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AP ENGLISH LITERATURE

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# The Ultimate Student's Starter Kit to AP English Literature and Composition

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# Introduction

This eBook was created as the perfect starter kit for any student planning to take the AP English Literature and Composition exam. By beginning here, you'll have a better understanding of the test and how to study for it.

It features information from the [Albert Blog](#). If you're looking for additional help in preparing for the APs, be sure to regularly check the blog and subscribe to hear about our new posts.

E-mail us at [hello@albert.io](mailto:hello@albert.io) if you have any questions, suggestions, or comments!

*Last Updated: December 2016*

# About Us

## What is Albert?

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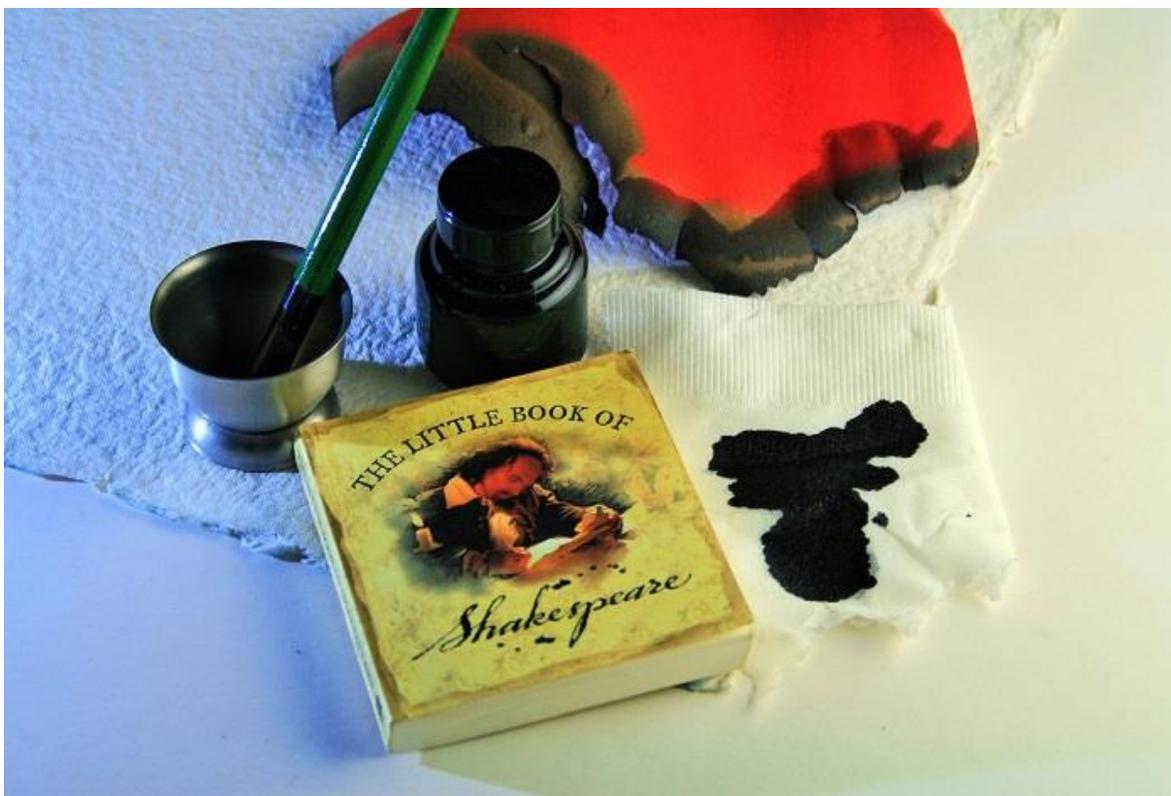


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# Is AP English Literature Hard?



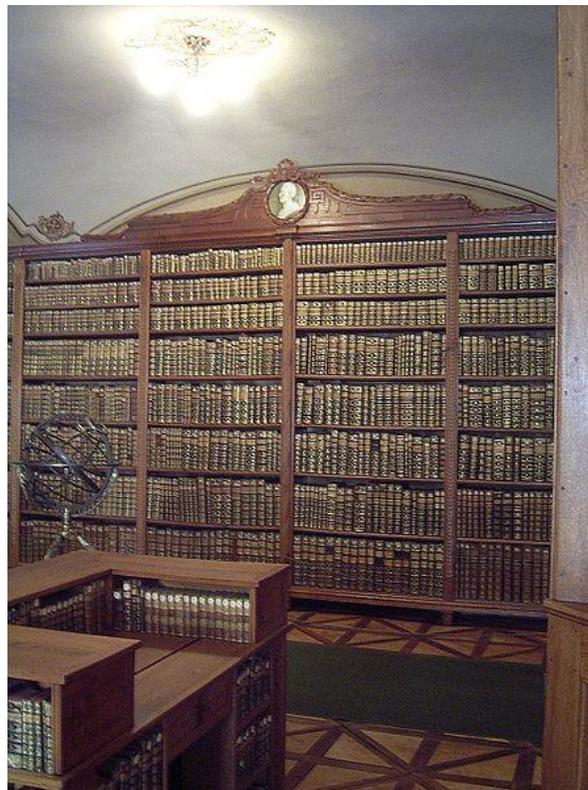
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If the idea of dedicating a bit of your high school education to a subject that can ultimately result in college credit sounds appealing, then the AP English Literature class may be right up your alley. Not only will it provide a foundational understanding of classic literature, but it will also teach skills in the areas of comprehension and composition.

## Is AP English Literature Hard? Cont.

You'll have the opportunity to analyze and interpret pieces written by some of the world's most famous authors across the centuries. Better yet, you will experience the opportunity to discuss your views on the meanings of the piece, and may even be able to debate some of the included subjects.

Now, don't let the description intimidate you. While the idea may sound overly sophisticated, AP English Lit ultimately builds on the skills you have been cultivating throughout your school career. Unlike some other English courses, much of English Lit is open to personal interpretation, and you will learn the techniques necessary to identify patterns and form strong opinions based on your analysis of the content.



