

AP English Literature Exam Strategies

I. Multiple Choice Questions

1. Use Process of Elimination to get rid of obviously wrong answers. If you can eliminate at least one wrong answer, then you should answer the question. Each correct answer will add a point to your score. For every wrong answer, your score will be lowered by $\frac{1}{4}$ point. An item left blank will neither increase nor decrease your score. If you have NO clue and cannot eliminate at least one wrong answer, then leave it blank.
2. When short on time, answer specific line questions and vocabulary questions.
3. Remember question types—factual, technical, analytical, and inferential
4. Do not spend too much time on any question, especially the difficult questions.

II. Essay Questions

1. Use sophisticated language, including vocabulary and sentence structure. Exceptionally good writing may compensate for a mediocre analysis and raise a score.
2. Pre-write, which includes brainstorming and/or outlining. Outlines should not be too long; paraphrase.
3. Do NOT summarize text in your essays.
4. Address the prompt clearly throughout your essays.
5. Use prior knowledge in your essays.
6. Know and apply plentiful literary devices.
7. Grab your readers' attention with a strong introduction.
8. Organize, Organize, Organize!
9. Include direct quotes and explain their significance to the question prompt.
10. Conclude your essay, even with one-two sentences if you're short on time.

III. General Strategies for ALL parts of the exam

1. Pay attention to the time constraints: 1 hour for multiple choice questions (45% of exam) and 2 hours for the 3 essay questions (55% of exam). Each essay should take about 40 minutes.
2. Read directions carefully!
3. Underline/Circle key words in question prompts.
4. Annotate the passages and poems purposefully, carefully and closely, summarizing in the margins. Fill up much of the space provided.
5. Identify literary devices in the margins and understand how they contribute to the poem/passage as a whole. Remember to ask: So What? Why is this device important and what does it serve to the overall meaning of the text? Why did the author choose this device?
6. Pay attention to the author's point of view and tone in each text.

7. Make inferences based on the textual evidence.
8. Read poems a couple of times. It pays to do so.
9. Use your VETY skills and your other language knowledge/skills to help with unfamiliar words.
10. Pay attention to context clues in understanding difficult vocabulary.
11. Know and apply MANY literary devices, including structure and style.
12. Pay attention to the titles of passages and poems.
13. Be confident in your knowledge and preparation.
14. Sleep well, eat well (especially a good, hearty breakfast), get to the exam early, use the bathroom before taking the exam, and bring two pens, two pencils and a good eraser.