

Multiple-Choice

▶ ABOUT THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE SECTION

The multiple-choice section of the AP English Language and Composition exam consists of four or five passages followed by a set of questions. The passages will be prose of some sort—perhaps fiction but more likely from essays, letters, journals, diaries, biographies, speeches, or government documents. Several might be persuasive or argumentative.

You will not have time to do an in-depth analysis of a passage on the multiple-choice section. Remember, you have 12 to 15 minutes per passage and question set.

If you are unsure of an answer, mark your book and return to that question before you start reading the next passage. If you have no idea of the answer—you are totally clueless—guess and move on. Work with what you know and what you think you know. You are *not* expected to know all the answers.

▶ READING THE QUESTIONS

Questions or Passage First?

Many debate the comparative wisdom of skimming the questions before reading the passage or quickly reading the passage first and then tackling the questions. That is something that you will have to decide for yourself. If you are a slow reader, you may not have enough time to look at the questions first. You may have to eliminate that step. On the other hand, some students find that skimming the questions helps them to focus better when they read, so their reading time is actually shorter. As you practice the multiple-choice section in this book or look at passages and questions online at AP Central, try it both ways and decide what works best.

▶ AP EXPERT TIPS

1. The multiple-choice section consists of four or five passages, each followed by a set of questions.
2. Remember Kaplan's multiple-choice question attack plan:
 - Read critically.
 - Know what the question asks.
 - Predict an answer.
 - Read every answer choice.
 - Find the best answer.
3. Know the different question categories in advance of the exam—it can really boost your confidence and test-taking speed.

▶ AP EXPERT TIP

On the multiple-choice section of the test, you will have to read for meaning and use your close analysis and annotation habits: circling, underlining, and evaluating as you read. Then you will need to attack the questions, returning to the passage for the information you need to answer each one.

Read Critically

Whether you read the passage first or second, read actively and critically—that is, mark key words and ideas.

Know What the Question Asks

Read the question carefully. Sometimes it helps to mark that as well, to help you to decide just what it is you are being asked.

Predict an Answer

Try to formulate the answer in your mind before you look at the choices given.

Read Every Answer Choice

Next, read every answer choice, even if the correct response jumps out at you right away. It is not unusual to have more than one acceptable answer but only one *best* answer.

Don't Waste Time on Hard Questions

If you have no clue about a question, skip it and move on to the next one. If you just need a bit of time to “work it out,” mark it in the book and move on. Return to any you have marked before going on to the next passage. If you are pushing the time limit (an average of 12 minutes per passage for five passages; 15 minutes per passage for four passages), go on to the next passage and return at the end of the multiple-choice section if you have time.

Read the Explanations and Look for Patterns

On practice sets, review your performance. Can you detect a pattern to your errors? If so, what do you need to do? What types of questions are you missing? Try to shore up those shaky areas.

► THE TYPES OF QUESTIONS

AP English Language and Composition test questions are surprisingly predictable. They fall into only a few categories, with a variety of approaches within each category. Once you are familiar with the basic types of questions, you will find your confidence growing and your response speed increasing. Because the multiple-choice section of the exam makes up 45 percent of your test score, conquering multiple-choice questions is essential for your success.

The categories are as follows:

- The main idea/theme/attitude
- The author's meaning and purpose
- The language of rhetoric (syntax, diction, figurative language, tone)
- The speaker or narrator
- The attitude (of the narrator or of the author)
- Word choice and selection of details (connotation)
- Sentence structure (syntax)

► AP EXPERT TIP

Think like the test maker. One valuable activity you can undertake in preparation for the test is to create your own multiple-choice questions based on passages you may find in your textbook or in other sources. Perhaps you might want to work with a partner and then swap questions with each other to test your skills.

- Rhetorical reasoning
- Inferences
- General conclusions
- Organization and structure (contrast, deduction, spatial description)
- Rhetorical modes (narration, description, argumentation)
- Documentation and citation

Main Idea

Questions about the passage's main idea are very common on the exam. Often the first or last question of a series has to do with main idea. What is the author saying? Can you restate it?

You might have to make a few marginal notes, or you may find the main idea stated in one or two lines that you can underline. You will want to mark this somehow. Work on developing an annotation code that works for you.

Testing the Main Idea

The author would most likely agree with which of the following _____?

The narrator's/writer's/author's/speaker's attitude can 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 _____.

Rhetoric

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 to make the entire passage. How does each "rhetorical device" affect the whole?

Spotting Rhetoric Questions

Rhetoric questions appear in a variety of different forms:

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 _____ 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 _____.