*[Image Source: Wikimedia Commons](#)*

# Is AP English Literature Hard? Cont.

## Course Overview

The [AP English Literature course](#) focuses on providing you with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in the analysis of a wide range of literary works. You will increase your understanding of the English language and learn how it is used to achieve certain goals or effects in a written work.

Special attention is given to how the written work is structured, as well as consideration on how a piece is styled. An examination of the use of themes, whether blatantly stated or indicated through subtext, serves as an avenue for gaining deeper understanding regarding the author's intentions.

Before I lose you, consider this; part of what makes a piece of literature particularly moving is its ability to elicit an emotional response in you, the reader. This can be accomplished through the use of vivid imagery, shifts in tone, and other idiosyncrasies of the English language.

Part of English literature is learning how these mood-shifting pieces work. You will learn exactly how they can impact you so deeply, and will be introduced to tools that help you understand why others may feel differently. In this regard, studying literature is part art, part science. It helps you see how word choice and sentence structure can be used to obtain a particular reaction, or to guide the reader on a journey well beyond the basics of the words on the page.

Does this mean that AP lit is difficult? Not necessarily. Analysis at this level is often personal, so there is room for interpretation when it comes to what an author is trying to accomplish. It's this level of flexibility that makes the class an adventure as it focuses on the exploration of written works more than hard-and-fast mechanics.

With that being said, that does not mean you will not be completing any written assignments. The difference is that, while English composition guides you through the use of proper techniques, much of the writing in AP English Literature is used to reinforce concepts found in the written works.

## Is AP English Literature Hard? Cont.

Even though the course focuses on the study of works that are accepted as examples of the pinnacle of their particular style that does not mean you will be given the same reading list as someone taking the course for another school.

### **Academic Challenges in AP English Literature**

AP Lit's difficulty resides less with the content, and more in the sheer volume of content that may apply to its study. As I mentioned before, there is not strict reading list to which all classes must adhere. This means that you may be required to read certain works based on your individual class's requirements, but whether that information will be on the AP exam is somewhat left to chance.

With that in mind, you will be best served by taking personal time to examine written works that are not required to pass your class. This can make AP Literature hard for students who have a particularly demanding course load, as free time to pursue its study may be limited.

You can make the study of English literature simpler by increasing your exposure to classic written works over time. If you plan to take AP English Literature as a high school senior, see if you can obtain a reading list from the teacher of that class. With that information, you can identify if any key works are not included, use that information to create a personal AP Literature study guide, and can use some of your summers to enjoy those works independently. This will ensure you have the best foundation possible before you take the exam.

### **By the Numbers**

AP exams are scored based on a scale of one to five, with one being the lowest score possible and five being the highest. For the score to be considered sufficient to stand it for college credit, a score of 3 or greater is required.

Based on the [CollegeBoard report](#) on the success rates of students who took the AP English Literature exam in 2013, 55 percent of all test-takers achieve a passing score with 6.8 percent achieving a score of 5, 17.4 obtaining a score of 4, and 30.8 percent earning a score of 3.

## Is AP English Literature Hard? Cont.

The vast majority of the students who took the exam qualified as high school seniors. This is due to the fact that advanced reading, writing, and analytical skills are often required and most students will not have that level of exposure until their senior year. Some sophomores and juniors attempted the exam as well, so you are not required to be a senior to participate.

### Exam Structure

The [structure of the exam](#) established by the College Board is simple. It is divided into two sections, the multiple choice section, and the free response section. Each section is timed, just like any other standardized exam, like the PSAT or SAT, tends to be. This ensures that all test-takers are given the same opportunity to complete the questions even if you are taking it on different days, in different cities, or even different states.

The multiple choice section consists of 55 questions where you will be expected to examine excerpts from various literary works and answer corresponding questions regarding the piece. You will be given one hour to complete this portion. Once the time is up, you will be told to close that section of the exam before preparing for the free response portion.

The term free response is simply a fancy way to refer to the written part of the exam. While this section is only comprised of three questions, each requires an essay-length answer. With this in mind, you are given two hours to complete your responses in this section.

You will be presented with one question from each of the following categories to guide your efforts through the free response section:

1. An analysis of a given poem
2. An analysis of a given passage from a work of fiction
3. An analysis of a particular topic as it relates to a work of literary merit, as chosen by you

## Is AP English Literature Hard? Cont.

Here's the deal. You must use your personal judgment in regards to the amount of time you dedicate to writing your responses, as you are only restricted based on the two-hour total time limit.

Does the amount of time available make the exam seem too difficult? Before you let that fear discourage you from going forward, consider the following exam technique to help you succeed in the written portion of the exam.

First, you want to read all three questions and begin by writing your essay response for the one about which you feel most confident. Not only can that help get your mind in writing mode, but it can also be pretty exciting to get through a piece that you feel you nailed.

Once that one is complete, move to the one you had the second most confidence in, leaving the most challenging piece for last. This will hopefully give you the strongest chance in regards to leaving quality answers in the areas you feel knowledgeable, and may leave you with more time to dedicate to the complicated topic if you finish the other essays more quickly.

### **Content**

The AP literature review will include works from a variety of categories. Most commonly, a teacher will feature sections on drama, verse, and prose fiction. You will be responsible for reading select works and participating in analytical activities designed to further your understanding of how the English language is used in literature.

During your exploration of the topic, you will also have the opportunity to expand your vocabulary to promote a college-level understanding of language, and will be introduced to higher level writing techniques based on what is expected from successful college students.

At times, group work may be required during your class to develop your skills in the areas of literary analysis and to expose you to the thought processes and points-of-view of other students. This collaboration is used to further the exploration as to how a written work may be interpreted by the reader.

# Is AP English Literature Hard? Cont.

## Skills Required

To excel in AP English courses, you must have a suitable reading level for the coursework that will be presented. This may require a vocabulary beyond a basic high school student, as well as a greater understanding of writing techniques and how they vary between different forms of written works. It is helpful to have an introduction to common forms of poetry, as well as fiction from various eras.

Your ability to read quickly is less relevant than your ability to thoroughly comprehend what you read. Not only will you have to examine the excerpts at face value, but you will also have to determine the presence of any subtext that may change the meaning of the content in a critical way. In this regard, critical thinking ability and analytical skills are also highly desirable for students interested in AP Lit.

