



TIPS FOR THE MULTIPLE CHOICE PORTION OF THE AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST

DURING PRACTICE

- 1. Write copiously on the passage.
- 2. Understand why your wrong answers are wrong.
- 3. Read each question and anticipate what the answer might be before looking at the answers. This helps you focus on the question.
- 4. When you narrow choices down to two answers, and you're not sure, choose the more specific answer.



- 5. Read ACTIVELY, not passively. Underline words, phrases, or sentences that might be important.
- 6. Look for patterns, motifs, repetition, and/or contrasts.



7. What you underline is not as important as the process because the process increases focus and improves comprehension.
8. You cannot afford to waste time with several readings of each passage, so focus and comprehension are critical!



9. Most difficult kinds of questions ask you to find “all of the following **except**” or any questions that require you to reread a large portion of the text. You might want to omit these or leave these until later, since these questions consume an inordinate amount of time.



- 10. Remember that this section always presents combination of easy, medium, and hard questions for each passage.
- 11. The questions generally follow the chronology of the passage rather than transition from easiest to hardest or vice versa.
- 12. Since they all count the same, get credit for the easy and medium answers first!



- 13. That means choose which questions to answer and which ones to skip. Return to the skipped ones if time allows.
- 14. Each time you see a zero on in item number (10, 20, 30, etc.), double-check to ensure you are on the write spot on your Scantron form.



- 15. When the question refers to a part of the sentence and asks for the meaning of a word or phrase in context, what a word refers to, or how a word functions, go back to the beginning of the sentence or even to the previous sentence and read completely to the end of the sentence to comprehend the meaning. **ESPECIALLY** important for “antecedent” questions!



- 16. No penalty for guessing on multiple choice questions now!
- 17. If you are running out of time, try these approaches:
 - A. Scan the remaining questions and look for either the shortest questions or the questions that direct you to a specific line or lines.
 - B. Look for questions that contain the answer without requiring you to refer to the text.



- 18. This one works for some students, not all!
- Before reading the passage, scan the questions first but not the answers, since four of the five answers are wrong. Skip any questions that direct you to a specific line number – this eliminates the majority of questions. Thus, this takes only a few seconds. You MAY get an idea of what the passage is about by using this technique.



- 19. To ensure you finish the entire m/c section, scan the number of questions and divide the number by two, e.g., 54 questions for 60 minutes; 27 questions in 30 minutes.
- OR, divide the 60 minutes by the number of passages. Four passages means 15 minutes per passage.



WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT IN SECTION I?

- For this first section of the AP English Language and Composition exam, you are allotted 1 hour to answer between 45 and 60 objective questions on four to five prose passages. The selections may come from works of fiction or nonfiction and be from different time periods, of different styles, and of different purposes. In other words, you will not find two essays by Thoreau in the multiple-choice section of the same test.



WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT IN SECTION I?

- At least one of the readings will contain some type of citation, attribution, footnote, and so on. You will be expected to be able to determine HOW this citation, etc., is employed by the author to further his purpose. You will NOT be asked about specific formats such as MLA or APA.



WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT IN SECTION I?

- These are NOT easy readings. They are representative of the college-level work you have been doing throughout the year. You will be expected to:
 - • follow sophisticated syntax;
 - • respond to diction;
 - • be comfortable with upper-level vocabulary;
 - • be familiar with rhetorical terminology;



WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT IN SECTION I?

- These are NOT easy readings. They are representative of the college-level work you have been doing throughout the year. You will also be expected to:
 - • make inferences;
 - • be sensitive to irony and tone;
 - • recognize components of organization and style;
 - • be familiar with modes of discourse and rhetorical strategies; and
 - • recognize how information contained in citations contributes to the author's purpose.



WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT IN SECTION I?

- THE GOOD NEWS IS . . . the selection is self-contained. If it is about the Irish Potato Famine, you will NOT be at a disadvantage if you know nothing about Irish history. Frequently, there will be biblical references in a selection. This is especially true of works from an earlier time period. You are expected to be aware of basic allusions to biblical and mythological works often found in literary texts, but the passage will never require you to have any particular religious background.



WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT IN SECTION I?

- ❑ DO NOT LET THE SUBJECT MATTER OF A PASSAGE THROW YOU. Strong analytical skills will work on any passage.



WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS THAT CAUSES SUCH ANXIETY?

- Basically, a multiple-choice literature question is a flawed method of gauging understanding. Why? Because, by its very nature, a multiple-choice question forces you to play a cat-and- mouse game with the test maker who demands that you concentrate on items that are incorrect before you can choose what is correct. We know, however, that complex literary works have a richness that allows for ambiguity.



WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS THAT CAUSES SUCH ANXIETY?

- In the exam mode, you are expected to match someone else's reading of a work with your choice of answers. This is what often causes the student to feel that the multiple-choice section is unfair. And, perhaps, to a degree, it is. But, get with the program! It's a necessary evil. So, our advice to you is to accept the difficulties and limitations of Section I and to move on.



WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS THAT CAUSES SUCH ANXIETY?

- This said, it's wise to develop a strategy for success. Once again, practice is the key to this success.
- You've answered all types of multiple-choice questions during your career as a student. The test-taking skills you have learned in your social studies, math, and science classes may also apply to this specific situation.



WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS THAT CAUSES SUCH ANXIETY?

- A word in defense of the test makers is in order here. The test is designed to allow you to shine, NOT to be humiliated. To that end, the people who design the multiple-choice questions take their job seriously and take pride in their product. You will not find “cutesy” questions, and they will not play games with you.



WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS THAT CAUSES SUCH ANXIETY?

- What they will do is present several valid options in response to a challenging and appropriate question. These questions are designed to separate the knowledgeable, perceptive, and thoughtful reader from the superficial and impulsive one.



- English Language is one of the most popular Advanced Placement subjects, and in 2008 over 300,000 students took the exam. Many colleges and universities have a writing requirement, and a high score on the AP English Language exam will sometimes fulfill that requirement.
- The chart below presents some representative data from a variety of colleges and universities.



- This next chart presents some representative data from a variety of colleges and universities. This information is meant to provide a general overview of the scoring and placement information related to the AP English Language exam.
- For other schools, you'll need to check the college's website or contact the appropriate Registrar's office to get AP placement information.



The chart below presents some

- The distribution of scores for the AP English Language exam is as follows (2008 data):
 - 5 - 9%
 - 4 - 18%
 - 3 - 31%
 - 2 - 31%
 - 1 - 11%



ADVICE FROM A FORMER TEST TAKER

- All I do is look at the first question, or second question, and try and scope out where it is in the passage... then read **ONLY** to that section.
- This will make sure you don't take in any other information that might trick you. then just keep doing this for every question; you should actually finish reading the passage after the last few questions.



- Next, I would recommend checking over all of your answers, now that you know what the passage is all about, and also consider the questions and what they are asking you to focus on; that'll help you with the theme, tone, blah blah [*sic*] English words.
- Just think that the questions are there to GUIDE you into understanding the passage. So most likely the questions will be related somehow.



QUESTION: IS MY AP SCORE GOOD ENOUGH?

- **Answer:** AP scores are much more straight-forward than SAT scores AP scores are much more straight-forward than SAT scores or ACT scores since the AP is graded on a simple 5-point scale. However, not every college treats AP scores the same way. Students who take the AP exam will get a score ranging from 1 to 5. The College Board defines the numbers as follows:
 - 5 - Extremely well qualified to receive college credit
 - 4 - Well qualified to receive college credit
 - 3 - Qualified to receive college credit
 - 2 - Possibly qualified to receive college credit
 - 1 - No recommendation to receive college credit



QUESTION: IS MY AP SCORE GOOD ENOUGH?

- The five-point scale, probably not coincidentally, can also be thought of in terms of letter grades:
- 5 - "A"
- 4 - "B"
- 3 - "C"
- 2 - "D"
- 1 - "F"



QUESTION: IS MY AP SCORE GOOD ENOUGH?

- The average score on all AP exams is slightly below a 3. In 2008, of the nearly 3 million AP exams administered, the grades broke down as follows: 5 - 14% of test takers
- 4 - 19% of test takers
- 3 - 24% of test takers
- 2 - 22% of test takers
- 1 - 21% of test takers



QUESTION: IS MY AP SCORE GOOD ENOUGH?

- Now for the bad news:
- Although the College Board defines a 2 as "possibly qualified" to receive college credit, almost no college will accept a score of 2.
- In fact, most selective colleges will not accept a 3 for college credit.
- In the majority of cases, a student who scores a 4 or 5 will receive college credit.



QUESTION: IS MY AP SCORE GOOD ENOUGH?

- In rare cases, a school may require a 5.
- The exact guidelines vary from college to college, and they often vary from department to department within a college.
- At Hamilton College, for example, a student can receive credit for a 3 in Latin, but a 5 is required in Economics.



FROM A STUDENT WHO TOOK THE TEST!

- For the multiple choice: ALWAYS go with your first choice.
- Once you make your decision, stick with it.
- If you don't you'll kill very precious time trying to figure out the "right" answer.



FROM A STUDENT WHO TOOK THE TEST!

- For the multiple choice: ALWAYS go with your first choice. Once you make your decision, stick with it. If you don't, you'll kill very precious time trying to figure out the "right" answer.
- Do not rush through the multiple choice either, it'll kill you if you do. Patience is smooth, smooth is fast.



FROM THE CB'S COURSE DESCRIPTION

- ❑ Multiple-choice scores are based on the number of questions answered correctly.
- ❑ Points are not deducted for incorrect answers, and no points are awarded for unanswered questions.
- ❑ Because points are not deducted for incorrect answers, students are encouraged to answer all multiple-choice questions.
- ❑ On any questions students do not know the answer, students should eliminate as many choices as they can, and then select the best answer among the remaining choices.



FROM A STUDENT WHO TOOK THE TEST!

- For the essays: All of your essays will be timed so work as fast as possible.
- If I remember correctly you will be given all three essays at once, so read all of the prompts first then decide which would be the easiest to write about, then write that one first.
- Scan very quickly through the sources they give you and write as efficiently as possible.



FROM A STUDENT WHO TOOK THE TEST!

- ❑ ALWAYS CITE YOUR SOURCES, at the end of the paragraph put the source you referenced in parentheses or cite within the paragraph for multiple sources.
- ❑ And if you find that you don't like the sentence or paragraph you wrote don't waste time erasing it, cross out sentences and 'X' out paragraphs. They don't care how your essay looks as long as they can read it.



FROM A STUDENT WHO TOOK THE TEST!

- ❑ Finally, and most importantly, don't go into the exam worrying about it. Either you pass it or you don't. Just give it hell [*sic*] then move on.
- ❑ Follow any, all, or none of my advice it is entirely up to you. I wish you good luck and hope you do well.

P.S

- ❑ In case you were curious, I scored a five on the AP English exam. Whether or not that influences your decision on following my advice is entirely up to you.
- ❑ Best of luck.

