

## **Manta AP Resource Packet**

Adapted and compiled from V. Stevenson of Patrick Henry High School, Dr. Abrams' *Glossary of Literary Terms*, Dr. Pell from the 2008 AP Institute, *and* Dr. Wheeler's amazing handbook at [http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit\\_terms.html](http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms.html). Other sources have been noted after their contributions.

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## Literary and Rhetorical Terms

**These terms should be of use to you in answering the multiple-choice questions, analyzing passages and poetry, and composing your essays.**

**allegory** – The device of using character and/or story elements symbolically to represent an abstraction in addition to the literal meaning. In some allegories, for example, an author may intend the characters to personify an abstraction like hope or freedom. The allegorical meaning usually deals with moral truth or a generalization about human existence.

**alliteration** – The repetition of sounds, especially initial consonant sounds in two or more neighboring words (as in “she sells sea shells”). Although the term is not frequently in the multiple choice section, you can look for alliteration in any essay passage. The repetition can reinforce meaning, unify ideas, supply a musical sound, and/or echo the sense of the passage.

**allusion** – A direct or indirect reference to something which is presumably commonly known, such as an event, book, myth, place, or work of art. Allusions can be historical, literary, religious, topical, or mythical. There are many more possibilities, and a work may simultaneously use multiple layers of allusion.

**ambiguity** – The multiple meanings, either intentional or unintentional, of a word, phrase, sentence, or passage.

**analogy** – A similarity or comparison between two different things or the relationship between them. An analogy can explain something unfamiliar by associating it with or pointing out its similarity to something more familiar. Analogies can also make writing more vivid, imaginative, or intellectually engaging.

**anaphora**- The intentional repetition of beginning words, phrases/clauses in order to create an artistic effect. For instance, Churchill declared, "We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France. We shall fight on the seas and oceans. We shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air. We shall defend our island, whatever the cost shall be." The repetition of "We shall. . ." creates a rhetorical effect of solidarity and determination.

**antecedent** – The word, phrase, or clause referred to by a pronoun. The AP exams occasionally ask for the antecedent of a given pronoun in a long, complex sentence or in a group of sentences. A question from the 2001 AP test as an example follows:

*“But it is the grandeur of all truth which can occupy a very high place in human interests that it is never absolutely novel to the meanest of minds; **it** exists eternally, by way of germ of latent principle, in the lowest as in the highest, needing to be developed but never to be planted.”*

The antecedent of “it” (bolded) is...? [answer: “all truth”]

**antithesis** – the opposition or contrast of ideas; the direct opposite. Using opposite phrases in close conjunction. Examples might be, "I burn and I freeze," or "Her character is white as sunlight, black as midnight." The best antitheses express their contrary ideas in a balanced sentence.

**aphorism** – A terse statement of known authorship which expresses a general truth or a moral principle. (If the authorship is unknown, the statement is generally considered to be a folk proverb.) An aphorism can be a memorable summation of the author's point.

**apostrophe** – A figure of speech that directly addresses an absent or imaginary person or a personified abstraction, such as liberty or love. It is an address to someone or something that cannot answer. The effect may add familiarity or emotional intensity. William Wordsworth addresses John Milton as he writes, "*Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour: / England hath need of thee.*"

Another example is Keats' "Ode to a Grecian Urn," in which Keats addresses the urn itself: "*Thou still unravished bride of quietness.*" Many apostrophes imply a personification of the object addressed.

**asyndeton**: The artistic elimination of conjunctions in a sentence to create a particular effect.

**atmosphere** – The emotional nod created by the entirety of a literary work, established partly by the setting and partly by the author's choice of objects that are described. Even such elements as a description of the weather can contribute to the atmosphere. Frequently atmosphere foreshadows events. Perhaps it can create a mood.

**bildungsroman**- (Germ. "formation novel"): The German term for a coming-of-age story. A novel in which an adolescent protagonist comes to adulthood by a process of experience and disillusionment. This character loses his or her innocence, discovers that previous preconceptions are false, or has the security of childhood torn away, but usually matures and strengthens by this process.

**caricature** – a verbal description, the purpose of which is to exaggerate or distort, for comic effect, a person's distinctive physical features or other characteristics.

**chiasmus**- a rhetorical technique in which the author introduces words or concepts in a particular order, then later repeats those terms or similar ones in reversed or backwards order. It involves taking parallelism and deliberately turning it inside out, creating a "crisscross" pattern. For example, consider the chiasmus that follows: "By day the frolic, and the dance by night."

**clause** – A grammatical unit that contains both a subject and a verb. An *independent*, or *main*, *clause* expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence. A *dependent*, or *subordinate clause*, cannot stand alone as a sentence and must be accompanied by an independent clause. The point that you want to consider is the question of what or why the author subordinates one element should also become aware of making effective use of subordination in your own writing.

**colloquial/colloquialism** – The use of slang or informalities in speech or writing. Not generally acceptable for formal writing, colloquialisms give a work a conversational, familiar tone. Colloquial expressions in writing include local or regional dialects.

**conceit** – A fanciful expression, usually in the form of an extended metaphor or surprising analogy between seemingly dissimilar objects. A conceit displays intellectual cleverness as a result of the unusual comparison being made.

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**connotation** – The non-literal, associative meaning of a word; the implied, suggested meaning. Connotations may involve ideas, emotions, or attitudes.

**denotation** – The strict, literal, dictionary definition of a word, devoid of any emotion, attitude, or color. (Example: the *denotation* of a knife would be a utensil used to cut; the *connotation* of a knife might be fear, violence, anger, foreboding, etc.)

**deus ex machina**- an event usually at the end of a work that serves as a divine and often unlikely intervention- the naval officer shows up to rescue the boys in *Lord of the Flies*

**diction** – Related to style, diction refers to the writer's word choices, especially with regard to their correctness, clearness, or effectiveness. For the AP exam, you should be able to describe an author's diction (for example, formal or informal, ornate or plain) and understand the ways in which diction can complement the author's purpose. Diction, combined with syntax, figurative language, literary devices, etc., creates an author's style.

**didactic** – From the Greek, *didactic* literally means "teaching." Didactic words have the primary aim of teaching or instructing, especially the teaching of moral or ethical principles.

**doppelganger**- is quite simply a double. It can be a ghost or physical apparition, but it is usually a source of psychological anxiety for the person who sees it. Many different types of doppelganger have arisen in cultures around the world. A doppelganger may be an "evil twin," unknown to the original person, who causes mischief by confusing friends and relatives. In other cases, the double may be the result of a person being in two places at once, or even an individual's past or future self. Other times, the double is merely a look-alike, a second individual who shares a strong visual resemblance.

**ellipsis**- *ellipsis* refers to the artful omission of a word implied by a previous clause. For instance, an author might write, "The American soldiers killed eight civilians, and the French eight."

**enjambment**- A line having no pause or end punctuation but having uninterrupted grammatical meaning continuing into the next line.

**epistrophe**- The poet or rhetorician repeats the concluding phrase over and over for effects. This example combine anaphora and epistrophe. For instance, Saint Paul writes to the church at Corinth, "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I."

**euphemism** – From the Greek for "good speech," euphemisms are a more agreeable or less offensive substitute for a generally unpleasant word or concept. The euphemism may be used to adhere to standards of social or political correctness or to add humor or ironic understatement. Saying "earthly remains" rather than "corpse" is an example of euphemism.

**extended metaphor** – A metaphor developed at great length, occurring frequently in or throughout a work.

**feminine rhyme**- rhyme emphasis on the last two syllable- Ex. "fellow" and "mellow"

**figurative language** – Writing or speech that is not intended to carry literal meaning and is usually meant to be imaginative and vivid.

**figure of speech** – A device used to produce figurative language. Many compare dissimilar things. Figures of speech include apostrophe, hyperbole, irony, metaphor, oxymoron, paradox, personification, simile, synecdoche, and understatement.

**genre** – The major category into which a literary work fits. The basic divisions of literature are prose, poetry, and drama. However, genre is a flexible term; within these broad boundaries exist many subdivisions that are often called genres themselves. For example, prose can be divided into fiction (novels and short stories) or nonfiction (essays, biographies, autobiographies, etc.). Poetry can be divided into lyric, dramatic, narrative, epic, etc. Drama can be divided into tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, etc. On the AP Language exam, expect the majority of the passages to be from the following genres: autobiography, biography, diaries, criticism, essays, and journalistic, political, scientific, and nature writing. On the Literature exam, expect fiction, drama, poetry, essays, and memoirs.

**homily** – This term literally means “sermon,” but more informally, it can include any serious talk, speech, or lecture involving moral or spiritual advice.

**hyperbole** – A figure of speech using deliberate exaggeration or overstatement. (The literal Greek meaning is “overshoot.”) Hyperboles often have a comic effect; however, a serious effect is also possible. Often, hyperbole produces irony. The opposite of hyperbole is *understatement*.

**imagery** – The sensory details or figurative language used to describe, arouse emotion, or represent abstractions. On a physical level, imagery uses terms related to the five senses: visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory. On a broader and deeper level, however, one image can represent more than one thing. For example, a rose may present visual imagery while also representing the color in a woman’s cheeks and/or symbolizing some degree of perfection. An author may use complex imagery while simultaneously employing other figures of speech, especially metaphor and simile. In addition, this term can apply to the total of all the images in a work. On the AP language exam, pay attention to *how* an author creates imagery and to the effect of this imagery.

**in medias res**- the work starts in the middle of the action- *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*,

**inference/infer** – To draw a reasonable conclusion from the information presented. When a multiple choice question asks for an inference to be drawn from a passage, the most direct, most reasonable inference is the safest answer choice. If an inference is implausible, it’s unlikely to be the correct answer. *Note that if the answer choice is directly stated, it is **not** inferred and it is wrong.* You must be careful to note the connotation – negative or positive – of the choices.

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**invective** – an emotionally violent, verbal denunciation or attack using strong, abusive language. (For example, in *Henry IV, Part I*, Prince Hal calls the large character of Falstaff “this sanguine coward, this bedpresser, this horseback breaker, this huge hill of flesh.”)

**irony/ironic** – The contrast between what is stated explicitly and what is really meant, or the difference between what appears to

be and what is actually true. Irony is often used to create poignancy or humor. In general, there are three major types of irony used in language:

- (1) *verbal irony* – when the words literally state the opposite of the writer’s (or speaker’s) meaning
- (2) *situational irony* – when events turn out the opposite of what was expected; when what the characters and readers think ought to happen is not what does happen
- (3) *dramatic irony* – when facts or events are unknown to a character in a play or piece of fiction but known to the reader, audience, or other characters in the work.

**lampoon-** A coarse or crude satire ridiculing the appearance or character of another person.

**leit- motif-** In literature, *leit-motif* to refer to an object, animal, phrase, or other thing loosely associated with a character, a setting, or event. For instance, the color green is a *leit-motif* associated with Sir Bercilak in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; thus, the appearance of the Green Chapel and a green girdle should cause the reader to recall and connect these places and items with the Green Knight. In Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the moon is a *leit-motif* associated with the fairy court, and it appears again in the stage scenery and stage discussion of Bottom's play about Pyramis and Thisbe. The *leit-motif* is not necessarily a symbol (though it can be). Rather, it is a recurring device loosely linked with a character, setting, or event. It gives the audience a "heads-up" by calling attention to itself and suggesting that its appearance is somehow connected with its appearance in other parts of the narrative.

**litotes** (pronounced almost like “li toe tee”) – a form of understatement that involves making an affirmative point by denying its opposite. *Litote* is the opposite of *hyperbole*. Examples: “Not a bad idea,” “Not many,” “It isn’t very serious. I have this tiny little tumor on the brain” (Salinger, *Catcher in the Rye*).

**loose sentence/non-periodic sentence** – A type of sentence in which the main idea (independent clause) comes first, followed by dependent grammatical units such as phrases and clauses. If a period were placed at the end of the independent clause, the clause would be a complete sentence. A work containing many loose sentences often seems informal, relaxed, or conversational. Generally, loose sentences create loose style.

Example: I arrived at the San Diego airport after a long, bumpy ride and multiple delays.

Could stop at: I arrived at the San Diego airport.

The opposite of a loose sentence is the *periodic sentence*.

**masculine rhyme:** Rhymes that end with a heavy stress on the last syllable in each rhyming word.

**metaphor** – A figure of speech using implied comparison of seemingly unlike things or the substitution of one for the other, suggesting some similarity. Metaphorical language makes writing more vivid, imaginative, thought provoking, and meaningful.

**metonymy** –A term from the Greek meaning “changed label” or “substitute name,” metonymy is a figure of speech in which the name of one object is substituted for that of another closely associated or related to the whole of it. For example, a news release that claims “the White House declared” rather than “the President declared” is using metonymy; Shakespeare uses it to signify the male and female sexes in *As You Like It*: “doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat.” The substituted term generally carries a more potent emotional impact.

**mood** – The prevailing atmosphere or emotional aura of a work. Setting, tone, and events can affect the mood.

**narrative** – The telling of a story or an account of an event or series of events.

**onomatopoeia** – A figure of speech in which natural sounds are imitated in the sounds of words. Simple examples include such words as *buzz*, *hiss*, *hum*, *crack*, *whinny*, and *murmur*. If you note examples of onomatopoeia in an essay passage, note the effect.

**oxymoron** – From the Greek for “pointedly foolish,” an oxymoron is a figure of speech wherein the author groups apparently contradictory terms to suggest a paradox. Simple examples include “jumbo shrimp” and “cruel kindness.” Take note of the effect that the author achieves with the use of oxymoron.

**paradox** – A statement that appears to be self-contradictory or opposed to common sense but upon closer inspection contains some degree of truth or validity. (Think of the beginning of Dickens’ *Tale of Two Cities*: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times....”)