## Is AP English Literature Worth It?

As with most AP courses, the primary benefit is that you will have a stronger foundation to build upon before you officially become a college student. This may make other related courses easier based on your preexisting knowledge on certain subjects.

Do you want to hear the best part? By successfully passing the AP Literature exam, you may also receive college credit by accredited colleges and universities for certain English courses. Not only can this help you progress through your degree more quickly, as you will not be required to attend certain classes, it can also save you money since it will not be necessary to pay for any coursework that you do not need to take to obtain your degree. And who doesn't like saving money?

For those who have a particular interest in literature and reading, literature courses often expose you to works that you may not have otherwise read. This may introduce you to a new favorite author, or may present ideas that you may not have otherwise considered.

## Is AP English Literature Hard? Cont.

It is not uncommon for works from different historical periods to provide insights into issues and attitudes of the particular time they were written. Individual pieces may tie directly into historical events, while others may demonstrate how popular opinion shifted over time.

Even though the AP English Literature course, and subsequent test, may be considered difficult. The opportunity to qualify for college credit, save money on college expenses, and learn about different eras can certainly make it a worthwhile venture.

### Next Steps

Your first step to participating in an AP English Literature course is to determine if it is offered at your school. While most high schools offer a variety of AP coursework, some smaller institutions may not be able to provide every opportunity.

If your school does offer the course, you will need to speak with the administrators in charge of class scheduling and see if you are eligible to attend. While the CollegeBoard does not specify any prerequisites, your school may have a standard to which you must adhere.

In cases where the class is offered, but you do not yet meet the requirements as set by your school, you can take advantage of the extra time and begin broadening your literary horizons by reviewing the various written works that would be covered in an AP English Literature course.

As mentioned before, you should request a copy of the applicable syllabus, and then focus your personal studies on works that are not going to be covered during the class. You can explore the [reading list provided by Albert](#) to help you along your way. This ensures you are spending your own time on pieces that will provide you with a wider range of knowledge in the area and limits the risk of having to reread a piece you had already covered.

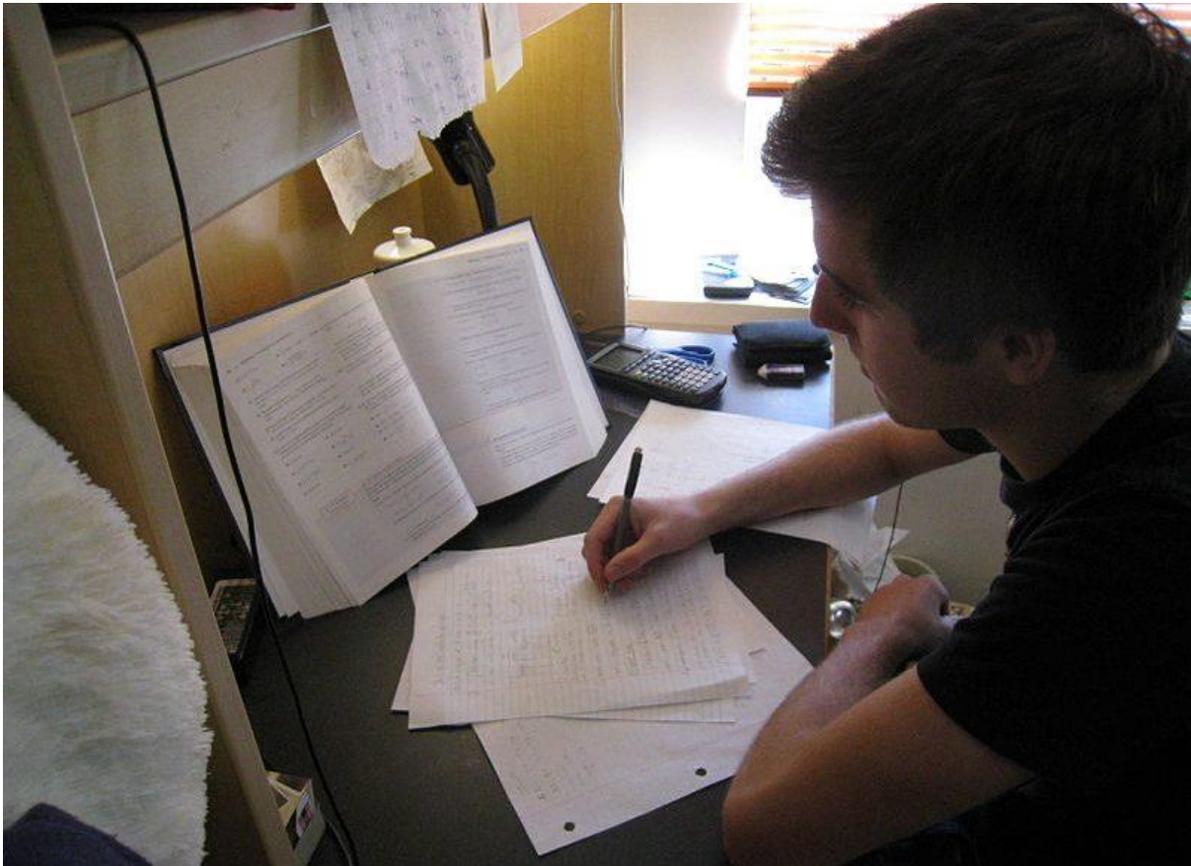
## Is AP English Literature Hard? Cont.

If your school does not officially offer an AP Lit class, you may be able to work with administrators and English teachers for an independent study course. They may be able to design you an AP Lit study guide that will provide an overview that you can use to guide your studies on your own.

Even if you are not able to take the class, you may still be eligible for the exam. You can participate in practice exams and focus your efforts on the key areas covered within the standard coursework. While this may be a more challenging approach, especially if you are still required to complete other classes to graduate, it does give you the chance to experience the same benefits as those who can take the class in-person. One benefit of the self-study route is that once you feel sufficiently prepared, you can look into scheduling your exam.

Now that you have seen an overview of the AP English Literature course and exam, what's stopping you from giving it a try? Not only can you further your studies, but you can also obtain college credits before you ever set foot in college. I think that sounds like a pretty good deal, and thousands of students every year agree.