Meaning and Purpose

What is the purpose of the passage? Why was it written? What is its overall idea? 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 meaning by looking at the connotations of the author's words. You will have to determine how or why the specific word choice demonstrates the author's thematic intention(s).

Spotting Meaning and Purpose Questions

These questions also take a variety of forms:

_____ can best be defined as . . .

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 . . .

Structure and Organization

How has the author organized the passage? Is there a consistency or a planned inconsistency that should be noted? Is this an argument? If so, is it deductive or inductive? Is this a personal observation? 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.

Spotting Structure and Organization Questions

Some sample forms for structure and organization questions are these:

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 passage can be said to move from _____ to _____.

The _____ paragraph can be said to be _____ in relation to _____.

The structure of this passage is primarily one of . . .

Rhetorical Modes

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, etc.? Sometimes understanding the author's choice of mode helps us to understand his or her purpose in writing.

Spotting Rhetorical Mode Questions

These questions may appear in the following forms:

- All of the following modes can be found within the passage EXCEPT _____.
- The rhetorical mode that best describes this passage is _____.
- The author uses cause and effect in order to _____.
- Which of the following best describes the author's method of presenting the information? _____.
- The author combines retrospection with which other rhetorical mode within this passage? _____.

Documentation and Citation

At least one reading passage in the multiple-choice section of the AP English Language and Composition 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 (which include freshman writing program directors) see great value in students having the ability to find, synthesize, and cite appropriate sources, as well as construct a formal bibliography.

You can breathe a sigh of relief because the exam will not require students to memorize any of the various styles of documentation (e.g., APA, MLA, or Chicago). However, you *are* expected to be able to read and interpret the footnotes and/or bibliographic entries that the test presents.

Spotting Documentation and Citation Questions

Documentation and citation questions will take a number of different forms:

- 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 _____.

Miscellaneous

The question types listed in this chapter do not constitute a complete list. You will most likely encounter questions that don't seem to fit into a category. It is important, however, to become familiar with the more common types of questions you will encounter. Just don't be so set on every question having to fit into a particular category that you get flustered when faced with one that does not.

► AP EXPERT TIP

One thing you can always count on is that just when you think you have an AP test completely figured out, the test makers will surprise you with something you never anticipated.

► APPLYING THE STRATEGIES

You must practice applying the strategies as you work to make them second nature by test day. Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow. Each represents a category or type of multiple-choice question that corresponds to those typically found in the multiple-choice section of the AP English Language and Composition exam. Don't forget to practice Kaplan's multiple-choice question attack plan.

Directions: The following excerpt is from the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*.

After reading the passage, answer the questions that follow.

His mistress had been severely reprimanded by her husband for helping Frederick Douglass learn to read. After all, the husband admonished, giving a slave the knowledge to read was like giving the slave access to thinking he or she was human. If you give the slaves an inch, they will
(5) take the ell.

My mistress was, as I have said, a kind and tender-hearted woman; and in the simplicity of her soul she commenced, when I first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another. In entertaining upon the duties of a slaveholder, she did not seem to per-
(10) ceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere chattel, and that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong, but dangerously so.

Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was pious, warm, and tender-hearted woman. There was no sorrow or suffering for which she had not a tear. She had bread for the hungry, clothes
(15) for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach.

Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness. The first step in her downward course was in her ceasing to instruct me. She now commenced
(20) to practice her husband's precepts. She finally became even more violent in her opposition [to my learning to read] than her husband himself.

She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had commanded; she seemed anxious to do better. Nothing seemed to make her more angry than to see me with a newspaper. She seemed to think that here lay the danger.
(25) I have had her rush at me with a face made all up of fury, and snatch from me a newspaper, in a manner that fully revealed her apprehension.

She was an apt woman; and a little experience soon demonstrated, to her satisfaction, that education and slavery were incompatible with each other.

(30) From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book, and was at once called to give an account of myself. All this, however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the *inch*, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the *ell*.

(35) The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read.

(40) When I was sent on errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return.

I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome, for I was much better off in (45) this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood.

This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids; —not (50) that it would injure me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost a unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country.

I used to talk this matter of slavery over with them. I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. This used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest (55) sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free.

1. The narrator's feelings toward his mistress can best be explained as
 - (A) empathy and compassion.
 - (B) loathing and revenge.
 - (C) scorn and dismissal.
 - (D) repugnance and dissatisfaction.
 - (E) remorse and gratitude.

The narrator regrets that his mistress turned against him so passionately, but he is still grateful that she taught him to read and inspired him to learn and value knowledge. This type of question fits under the *main idea* category of questions. When you are presented with descriptors in pairs or in threes, don't forget that all of them must apply correctly to the question for that answer choice to be correct.