**parallelism** – Also referred to as parallel construction or parallel structure, this term comes from Greek roots meaning “beside one another.” It refers to the grammatical or rhetorical framing of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs to give structural similarity. This can involve, but is not limited to, repetition of a grammatical element such as a preposition or verbal phrase. (Again, the opening of Dickens’ *Tale of Two Cities* is an example: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of believe, it was the epoch of incredulity....”) The effects of parallelism are numerous, but frequently they act as an organizing force to attract the reader’s attention, add emphasis and organization, or simply provide a musical rhythm.

**parody** – A work that closely imitates the style or content of another with the specific aim of comic effect and/or ridicule. It exploits peculiarities of an author’s expression (propensity to use too many parentheses, certain favorite words, etc.) Well-written parody offers enlightenment about the original, but poorly written parody offers only ineffectual imitation. Usually an audience must grasp literary allusion and understand the work being parodied in order to fully appreciate the nuances of the newer work.

**A pastoral-** An artistic composition dealing with the life of shepherds or with a simple, rural existence. It usually idealized shepherds' lives in order to create an image of peaceful and uncorrupted existence. More generally, pastoral describes the simplicity, charm, and serenity attributed to country life, or any literary convention that places kindly, rural people in nature-centered activities.

**periodic sentence** – The opposite of *loose sentence*, a sentence that presents its central meaning in a main clause at the end. This independent clause is preceded by a phrase or clause that cannot stand alone. The effect of a periodic sentence is to add emphasis and structural variety. It is also a much stronger sentence than the loose sentence. (Example: After a long, bumpy flight and multiple delays, I arrived at the San Diego airport.)

**personification** – A figure of speech in which the author presents or describes concepts, animals, or inanimate objects by endowing them with human attributes or emotions. Personification is used to make these abstractions, animals, or objects appear more vivid to the reader.

**picaresque**- A humorous novel in which the plot consists of a young knave's misadventures and escapades narrated in comic or satiric scenes. This roguish protagonist--called a *pícaro*--makes his (or sometimes her) way through cunning and trickery rather than through virtue or industry. The *pícaro* frequently travels from place to place engaging in a variety of jobs for several masters and getting into mischief. The picaresque novel is usually **episodic** in nature and realistic in its presentation of the seamier aspects of society.

**point of view** – In literature, the perspective from which a story is told. There are two general divisions of point of view, and many subdivisions within those.

(1) *first person narrator* tells the story with the first person pronoun, “I,” and is a character in the story. This narrator can be the protagonist (major, like Huck Finn) , or a secondary character, or an observing character (minor, like Nick Carraway)

(2) *third person narrator* relates the events with the third person pronouns, “he,” “she,” and “it.”

There are three main subdivisions to be aware of:

a. *third person omniscient*, in which the narrator, with godlike knowledge, presents the thoughts and actions of any or all characters

b. *third person limited*, in which the narrator presents the feelings and thoughts of only one character, presenting only the actions of all the remaining characters.

c. *third objective*, in which a narrator observes and reports- no access to internal thoughts and feelings

In addition, be aware that the term *point of view* carries an additional meaning. When you are asked to analyze the author’s point of view, the appropriate point for you to address is the author’s *attitude*, or *tone*

(3) *second person narrator* uses “you” and is speaking directly to the reader. Usually accompanies first person.

**polysyndeton**- Using many conjunctions to achieve an overwhelming effect in a sentence. For example, "This term, I am taking biology and English and history and math and music and physics and sociology." All those *ands* make the student sound like she is completely overwhelmed. It is the opposite of **asyndeton**.

**prose** – one of the major divisions of genre, prose refers to fiction and nonfiction, including all its forms. In prose the printer determines the length of the line; in poetry, the poet determines the length of the line.

**repetition** – The duplication, either exact or approximate, of any element of language, such as a sound, word, phrase, clause, sentence, or grammatical pattern.

**rhetoric** – From the Greek for “orator,” this term describes the principles governing the art of writing effectively, eloquently, and persuasively.

**rhetorical modes** – This flexible term describes the variety, the conventions, and the purposes of the major kinds of writing. The



four most common rhetorical modes (often referred to as “modes of discourse”) are as follows:

(1) The purpose of *exposition* (or expository writing) is to explain and analyze information by presenting an idea, relevant evidence, and appropriate discussion. The AP language exam essay questions are frequently expository topics.

(2) The purpose of *argumentation* is to prove the validity of an idea, or point of view, by presenting sound reasoning, discussion, and argument that thoroughly convince the reader. *Persuasive* writing is a type of argumentation having an additional aim of urging some form of action.

(3) The purpose of *description* is to recreate, invent, or visually present a person, place, event or action so that the reader can picture that being described. Sometimes an author engages all five senses in description; good descriptive writing can be sensuous and picturesque. Descriptive writing may be straightforward and objective or highly emotional and subjective.

(4) The purpose of *narration* is to tell a story or narrate an event or series of events. This writing mode frequently uses the tools of descriptive writing.

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**sarcasm** – From the Greek meaning “to tear flesh,” sarcasm involves bitter, caustic language that is meant to hurt or ridicule someone or something. It may use irony as a device, but not all ironic statements are sarcastic (that is, intended to ridicule). When well done, sarcasm can be witty and insightful; when poorly done, it is simply cruel.

**satire** – A work that targets human vices and follies or social institutions and conventions for reform or ridicule. Regardless of whether or not the work aims to reform human behavior, satire is best seen as a style of writing rather than a purpose for writing. It can be recognized by the many devices used effectively by the satirist: irony, wit, parody, caricature, hyperbole, understatement, and sarcasm. The effects of satire are varied, depending on the writer’s goal, but good satire, often humorous, is thought provoking and insightful about the human condition. (refer to our detailed satire notes)

**slant rhyme**- (also called inexact rhyme): Rhymes created out of words with similar but not identical sounds. In most of these instances, either the vowel segments are different while the consonants are identical, or vice versa. This type of rhyme is also called **approximate rhyme**, **inexact rhyme**, **near rhyme**, **half rhyme**, **off rhyme**, **analyzed rhyme**, or **suspended rhyme**.  
Ex. down / upon or amaze/ rise

**style** – The consideration of style has two purposes:

(1) An evaluation of the sum of the choices an author makes in blending diction, syntax, figurative language, and other literary devices. Some authors’ styles are so idiosyncratic that we can quickly recognize works by the same author. We can analyze and describe an author’s personal style and make judgments on how appropriate it is to the author’s purpose. Styles can be called flowery, explicit, succinct, rambling, bombastic, commonplace, incisive, laconic, etc.

(2) Classification of authors to a group and comparison of an author to similar authors. By means of such classification and comparison, we can see how an author’s style reflects and helps to define a historical period, such as the Renaissance or the Victorian period, or a literary movement, such as the romantic, transcendental, or realist movement.

**subject complement** – The word (with any accompanying phrases) or clause that follows a linking verb and complements, or

completes, the subject of the sentence by either (1) renaming it (the *predicate nominative*) or (2) describing it (the *predicate adjective*). These are defined below:

(1) the *predicate nominative* – a noun, group of nouns, or noun clause that renames the subject. It, like the predicate adjective, follows a linking verb and is located in the predicate of the sentence. Example: Julia Roberts is a movie star. *movie star* = predicate nominative, as it renames the subject, Julia Roberts

(2) the *predicate adjective* -- an adjective, a group of adjectives, or adjective clause that follows a linking verb. It is in the predicate of the sentence, and modifies, or describes, the subject.

Example: Warren remained optimistic.

*optimistic* = predicate adjective, as it modifies the subject, Warren

**subordinate clause** – Like all clauses, this word group contains both a subject and a verb (plus any accompanying phrases or modifiers), but unlike the independent clause, the subordinate clause cannot stand alone; it does not express a complete thought. Also called a *dependent* clause, the subordinate clause depends on a main clause (or *independent* clause) to complete its meaning. Easily recognized key words and phrases usually begin these clauses. For example: *although, because, unless, if, even though, since, as soon as, while, who, when, where, how* and *that*.

Example: Yellowstone is a national park in the West that is known for its geysers.  
underlined phrase = subordinate clause

**sylogism** – From the Greek for “reckoning together,” a syllogism (or syllogistic reasoning or syllogistic logic) is a deductive system of formal logic that presents two premises (the first one called “major” and the second called “minor”) that

inevitably lead to a sound conclusion. A frequently cited example proceeds as follows:

*major premise*: All men are mortal.

*minor premise*: Socrates is a man.

*conclusion*: Therefore, Socrates is a mortal.

A syllogism’s conclusion is valid only if each of the two premises is valid. Syllogisms may also present the specific idea

first (“Socrates”) and the general second (“all men”).

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**symbol/symbolism** – Generally, anything that represents itself and stands for something else.

Usually a symbol is something concrete -- such as an object, action, character, or scene – that represents something more abstract. However, symbols and symbolism can be much more complex. One system classifies symbols into three categories:

(1) *natural symbols* are objects and occurrences from nature to symbolize ideas commonly associated with them (dawn symbolizing hope or a new beginning, a rose symbolizing love, a tree symbolizing knowledge).

(2) *archetypal symbols* are those that have been invested with meaning by a group and are recognizable over time and throughout the globe: (religious symbols such as a cross or Star of David; national symbols, such as a flag or an eagle; or group symbols, such as a skull and crossbones for pirates or the scale of justice for lawyers).

(3) *contextual symbols* are symbols within a particular work of literature or art-like the conch in *Lord of the Flies* or the light bulb in *Anthem*

On the AP exam, try to determine what abstraction an object is a symbol for and to what extent it is successful in representing that abstraction.

**synecdoche** – a figure of speech in which a part of something is used to represent the whole or, occasionally, the whole is used to represent a part. Examples: To refer to a boat as a “sail”; to refer to a car as “wheels”; to refer to the violins, violas, etc.

in an orchestra as “the strings.” \*\*Different than *metonymy*, in which something related represents the whole. i.e., referring to a monarch as “the crown” or the President as “The White House.”

**synesthesia** – involving shifts in **imagery** or sensory metaphors. It involves taking one type of sensory input (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste) and comingling it with another separate sense in what seems an impossible way. In the resulting figure of speech, we end up talking about how a color sounds, or how a smell looks. When we say a musician hits a “blue note” while playing a sad song, we engage in synesthesia. When we talk about a certain shade of color as a “cool green,” we mix tactile or thermal imagery with visual imagery the same way. When we talk about a “heavy silence,” we also use synesthesia. Red Hot Chili Peppers’ song title, “Taste the Pain,” is an example.

**syntax** – The way an author chooses to join words into phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax is similar to diction, but you can differentiate them by thinking of syntax as groups of words, while diction refers to the individual words. In the multiple choice section of the AP exam, expect to be asked some questions about how an author manipulates syntax. In the essay section, you will need to analyze how syntax produces effects.

**theme** – The central idea or message of a work, the insight it offers into life. Universal idea about humans or society. Usually theme is unstated in fictional works, but in nonfiction, the theme may be directly state, especially in expository or argumentative writing.

**thesis** – In expository writing, the thesis statement is the sentence or group of sentences that directly expresses the author’s opinion, purpose, meaning, or position. Expository writing is usually judged by analyzing how accurately, effectively, and thoroughly a writer has proven the thesis.

**tone** – Similar to mood, tone describes the author’s attitude toward his material, the audience, or both. Tone is easier to determine in spoken language than in written language. Considering how a work would sound if it were read aloud can help in identifying an author’s tone. Some words describing tone are *playful, serious, businesslike, sarcastic, humorous, formal, ornate, sardonic, somber*, etc.

**transition** – A word or phrase that links different ideas. Used especially, although not exclusively, in expository and argumentative writing, transitions effectively signal a shift from one idea to another. A few commonly used transitional words or phrases are *furthermore, consequently, nevertheless, for example, in addition, likewise, similarly, on the contrary*, etc. More sophisticated writers use more subtle means of transition.

**understatement** – the ironic minimalizing of fact, understatement presents something as less significant than it is. The effect can frequently be humorous and emphatic. Understatement is the opposite of *hyperbole*. Example: Jonathan Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub*: “Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse.”

**wit** -- intellectually amusing language that surprises and delights. A witty statement is humorous, while suggesting the speaker’s verbal power in creating ingenious and perceptive remarks. Wit usually uses terse language that makes a pointed statement. Historically, wit originally meant basic

understanding. Finally, it grew to mean quick perception including creative fancy and a quick tongue to articulate an answer that demanded the same quick perception.

**AP Literature Allusions:** Allusions are compact keys to meaning. The following is an oh-so- introductory list of allusions for literature students. Notice the Bible and mythology get a huge shout-out here. Maybe Foster is on to something? Please add to this list as you come across new references.