# 11 AP English Literature Test Taking Strategies



*[Image Source: Wikimedia Commons](#)*

Taking any of the multitude of AP exams can seem like a daunting task in the beginning stages of your preparation. That's why it's important to be organized about the work you do in studying for these tests. The AP English Literature exam is frankly no different. Each of these tests requires extensive, specific preparation. But how do we know what to prepare for and how to prepare for it? Answering that question requires some solid strategy. Continue reading for 11 specific AP English Literature strategies that you can use to tie all of your tireless preparation together.

# 11 AP English Literature Test Taking Strategies Cont.

## The Test

The AP English Literature test takes three hours to complete and consists of two parts: multiple choice and free response. The multiple-choice section is worth 45%, and the free response section 55% of the final exam grade. The AP English Literature multiple-choice section is 55 questions and takes place over the first hour of testing. The free response section takes place over the final two hours of testing and requires the completion of three essay responses.

Understanding the importance of these separate parts and how they make up the whole of the AP English Literature test should inform your test-taking strategies.

## AP English Literature Test-Taking Strategies

### 1. Know the Material

The multiple-choice section of the AP English Literature test makes up almost half of your final grade. The scoring of this section allows you to bolster your base score easily! No points are subtracted for unanswered or incorrectly answered questions. This means that really knowing the material, the terms, concepts, and literary works discussed, in the multiple-choice section can only help you. Rattle off the multiple-choice answers to gain a strong base on which you can build with your essay responses.

### 2. Annotate AP English Literature Passages

Annotate the passages that you're expected to analyze. Take note of the time period if it is provided or make an inference about the time period by analyzing the diction. Mark up literary terms and devices. Paraphrase things in your head in order to cut through the sometimes complicated diction of the sample passages. These notes can come in handy on the upcoming questions. Just a few extra, collective minutes spent on annotation can save you a lot more than that in time spent rereading the passage while trying to answer a question.

# 11 AP English Literature Test Taking Strategies Cont.

## 3. Accept the Best Possible Answer

Many of the questions on the multiple-choice section of the AP English Literature test come with many answer choices that could be considered correct. But which one is the best, the most correct? This is intentional, though certainly subjective, but should not scare you. Remember: incorrect answers don't count against your score. If faced with this situation, make a reasoned decision based on facts that you know about the piece and the question.

## 4. Guess

Once more, incorrect answers do not count against you. So, at least make a reasonable guess at every question on the test. Every question has 5 possible answer choices. That means an outright guess has a 20% chance of being correct. Eliminate as many choices as possible and increase your odds of guessing correctly.

## 5. Know These Works

As of 2014, the top 5 most frequently cited literary works appearing on the AP English Literature exam are:

- i. Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison (26)
- ii. Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte (20)
- iii. Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens (18)
- iv King Lear* by William Shakespeare (17)
- v. Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte (16)

BONUS: *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare\*

These pieces can, with a good read, reveal several constant themes and tropes that will be of use to you on the multiple choice and response sections of the test.

# 11 AP English Literature Test Taking Strategies Cont.

## **6. Read the Passage, Read the Questions, then Read the Passage Again**

When utilizing a quick first read through the text and then the questions on the multiple choice portion, you might get a better sense of which questions you can answer easily and maximize the time you have to spend on more difficult questions. Then, upon rereading the passage, you may have an idea of what to look out for without attempting to cherry pick your answers out of the passage and wasting even more valuable time. Alternatively, you could get a similar effect from reading the questions to start with and then reading the passage. Go with what feels right for you, considering your personal preferences about how to best utilize the time you're provided.

## **7. Compose Effective Essays**

The other half of the test, comprising a little over half of your final grade, asks for responses to three separate prompts. Concentrate on what you're being asked to do and provide a response as relevant to the prompt as possible. To receive at least a 5 on the AP English Literature test, according to the College Board rubric, test takers must demonstrate the ability to select a suitable work, explain this piece in a relatively nuanced fashion, and exercise control over some college-level composition practices. The first steps in writing an effective essay for the AP Literature test are identifying what you're being asked and selecting a work that allows you to provide a relevant response to the prompt.

## **8. Have a Set of Go-To Literary Novels for AP English Lit**

A good way to prepare for the response section of the test is to know a few literary works, typically from a class-reading list, pretty well. Composing an effective essay depends on your knowledge of a few texts that you can reference, even if it is what you might consider superficial knowledge. On test day, have a list of well-known poetry and fiction pieces ready to call up when you need them.

# 11 AP English Literature Test Taking Strategies Cont.

## 9. Plan Before you Begin

Make notes in the margins of the text. Use the DIDLS prose analysis method. Use the TP-CASTT poetry analysis method. Whatever you do, make a plan. By just beginning to write without a road map, you're more likely to waste time writing around an appropriate response to the prompt without actually addressing it.

## 10. Employ College-Level Composition Strategies

This can make or break your response section score. If you can at least employ some of these strategies with ease, you can score decently on the response section. Some of these strategies include:

- i. Logically organizing your thoughts (planning!)*
- ii. Demonstrating generalization as well as detail*
- ii. Controlling your tone, voice, and usage of rhetorical strategies*
- iv. Using an expanded vocabulary (correctly!)*
- v. Varying your sentence structures*

This probably seems like a general test-taking skill, and it is. However, breathing and staying relaxed are of particular importance on the AP English Literature test. When we're anxious, stressed, or worked up, we tend to lose cognitive efficacy. Letting the moment get the best of you is a surefire way to lose points on the response section of this test.

Breathe, stay calm, and understand that the body's natural stress response impairs our ability to plan ahead and to recall memories. On this portion of the test, the readers want to see that you've at least organized your thoughts. If you stay calm, you will have a much easier path to meeting that extremely important expectation put forth in the rubric.

# 11 AP English Literature Test Taking Strategies Cont.

## Conclusion

These 11 AP English Literature test-taking strategies can be of great use to you if you consider them ahead of time and tailor your preparation and studying to them. Make sure you know the material, understand what's being asked of you, and address the prompts directly. Annotate, plan, and use a logical approach to answering the multiple-choice questions as well as the free response prompts. Bulk up your literary analysis skills by studying relevant works ahead of time. Most importantly, breathe and stay focused while you're taking the test.

