

Multiple Choice Questions on the AP Language and Composition Exam- 2012

Upon what are you tested?

The AP Language and Composition exam tests your critical and analytical thinking skills; it asks you to understand the ways writers use language to provide both meaning and pleasure for their readers; it requires you to apply concepts and terms to any piece of writing presented; and it necessitates your translating some of this information into multiple-choice selections and written responses. These multiple choice questions and written responses ask you to make careful observations of textual details, establish connections among their characteristics, and draw from your observations a series of associations and inferences that lead to a meaningful and interpretive conclusion about a passage of writing.

General suggestions

- Read the questions before reading the passages
- Take brief notes or underline key parts of the passage
- When answering questions, **BE SURE TO READ ALL OF THE OPTIONS.** Sometimes there are more than one that will work as an answer, but only one will be the **BEST** answer
- Occasionally, a question will direct you to a particular line or even a specific word within the passage. Find the location, but be ready to read a few lines before and after the reference to be sure you understand the context.

General suggestions

- Read the instructions carefully, paying particular attention to critical words such as *only*, *except*, *always*, *not*, *never*, *best*. Students often hate the “all of the following except.” Be careful of the word **EXCEPT**.
- The 60-minute time limit for the multiple choice section of the exam includes reading and understanding four or five passages as well as answering the questions that follow. If there are four passages, estimate an average of about 15 minutes for each passage. If there are five passages, estimate about 12 minutes.
- **SOME PASSAGES WILL BE HARDER THAN OTHERS**, so don't be rigid about these timing rules.

General suggestions

- **PREDICT AN ANSWER.** Before you look at the possible responses, try to think of an answer on your own. It might help you narrow down your choice.
- If you don't know, guess. Beginning in May 2011, there is no penalty for wrong answers. Narrow down your choices as much as possible, and keep in mind that you should be able to eliminate at least two options that are obviously wrong for every question.
- Circle the correct answers in the question book and bubble them in all at once for each section. This saves time shuffling papers around.

General suggestions

- Don't agonize over the ones you don't know. Circle the question, leave it blank, and come back to it later. Chances are you will have time to revisit a few questions before the time is up.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the main idea question

Questions about the passage's main idea are very common on the exam. Often the first or last questions of a series have to do with the main idea. What is the author saying? Can you restate it? That's what you need to do, at least in your mind. You might have to make a few marginal notes, or you may find the main idea stated in one or two lines (sometimes at the end) that you can underline.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the main idea question

Question stems:

- The author would most likely agree with which of the following?
- The narrator's/ writer's/ author's/ speaker's attitude can best be described as...
- The author would most/ least likely agree that...
- The writer has presented all of the following ideas EXCEPT...
- We can infer that the author values the quality of....
- The attitude of the narrator helps the writer create a mood of...
- In context, lines ___ most likely refer to....

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the main idea question

Example #1:

The Narrator's attitude toward his mistress can best be described as

- a. Compassion and understanding
- b. Hatred and vengeance
- c. Ridicule and dismissal
- d. Disgust and disappointment
- e. Regret and thankfulness

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the main idea question

Example #1:

Be careful of the multiple options. They must both be correct for the option to be the correct one.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the main idea question

Example:

The narrator Frederick Douglas would most likely adhere to the concept that

- a. All's well that ends well
- b. Some people's piety is only skin deep
- c. One must take advantage of that which is close at hand
- d. Sometimes things don't work out the way you want them to
- e. White people are not to be trusted

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the main idea question

Example #2:

In this question, multiple options *could* work, but only one is the *best* answer.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the rhetoric question

Questions about rhetoric dominate the AP English exam. How does the language work in a passage? What is the point of view or the syntax and diction? How does the author express his or her tone? What is the narrator's attitude? These are not words just to be thrown around recklessly. You need to understand how all of the elements synthesize together to make the entire passage. How does each "rhetorical device" affect the whole?

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the rhetoric question

Question stems:

- A shift in point of view is demonstrated by....
- The repetitive syntax of lines ___ serves to...
- "___" can best be said to represent....
- The second sentence is unified by the writer's use of which rhetorical device?
- The word "___" is the antecedent for...
- The style of the passage can best be characterized as...
- The author employs ___ sentence structure to establish...
- The tone of the passage changes when the writer....