- |                               |                                     |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Cerberus                   | 42. Sisyphus                        |
| 2. Medusa                     | 43. Salome                          |
| 3. Stygian                    | 44. Electra                         |
| 4. Minotaur                   | 45. Satyrs                          |
| 5. Venus                      | 46. Oedipus                         |
| 6. Nebuchadnezzar's dream     | 47. Scylla and Charybdis            |
| 7. Bacchus                    | 48. Job                             |
| 8. Nemesis                    | 49. Sisyphus                        |
| 9. Zephyr                     | 50. Cain and Abel                   |
| 10. Pandora                   | 51. Sodom and Gomorrah              |
| 11. Aurora                    | 52. Abraham and Isaac               |
| 12. Persephone                | 53. Styx                            |
| 13. Achilles                  | 54. Absalom                         |
| 14. Aphrodite                 | 55. Tantalus                        |
| 15. Philistines               | 56. Achilles                        |
| 16. Clytemnestra              | 57. Thirty Pieces of Silver         |
| 17. Leda                      | 58. Antigone                        |
| 18. Lot/Lot's wife            | 59. Tower of Babel                  |
| 19. Magi                      | 60. Armageddon                      |
| 20. Mary (the Virgin)         | 61. Madonna                         |
| 21. Mary Magdalene            | 62. Atalanta                        |
| 22. Massacre of the Innocents | 63. the Second Coming               |
| 23. Pontius Pilate            | 64. Camelot                         |
| 24. Brutus                    | 65. Thebes                          |
| 25. Prodigal Son              | 66. Atlas                           |
| 26. Herod                     | 67. Cain and Abel                   |
| 27. Prometheus                | 68. David and Bathsheba             |
| 28. Solomon                   | 69. Four horsemen of the apocalypse |
| 29. Proteus                   | 70. Good Samaritan                  |
| 30. Hermes                    | 71. Grail or Holy Grail             |
| 31. Pygmalion                 | 72. Jacob's ladder                  |
| 32. Daedalus                  | 73. Jephthah's daughter             |
| 33. Phoebus                   | 74. Joshua                          |
| 34. Icarus                    | 75. Jezebel                         |
| 35. Rachel and Leah           | 76. Judas Iscariot                  |
| 36. Hercules                  | 77. Laius                           |
| 37. Romulus and Remus         | 78. Lazarus                         |
| 38. Ruth                      | 79. Zephyr                          |
| 39. Xanadu                    | 80. Ajax                            |
| 40. Penelope                  | 81. Japhet, Ham, and Shem           |
| 41. Sabine women, rape of     |                                     |



**Basic Vocabulary for Tone and Style-**  
**For use when writing about effect of diction, structure, author's attitude, and characterization**

1. abstract: theoretical, without reference to specifics
2. abstruse- complex, profound
3. affected: assuming a false manner of attitude to impress others
4. allusive- makes use of allusions or references to other works, history, religion, pop culture...
5. ambiguous: having two or more possible meanings
6. ambivalent: of two minds- undecided-
7. analytical: inclined to examine things by studying their contents or parts
8. anecdotal: involving short narratives of interesting events
9. archaic: in the style of an earlier period
10. austere: stern, strict, frugal, unadorned
11. banal: pointless and uninteresting
12. baroque: elaborate, grotesque, and ornamental
13. bombastic: pretentious and pompous- often featured in satiric figures
14. cinematic: having the qualities of a motion picture
15. classical: formal, enduring, and standard, adhering to certain traditional methods
16. colloquial: using everyday language; conversational- not formal
17. concise: using very few words to express a great deal
18. concrete- solid, physical, real
19. confessional: characterized by personal admissions of faults
20. contemptuous: hatred or disdain
21. convoluted: very complicated or involved ( as in the case of sentences with many qualifiers, phrases, and clauses)
22. crepuscular: having to do with twilight or shadowy areas ( as in the darker and more hidden parts of human experience)
23. cynical: a tendency to believe that all human behavior is selfish and opportunistic
24. decadent: marked by a decay in morals, values and artistic standards
25. detached: disinterested, unbiased, emotionally disconnected
26. discursive: moving pointlessly from one subject to another; lingering
27. earthy: realistic, rustic, coarse, unrefined, instinctive, animalize
28. effeminate: soft, delicate, unmanly -not used for women
29. elegiac: expressing sorrow or lamentation (elegy is a mournful poem)
30. epistolary: involving letters
31. erudite: learned, scholarly
32. euphemistic- using mild or pleasing language to lessen the blow- "passed on" for "dead"
33. esoteric- cryptic, difficult to understand- mysterious
34. eulogistic: involving formal praise in speech or writing, usually in honor of someone dead
35. evocative: having the ability to call forth memories or other responses
36. facetious: amusing, but light, unserious, frivolous; teasing
37. farcical: humorous in a light way, comedy with high exaggeration
38. fatalistic: believing that everything that happens is destined and, therefore, out of the hands of the individual
39. flamboyant: conspicuously bold or visual
40. iconoclastic: inclined to attack cherished beliefs and traditions
41. impressionistic: inclined to use subjective impressions rather than objective reality

42. incongruous: contrary to logic, but sometimes artistically viable
43. insipid- dull, bland, lifeless
44. ironic- characterized by an unexpected turn of events, often the opposite of what was intended
45. irreverent: showing disrespect for things that are usually respected or revered
46. journalistic: characterized by the kind of language used in journalism- reporting not editorializing
47. lyrical: intense, spontaneous, musical
48. melodramatic- emotions, characters, and plot which are exaggerated and characterization is shallow
49. mournful: feeling or expressing grief. (certain literary forms are devoted to the expression of grief , such as elegies)
50. mundane: ordinary or common, as in everyday matters (“his mind was filled with mundane matters”)
51. nostalgic: inclined to long for or dwell on things of the past; sentimental
52. objective: uninfluenced by personal feelings. Seeing things from the outside, not subjectively
53. ominous: indicating or threatening evil or danger as dark clouds indicate that storm is coming,
54. parody: a satirical imitation of something serious, such as comic takeoff of Romeo and Juliet. The parody must have enough elements of the original for it to be recognized.
55. philosophical: interested in the study of basic truths of existence and reality.
56. pious: having or displaying a reverence for god and religion. Sometimes used pejoratively, when the display is excessive and outwardly righteous
57. poignant- touching, emotional, pulls at the heart strings
58. pompous: displaying one’s importance in an exaggerated way. Sometimes the quality is found in comic characters or in satire
59. provocative- challenging, confrontational, can be insulting, but it is always controversial
60. prurient: preoccupied with lewd and lustful thoughts
61. psychological: having to do with the human mind and human behavior
62. puritanical: strict or severe in the matters of morality
63. rhythmic: characterized by certain patterns, beats, or accents (as in dancing music, poetry)
64. Romantic: As with nineteenth century literature, or any such literature it suggests a style that emphasizes freedom of form, imagination, and emotion.
65. sardonic: mocking, taunting, bitter, scornful, sarcastic
66. satirical: using sarcasm and irony, often humorously to expose human folly.
67. sensuous: taking pleasure in things that appeal to the senses. (Sensual suggests a strong preoccupation with such things, especially sexual pleasures.)
68. stark: plain, harsh, completely ( as in stark raving mad) simple or bare, when applied to style, sometimes even bleak or grim
69. subjective: relying on ones own inner impressions as opposed to being objective
70. surrealistic: stressing imagery and the subconscious and sometimes distorting ordinary ideas in order to arrive at artistic truths
71. terse: effectively, concise, brief
72. trite: stale, worn out, as in trite expressions
73. urbane: sophisticated, socially polished
74. vexed- annoyed, irritated
75. Victorian: prudish, stuffy, and puritanical (qualities associated with Queen Victoria’s reign)
76. whimsical: inclined to be playful , humorous or fanciful



77. zealous- passionate, often fanatical

### Sample Multiple Choice Question Stems

(Thanks to Ms. Schaffer and to Dr. Pell from the 08 Institute)

From the AP literature exam:

1. What is the author's attitude toward the subject of the essay?
2. What is this passage about?
3. What does the phrase, \_\_\_\_\_, mean?
4. How would you characterize the style of the passage?
5. Which of the following best summarizes the main point in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
6. What is the main point in \_\_\_\_\_? (the passage, the 2nd paragraph, etc.)
7. How would you restate the meaning of \_\_\_\_\_?
8. How would you define the phrase \_\_\_\_\_?
9. What is the speaker's purpose in \_\_\_\_\_?
10. What thought is reflected in the allusion \_\_\_\_\_?
11. What is the tone of the passage?
12. How would you define the word \_\_\_\_\_?
13. How would you describe the diction and style of the passage?
14. In lines \_\_\_\_\_, what is the speaker asserting?
15. Why is \_\_\_\_\_ described as \_\_\_\_\_?
16. What is significant about the structure of sentence # \_\_\_\_\_ in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
17. In sentences \_\_\_\_\_, what contrasts are developed or implied?
18. In lines \_\_\_\_\_, why does the author pair quotations?
19. In lines \_\_\_\_\_, what is the effect of pairing quotations?
20. What is the dominant technique used in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
21. In lines \_\_\_\_\_, what is the effect of using a metaphor?
22. In lines \_\_\_\_\_, Juxtaposing \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ serves the purpose of \_\_\_\_\_.
23. What does the speaker accomplish in using \_\_\_\_\_?
24. By using the words \_\_\_\_\_, the speaker shows the belief that \_\_\_\_\_.
25. In lines \_\_\_\_\_, how is the speaker portrayed?
26. The shift in point of view from...has the effect of...
27. What is the theme of the \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., second paragraph, whole piece)?
28. In lines \_\_\_\_\_, the passage shifts from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.
29. Why does the author represent \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_ in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
30. What is the purpose of the syntax in sentence \_\_\_\_\_?
31. What does \_\_\_\_\_ symbolize in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
32. The speaker's attitude toward \_\_\_\_\_ is best described as one of \_\_\_\_\_.
33. In \_\_\_\_\_, the author is asserting that \_\_\_\_\_.
34. The term \_\_\_\_\_ conveys the speaker's belief that \_\_\_\_\_.
35. The speaker assumes that the audience's attitude toward \_\_\_\_\_ will be one of \_\_\_\_\_.
36. In the \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., first, second, last) paragraph, the speaker seeks to interest us in the subjects of the discussion by stressing the \_\_\_\_\_.
37. It can be inferred by \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_.
38. The \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., first, second) sentence is unified by metaphorical references pertaining to \_\_\_\_\_.
39. The speaker's mention of \_\_\_\_\_ is appropriate to the development of the argument as an illustration of \_\_\_\_\_.

















40. As the sentence in lines \_\_\_\_\_ is constructed, \_\_\_\_\_ is parallel to \_\_\_\_\_.
41. It can be inferred from the description of--- \_\_\_\_\_ that the qualities of \_\_\_\_\_ are valued by the speaker.
42. According to the passage, \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
43. In the context of the passage, \_\_\_\_\_ is best interpreted as \_\_\_\_\_.
44. Sentence \_\_\_\_\_ is best described as \_\_\_\_\_.
45. The antecedent for \_\_\_\_\_ in line \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.
46. What type of argument does the writer employ in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
47. Why does the speaker use the sequence of ideas in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
48. We can infer from \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_.
49. What pattern of exposition does the writer use in this passage?
50. What is the point of view in this passage/poem?
51. What is the purpose of the statement in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
52. What atmosphere or mood is established in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
53. The \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., first, fourth) sentence is coherent because of its use of \_\_\_\_\_.
54. What qualities are present in the scene described in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
55. What words and details suggest a \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective) attitude on the part of the author?
56. In line \_\_\_\_\_, the use of \_\_\_\_\_ instead of \_\_\_\_\_ accomplishes \_\_\_\_\_.
57. In line \_\_\_\_\_, the author emphasizes \_\_\_\_\_ because he/she \_\_\_\_\_.
58. The use of \_\_\_\_\_ suggests that \_\_\_\_\_.
59. What is the function of the \_\_\_\_\_ (sentence, detail, clause, phrase, and so on) in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
60. The subject of the sentence in lines \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.
61. What assertions does the author make in the passage, and what is his/her purpose in doing this?
62. By \_\_\_\_\_, the author most probably means \_\_\_\_\_.
63. What meanings are contained in the word \_\_\_\_\_ in line \_\_\_\_\_?
64. What can we infer from the passage about \_\_\_\_\_?
65. The author apparently believes that \_\_\_\_\_.
66. In lines \_\_\_\_\_, the phrase \_\_\_\_\_ is used to refer to \_\_\_\_\_.
67. The author believes that we should \_\_\_\_\_.
68. The \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., first, last, third) sentence of the passage is chiefly remarkable for its \_\_\_\_\_.
69. What does the author want to encourage in a person?
70. What is the function of \_\_\_\_\_ in relation to \_\_\_\_\_?

From the AP Language exam:

1. What is the author's attitude toward the subject?
2. What does the phrase \_\_\_\_\_ mean?
3. How would you characterize the style of the passage?
4. What is the main point of the passage?
5. Restate the phrase, \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Define the phrase, \_\_\_\_\_.
7. What is the speaker's purpose in writing this passage?
8. What is the speaker's purpose in lines \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Why does the writer use the allusion to \_\_\_\_\_?"
10. What is the tone of the passage?
11. How would you characterize the diction and style of the passage?
12. What is the speaker asserting in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
13. Describe the structure of the sentence in lines \_\_\_\_\_.
14. What contrast does the speaker develop in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
15. What effect is achieved by the speaker's using the phrases \_\_\_\_\_?
16. What dominant technique is the speaker using in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
17. In lines \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ is a metaphorical way of saying \_\_\_\_\_.
18. What does the author achieve by juxtaposing \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_?
99. What does the speaker accomplish in this passage?
20. What does the choice of words show about the speaker's beliefs?
21. Where is there a shift of tone in the passage?
22. The syntax in lines \_\_\_\_\_ serves to \_\_\_\_\_.
23. What is the speaker's attitude toward the subject?
24. What assumptions does the speaker make about the audience?
25. How does the author seek to interest us in the first paragraph?
26. What method does the author use to develop the argument?

27. Line \_\_\_\_\_ is parallel to what other line in the passage?
28. What can you infer about the author's attitudes toward the subject?
29. What is the antecedent for \_\_\_\_\_?
30. What type of argument is the author using in this passage?
31. What pattern of exposition is the author using in this passage?
32. What is the atmosphere established in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
33. Why is the sentence in lines \_\_\_\_\_ coherent, despite its length?
34. In line \_\_\_\_\_, the use of \_\_\_\_\_ instead of \_\_\_\_\_ accomplishes what?
35. What is the function of \_\_\_\_\_ in the passage?
36. What is the subject of the sentence in lines \_\_\_\_\_?
37. What does the author apparently believe about the subject?
38. What does the author believe we should do in response to this passage?
39. Why is the sentence in lines \_\_\_\_\_ remarkable?
40. What is the function of paragraph \_\_\_\_\_? of line \_\_\_\_\_?