Given an appropriate amount of study time and some solid strategizing on your part, you can start strong on the multiple-choice section and confidently continue on to the free response section. Given an understanding of the literary works and the writing skills you are expected to demonstrate, you can create clean essays for the free response portion with ease.

Now, since you have some ideas of how to tackle it, which strategies can you use to improve your odds of acing the AP English Literature exam?

# 15 Must-Know Rhetorical Terms for AP English Literature



*[Image Source: Flickr](#)*

Conquering the multiple-choice section of the English Literature AP exam depends in part on being able to identify and understand certain essential literary concepts, known in this article as rhetorical terms. The AP English Literature rhetorical terms defined and described below are only a sampling of the many concepts that could appear on the test. However, these 15 terms are some of the must-know concepts necessary for success in the English Literature exam.

# 15 Must-Know Rhetorical Terms for AP English Literature Cont.

## Studying These Terms

I personally found writing the words and their definitions over and over again, an approach known as inculcation, to be the best way for me to master this vocabulary before I took the AP English Literature exam. When facing a large vocabulary list such as this one, it's easy to look at and consider it as a whole, a practice that creates a lot of unnecessary stress.

Compartmentalization is a very useful study skill we can employ in exploring AP English Literature rhetorical terms. Try not to consider the list as a whole. Try to think of these terms as independent parts that must be placed in different compartments so that they can be easily called up when they're needed. You'll know exactly where to find them when you need them if you study them in parts. Consider the 15 rhetorical terms below the first set of words for you to study.

## AP English Literature Rhetorical Terms

### 1. Alliteration

The repetition of the same initial consonants of words or of stressed syllables in any sequence of neighboring words.

**Purpose:** Alliteration highlights a particular part of a piece through the repetition of initial consonants. The repetition of certain sounds creates emphasizes not only the words in the passage themselves but on the pattern, creating a musical effect.

**Example:** American Airlines, Best Buy, Coca-Cola

# 15 Must-Know Rhetorical Terms for AP English Literature Cont.

## 2. Allusion

An indirect or passing reference to an event, person, place, or artistic work.

**Purpose:** Allusion allows the audience to connect the characteristics of one object/concept to another. More often than not, an allusion in a literary work refers to some feature of another, previous literary work.

**Example:** One everyday example of an allusion is “This place is a Garden of Eden.” Literally, the place probably isn’t evocative of the biblical Garden of Eden in the Book of Genesis, but the intended meaning is that the setting is a paradise.

## 3. Analogy

Comparing two things or instances in time often based on their structure and used to explain a complex idea in simpler terms.

**Purpose:** Analogies are typically used to clarify or explain an author’s idea to the reader by likening a new idea to an older, better known one. They typically appear as similes that allow the reader to more easily understand the author’s meaning. It’s important for the reader to be able to understand or able to infer using context clues the meaning of the comparison.

**Example:** An everyday example of an analogy that appears as a simile is “nails on a chalkboard.” Readers understand the assaulting sound of nails on a chalkboard and are encouraged to liken it to some new occurrence that is assaulting or annoying.

# 15 Must-Know Rhetorical Terms for AP English Literature Cont.

## 4. Antithesis

A device used to create contrast by placing two parallel but opposite ideas in a sentence.

**Purpose:** Antithesis literally means opposite, but the rhetorical definition calls for parallel structures of contrasting words or clauses. These opposing words or clauses are placed in close proximity within a sentence in order to create a focal point for the reader.

**Example:** A well-known example of antithesis is “Speech is silver, but silence is gold.” The two opposites, speech and silence, are compared to one another by using the stratified value of silver and gold.

## 5. Consonance

Repetition of consonant sounds two or more times in short succession within a sentence or phrase.

**Purpose:** Consonance is, again, a device used by writers in order to create focus on a particular part of a piece. In many cases, consonance appears in poetry as a device used to create slant rhymes.

**Example:** An easy way to think of consonance is to remember tongue twisters like “She sells sea shells down by the sea shore.”

# 15 Must-Know Rhetorical Terms for AP English Literature Cont.

## 6. Diction

Refers to the author's word choice.

**Purpose:** Diction is the umbrella term used to identify an author's choice of words. This is important to define because understanding diction allows the reader to identify other concepts like the tone of a piece, the intended audience, or even the era in which the piece was written.

**Example:** Examples of diction are present throughout whatever piece you're reading. Notice repetitive words, phrases, and thoughts. Consider the lofty or lowly word choice such as the formal "ye" versus the informal "you."

## 7. Ellipsis

When one or more words are omitted from a sentence.

**Purpose:** Often, ellipsis is used to omit some parts of a sentence or even an entire story, forcing the reader to figuratively fill in the gaps. This heavily depends on the reader being not only invested but also immersed in the story enough to care about what happens during those gaps.

**Example:** A good example of ellipsis is "I went to the park, and she went too." The reader can infer that she also went to the park, though "to the park" is omitted from the second clause.

# 15 Must-Know Rhetorical Terms for AP English Literature Cont.

## 8. Ethos

A characteristic spirit of a given culture, era, or community or its beliefs; Ethos, in purely rhetorical terms, is a label used to identify an appeal to the ethics of a culture or individual.

**Purpose:** The purpose of an appeal to ethos, an ethical appeal, is to establish the speaker's credibility through exposition of that speaker's character. Identifying an ethical appeal will be of particular use to readers when analyzing the work of the ancients.

**Example:** Consider the overlap between diction and appeal. The author's word choice can tip the reader off that an ethical appeal is being made.

## 9. Hyperbole

An intentionally exaggerated statement or claim not meant to be taken literally but creating a desired humorous effect.

**Purpose:** A hyperbole involves exaggeration in order to create emphasis. Unlike other figurative language devices, hyperbole creates emphasis through the humorous effect that is created by the author's overstatement.

**Example:** One of the best examples is the phrase "I'm dying to..." One is literally not dying to see someone or do something, but the exaggeration intends to show affection or intense longing while maintaining a humorous tone.