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the rhetoric question

Example #1:

The short paragraph concludes with the author's clever use of

- a. A sentence
- b. A version of an aphorism
- c. An alliteration
- d. A trite expression
- e. A metaphor

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the rhetoric question

Example #1:

“Give an inch and take a mile” is what is known as an aphorism. Ben Franklin was full of such aphorisms, about early birds getting worms and mending something before the tear gets worse. If you know what an aphorism is, then this was an easy question for you. If not, at least you do now. Sayings, aphorisms, allusions to things past—these are all part of rhetoric.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the rhetoric question

Example #2:

The repetition of the opening word “she” in the sentences starting in lines 22, 30, 31, 34, 37, and 42 is an example of the specific rhetorical device known as

- a. Repetition
- b. Alliteration
- c. Rhetorical statement
- d. Anaphora
- e. allusion

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the rhetoric question

Example #2:

Anaphora is the repetition that occurs in opening words or phrases or clauses in a series. This is a *rhetoric* question—that is, it asked about a term of rhetorical language. You will possibly find a number of these questions in the multiple-choice section the exam.

AP TERMINOLOGY

Allegory

Alliteration

Allusion

Anaphora

Antithesis

Aphorism

Apostrophe

Assonance

Asyndeton

Attitude

Begging the question

Canon

Chiasmus

Claim

Colloquial

Prose

Realism

Rebuttal/refutation

Rhetoric

Rhetorical question

Sarcasm

Satire

Simile

Style

Symbolism

Synecdoche

Syntax

Theme

Tone

Voice

zeugma

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the meaning & purpose question

Multiple-choice questions often ask about meaning and purpose. What is the purpose of the passage? How does it fit a meaning? Why was it written? Because so many of the passages on this exam are taken from nonfiction speeches, letters, autobiographies, and essays, the author typically had a very strong reason for writing the passage. Usually you can discover the meaning by looking at the connotation of the author's words.

You will have to determine how or why the specific word choice demonstrates the author's thematic intention(s).

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the meaning & purpose question

Question stems:

- The purpose of lines ___ can best be interpreted as...
- The writer clarifies "___" by...
- The writer emphasizes "---" in order to...
- By saying "---", the author intends for us to understand that....
- By "___." the author most likely means....
- The purpose of the sentence/ paragraph. Passage can best be summarized as....
- The passage can be interpreted as meaning all of the following EXCEPT...

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: meaning & purpose question

Example #1:

In line 79, the words "Christian country" are most specifically chosen by Frederick Douglass to

- Express an irony
- Demonstrate alliteration
- Show the religious element of the passage
- Express the spiritual feelings of the writer
- Present an allusion

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: meaning & purpose question

Example #2:

The purpose of this passage can be interpreted as all of the following EXCEPT

- To relate a Negro slave's struggle to learn to read
- To explain the impetus of a slave to seek freedom
- To expose the hypocrisy of slave owners
- To expose the determination of one man to seek freedom
- To show the changing attitude of the slave's mistress

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the structure & organization question

How has the author organized the passage? Is there a consistency or planned inconsistency that should be noted? Is this an argument? How is the information presented? Although not many organization and structure questions appear in the multiple-choice section of the exam, you need to know what to expect when you are faced with one.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the structure & organization question

Question stems:

- The shift from ___ to ___ is seen by the author's use of...
- In presenting the author's point, the passage utilizes all of the following EXCEPT....
- The speaker has included ___ in her argument in order to...
- The type of argument employed by the author is most similar to which of the following?
- The structure of this passage is primarily one of....

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the structure and organization question

Example:

The author uses all of the following elements to tell his story EXCEPT

- Retrospective storytelling

- b. Personal narrative
- c. Movement from the personal to the general
- d. Movement from the narrator's childhood to his adulthood
- e. Reference from specific people to a more general population

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the rhetorical modes question

Only a few questions about modes are on the test. A mode (rhetorical mode, mode of discourse) simply means what type of writing the author has used. Is it description, narration, argumentation, comparison and contrast, and so on? Sometimes understanding the author's choice of mode helps us to understand the author's purpose in writing.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the RHETORICAL MODES question

Example:

The rhetorical mode that best describes the characteristics of this passage is one of

- a. Comparison and contrast
- b. Argumentation
- c. Personal reflection
- d. Description
- e. Case and effect

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the documentation and citation question

At least one reading passage in the multiple-choice section on the exam will be excerpted from a scholarly journal article, magazine article, or book that has used extensive documentation and citation of sources.

You will be expected to understand what is learned from reading and tracing these in-text citations. Because the exam is increasingly trying to simulate the types of reading and writing you will do in college, the developers of the exam see great value in students having the ability to understand the function and purpose of finding, synthesizing, and citing appropriate sources, as well as formal bibliography. You will NOT be expected to memorize documentations styles (like MLA or APA), but you *are* expected to be able to read and interpret the footnotes and/ or bibliography entries that are present.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS: the documentation and citation question

Question stems:

- Which of the following is an accurate reading of footnote___?
- The purpose of footnote___ is to inform the reader that the quotation in line____....
- Taken as a whole, the footnotes suggest that....
- From reading footnote___, the reader can infer that....