## WRITING FEEDBACK SYMBOLS

Symbol	Meaning	What to Do
	Good point! Good idea! Nicely put!	Smile, and notice what you did well. Keep doing this—it's good!
	Delete, from punctuation mark to an entire section	Delete the marked text. Ex: <del>The the first one...</del>
	Close up, no space	Delete the space. Ex: The after math of the...
	Something is missing here	Insert something, usually a space, punctuation mark or missing word. Ex: Send this Myrtle.
	Reverse order	Reverse the order of the indicated text items.
	Unclear. What do you mean?	Clarify. Explain.
	Incorrect capital	Replace the capital letter with a lower case letter.
	Needs capital	Replace with an uppercase letter.
	Paragraphing problem	Begin new paragraph. Or join paragraphs, no break here.
	Agreement error	Make a subject and verb, or an antecedent and pronoun, agree in number. Ex: 1. Each camper must put up his or her own tent. 2. Campers must put up their own tents.
	Awkward sentence or passage	Rephrase sentence or section. Check word choice or word order.
	Concrete details	Respond to comment in reference to CD. Often: "good concrete details" or "needs more concrete details."
	Overused expression, trite, truism	Rewrite using your own words. Refresh the tired phrase!
	Colloquial expression or slang, inappropriately informal	Use appropriate diction. Replace phrasing of everyday talk.
	Sentence fragment	Add subject or verb, or attach fragment to nearby sentence. Change to make a complete sentence.
	Never again!	Be careful to never make this mistake again! Life is short!

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Valerie Stevenson, PHHS, Originated 09/1996, reprinted 02/2001

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## Writing Feedback Symbols page 2

Symbol	Meaning	What to Do
OE	Opportunity to Elaborate, Expand	Add CDs, commentary, reasoning, etc. Develop idea further to correct "thinness."
OS	Over simplification	Rewrite for precision, exactness, and clarity.
PV	Passive voice	Use active verbs. Example: Vivid descriptions are used by Twain to... (weak). Twain uses vivid descriptions to... (stronger).
punc	Punctuation error	Add, replace, or delete punctuation.
R-O	Run-on sentence	Correct with needed punctuation. This is more than one sentence run together.
See me:	I'd like to tell you something!	I can't write what I want to say. Come see me. You'll be glad you did!
Sug:	A suggestion, not a correction	Consider a possible improvement or alternative. Always read these carefully.
Sp	Misspelled word	Correct spelling.
T	Wrong tense, shift in tense	Correct verb tense to make all past or present, etc. Use present tense when writing about literature. Ex: John Proctor betrays Elizabeth when he ...
Trans	Transition	Respond to comment in reference to transition. Usually: "good transition" or "needs transition."
Wordy	Too many words	Say in fewer words; combine sentences. Omit useless words, phrases.
WC	Word choice weak or questionable	Replace with more precise or livelier word.
WW	Wrong word	Correct the word you used in error.

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• Natural order (subject before main verb)

Ex: Oranges grow in California.

• Inverted order (verb before subject)

Ex: In California grow oranges.

- Interrupted sentence: subordinate clauses come in the middle, set off by dashes or commas

Ex: These had been her teachers, -- stern and wild ones, -- and they had made her strong....

- Appositives, or renamings.

EX: Oranges, a round orange fruit, grow in California.

## 7. Sentence types

- Declarative = statements

Ex: The clock struck eight. She waited. Nobody came.

- Interrogative = questions

- Imperative = commands, requests

Ex: Write to the local TV station. Try to convince others to take your side.

- Exclamatory

- Simple sentences = 1 subject, 1 predicate

Ex: The price of gold rose. Stock prices may fall. Van Gogh painted *The Starry Night*.

- Compound sentences = two or more independent clauses joined with coordinating conjunctions, transitional words/phrases, semicolons, or colons

Ex: The saxophone does not belong to the brass family; in fact, it is a member of the woodwind family.

Ex: In the fall the war was always there, but we did not go to it any more. (Hemingway)

- Complex sentences = one independent clause and one dependent clause

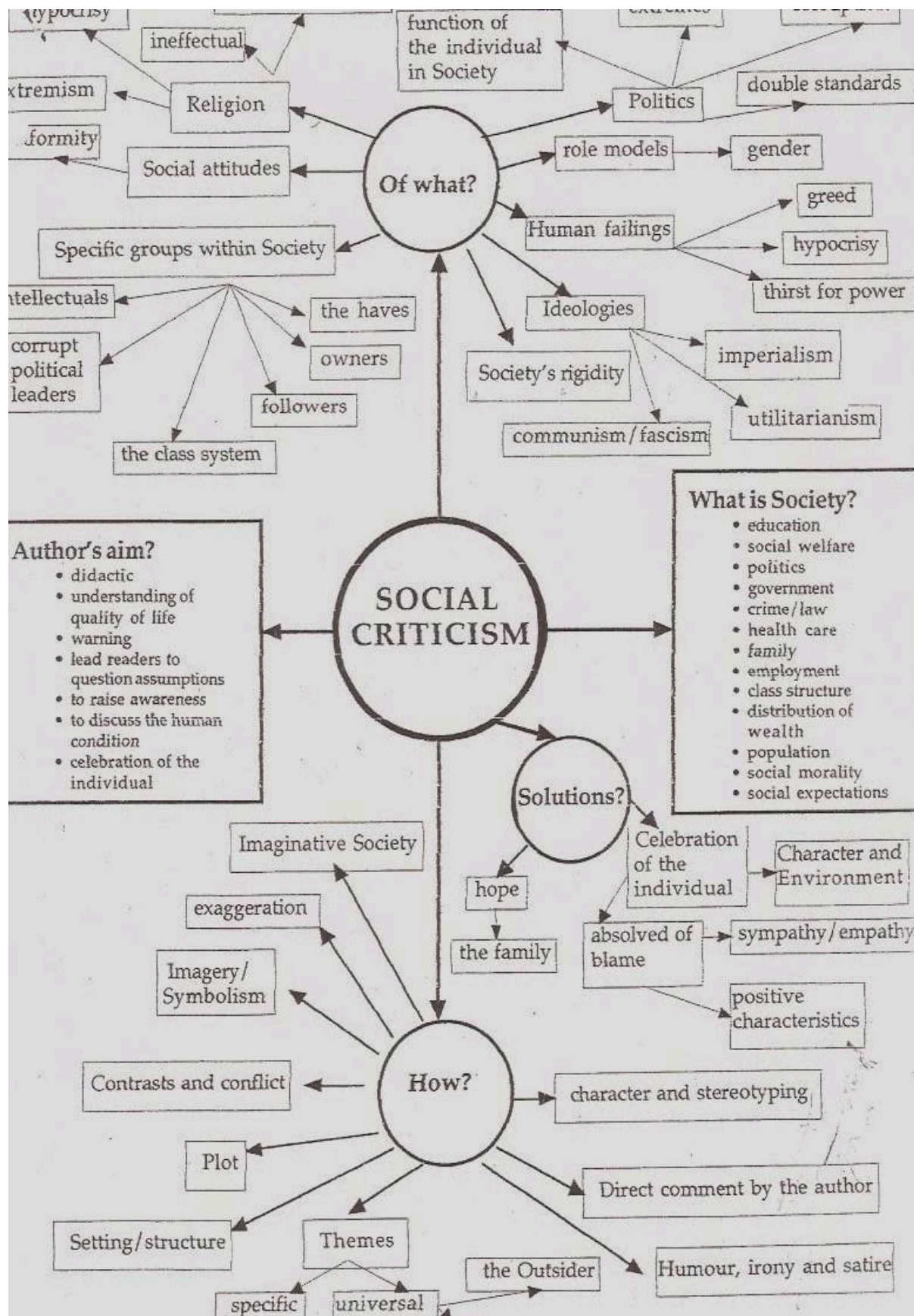
Ex: After the town was evacuated, the hurricane began.

Ex: Town officials, who were very concerned, watched the storm.

- Compound-complex = two or more independent clauses and at least one dependent clause

Ex: When small foreign imports began dominating the US automobile industry, consumers were very responsive, but American auto workers were dismayed.

- Fragments and run-ons



## Some Generalizations about Literature- Thanks, Dr. Pell

- 1) Authors usually devalue materialism
- 2) Authors often devalue formal religion, but value individual reverence.
- 3) Authors value mutability, both personal and societal.
- 4) Authors are rarely neutral about the carpe diem theme.
- 5) Authors are both social historians and social critics.
- 6) In the conflict between society and the individual, authors generally side with the individual.
- 7) Most authors attack overweening pride.
- 8) Most authors have a critical tone toward war.
- 9) In most literature, the family is a source of a passionate kind of conflict.

## Classic Archetypes

### Character Archetypes

The naïve kid from the country

The villain

The damsel in distress

The hero

The anti-hero

Earth mother

The warrior

The sidekick or mentor

The temptress

The river or ocean

The forest

The garden or Eden

The wasteland

The tomb or prison

The Fortress/castle/tower

The wilderness

The utopia- heaven

The threshold

### Setting Archetypes



## **From *How to Read Literature Like a Professor***

**Thomas C. Foster**

Notes by Marti Nelson

- 1. Every Trip is a Quest (except when it's not):**
  - a. A quester
  - b. A place to go
  - c. A stated reason to go there
  - d. Challenges and trials
  - e. The real reason to go—always self-knowledge
- 2. Nice to Eat With You: Acts of Communion**
  - a. Whenever people eat or drink together, it's communion
  - b. Not usually religious
  - c. An act of sharing and peace
  - d. A failed meal carries negative connotations
- 3. Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires**
  - a. Literal Vampirism: Nasty old man, attractive but evil, violates a young woman, leaves his mark, takes her innocence
  - b. Sexual implications—a trait of 19<sup>th</sup> century literature to address sex indirectly
  - c. Symbolic Vampirism: selfishness, exploitation, refusal to respect the autonomy of other people, using people to get what we want, placing our desires, particularly ugly ones, above the needs of another.
- 4. If It's Square, It's a Sonnet**
- 5. Now, Where Have I Seen Her Before?**
  - a. There is no such thing as a wholly original work of literature—stories grow out of other stories, poems out of other poems.
  - b. There is only one story—of humanity and human nature, endlessly repeated
  - c. “Intertextuality”—recognizing the connections between one story and another deepens our appreciation and experience, brings multiple layers of meaning to the text, which we may not be conscious of. The more consciously aware we are, the more alive the text becomes to us.
  - d. If you don't recognize the correspondences, it's ok. If a story is no good, being based on Hamlet won't save it.
- 6. When in Doubt, It's from Shakespeare...**
  - a. Writers use what is common in a culture as a kind of shorthand. Shakespeare is pervasive, so he is frequently echoed.
  - b. See plays as a pattern, either in plot or theme or both. Examples:
    - i. Hamlet: heroic character, revenge, indecision, melancholy nature
    - ii. Henry IV—a young man who must grow up to become king, take on his responsibilities
    - iii. Othello—jealousy
    - iv. Merchant of Venice—justice vs. mercy
    - v. King Lear—aging parent, greedy children, a wise fool
- 7. ...Or the Bible**
  - a. Before the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, writers could count on people being very familiar with Biblical stories, a common touchstone a writer can tap
  - b. Common Biblical stories with symbolic implications

- i. Garden of Eden: women tempting men and causing their fall, the apple as symbolic of an object of temptation, a serpent who tempts men to do evil, and a fall from innocence
- ii. David and Goliath—overcoming overwhelming odds
- iii. Jonah and the Whale—refusing to face a task and being “eaten” or overwhelmed by it anyway.
- iv. Job: facing disasters not of the character’s making and not the character’s fault, suffers as a result, but remains steadfast
- v. The Flood: rain as a form of destruction; rainbow as a promise of restoration
- vi. Christ figures (a later chapter): in 20<sup>th</sup> century, often used ironically
- vii. The Apocalypse—Four Horseman of the Apocalypse usher in the end of the world.
- viii. Biblical names often draw a connection between literary character and Biblical character.

#### **8. Hansel and Gretel—using fairy tales and kid lit**

- a. Hansel and Gretel: lost children trying to find their way home
- b. Peter Pan: refusing to grow up, lost boys, a girl-nurturer/
- c. Little Red Riding Hood: See Vampires
- d. Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz: entering a world that doesn’t work rationally or operates under different rules, the Red Queen, the White Rabbit, the Cheshire Cat, the Wicked Witch of the West, the Wizard, who is a fraud
- e. Cinderella: orphaned girl abused by adopted family saved through supernatural intervention and by marrying a prince
- f. Snow White: Evil woman who brings death to an innocent—again, saved by heroic/princely character
- g. Sleeping Beauty: a girl becoming a woman, symbolically, the needle, blood=womanhood, the long sleep an avoidance of growing up and becoming a married woman, saved by, guess who, a prince who fights evil on her behalf.
- h. Evil Stepmothers, Queens, Rumpelstiltskin
- i. Prince Charming heroes who rescue women. (20<sup>th</sup> c. frequently switched—the women save the men—or used highly ironically)

#### **9. It’s Greek to Me**

- a. Myth is a body of story that matters—the patterns present in mythology run deeply in the human psyche
- b. Why writers echo myth—because there’s only one story (see #4)
- c. Odyssey and Iliad
  - i. Men in an epic struggle over a woman
  - ii. Achilles—a small weakness in a strong man; the need to maintain one’s dignity
  - iii. Penelope (Odysseus’s wife)—the determination to remain faithful and to have faith
  - iv. Hector: The need to protect one’s family
- d. The Underworld—an ultimate challenge, facing the darkest parts of human nature or dealing with death
- e. Metamorphoses by Ovid—transformation (Kafka)
- f. Oedipus: family triangles, being blinded, dysfunctional family
- g. Cassandra: refusing to hear the truth

- h. A wronged woman gone violent in her grief and madness—Aeneas and Dido or Jason and Medea
- i. Mother love—Demeter and Persephone

#### **10. It's more than just rain or snow**

- a. Rain
  - i. fertility and life
  - ii. Noah and the flood
  - iii. Drowning—one of our deepest fears
- b. Why?
  - i. plot device
  - ii. atmospherics
  - iii. misery factor—challenge characters
  - iv. democratic element—the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike
- c. Symbolically
  - i. rain is clean—a form of purification, baptism, removing sin or a stain
  - ii. rain is restorative—can bring a dying earth back to life
  - iii. destructive as well—causes pneumonia, colds, etc.; hurricanes, etc.
  - iv. Irony use—April is the cruellest month (T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland*)
  - v. Rainbow—God's promise never to destroy the world again; hope; a promise of peace between heaven and earth
  - vi. fog—almost always signals some sort of confusion; mental, ethical, physical “fog”; people can't see clearly
- d. Snow
  - i. negatively—cold, stark, inhospitable, inhuman, nothingness, death
  - ii. positively—clean, pure, playful

#### **11. ...More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence**

- a. Violence can be symbolic, thematic, biblical, Shakespearean, Romantic, allegorical, transcendent.
- b. Two categories of violence in literature
  - i. Character caused—shootings, stabbings, drownings, poisonings, bombings, hit and run, etc
  - ii. Death and suffering for which the characters are not responsible. Accidents are not really accidents.
- c. Violence is symbolic action, but hard to generalize meaning
- d. Questions to ask:
  - i. What does this type of misfortune represent thematically?
  - ii. What famous or mythic death does this one resemble?
  - iii. Why this sort of violence and not some other?