# 15 Must-Know Rhetorical Terms for AP English Literature Cont.

## 10. Imagery

Visually descriptive or figurative language.

**Purpose:** Imagery is used to characterize objects, actions, and ideas in a way that appeals to our physical senses. The true purpose of imagery is to create a visual imagination of the scenarios or things being described.

**Example:** Again, consider the diction of the piece. Imagery is created by the writer's choice of words. Evocative words that arouse the senses—touch, sight, smell, etc.—are indicators of imagery at work.

## 11. Irony

The expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite of what the writer intends to achieve a humorous effect or to add emphasis.

**Purpose:** A writer utilizes irony to show that the words they use do not necessarily represent their intended meaning. Further, irony can be manifest as a situation that does not pan out the way that the audience, speaker, or characters believe it will.

**Example:** A common example of irony is the nickname "Tiny" for a large man. We know and see that a large man is not, in fact, tiny, yet we employ the nickname ironically.

# 15 Must-Know Rhetorical Terms for AP English Literature Cont.

## 12. Oxymoron

A figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction.

**Purpose:** An oxymoron is a juxtaposition of two opposing words with the intended effect of creating emphasis through the nonsensical nature of this device. Oxymoron is used to characterize conflicting emotions, thoughts, or occurrences.

**Example:** An easy example of oxymoron is a two-word, adjective and noun construction such as original copy.

## 13. Pathos

A quality that evokes pity or sadness.

**Purpose:** Pathos is a term used to identify an appeal to the pathetic. A writer may want a reader to sympathize with a character and employ a pathetic appeal to inspire feelings of pity, sympathy, or sadness.

**Example:** Examples of pathetic appeals are, once more, bound to diction. Look for clues in word choice that indicate an appeal to the emotions of an individual. A good, though sometimes sad, example of pathos is a call for donations to cancer research which features the stories or pictures of survivors and sufferers.

# 15 Must-Know Rhetorical Terms for AP English Literature Cont.

## 14. Personification

The attribution of a personal nature or human characteristic to a nonhuman or the representation of an abstract quality in human form.

**Purpose:** A writer might employ personification in order to apply human characteristics to something nonhuman, thus furthering the writer’s use of imagery and figurative language

**Example:** “The wind whispers” is a fitting example of personification. The wind doesn’t actually whisper, but the human action of whispering characterizes well the sounds that the wind can make.

## 15. Symbol/Symbolism

A thing that represents or stands for another thing like an object that represents an abstract idea.

**Purpose:** Employing symbolism is a way for a writer to attach meaning to an object or action, some symbol within the piece, that goes beyond the face-value of the symbol itself. Symbols represent something more than their literal meanings.

**Example:** Consider the phrase “a new dawn.” It literally refers to the beginning of a new day. However, figuratively speaking, the beginning of a new day signifies a new start.

## Conclusion

Now that you’ve explored a few of the necessary rhetorical terms and gained a possible strategy for studying the rest of the terms, you’re well on your way to conquering the multiple-choice section of the AP English Literature exam. Continue studying using repetition and compartmentalizing, and you’ll be able to easily recall these definitions and examples when you’re taking the test.



# Ready to Score Higher?

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# AP English Lit

## Multiple Choice Questions: A How-To Guide

As it makes up 45% of your score, the multiple-choice section on the AP English Literature is an important thing to study for, even if you think you're already an excellent multiple-choice test-taker.

There are 55 AP English Literature multiple choice questions and you will be given one hour to complete them. Sample AP English Literature multiple choice questions are available on [Albert.io](https://albert.io) and [CollegeBoard](https://collegeboard.org).

What follows are some basic strategies to keep in mind while studying for this section of the test, doing practice questions, and taking the exam itself.

### **1. Close Reading**

Because the AP English Literature multiple choice questions are centered around passages selected from works of literature throughout the ages, it is important to read the passages thoroughly but efficiently (as you only have about 1 minute per question on this section of the exam).

There are a few different helpful strategies for reading the passages in this section; you should try each with a different set of practice questions and see which one works best for you.

Some students feel they perform better when they read the questions before the passages. One of the advantages of this strategy is that you will already know what you're looking for when you start to tackle the passage.

# AP English Lit Multiple Choice Questions: A How-To Guide Cont.

Others prefer to read the passage twice, once being a skim for main ideas the other a full reading. Although this may take a bit longer than the other strategies, you may make up the time later when working on the questions, as you won't have to go back and refer to the passage as often.

Of course, simply reading the passage through once and then starting on the questions may work for you better than these. Try all three strategies and any others you can think of to see what works best for you.

## 2. Make Critical Inferences

There is no guessing penalty on the AP English Literature multiple choice questions; you are graded based on the number of questions you get right. There is also no penalty for leaving a question blank. This means that you shouldn't waste time and effort on guessing wildly (blindly picking choice C on a question you don't know anything about), but that you also shouldn't be afraid to guess if you can think critically and eliminate certain answers.

If you can eliminate 3 of the 5 possible answers, you have a 50% chance of getting the question right, and should take a guess, because the potential benefits outweigh the very minimal risk.