(E) is the correct choice.

2. The narrator would most likely hold fast to the notion that
- (A) all's well that ends well.
 - (B) some people's religious devotion is superficial.
 - (C) one should take advantage of opportunities at hand.
 - (D) occasionally things don't work out the way you'd like them to.
 - (E) white people should never be trusted.

This narrator is clearly ambitious; he will take any advantage he can to achieve his objectives. This is also a *main idea* question. Although Frederick Douglass might agree with one or two of the other choices, (C) is definitely the most accurate choice.

(C) is the correct answer.

3. The brief Paragraph 1 ends with the author's witty use of
- (A) a sentence.
 - (B) a kind of aphorism.
 - (C) an alliteration.
 - (D) a corny expression.
 - (E) a metaphor.

"Give an inch and take an ell (mile)" is what is known as an aphorism. Ben Franklin had tons of such aphorisms, about early birds getting worms and mending something before the tear gets worse. Sayings, aphorisms, allusions to things past—these are all a part of *rhetoric*.

Choice (B) is the correct choice.

4. The repetition of the opening word "She" in the sentences starting in lines 14, 19, 20, 22, 24, and 27 is an example of the specific rhetorical technique called
- (A) repetition.
 - (B) alliteration.
 - (C) rhetorical statement.
 - (D) anaphora.
 - (E) allusion.

If you look in the key terminology section of chapter 3, anaphora (D) is a repetition that occurs in opening words of 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 of the AP English Language and Composition exam.

(D) is the correct response.

5. In line 51, the words “Christian country” are most specifically chosen to
- (A) communicate irony.
 - (B) exhibit alliteration.
 - (C) reveal the religious sentiment of the piece.
 - (D) articulate the spiritual feelings of the author.
 - (E) present an allusion.

The juxtaposition of the harsh treatment of slaves and the phrase “Christian country” show Douglass’s great awareness of the injustices of humankind and the double standard by which many white people lived at this time. So (A) is correct. None of the alternative responses make sense as an answer. This question assumes you grasp the *meaning and purpose* of this passage.

(A) is the correct answer.

6. The purpose of this passage can be interpreted as all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) to narrate a slave’s effort to learn to read.
 - (B) to elucidate a slave’s drive to achieve liberty.
 - (C) to reveal the hypocrisy of Christian slave owners.
 - (D) to illuminate the determination of one man to seek autonomy.
 - (E) to illustrate the instinctive cruelty of the slave’s mistress.

You could claim that several of the answer choices might be appropriate. However, only one, (B), really addresses the question asked. This is another *meaning/purpose* question.

(B) is the correct answer.

7. Paragraph 7, unlike Paragraphs 5 and 6, can best be described as
- (A) the narrator’s change from being inactive to ambitious.
 - (B) the difference in what went on inside versus outside the house.
 - (C) a comparison of children’s actions versus adult actions.
 - (D) a shift from the metaphoric to the concrete.
 - (E) a solution to a problem.

This question requires you to take a look at the *structure* of the passage. However, not only do you need to recognize structure, but you need to understand shifts or changes in tone or in the point of view of the narrator.

(A) is the correct choice.

8. The author uses all of the following techniques to tell his story EXCEPT
- (A) retrospective storytelling.
 - (B) personal perception as it relates to reality.
 - (C) a shift from the individual to the general.
 - (D) movement from the narrator's youth to his maturity.
 - (E) a reference from specific people to a broader population.

Here's another *structure/organization* question. This question expects you to get a "feel" for the narrator's perspective. The earlier part of this essay has nothing to do with the narrator's childhood. This narrator is an adult—he is older when he writes, but he was still a young adult when he learned to read.

(D) is the correct choice.

9. The rhetorical form that best describes the elements of this passage is one of
- (A) comparison and contrast.
 - (B) argumentation.
 - (C) personal reflection.
 - (D) description.
 - (E) cause and effect.

This is a question having to do with *rhetorical mode* or mode of discourse. Actually, there is only one reasonable response—this is a reminiscence piece. In other words, this is a personal reflection, (C).

(C) is the correct answer.

10. One could describe the narrator of this piece as
- (A) a furious young man.
 - (B) a despairing, hopeless slave.
 - (C) one who was more fortunate than most of his peers.
 - (D) a frustrated author who knew he could write well.
 - (E) a young man determined to be a success.

In this passage, the narrator is a young man resolved to succeed, (E). This is a *miscellaneous* type of question. It doesn't quite fit any of the other categories, but it is not unlike other multiple-choice questions you might face.

(E) is the correct answer.