#### **12. Is That a Symbol?**

- a. Yes. But figuring out what is tricky. Can only discuss possible meanings and interpretations
- b. There is no one definite meaning unless it's an allegory, where characters, events, places have a one-on-one correspondence symbolically to other things. (Animal Farm)
- c. Actions, as well as objects and images, can be symbolic. i.e. “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost
- d. How to figure it out? Symbols are built on associations readers have, but also on emotional reactions. Pay attention to how you feel about a text.

### **13. It's All Political**

- a. Literature tends to be written by people interested in the problems of the world, so most works have a political element in them
- b. Issues:
  - i. Individualism and self-determination against the needs of society for conformity and stability.
  - ii. Power structures
  - iii. Relations among classes
  - iv. issues of justice and rights
  - v. interactions between the sexes and among various racial and ethnic constituencies.

### **14. Yes, She's a Christ Figure, Too**

- a. Characteristics of a Christ Figure:
  - i. crucified, wounds in hands, feet, side, and head, often portrayed with arms outstretched
  - ii. in agony
  - iii. self-sacrificing
  - iv. good with children
  - v. good with loaves, fishes, water, wine
  - vi. thirty-three years of age when last seen
  - vii. employed as a carpenter
  - viii. known to use humble modes of transportation, feet or donkeys preferred
  - ix. believed to have walked on water
  - x. known to have spent time alone in the wilderness
  - xi. believed to have had a confrontation with the devil, possibly tempted
  - xii. last seen in the company of thieves
  - xiii. creator of many aphorisms and parables
  - xiv. buried, but arose on the third day
  - xv. had disciples, twelve at first, although not all equally devoted
  - xvi. very forgiving
  - xvii. came to redeem an unworthy world
- b. As a reader, put aside belief system.
- c. Why us Christ figures? Deepens our sense of a character's sacrifice, thematically has to do with redemption, hope, or miracles.
- d. If used ironically, makes the character look smaller rather than greater

### **15. Flights of Fancy**

- a. Daedalus and Icarus
- b. Flying was one of the temptations of Christ
- c. Symbolically: freedom, escape, the flight of the imagination, spirituality, return home, largeness of spirit, love
- d. Interrupted flight generally a bad thing
- e. Usually not literal flying, but might use images of flying, birds, etc.
- f. Irony trumps everything

### **16. It's All About Sex...**

- a. Female symbols: chalice, Holy Grail, bowls, rolling landscape, empty vessels waiting to be filled, tunnels, images of fertility
- b. Male symbols: blade, tall buildings
- c. Why?

- i. Before mid 20<sup>th</sup> c., coded sex avoided censorship
- ii. Can function on multiple levels
- iii. Can be more intense than literal descriptions

**17. ...Except Sex.** When authors write directly about sex, they're writing about something else, such as sacrifice, submission, rebellion, supplication, domination, enlightenment, etc.

**18. If She Comes Up, It's Baptism**

- a. Baptism is symbolic death and rebirth as a new individual
- b. Drowning is symbolic baptism, IF the character comes back up, symbolically reborn. But drowning on purpose can also represent a form of rebirth, a choosing to enter a new, different life, leaving an old one behind.
- c. Traveling on water—rivers, oceans—can symbolically represent baptism. i.e. young man sails away from a known world, dies out of one existence, and comes back a new person, hence reborn. Rivers can also represent the River Styx, the mythological river separating the world from the Underworld, another form of transformation, passing from life into death.
- d. Rain can be symbolic baptism as well—cleanses, washes
- e. Sometimes the water is symbolic too—the prairie has been compared to an ocean, walking in a blizzard across snow like walking on water, crossing a river from one existence to another (Beloved)
- f. There's also rebirth/baptism implied when a character is renamed.

**19. Geography Matters...**

- a. What represents home, family, love, security?
- b. What represents wilderness, danger, confusion? i.e. tunnels, labyrinths, jungles
- c. Geography can represent the human psyche (Heart of Darkness)
- d. Going south=running amok and running amok means having a direct, raw encounter with the subconscious.
- e. Low places: swamps, crowds, fog, darkness, fields, heat, unpleasantness, people, life, death
- f. High places: snow, ice, purity, thin air, clear views, isolation, life, death

**20. ...So Does Season**

- a. Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter=youth, adulthood, middle age, old age/death.
- b. Spring=fertility, life, happiness, growth, resurrection (Easter)
- c. Fall=harvest, reaping what we sow, both rewards and punishments
- d. Winter=hibernation, lack of growth, death, punishment
- e. Christmas=childhood, birth, hope, family
- f. Irony trumps all "April is the cruelest month" from *The Wasteland*

**21. Marked for Greatness**

- a. Physical marks or imperfections symbolically mirror moral, emotional, or psychological scars or imperfections.
- b. Landscapes can be marked as well—*The Wasteland* by T.S. Eliot
- c. Physical imperfection, when caused by social imperfection, often reflects not only the damage inside the individual, but what is wrong with the culture that causes such damage
- d. Monsters
  - i. Frankenstein—monsters created through no fault of their own; the real monster is the maker
  - ii. Faust—bargains with the devil in exchange for one's soul

- iii. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—the dual nature of humanity, that in each of us, no matter how well-made or socially groomed, a monstrous Other exists.
- iv. Quasimodo, Beauty and the Beast—ugly on the outside, beautiful on the inside. The physical deformity reflects the opposite of the truth.

**22. He's Blind for a Reason, You Know**

- a. Physical blindness mirrors psychological, moral, intellectual (etc.) blindness
- b. Sometimes ironic; the blind see and sighted are blind
- c. Many times blindness is metaphorical, a failure to see—reality, love, truth, etc.
- d. darkness=blindness; light=sight

**23. It's Never Just Heart Disease...**

- a. Heart disease=bad love, loneliness, cruelty, disloyalty, cowardice, lack of determination.
- b. Socially, something on a larger scale or something seriously amiss at the heart of things (Heart of Darkness)

**24. ...And Rarely Just Illness**

- a. Not all illnesses are created equal. Tuberculosis occurs frequently; cholera does not because of the reasons below
- b. It should be picturesque
- c. It should be mysterious in origin
- d. It should have strong symbolic or metaphorical possibilities
  - i. Tuberculosis—a wasting disease
  - ii. Physical paralysis can mirror moral, social, spiritual, intellectual, political paralysis
  - iii. Plague: divine wrath; the communal aspect and philosophical possibilities of suffering on a large scale; the isolation and despair created by wholesale destruction; the puniness of humanity in the face of an indifferent natural world
  - iv. Malaria: means literally “bad air” with the attendant metaphorical possibilities.
  - v. Venereal disease: reflects immorality OR innocence, when the innocent suffer because of another's immorality; passed on to a spouse or baby, men's exploitation of women
  - vi. AIDS: the modern plague. Tendency to lie dormant for years, victims unknowing carriers of death, disproportionately hits young people, poor, etc. An opportunity to show courage and resilience and compassion (or lack of); political and religious angles
  - vii. The generic fever that carries off a child

**25. Don't Read with Your Eyes**

- a. You must enter the reality of the book; don't read from your own fixed position in 2005. Find a reading perspective that allows for sympathy with the historical movement of the story, that understands the text as having been written against its own social, historical, cultural, and personal background.
- b. We don't have to accept the values of another culture to sympathetically step into a story and recognize the universal qualities present there.

**26. Is He Serious? And Other Ironies**

- a. Irony trumps everything. Look for it.

- b. Example: Waiting for Godot—journeys, quests, self-knowledge turned on its head. Two men by the side of a road they never take and which never brings anything interesting their way.
- c. Irony doesn't work for everyone. Difficult to warm to, hard for some to recognize which causes all sorts of problems. *Satanic Verses*, nknkn

## 27. Test Case: A Reading of “The Garden Party” by Katherine Mansfield

### Works referenced in *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*

Chapter	Title	Genre	Author
1. Quest	The Crying of Lot 49	novel	Thomas Pynchon
	Adventures of Huckleberry Finn	novel	Mark Twain
	Lord of the Rings	novel	J.R.R. Tolkein
	Star Wars	movie	George Lucas
	North by Northwest	movie	Alfred Hitchcock
2. Food as Communion	Tom Jones (excerpt)	novel	Henry Fielding
	Cathedral	SS	Raymond Carver
	Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant	novel	Anne Tyler
	The Dead	SS	James Joyce
3. Vampires and Ghosts	Dracula	novel	Bram Stoker
	Hamlet	play	William Shakespeare
	A Christmas Carol	novel	Charles Dickens
	Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	novel	Robert Louis Stevenson
	The Turn of the Screw	novella	Henry James
	Daisy Miller	novel	Henry James
	Tess of the D'Urbervilles	novel	Thomas Hardy
	Metamorphosis and Hunger Artist	novel	Franz Kafka
	A Severed Head, The Unicorn	novels	Iris Murdoch
4. Sonnets			
5. Intertextuality	Going After Cacciato	novel	Tim O'Brien
	Alice in Wonderland	novel	Lewis Carroll
	The Overcoat	SS	Nikolai Gogol
	The Overcoat II"	SS	T. Coraghessan Boyle
	Two Gallants	SS	James Joyce
	Two More Gallants	SS	William Trevor
	Beowulf	poem	
	Grendel	novel	John Gardner
	Wise Children	novel	Angela Carter

	Hamlet, Much Ado About Nothing	play	William Shakespeare
6. Shakespeare Allusions	Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead	play	Tom Stoppard
	A Thousand Acres	novel	Jane Smiley
	The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock	poem	T.S. Eliot
	Master Harold...and the boys	play	Athol Fugard
	numerous TV shows and movies		
7. Biblical Allusions	Araby	SS	James Joyce
	Beloved	novel	Toni Morrison
	The Sun Also Rises	novel	Hemingway
	Canterbury Tales	poem	Geoffrey Chaucer
	Holy Sonnets	poems	John Donne
	The Wasteland	poem	T.S. Eliot
	Why I Live at the P.O.	SS	Eudora Welty
	Sonny's Blues, Go Tell It on the Mountain	SS	James Baldwin
	Pulp Fiction	movie	Quentin Tarantino
	East of Eden	novel	John Steinbeck
8. Fairy Tales	Alice in Wonderland, Sleeping Beauty, Snow white, Cinderella, Prince Charming, Hansel and Gretel,		Angela Carter
	The Gingerbread House	SS	Robert Coover
	The Bloody Chamber (collection of stories)	SS	Angela Carter
9. Greek Mythology	Song of Solomon	novel	Toni Morrison
	Musee des Beaux Arts	poem	W. H. Auden
	Landscape with Fall of Icarus	poem	William Carlos Williams
	Omeros (based on Homer)	novel	Derek Walcott
	O Brother, Where Art Thou	movie	Joel and Ethan Coen
	Ulysses	novel	James Joyce
10. Weather	The Three Strangers	SS	Thomas Hardy
	Song of Solomon	novel	Toni Morrison
	A Farewell to Arms	novel	Ernest Hemingway
	The Dead	SS	James Joyce
	The Wasteland	poem	T.S. Eliot
	The Fish	poem	Elizabeth Bishop
	The Snow Man	poem	Wallace Stevens
11. Violence	Out, Out...	poem	Robert Frost
	Beloved	novel	Toni Morrison
	Women in Love	novel	D.H. Lawrence
	The Fox	novella	D. H. Lawrence
	Barn Burning	SS	William Faulkner
	Beloved	novel	Toni Morrison
12. Symbolism	Pilgrim's Progress	allegory	John Bunyan
	Passage to India	novel	E.M. Forster
	Parable of the Cave (The Republic)		Plato
	The Bridge (poem sequence)	poem	Hart Crane
	The Wasteland	poem	T.S. Eliot
	Mowing, After Apple Picking, The Road Not Taken, Birches	poems	Robert Frost
13. Political Writing	A Christmas Carol	novel	Charles Dickens
	Masque of the Red Death, The Fall of the House of Usher	SS	Edgar Allen Poe
	Rip Van Winkle	SS	Washington Irving
	Oedipus at Colonus	play	Sophocles
	A Room of One's Own	NF	Virginia Woolf
	Mrs. Dalloway	novel	Virginia Woolf