## 3. Be Mindful of Your Time

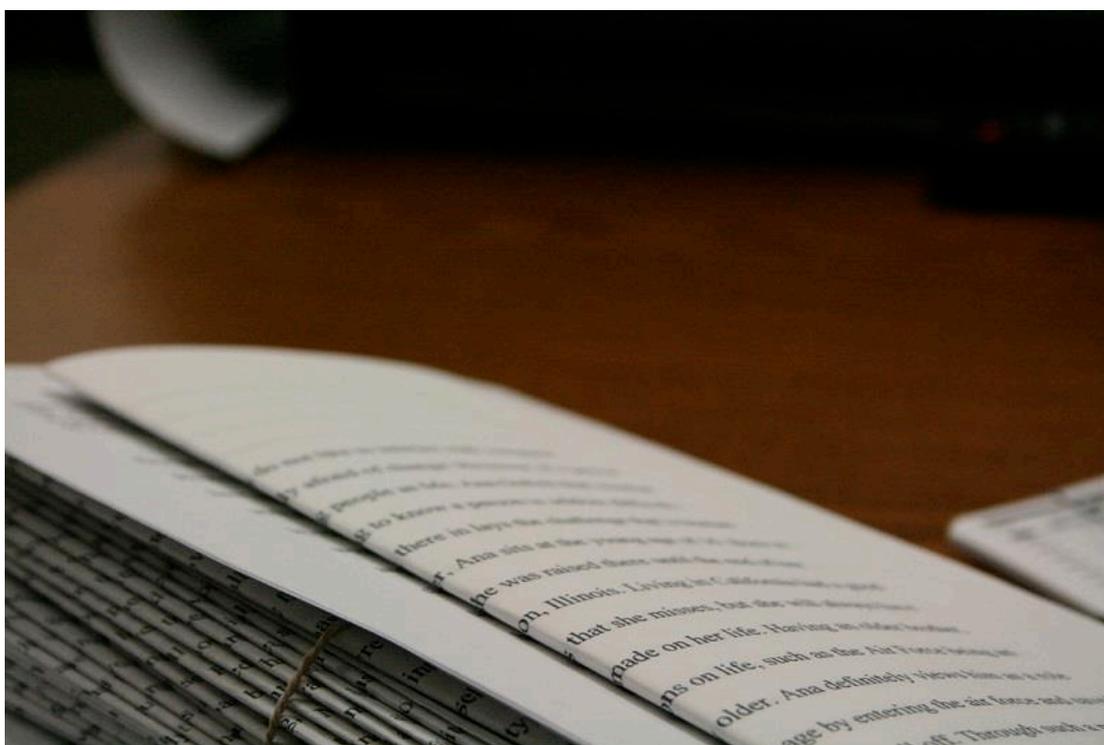
Because there is no penalty for leaving questions blank, if a question is giving you trouble you should skip it and mark it to return to later if you have time. You only have 1 hour for the test, which breaks down to about one minute per question with a little extra time for reading the associated passage. As such, you need to work through the test efficiently; it's better to miss out on the points for one tough question than three easy ones, as the questions are all counted equally, despite their difficulty levels.



## AP English Lit Multiple Choice Questions: A How-To Guide Cont.

These tips should help you tackle your AP English Literature multiple choice questions, but be sure to practice as much as possible between now and the exam, reviewing on [Albert.io](https://albert.io) and other sites and bringing any important questions to your teacher or study group.

# 3 Ways to Tackle AP English Literature Prompts



[Image Source: Flickr](#)

Each open-ended AP English Literature essay prompt focuses upon a specific idea or theme common in canonical literature (such as justice, sacrifice) or a certain type of work or technique used within many works. It will then ask you to explain how whatever device it focuses on works within a particular piece of literature and then justify that explanation. Here are three sample AP English Literature prompts (all from actual AP exams) and a quick explanation of one way you could tackle each of them. Studying and practicing these methods will definitely help you perform better on the AP English Literature exam!

## 3 Ways to Tackle AP English Literature Prompts Cont.

### 1. A 2003 AP English Literature Prompt:

*According to critic Northup Frye, “Tragic heroes are so much the high points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable conductors of the power around 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.*

A good work to write on is Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, in which the eponymous character commits various murders, including of his king and closest friend, because of the influence of his tragic flaw, ambition. The suffering Macbeth causes for others contributes to the tragic vision of the work for various reasons:

- With every act of violence, he becomes more mad with guilt and paranoid that he will be discovered (in the beginning) or usurped (throughout the middle and end). Macbeth’s madness and paranoia lead to further acts of violence in a vicious cycle.
- The people Macbeth should love most, his wife and best friend, are directly affected by his actions, Lady Macbeth going mad and Banquo being murdered by hired assassins.
- There is an irony in the fact that Macbeth is hated for killing his countrymen, when before the murder spree he was revered for killing his kingdom’s enemies.

Any one of these, if fully explored, could provide an essay in and of itself, or all of them could be combined in one essay. For practice, try constructing a thesis (or even writing an entire essay) for each of these points, then all of them together.

## 3 Ways to Tackle AP English Literature Prompts Cont.

### 2. A 2009 AP English Literature Prompt:

*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.*

A good work for this prompt would be George Orwell's *1984*, which focuses on the political issue of communist totalitarianism. The setting of this novel is one element through which political commentary is delivered, in that Orwell has imagined a future in which the government lies to its people constantly and has forged a police state in the name of creating equality, while in fact the same inequalities that ran rampant during the age of capitalism still exist.

The character of Winston Smith is also an element through which Orwell makes his commentary, because Smith is an "everyman" – an unremarkable, easy-to-relate-to character – driven to political radicalism by that environment.

Focusing on setting or character would work equally well for an essay. For points supporting a thesis related to setting, you could list and explain examples of the various ways in which Orwell's imagined society takes control of its people, and the consequences for fighting against that system. For points supporting a thesis related to character, you could write on the changes that take place in Smith over the course of the novel, as he gets involved with revolutionary activity and then faces torture, imprisonment, and guilt toward the novel's end.

## 3 Ways to Tackle AP English Literature Prompts Cont.

### 3. A 2012 AP English Literature Prompt:

*“And, after all, our surroundings influence our lives and character 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 this work as a whole.*

This question could be answered with an essay on Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*. In this novel, the two estates, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, represent two different ways of life and have distinct sets of characters – though the most significant characters in the novel travel between the two estates, and are often very seriously affected by it. The Grange represents civilization, security, strict morality, and the Heights wildness, violence, and freedom.

When writing this essay, you could focus not only on how these traits are displayed by the characters from or inhabiting one of the two estates, but how the development of characters at each of the locations seeks to start a dialogue about ideas of “good breeding” very prevalent in society at the time. Is a person shaped more by her heredity or environment? There are cases to be made from both and evidence to support either claim in this very complicated novel.

You could also consider the fact that the most important, interesting, and ultimately happy characters in the story are not dominated by either place, either family, either set of characteristics – showing that freedom and wildness tempered with, but not totally eclipsed by, civilized notions provide the best life.

