of the selection
  - \* Your ability to draw inferences
  - \* Your ability to see implications
  - \* How a writer develops ideas
- \* Therefore, the questions will be **factual, technical, analytical, and inferential.**

## \* Section : Multiple Choice

- \* Pace yourself—work at the pace of one question per minute.
- \* **Reading the text carefully is a must:**
  - \* Skim the passage to get a “feel” for the passage (30 seconds).
  - \* Read slowly for comprehension
    - \* Underline, circle, highlight the text
    - \* Pay attention to details, including punctuation
    - \* Note additional information provided, including title, author, date of publication, and footnotes
    - \* Be aware of literary devices and techniques, especially with poetry
    - \* Ask yourself, “What is this about?”
    - \* If it’s a poem, write a brief paraphrase.

## \* Multiple Choice General Guidelines—p. 1

- \* If you have the general idea, answer the questions in order (if not, answer line-reference questions first—you will get a better idea of the passage).
- \* Write on the booklet—interact with the test.
- \* **Do not spend too much time on any one question.**
- \* Consider all the choices.
- \* Questions do not become more difficult as it progresses.
- \* If you spend any time on a question, guess.

## \* Multiple Choice General Guidelines—p. 2

- \* Read the five choices.
  - \* Eliminate those that are obviously wrong.
  - \* Eliminate those that are too broad or too narrow.
  - \* Eliminate illogical choices.
  - \* Eliminate answers that are synonymous.

## \* Multiple Choice Specific Techniques—p. 1

- \* If answers are close, do one OR the other of the following:
  - \* Find the one general enough to cover all aspects of the question.
  - \* Find one specific enough to be the detail the question is looking for.
  - \* If time is running out, and you haven't finished the last passage, scan the remaining questions and:
    - \* Answer grammar/literary terms questions first
    - \* Answer single word or phrase questions (line-reference)
    - \* Answer questions on tone or attitude
- \* Remember; You must answer 38 questions correctly if you want a high score.

## \* Multiple Choice Specific Techniques—p. 2

- \* Usually from a novel or short story, but can include a scene from a drama (play)
- \* Some typical prose passage essays ask students to:
  - \* Analyze narrative and literary techniques which reveal character (diction, syntax, point of view, imagery)
  - \* Explain the effect of the passage on the reader
  - \* Compare/contrast two passages for diction and details and their effect on the reader
  - \* Analyze the attitude of the speaker
  - \* Analyze the attitudes of the author, using tone and style

## \* Section II: Essays—Prose Passage



## \* Tips for Responding to the Prose Passage:

- \* Become familiar with the types of questions you might be asked.
- \* Analyze the prompt and understand the tasks.
- \* Time your essay carefully. Each essay is timed at basically 40 minutes each.
- \* Annotate the passage before writing.
- \* Write a strong but specific opening paragraph.
- \* Refer often to the passage.
- \* Use details and quotations from passage to support your ideas.
- \* Avoid summary and paraphrase.
- \* Include smooth transitions.

# \* Section II: Essay- Prose Passage

## \* Structuring the Response:

### \* Strategy:

- \* 1-3 minutes analyzing the prompt (practice makes perfect)
- \* 5 minutes reading and annotating the passage
- \* 5 minutes preparing to write
- \* 25 minutes to write your essay
- \* 3 minutes to proofread

# \* Section II: Essays—Prose Passage

## \* Opening:

- \* Let the nature of the prompt determine the structure, but a lengthy opening is unnecessary. Since readers look for an over-all impression of your essay, it is important to convey a positive impression from the beginning by having a clearly focused opening. You should include:
  - \* Author and title
  - \* The task(s) to addressed
  - \* Specific techniques you will refer to

## \* Body:

- \* Have paragraphs with topic sentences
- \* Develop points stated in the opening
- \* Use smooth transitions
- \* Use specific references and details from the passage

## \* Closing:

- \* Like the opening, the closing need not be long or even a separate paragraph, but your paper should have a sense of finality. You can end by:
  - \* Re-stating the meaning/emotional effect/or techniques
  - \* A final effective sentence

# \* Section II: Essay—Prose Passage

- \* Some typical poetry essays ask students to:
  - \* Analyze how the language of the poem reflects the speaker's perceptions, and how, in turn that language determines the reader's perceptions.
  - \* Analyze how the poet reveals character (diction, sound devices, imagery, allusion)
  - \* Discussion similarities and differences between two poems, considering style and theme
  - \* Contrast the speaker's views toward a subject in two poems, referring to tone, form, and imagery.
  - \* Discuss how poetic elements, such as language, structure, imagery, and point of view convey meaning
  - \* Relate imagery, form, or theme of a particular section of a poem to another part of the same poem
  - \* Analyze extended metaphor and how it reveals the poet's or speaker's attitude
  - \* Discuss how form affects meaning