14. Christ Figures	Old Man and the Sea	novella	Ernest Hemingway
15. Flight	Song of Solomon	novel	Toni Morrison
	Nights at the Circus	?	Angela Carter
	A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings	SS	Gabriel Garcia Marquez
	Satanic Verses	novel	Salman Rushdie
	Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man	novel	James Joyce
	Wild Swans at Coole	poem	William Butler Yeats
	Birches	poem	Robert Frost
16. All About Sex	North by Northwest	movie	Alfred Hitchcock
	Janus	SS	Ann Beattie
	Lady Chatterly's Lover, Women in Love, The Rocking-Horse Winner (SS)	novel	D.H. Lawrence
17. Except Sex	French Lieutenant's Woman	novel	John Fowles
	A Clockwork Orange	novel	Anthony Burgess
	Lolita	novel	Vladimir Nabokov
	Wise Children	novel	Angela Carter
18. Baptism	Ordinary People	novel	Judith Guest
	Love Medicine	novel	Louise Erdrich
	Song of Solomon, Beloved	novel	Toni Morrison
	The Horse Dealer's Daughter	SS	D.H. Lawrence
	The Unicorn	novel	Iris Murdoch
19. Geography	The Old Man and the Sea	novel	Ernest Hemingway
	The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn	novel	Mark Twain
	The Fall of the House of Usher	SS	Edgar Allan Poe
	Bean Trees	novel	Barbara Kingsolver
	Song of Solomon	novel	Toni Morrison
	A Room with a View, A Passage to India	novel	E.M. Forster
	Heart of Darkness	novel	Joseph Conrad
	In Praise of Prairie	poem	Theodore Roethke
	Bogland	poem	Seamus Heaney
	In Praise of Limestone	poem	W.H. Auden
	The Snows of Kilimanjaro	novel	Ernest Hemingway
20. Seasons	Sonnet 73, Richard III opening, etc.	poem	William Shakespeare
	In Memory of W.B. Yeats	poem	W.H. Auden
	After Apple Picking	poem	Robert Frost
	The Wasteland	poem	T.S. Eliot
21. Physical Marks	Richard III	play	William Shakespeare
	Song of Solomon, Beloved	novel	Toni Morrison
	Oedipus Rex	play	Sophocles
	The Sun Also Rises	novel	Ernest Hemingway
	The Wasteland	poem	T.S. Eliot
	Frankenstein	novel	Mary Shelley
	versions of Faust, Dr. Faustus, The Devil and Daniel Webster, Bedazzled (movie), Star Wars	novel, play	Goethe, Marlowe, Stephen Vincent Benet
	The Hunchback of Notre Dame	novel	Victor Hugo
	Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	novel	Robert Louis Stevenson
22. Blindness	Oedipus Rex	play	Sophocles
	Araby	SS	James Joyce
	Waiting for Godot	play	Samuel Beckett
23. Heart Disease	The Good Soldier	novel	Ford Madox Ford
	The Man of Adamant	SS	Nathaniel Hawthorne
	Lord Jim	novel	Joseph Conrad
	Lolita	novel	Vladimir Nabokov
24. Illness	The Sisters (Dubliners)	SS	James Joyce

	Illness as Metaphor (literary criticism)	NF	Susan Sontag
	The Plague	novel	Albert Camus
	A Doll's House	play	Henrik Ibsen
	The Hours	novel	Michael Cunningham
	The Masque of the Red Death	SS	Edgar Allen Poe
25. Don't Read with Your Eyes	The Dead	SS	James Joyce
	Sonny's Blues	SS	James Baldwin
	The Merchant of Venice	play	William Shakespeare
26. Irony	Waiting for Godot	play	Samuel Beckett
	A Farewell to Arms	novel	Ernest Hemingway
	The Importance of Being Earnest	play	Oscar Wilde
	Howard's End	novel	E.M. Forster
	A Clockwork Orange	novel	Anthony Burgess
	Writers who frequently take ironic stance: Franz Kafka, Samuel Beckett, James Joyce, Vladimir Nabokov, Angela Carter, T. Coraghessan Boyle, Salman Rushdie		
27. A Test Case	Uses "The Garden Party" by Katherine Mansfield as an application of the concepts found in this book.		

Notes by Marti Nelson

# Open-ended Questions for Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition, 1970-2013, to be used with Independent Reading Project

## Book Choice List

**IMPORTANT:** ALL of the questions below, implicitly or explicitly, ask you to

- Show HOW what you're discussing relates to the work's over-all significance
- Avoid mere plot summary

**2013.** A bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel, recounts the psychological or moral development of its protagonist from youth to maturity, when this character recognizes his or her place in the world. Select a single pivotal moment in the psychological or moral development of the protagonist of a bildungsroman. Then write a well-organized essay that analyzes how that single moment shapes the meaning of the work as a whole.

**2012.** "And, after all, our surroundings influence our lives and characters as much as fate, destiny or any supernatural agency." Pauline Hopkins, *Contending Forces*  
Choose a novel or play in which cultural, physical, or geographical surroundings shape psychological or moral traits in a character. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how surroundings affect this character and illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**2011.** In a novel by William Styron, a father tells his son that life "is a search for justice." Choose a character from a novel or play who responds in some significant way to justice or injustice. Then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze the character's understanding of justice, the degree to which the character's search or justice is successful, and the significance of this search for the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**2011B.** In *The Writing of Fiction* (1925), novelist Edith Wharton states the following:

At every stage in the progress of his tale the novelist must rely on what may be called the *illuminating incident* to reveal and emphasize the inner meaning of each situation. Illuminating incidents are the magic casements of fiction, its vistas on infinity.

Choose a novel or play that you have studied and write a well-organized essay in which you describe an "illuminating" episode or moment and explain how it functions as a "casement," a window that opens onto the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

**2010.** Palestinian American literary theorist and cultural critic Edward Said has written that "Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted." Yet Said has also said that exile can become "a potent, even enriching" experience. Select a novel, play, or epic in which a character experiences such a rift and becomes cut off from "home," whether that home is the character's birthplace, family, homeland, or other special

place. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the character's experience with exile is both alienating and enriching, and how this experience illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**2010, Form B.** "You can leave home all you want, but home will never leave you."

—Sonsyrea Tate

Sonsyrea Tate's statement suggests that "home" may be conceived of as a dwelling, a place, or a state of mind. It

may have positive or negative associations, but in either case, it may have a considerable influence on an individual. Choose a novel or play in which a central character leaves home yet finds that home remains significant. Write a well-developed essay in which you analyze the importance of "home" to this character and the reasons for its continuing influence. Explain how the character's idea of home illuminates the larger meaning of the work. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**2009.** A symbol is an object, action, or event that represents something or that creates a range of associations beyond itself. In literary works a symbol can express an idea, clarify meaning, or enlarge literal meaning. Select a novel or play and, focusing on one symbol, write an essay analyzing how that symbol functions in the work and what it reveals about the characters or themes of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**2009, Form B.** Many works of literature deal with political or social issues. Choose a novel or play that focuses on a political or social issue. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the author uses literary elements to explore this issue and explain how the issue contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**2008.** In a literary work, a minor character, often known as a foil, possesses traits that emphasize, by contrast or comparison, the distinctive characteristics and qualities of the main character. For example, the ideas or behavior of the minor character might be used to highlight the weaknesses or strengths of the main character. Choose a novel or play in which a minor character serves as a foil to a main character. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the relation between the minor character and the major character illuminates the meaning of the work.

**2008, Form B.** In some works of literature, childhood and adolescence are portrayed as times graced by innocence and a sense of wonder; in other works, they are depicted as times of tribulation and terror. Focusing on a single novel or play, explain how its representation of childhood or adolescence shapes the meaning of the work as a whole.

**2008 College Board authorized practice test:** In many works of literature, a main character has a mentor or mentor-like acquaintance whose influence dramatically changes how the character views not only himself or herself, but the world as well. Choose a novel or play in which a mentor exhibits such a strong influence, either beneficial or harmful, on one of the main characters. Then, in a well-organized essay, discuss the nature of the mentor's influence and its significance to the work as a whole.

**2007.** In many works of literature, past events can affect, positively or negatively, the present activities, attitudes, or values of a character. Choose a novel or play in which a character must contend with some aspect of the past, either personal or societal. Then

write an essay in which you show how the character's relationship to the past contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

**2007, Form B.** Works of literature often depict acts of betrayal. Friends and even family may betray a protagonist; main characters may likewise be guilty of treachery or may betray their own values. Select a novel or play that includes such acts of betrayal. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze the nature of the betrayal and show how it contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

**2006.** Many writers use a country setting to establish values within a work of literature. For example, the country may be a place of virtue and peace or one of primitivism and ignorance. Choose a novel or play in which such a setting plays a significant role. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the country setting functions in the work as a whole.

**2006, Form B.** In many works of literature, a physical journey - the literal movement from one place to another - plays a central role. Choose a novel, play, or epic poem in which a physical journey is an important element and discuss how the journey adds to the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

**2005.** In Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), protagonist Edna Pontellier is said to possess "that outward existence which conforms, the inward life that questions." In a novel or play that you have studied, identify a character who outwardly conforms while questioning inwardly. Then write an essay in which you analyze how this tension between outward conformity and inward questioning contributes to the meaning of the work. Avoid mere plot summary.

**2005, Form B.** One of the strongest human drives seems to be a desire for power. Write an essay in which you discuss how a character in a novel or a drama struggles to free himself or herself from the power of others or seeks to gain power over others. Be sure to demonstrate in your essay how the author uses this power struggle to enhance the meaning of the work.

**2004.** Critic Roland Barthes has said, "Literature is the question minus the answer." Choose a novel, or play, and, considering Barthes' observation, write an essay in which you analyze a central question the work raises and the extent to which it offers answers. Explain how the author's treatment of this question affects your understanding of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

**2004, Form B.** The most important themes in literature are sometimes developed in scenes in which a death or deaths take place. Choose a novel or play and write a well-organized essay in which you show how a specific death scene helps to illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

**2003.** According to critic Northrop Frye, "Tragic heroes are so much the highest points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable conductors of the power about them, great trees more likely to be struck by lightning than a clump of grass. Conductors may of course be instruments as well as victims of the divisive lightning." Select a novel or play in which a tragic figure functions as an instrument of the suffering of others. Then write an essay in which you explain how the suffering brought upon others by that figure contributes to the tragic vision of the work as a whole.

**2003, Form B.** Novels and plays often depict characters caught between colliding cultures -- national, regional, ethnic, religious, institutional. Such collisions can call a

character's sense of identity into question. Select a novel or play in which a character responds to such a cultural collision. Then write a well-organized essay in which you describe the character's response and explain its relevance to the work as a whole.

**2002.** Morally ambiguous characters -- characters whose behavior discourages readers from identifying them as purely evil or purely good -- are at the heart of many works of literature. Choose a novel or play in which a morally ambiguous character plays a pivotal role. Then write an essay in which you explain how the character can be viewed as morally ambiguous and why his or her moral ambiguity is significant to the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

**2002, Form B.** Often in literature, a character's success in achieving goals depends on keeping a secret and divulging it only at the right moment, if at all. Choose a novel or play of literary merit that requires a character to keep a secret. In a well-organized essay, briefly explain the necessity for secrecy and how the character's choice to reveal or keep the secret affects the plot and contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

**2001.** One definition of madness is "mental delusion or the eccentric behavior arising from it." But Emily Dickinson wrote: "Much madness is divinest/Sense-To a discerning Eye." Novelists and playwrights have often seen madness with a "discerning Eye." Select a novel or play in which a character's apparent madness or irrational behavior plays an important role. Then write a well-organized essay in which you explain what this delusion or eccentric behavior consists of and how it might be judged reasonable. Explain the significance of the "madness" to the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**2000.** Many works of literature not readily identified with the mystery or detective story genre nonetheless involve the investigation of a mystery. In these works, the solution to the mystery may be less important than the knowledge gained in the process of its investigation. Choose a novel or play in which one or more of the characters confront a mystery. Then write an essay in which you identify the mystery and explain how the investigation illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**1999.** The eighteenth-century British novelist Laurence Sterne wrote, "No body, but he who has felt it, can conceive what a plaguing thing it is to have a man's mind torn asunder by two projects of equal strength, both obstinately pulling in a contrary direction at the same time." From a novel or play choose a character (not necessarily the protagonist) whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences. Then, in a well-organized essay, identify each of the two conflicting forces and explain how this conflict with one character illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. You may use one of the novels or plays listed below or another novel or work of similar literary quality.

**1998.** In his essay "Walking," Henry David Thoreau offers the following assessment of literature: In literature it is only the wild that attracts us. Dullness is but another name for tameness. It is the uncivilized free and wild thinking in *Hamlet* and *The Iliad*, in all scriptures and mythologies, not learned in schools, that delights us. From the works that you have studied in school, choose a novel, play, or epic poem that you may initially have thought was conventional and tame but that you now value for its "uncivilized free and wild thinking." Write an essay in which you explain what constitutes its "uncivilized

free and wild thinking" and how that thinking is central to the value of the work as a whole. Support your ideas with specific references to the work you choose.

**1997.** Novels and plays often include scenes of weddings, funerals, parties, and other social occasions. Such scenes may reveal the values of the characters and the society in which they live. Select a novel or play that includes such a scene and, in a focused essay, discuss the contribution the scene makes to the meaning of the work as a whole. You may choose a work from the list below or another novel or play of literary merit.

**1996.** The British novelist Fay Weldon offers this observation about happy endings. "The writers, I do believe, who get the best and most lasting response from their readers are the writers who offer a happy ending through moral development. By a happy ending, I do not mean mere fortunate events -- a marriage or a last minute rescue from death -- but some kind of spiritual reassessment or moral reconciliation, even with the self, even at death." Choose a novel or play that has the kind of ending Weldon describes. In a well-written essay, identify the "spiritual reassessment or moral reconciliation" evident in the ending and explain its significance in the work as a whole.

**1995.** Writers often highlight the values of a culture or a society by using characters who are alienated from that culture or society because of gender, race, class, or creed. Choose a novel or a play in which such a character plays a significant role and show how that character's alienation reveals the surrounding society's assumptions or moral values.

**1994.** In some works of literature, a character who appears briefly, or does not appear at all, is a significant presence. Choose a novel or play of literary merit and write an essay in which you show how such a character functions in the work. You may wish to discuss how the character affects action, theme, or the development of other characters. Avoid plot summary.