## \* Section II: Essays-- Poetry

- \* Tips for responding to poetry essay:
  - \* Become familiar with the type of questions
  - \* Review poetic terms and techniques
  - \* Analyze prompt and understand tasks
  - \* Time your essay carefully (40 minutes)
  - \* Read the poem several times
  - \* Annotate the poem before writing
  - \* Write a strong opening paragraph
  - \* Refer often to the poem with details and quotations to support your ideas
  - \* Stay on topic
  - \* Avoid summary and paraphrase

## \* Section II: Essay-- Poetry

- \* Strategies and Structure are the same for responding to poetry as it is for prose. Please refer to that power point slide for those tips.

## \* Section II: Essay-- Poetry

- \* In this type of essay, you are free to choose the literary work you will use to respond to the prompt.
- \* This is not the time to promote a work that you believe is of literary merit.
- \* Your task is to convince the readers that you know how to read closely and critically, a work of literary merit. Stick with the classics or the canon or those works that you have been exposed to in your high school career.

## \* Section II: Essay—Free Response



- \* Some typical free response essays will ask students to:
  - \* Respond to a provocative question based on specific insights
  - \* Demonstrate your insights, critical thinking, and writing ability
  - \* Show awareness of character and comprehension of theme
  - \* Transfer specific ideas and details to a universal concept
  - \* Reveal the relationships among form, content, style, structure, and their effects on the meaning of the work
  - \* Reflect the writer's ability to choose appropriate illustrations and connect them in a thoughtful way
  - \* Compose a well-organized essay written in a mature voice and sophisticated style

## \* Section II: Essay—Free Response



## \*Some Free Response Topics:

- \* How an opening scene or chapter establishes the character, conflict, or theme
- \* How minor characters are used to develop a major character
- \* How violence relates to character or theme
- \* How time is a major factor
- \* The use of contrasting settings
- \* Parent/child or sibling relationships and their significance
- \* The analysis of a villain w/regard to meaning of work
- \* The use of an unrealistic character or element and its effect on work
- \* The conflict between passion and responsibility
- \* The conflict between character and society

## \*Section II: Essay—Free Response

- \* Tips for responding to free response essay:
  - \* Review thoroughly 3-5 full-length literary works from different genres, eras, and literary movements (Shakespeare is a must)
  - \* Isolate several pivotal scenes, moments, or episodes and examine them
  - \* Isolate quotations and details from the scenes
  - \* Analyze the prompt and understand the task
  - \* Choose a work that fits the prompt
  - \* Do NOT waste time looking at the suggested list of works: choose works from your own memory bank that you recall thoroughly and understand
  - \* Plan the essay thoroughly before responding (This task is more important than the other two essays)
  - \* AVOID PLOT SUMMARY
  - \* Use concrete details and quotations, if possible
  - \* Include smooth transitions
  - \* NEVER EVER WRITE ABOUT A FILM

## \* Section II: Essay—Free Response

\*Strategy for free response:

- \* 1-3 minutes analyzing the prompt
- \* 3-5 minutes choosing your work—a crucial step for a successful essay
- \* 5-7 minutes to brainstorm the specifics you plan to use in your essay
- \* 23-25 minutes to write your essay
- \* 3 minutes to proofread

## \*Section II: Essay—Free Response

## \*Structure of Essay:

- \*Opening: Your opening paragraph is the one that raises the expectations of the reader and sets the tone of your essay. Spend a little time on the opening to make it specific because it tells the reader you understand the task at hand, and it gives your paper purpose and direction.
- \*Use sophisticated syntax and a high level of diction to create distinct voice. **Be grammatically correct.** Make sure you include:
  - \*The author and title of work selected
  - \*The tasks to be addressed

## \*Section II: Essay—Free Response

## \* Body:

- \* Have paragraphs with topic sentences
- \* Use specific references and details from chosen work (Use a combination of direct quotations and indirect references)
- \* Use smooth transitions in and between paragraphs, including repetition of words and ideas

## \* Closing:

- \* Don't worry about formal closing (spend time with body paragraphs)
- \* You can:
  - \* Link your ideas to an especially effective line, image, or emotional effect
  - \* A formal remark or observation stated in a sentence or two

# \* Section II: Essay—Free Response