**1993.** "The true test of comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter." Choose a novel, play, or long poem in which a scene or character awakens "thoughtful laughter" in the reader. Write an essay in which you show why this laughter is "thoughtful" and how it contributes to the meaning of the work.

**1992.** In a novel or play, a confidant (male) or a confidante (female) is a character, often a friend or relative of the hero or heroine, whose role is to be present when the hero or heroine needs a sympathetic listener to confide in. Frequently the result is, as Henry James remarked, that the confidant or confidante can be as much "the reader's friend as the protagonist's." However, the author sometimes uses this character for other purposes as well. Choose a confidant or confidante from a novel or play of recognized literary merit and write an essay in which you discuss the various ways this character functions in the work.

**1991.** Many plays and novels use contrasting places (for example, two countries, two cities or towns, two houses, or the land and the sea) to represent opposed forces or ideas that are central to the meaning of the work. Choose a novel or play that contrasts two such places. Write an essay explaining how the places differ, what each place represents, and how their contrast contributes to the meaning of the work.

**1990.** Choose a novel or play that depicts a conflict between a parent (or a parental figure) and a son or daughter. Write an essay in which you analyze the sources of the



conflict and explain how the conflict contributes to the meaning of the work. Avoid plot summary.

**1989.** In questioning the value of literary realism, Flannery O'Connor has written, "I am interested in making a good case for distortion because I am coming to believe that it is the only way to make people see." Write an essay in which you "make a good case for distortion," as distinct from literary realism. Analyze how important elements of the work you choose are "distorted" and explain how these distortions contribute to the effectiveness of the work. Avoid plot summary.

**1988.** Choose a distinguished novel or play in which some of the most significant events are mental or psychological; for example, awakenings, discoveries, changes in consciousness. In a well-organized essay, describe how the author manages to give these internal events the sense of excitement, suspense, and climax usually associated with external action. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**1987.** Some novels and plays seem to advocate changes in social or political attitudes or in traditions. Choose such a novel or play and note briefly the particular attitudes or traditions that the author apparently wishes to modify. Then analyze the techniques the author uses to influence the reader's or audience's views. Avoid plot summary.

**1986.** Some works of literature use the element of time in a distinct way. The chronological sequence of events may be altered, or time may be suspended or accelerated. Choose a novel, an epic, or a play of recognized literary merit and show how the author's manipulation of time contributes to the effectiveness of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**1985.** A critic has said that one important measure of a superior work of literature is its ability to produce in the reader a healthy confusion of pleasure and disquietude. Select a literary work that produces this "healthy confusion." Write an essay in which you explain the sources of the "pleasure and disquietude" experienced by the readers of the work.

**1984.** Select a moment or scene in a novel, epic poem, or play that you find especially memorable. Write an essay in which you identify the line or the passage, explain its relationship to the work in which it is found, and analyze the reasons for its effectiveness.

**1983.** From a novel or play of literary merit, select an important character who is a villain. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the nature of the character's villainy and show how it enhances meaning in the work. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**1982.** In great literature, no scene of violence exists for its own sake. Choose a work of literary merit that confronts the reader or audience with a scene or scenes of violence. In a well-organized essay, explain how the scene or scenes contribute to the meaning of the complete work. Avoid plot summary.

**1981.** The meaning of some literary works is often enhanced by sustained allusion to myths, the Bible, or other works of literature. Select a literary work that makes use of such a sustained reference. Then write a well-organized essay in which you explain the allusion that predominates in the work and analyze how it enhances the work's meaning.



**1980.** A recurring theme in literature is the classic war between a passion and responsibility. For instance, a personal cause, a love, a desire for revenge, a determination to redress a wrong, or some other emotion or drive may conflict with moral duty. Choose a literary work in which a character confronts the demands of a private passion that conflicts with his or her responsibilities. In a well-written essay show clearly the nature of the conflict, its effects upon the character, and its significance to the work.

**1979.** Choose a complex and important character in a novel or a play of recognized literary merit who might on the basis of the character's actions alone be considered evil or immoral. In a well-organized essay, explain both how and why the full presentation of the character in the work makes us react more sympathetically than we otherwise might. Avoid plot summary.

**1978.** Choose an implausible or strikingly unrealistic incident or character in a work of fiction or drama of recognized literary merit. Write an essay that explains how the incident or character is related to the more realistic or plausible elements in the rest of the work. Avoid plot summary.

**1977.** In some novels and plays certain parallel or recurring events prove to be significant. In an essay, describe the major similarities and differences in a sequence of parallel or recurring events in a novel or play and discuss the significance of such events. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**1976.** The conflict created when the will of an individual opposes the will of the majority is the recurring theme of many novels, plays, and essays. Select the work of an essayist who is in opposition to his or her society; or from a work of recognized literary merit, select a fictional character who is in opposition to his or her society. In a critical essay, analyze the conflict and discuss the moral and ethical implications for both the individual and the society. Do not summarize the plot or action of the work you choose.

**1975.** Although literary critics have tended to praise the unique in literary characterizations, many authors have employed the stereotyped character successfully. Select one work of acknowledged literary merit and in a well-written essay, show how the conventional or stereotyped character or characters function to achieve the author's purpose.

**1975 Also.** Unlike the novelist, the writer of a play does not use his own voice and only rarely uses a narrator's voice to guide the audience's responses to character and action. Select a play you have read and write an essay in which you explain the techniques the playwright uses to guide his audience's responses to the central characters and the action. You might consider the effect on the audience of things like setting, the use of comparable and contrasting characters, and the characters' responses to each other. Support your argument with specific references to the play. Do not give a plot summary.

**1973.** An effective literary work does not merely stop or cease; it concludes. In the view of some critics, a work that does not provide the pleasure of significant closure has terminated with an artistic fault. A satisfactory ending is not, however, always conclusive in every sense; significant closure may require the reader to abide with or adjust to ambiguity and uncertainty. In an essay, discuss the ending of a novel or play of acknowledged literary merit. Explain precisely how and why the ending appropriately or inappropriately concludes the work. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**1972.** In retrospect, the reader often discovers that the first chapter of a novel or the opening scene of a drama introduces some of the major themes of the work. Write an essay about the opening scene of a drama or the first chapter of a novel in which you explain how it functions in this way.

**1970.** Choose a character from a novel or play of recognized literary merit and write an essay in which you (a) briefly describe the standards of the fictional society in which the character exists and (b) show how the character is affected by and responds to those standards. In your essay do not merely summarize the plot.

**1970 Also.** Choose a work of recognized literary merit in which a specific inanimate object (e.g., a seashell, a handkerchief, a painting) is important, and write an essay in which you show how two or three of the purposes the object serves are related to one another.

**This list has been modified to include only those prompts you may use for this assignment. Some prompts have been slightly modified from the original.**

## AP Literature Prose Essay Prompts (1970–2011)

**NOTE:** From 1956 (the first official administration of AP tests) through 1979, all AP English examinees took the same test. In 1980, separate Language and Literature exams began to be offered. The passages for the following prose essay prompts are from a variety of novels, essays, short stories, and nonfiction sources.

1970 Meredith’s “Ferdinand and Miranda” from *The Ordeal of Richard Ferval*: Show how the young woman and the young man in the passage are made to seem naturally suited for one another.

1971 Orwell’s “Some Thoughts on the Common Toad”: Demonstrate how the speaker establishes his attitude toward the coming of spring.

1972 Joyce’s “Eveline” from *Dubliners*: Explain how the author prepares his reader for Eveline’s final inability or unwillingness to sail to South America with Frank. Consider at least two elements of fictions such as theme, symbol, setting, image, characterization, or any other aspects of the narrative artist’s craft.

1973 Dickens’ *Hard Times*: Explain how the author’s presentation of details is intended to shape the reader’s attitudes toward the place he describes — Coketown and the caves. Give specific attention to the function of word choice, imagery, phrasing, and sentence structure.

1974 Henry James’s *What Maisie Knew*: In the opening lines of the passage we are told the “new arrangement was inevitably confounding” to Maisie. Write a descriptive or narrative piece which presents a person who is undergoing a new experience that is confounding.

1975 Lagerkvist’s *The Marriage Feast*: Define and discuss the subject of the story. Direct your remarks to the significance of the events described.

1976 Work/author unknown: Characterize briefly the world and way of life described in the passage, discuss the effect of the passage as a whole, and analyze those elements that achieve this effect.

1977 No prose selection (instead, had the following prompt: A character’s attempt to recapture or reject the past is important in many plays, novels, and poems. Choose a work in which a character views the past with such feelings as reverence, bitterness, or longing. Show with clear evidence how the character’s view of the past is used to develop a theme in the work.)

1978 Johnson’s “Review of ‘A Free Enquiry Into The Nature and Origin of Evil’”: Analyze Samuel Johnson’s attitude toward writer Soame Jenyns and treatment of Jenyns’ argument.

1979 Quentin Bell on the Woolf family: Show how style reveals feelings about family.

1980 Two funerals: Compare the different authors’ attitudes by examining diction and choice of detail; also discuss their effect on the reader.

1981 George Bernard Shaw on his mother’s cremation: Analyze how diction and detail convey attitude.

1982 Stevenson’s “Cat Bill”: Analyze strategies that make the argument effective for his audience.

1983 Thomas Carlyle’s “Work”: Examine how he uses language to convince the reader of the rightness of his position.

1984 Austen’s *Emma*: Explain how passage characterizes Emma more than Harriet.

Mailer’s “Death of Benny Paret”: Explain and analyze effect on reader and how diction, syntax, imagery, and tone produce that effect. (Two prose prompts; no poem)

1985 Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*: Compare two drafts of a passage from *A Farewell to Arms* and analyze the effect of revisions.

1986 Dickens’ *Dombey and Son*: Define narrator’s attitude toward characters through imagery, diction, narrative structure, choice of detail.

1987 George Eliot’s “Leisure” from *Adam Bede*: Describe her two views of leisure and discuss stylistic devices she uses to convey those views.

1988 Updike's "Reunion": Analyze blend of humor, pathos, and grotesque in their story.

1989 Conrad's "Captain MacWhirr" from *Typhoon*: Define attitude of speaker toward Captain and analyze techniques he uses to define Captain's character.

1990 Didion's "Self-deception - Self-respect": Show how style and tone help convey attitude.

1991 Boswell's *The Life of Samuel Johnson*: Discuss the ways Boswell differentiates between the writing of Addison and Johnson.

1992 Beginning and ending of Tillie Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing": Analyze the narrative techniques and other resources of language Olsen uses to characterize the mother and her attitude.

1993 Lytton Strachey's conception of Florence Nightingale: Define Strachey's view and analyze how he conveys it.

1994 Sarah Jewett's "A White Heron": Show how the author dramatizes the young heroine's adventure using diction, imagery, narrative pace, and point of view.

1995 Sandra Cisneros' "Eleven": Show how the author uses literary techniques to characterize Rachel.

1996 Hawthorne's "Judge Pyncheon" from *House of the Seven Gables*: Analyze how the narrator reveals the character of Judge Pyncheon. Emphasize such devices as tone, selection of detail, syntax, point of view.

1997 Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*: Analyze how changes in perspective and style reflect the narrator's complex attitude toward the past. Consider elements such as point of view, structure, selection of detail, and figurative language.

1998 George Eliot's *Middlemarch*: Write an essay in which you characterize the narrator's attitude toward Dorothea Brooke and analyze the literary techniques used to convey this attitude.

1999 Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing*: Show how the author's techniques convey the impact of the experience on the main character.

2000 Joseph Addison's *The Spectator* (March 4, 1712): Analyze how the language of the passage characterizes the diarist and his society and how the characterization serves Addison's satiric purpose. Consider such elements as selection of detail, repetition, and tone.

2001 Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749): Analyze the techniques that Fielding employs in this scene to characterize Mr. Allworthy and Mrs. Deborah Wilkins.

2002 Alain de Botton's *Kiss and Tell*: Write an essay in which you analyze how the author produces a comic effect.

2002B Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News*: Note the author's use of such elements as diction, syntax, imagery, and figurative language. Analyze how the author's use of language generates a vivid impression of Quoyle as a character.

2003 Mavis Gallant's "The Other Paris": Explain how the author uses narrative voice and characterization to provide social commentary.

2003B Joyce Carol Oates's *We Were the Mulvaney's* (1996): Analyze the literary techniques Oates uses to characterize the speaker, Judd Mulvaney. Support with specific references to the passage.

2004 Henry James's "The Pupil" (1891): Analyze the author's depiction of the three characters and the relationships among them. Pay particular attention to tone and point of view.

2004B Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848): This is from a novel about mill workers living in Manchester, England, in the 1840's. Analyze how Gaskell uses elements such as point of view, selection of detail, dialogue, and characterization to make a social commentary.

2005 Katharine Brush's "Birthday Party" (1946): Write an essay in which you show how the author uses literary devices to achieve her purpose.

2005B Norris' *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco*: Discuss how the characterization in the passage reflects the narrator's attitude toward McTeague. Consider such elements as

diction, tone, detail, and syntax.

2006 Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892): Analyze how the playwright reveals the values of the characters and the nature of their society.

2006B From "a nineteenth-century novel": Discuss how the narrator's style reveals his attitudes toward the people he describes.

2007 Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*: Analyze how Trumbo uses such techniques as point of view, selection of detail, and syntax to characterize the relationship between the young man and his father.

2007B Seamus Deane reflecting on his childhood experiences with books and writing: Analyze how Deane conveys the impact those early experiences had on him.

2008 Aran from Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* (1999): Analyze how the author uses such literary devices as speech and point of view to characterize Aran's experience.

2008B Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818): Analyze the literary techniques Austen uses to characterize Catherine Morland.

2009 Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946): Analyze how Petry establishes Lutie Johnson's relationship to the urban setting through the use of literary devices such as imagery, personification, selection of detail, and figurative language.

2009B Zorah Neale Hurston's *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948): Analyze the literary techniques Hurston uses to describe Sawley and to characterize the people who live there.

2010 Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801): The narrator provides a description of Clarence Harvey, one of the suitors of the novel's protagonist, Belinda Portman. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze Clarence Hervey's complex character as Edgeworth develops it through such literary techniques as tone, point of view, and language.

2010B Maxine Clair's "Cherry Bomb": Write an essay in which you analyze how Clair uses literary techniques to characterize the adult narrator's memories of her fifth-grade summer world.

2011 George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1874): In the passage, Rosamond and Tertius Lydgate, a recently married couple, confront financial difficulties. Read the passage carefully. Then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze how Eliot portrays these two characters and their complex relationship as husband and wife. You may wish to consider such literary devices as narrative perspective and selection of detail.

2011B Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998): The following passage is the opening of the novel by the Cree novelist and playwright Tomson Highway. Read the passage carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how Highway uses literary devices to dramatize Okimasis' experience.

Originally compiled and shared by Cheryl DeLacretaz, Dripping Springs High School, Dripping Springs, TX

## What AP Readers Long to See...

This list of suggestions for AP students writing the AP exam was compiled during the 2007 AP English reading at the Convention Center in Louisville, Kentucky. Although its participants read essays that answered only question number 1 (the poetry question), their suggestions apply to other parts of the exam as well.

### Structure & Composition

1. Fully develop your essays; try to write at least 2 pages. It's a shame to read the first page of what promises to be an 8 or 9 essay and then have the writer not fully develop their ideas and quit after one page. However, a longer essay is not necessarily a better essay.
2. Integrate your quotations gracefully (1) into your analysis of literary devices (2) with an interpretation of meaning (3). Thoroughly explain the relevance of the quote to the prompt and your analysis. Don't assume that your understanding of a quote is the same as the readers' understanding; you have to interpret its significance to the work, your thesis and the prompt. Show, don't tell.
3. Spend time planning your essay (10 minutes), and find some angle, within the context of the prompt, that you feel passionate about, whether emotionally, intellectually or philosophically (passion moves readers). If the prompt refers to "literary devices" or any other technical aspects of the work, ignore the reference and ask first, "What does the poem mean?" THEN, ask, "What message does the author have for you?" THEN, ask, "How is that message delivered?" At this point, the devices should suggest themselves in a context in which the technicalities of the work will be seen to create its effectiveness rather than obscuring its power.
4. Don't just jump from thought to thought; transition quickly but effectively.
5. Make sure your essay has a clear ARGUABLE thesis statement which clearly reflects what you intend to discuss. Make sure your thesis is an EXACT reflection of what the prompt is asking WITHOUT simply restating the prompt. A good formula is "The text shows X in order to show/highlight/accomplish Y." Connect the literary device back to the author's point.
6. Spend more time thinking and analyzing the ENTIRE text rather than paraphrasing the text in your response. Many writers miss or ignore subtle shades of meaning which show contrasts or similarities. Look for ambiguities and ambivalence in the selection.
7. Make sure that all your claims/analysis has effective support AND that the support you choose is the best the text has to offer. When considering what support to use, reflect on the following:
  - a. Are they all equal?
  - b. Do they grow or diminish in importance or scale?
  - c. Are there different aspects of one thing or varieties?
8. The conclusion should be a separate paragraph, even if you only have time for one sentence. Don't just stop after your last argument, and avoid simply repeating your introduction in your conclusion. A good conclusion could restate the thesis, emphasize salient aspects of the essay and end with a provocative clincher.
9. While avoiding the formula of the five-paragraph essay, it would also be helpful to see more than one or two GIGANTIC paragraphs. Because readers read through only once and quickly, not having those cues to where ideas begin and end contributes to the incoherency of an essay. **Structure is part of essay writing, and students need to show that they can command the language and their thoughts into a structured essay.**
10. Don't use plot summary in your response. "Summary is death!"
11. Evidence, evidence, evidence!
12. Avoid formulaic writing, especially in the opening of your essay. If you use a formula to get the pen moving, then do, but if 10 or 15 seconds though will help you craft something more creative or original or efficient, that that's 10 seconds well spent. Readers will read hundreds and hundreds of essays, 90% of which start the same way (think refrigerator word magnets simply rearranged a thousand different ways), and if you can create something memorable (but not wacky), it may bring more attention to your work.
13. Don't just use line numbers, but briefly quote instead. Line numbers never substitute for the actual quote when supporting a point, AND most readers will not go back to the poem or text to see which lines you are referring

- to. Finally, when quoting, don't simply give the first and last words with an ellipsis in between. Use the exact words that are most important in demonstrating your point.
14. Take some time to consider point of view and audience before digging in. Many essays confuse the actual purpose of the text by not thinking about or ignoring the proposed audience or point of view.
  15. Teachers should remind students that they can write on any work OF LITERARY MERIT which is a PLAY or a NOVEL. Some students wrote notes that they hadn't read any of the suggested works so they were giving up. In addition, the reading slowed down as readers searched the table for someone who might even recognize titles that none of us had heard of.

## Style

1. Avoid long, flowery (purple prose), showy, catchy, etc, introductions; stick to a few sentences and get to the point (aka your thesis).
2. Don't moralize or comment on the quality of the work – "I liked the poem," etc; focus on literary analysis as a means to convey your opinions not on how you personally felt about the selection. And, don't comment on the author, either: "Such and such was a great 20<sup>th</sup> century author who..." Or "Milton does a great job of..."
3. Avoid affective fallacy, which argues that the reader's response to a poem is the ultimate indication of its value.
4. Creative writing is not academic writing.
5. Take some risks. Be aware of your strengths as a writer and show them off. Be critical and analytical.
6. Develop your essay well, but be thinking about being concise, too. Less can be more.
7. Don't repeat yourself. Find new ways to say the same thing if you must reiterate a point.
8. Write as legibly and neatly as possible; WRITE USING LARGE LETTERS. *Readers will always do their best to read every word, but stumbling through an essay which is illegible, too small or too big does impact our understanding of the response.*
9. It's not necessary to write titles for your responses; in fact, many readers do not like them at all.
10. Don't confuse the characters in a poem or text with the audience or the speaker of the piece. Don't confuse the speaker with the author, either.
11. Avoid lists: "The writer uses words such as ...to show..."
12. Complex ideas require complex or multiple sentences. Don't oversimplify.
13. Do not use little hearts, stars or circles to dot your "i's." It makes your essay harder to read and takes away valuable time from your analysis.
14. Use a black pen.
15. Use an active voice, simple present tense (literary tense) and strong verbs.
16. Be yourself! Strut your stuff! Use your own voice in the essay. BUT, don't show off or "act smart" either. Patronizing or pretentious essays often don't make the cut because the author is more interested in himself or herself than in taking care of business (aka answering the prompt).
17. This is not the place to express your opinions on Iraq or the US government, your ex-boyfriend or girlfriend, how you're having a bad hair day, your unreasonable parents, or your lousy AP teacher (at least for the purposes set before us) – write about the literature.
18. Avoid "fluff."
19. Don't apologize in your essay for a lack of understanding, learning, etc. Show what you can do; don't apologize for what you can't do.

## Focus – aka THE PROMPT

1. Respond to the prompt and the prompt ONLY (**AP = Address the Prompt – accurately, completely and specifically**). Make sure you have a clear understanding of what the prompt asks before beginning, and don't twist it into what you really want to write about. We readers need to know what and how you understood the text and its relationship to the prompt. *This came up many, many times and is probably the most important part of your task. Too many great essays go down in flames because the student simply did not respond to the prompt.*

2. Be as specific as possible with your analysis as it refers to the prompt. Don't over-generalize. Generalizations don't make good evidence to support assertions.
3. Don't simply restate the prompt in your introduction. Using language from the prompt is fine when and if it is combined with an interpretation which you plan on pursuing in the essay.
4. Some literary devices are genre specific; know the difference. There is some overlap, of course, but certain distinctions are worth noting.
5. Don't simply list devices; focus on a few and show how AND WHY they are used – what the device adds to the meaning of the text. Literary devices are not important in and of themselves, and truly excellent writers don't just observe devices, they discuss their consequences. Literary devices are tools the author uses to create meaning. Ask yourself "So what?" If there's a rhyme scheme, so what? What purpose does it serve?
6. Especially when responding to poetry, explain how form relates to content. Form and content are mutually constitutive; any discussion of one should include the other.
7. Literary terms should be used correctly and appropriately. If you're not sure what a term means or refers to, don't use it in your essay, and don't make up devices. Finally, don't take time to define literary terms. We're English teachers; we already know them. Instead, focus on explaining how the literary device is being used effectively.
8. When you analyze a work, assess the whole work from start to finish as an organic whole. Don't carve your analysis into paragraphs for each device; evaluate how the work builds to its conclusion and creates its tone and effects.
9. Don't forget what are often the most important parts of a text, especially a poem: THE TITLE AND THE ENDING.
10. When asked to compare and contrast, remember that simply because one text uses devices X, Y and Z does not mean that the second text uses the same devices and, therefore, must be part of your analysis. You should be looking at overall meaning and how the author achieves that meaning regardless of the devices involved for each text.
11. Don't write about ANYTHING which can't be related back to the theme and the prompt. Also, don't show off by alluding to other works that you have read or studied, not even in the conclusion. Doing so almost always diminishes your other observations.
12. Take some time to review your essay and make sure it relates back to the prompt. Many essays start out well focused and end up digressing.
13. Many readers responded that you should try to discuss rhyme, structure, etc when working with poetry BUT ONLY if you know what you are talking about. The same is true when dealing with structural attributes of prose passages. BUT, don't ONLY discuss structure, and don't assume that structure is the end all or be all of the analysis.
14. If you don't have much to discuss, do it quickly.
15. If you think a selection is too simple or easy, look again!
16. Don't force symbolism into your analysis. Everything is not symbolic. It is better to miss symbolism that only might exist than to distort the meaning of the work by creating symbols that are simply not there.

### **Vocabulary & Word Choice**

1. The term "diction" does not mean "word choice." It refers more specifically to the formality of the writer's language. Looking closely at the writer's selection of words and phrases, along with his or her use of sentence construction and syntax, all lead to determining the diction of a selection.
2. When comparing and contrasting, don't write that the texts are similar and different or that they are "the same and different." *This comment was made MANY times.*
3. Avoid the use of clichés.
4. Put your time into answering the prompt
5. Do not inflate your essay with jargon. Readers know "big words," too. They may know more of them than you. Instead, use words effectively and in context. Simple, clear, and direct diction is preferable to high-toned literary baffle-gab (pretentious and obscure talk full of technical terminology or circumlocutions).



6. Do not misspell the names of poets, authors, poems, books, terms from the prompt, etc. It looks sloppy. Plus, poems are not plays or novels; plays are not poems or novels; and novels are not poems or plays.
7. Know the differences – *analyzing, explaining, paraphrasing, summarizing, describing, etc.*
8. “Simplistic” doesn’t mean “simple.”
9. Mastery of grammar and mechanical skills is important and strengthens the essay.
10. Writers don’t “use” diction or tone, nor do they “use literary terms” in their writing. ALL sentences have diction and syntax. The question is, therefore, what kind of diction and syntax is being used AND why. Don’t write that, “The author uses diction (or syntax or whatever) to show his or her meaning.”
11. A rhyme scheme and/or metrical pattern do not mean the poem is “sing songy” or “childlike.”
12. Avoid the word “flow”; it means nothing.
13. Poems and stories are not “journeys.”- They may convey journeys.
14. Don’t talk about the effect something has on the reader’s feelings or emotions. In fact, avoid the word “feel” altogether. Example: “...to make the reader feel...”; “...a story-like feel versus a rhythmic feel...”; “As one reads, it will make the reader flow through the poem and feel like he is there.”
15. Authors don’t “use” devices to make something *interesting, more accessible* or *more complicated to read or understand*.
16. Avoid using the diminutive or augmentative forms of words simply to highlight what may be more subtle differences in meaning.
17. Don’t create “new” words (or neologisms) in your essays.
18. Avoid empty words: unique, different, similar, negative, etc – make your own “weak word list.”
19. “Rhyme” does not mean the poem is simple.
20. Poetry is written in stanzas not paragraphs.
21. Avoid phrases like “in today’s society” and “paints a picture” and “makes you feel like you are really there.”
22. Words are not a poetic device.
23. Mood and tone are not the same thing.

## AP Literature Exam Review Sheet

Please complete 5-7 of these review sheets for the novels and plays which you enjoyed the most, believe have the most merit or will serve you well, or that you simply have the most recent memory of...In other words ... what do you see yourself using for an Open Response question?

Title:

Author:

Date of Publication (any significance between the date of publication and the work itself...ie. literary movement, historical or societal context?)

Brief plot summary. Just to remind yourself- Don't just summarize on the exam...OK?

Describe Setting(s): Note changes in, pairings of, absences of...

Symbols, motifs, archetypes and functions of?

Protagonist's name-

Describe: For example, education, talents, skills, occupation, family dynamics, loves, concerns, beliefs...

Why memorable?

Applicable vocabulary (Use of vocab quizzes)

Antagonist's name-

Describe: For example, education, talents, skills, occupation, family dynamics, loves, concerns, beliefs...

Why memorable?

Applicable vocabulary (Use of vocab quizzes)

Minor character(s)- function of each

Narrator? Function and reliability? Explain.

Point-of-view and contribution of...

Major Conflicts- note internal and external where appropriate- relate to themes.

Stylistic elements of note, LDS???: (Use your old vocab tests?)

Allusions? Function(s) of...

Possible themes- not clichés, proverb, or maxims. No “you.” Universals only.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Key Quotes and why significant

1.

2.

3.

List feasibility for AP prompts: Use your old papers and notes, our index card brainstorm, your old vocab tests, the old AP prompts, and your AP workbook.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

List Foster chapter connections with brief explanation

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.