# How to Score Your Own AP English Literature Practice Essay

Part of effectively preparing for the free response section of the AP English Literature exam is accepting at least this one old truism: practice makes perfect. However, you can up the ante by adding just one more word to that statement. In truth, perfect practice makes perfect.

You should ensure that you practice responding to sample prompts in as precise a manner as possible. How do we measure our precision here? Good question. By examining the AP English Literature rubric for the free response section, the pertinent skills on which your success depends become evident.

Read on for a brief analysis of English Literature rubric, an outline of a sample response with an examination of the pertinent skills at work in the sample, and a discussion of possible strategies that you can use to score your own practice essays.

## **The AP English Literature Rubric**

First of all, I believe the best way for us to analyze the AP English Literature rubric itself is by unpacking the important information found in the 9-8 scoring range. We should aim high here. The very fact that this range defines the highest percentile grades means that essays receiving 8 or 9 marks have everything needed—and a little more than that—to ace this portion of the exam.

## How to Score Your Own AP English Literature Practice Essay Cont.

So, I'll unpack the information and compartmentalize it. The top-tier section of the AP English Literature rubric states that the best essays “demonstrate the writer’s ability to discuss a literary work with insight and understanding and to control a wide range of the elements of effective composition.” That’s a little abstract for our analysis, but luckily there’s more concrete information that we can focus on.

A top-tier essay covers an appropriate work and the appropriate elements within that work. Appropriate is subjective though. Carefully consider how the literary work you’ve chosen helps you respond to the prompt. The piece you’ve selected should allow you to make many specific, apt references. These references and their purpose in proving your thesis should be clearly explained in a logical manner. The rubric warns against including “plot summary that is not relevant to the topic,” so make sure, again, that the material is appropriate.

The bottom line is that there are some concrete requirements we can plainly see in the rubric that will not only allow you to analyze your own writing, but that will also inform the way you practice writing for the AP English Literature exam. Let’s get down to some perfect practice.

### Sample Free Response Outline

The following example prompt comes from the 2013 AP English Literature free response section.

*“...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.”* For clarification, bildungsroman is German for “novel of formation,” or a coming-of-age story.

# How to Score Your Own AP English Literature Practice Essay Cont.

Let's use *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce, which is a title included in the prompt. We're sure it's appropriate because it's a story of a nineteenth-century Irish Catholic boy growing up to become a writer, a coming-of-age story in which a boy grapples with heady questions of morality and self and eventually finds peace as an adult. The protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, spurns his religion briefly, but he eventually rededicates himself to piety. He later realizes, in the pivotal moment we'll discuss, that his love and desire of beauty should not be shameful to him. He is forever changed by freeing himself from his religion.

Here's a brief outline for a sample response to this prompt:

## 1. Introduction

1. Stephen Dedalus' psychological and moral development throughout James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* directly correlates to the protagonist's struggle with his faith and his sense of self.
2. The pivotal moment in Stephen's development and in the story itself takes place when Stephen succeeds in his struggle to no longer be constrained by religion.

## II. Body

1. The truly pivotal moment in Stephen's development takes place when Stephen decides that his love of and desire for beauty should not be shameful to him.
  - a. Late in chapter 4, Stephen considers the myth of Daedalus and sees a beautiful girl whom he regards as an angel.
  - b. Stephen is changed by this experience in that he can grow and become the artist he wishes to be.

## How to Score Your Own AP English Literature Practice Essay Cont.

2. This moment shapes the meaning of the story itself by illustrating the author's own struggle to become an artist and possible his own pivotal moment.
  - a. It is at this point in the story that Joyce's diction and style become more elevated, reflecting Stephen's development sans religion.
  - b. By Chapter 5, Stephen seems well adjusted and as if he is able to embrace adulthood.

### Conclusion

1. The moment when Stephen observes the angelic girl in the water and contemplates the myth of Daedalus represents a pivotal moment not only in the story but in Stephen's psychological and moral development throughout Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.
2. This moment shapes the story by, in effect, being one of the main reasons that Joyce wrote it.
3. Joyce himself struggled with his religion, and, once free of it, developed into the artist he was meant to be, much like Stephen.

First, it was established that the literary work chosen was appropriate. The elements chosen, the pivotal moment was also established as appropriate, according to the prompt. Next, an understanding of the concept and of the references made in Paragraph I was demonstrated. Then, I responded to the other portion of the prompt regarding how the pivotal moment shapes the story and demonstrated an understanding of the references made in support of that. Finally, an insight was made regarding Joyce's reason for writing *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

This is an O.K. response. It's nothing special but it gives us an example text to guide our discussion of the strategies you can use to score your own practice essays.

# How to Score Your Own AP English Literature Practice Essay Cont.

## Scoring Practice Essays

The easiest way to score your practice essays is to consider the concrete information that's known about how the readers will score your essays. The following five questions are useful in scoring your practice essays but also in guiding your preparation for the actual test.

First, pretty obviously, have you actually made an attempt to respond to the prompt precisely and with only relevant material? If so, you've at least gotten off to a good start.

Second, analyze your structure and organization. Can you follow the logic in your essay without having to mentally fill in any blanks? If you notice that some part of the logic is unclear and requires you to make some cognitive jump, rest assured your reader will notice this. Good organization and structure of your thoughts is plainly pivotal to upping your essay scores. If you can read through your response comfortably, you're in good shape.

Third, analyze your diction and rhetorical strategies. Do you use a varied vocabulary? Have you employed any college-level composition strategies such as parallelism or antithesis? If no to either of these, you're running par for the course. If yes to both, you're doing pretty well.

Fourth, examine how your references demonstrate your understanding of the prompt, the text, and the elements of the text which you've discussed in your essay. Do you make any clever insights? Have you made a unique connection to or inference about the piece? If you're confident that your response demonstrates your understanding of these key artifacts, then you're probably looking at a 6 or 7 mark.

Fifth, scrutinize the style of your essay. This is the final part of your self-scoring. If you read over your essay and remark on your own style, even if you're critical at times, in a positive way, there's a chance your response may be an 8 or better.

# How to Score Your Own AP English Literature Practice Essay Cont.

Asking these questions is a quick, easy barometer for gauging the effectiveness of your AP English Literature free response responses.

## Conclusion

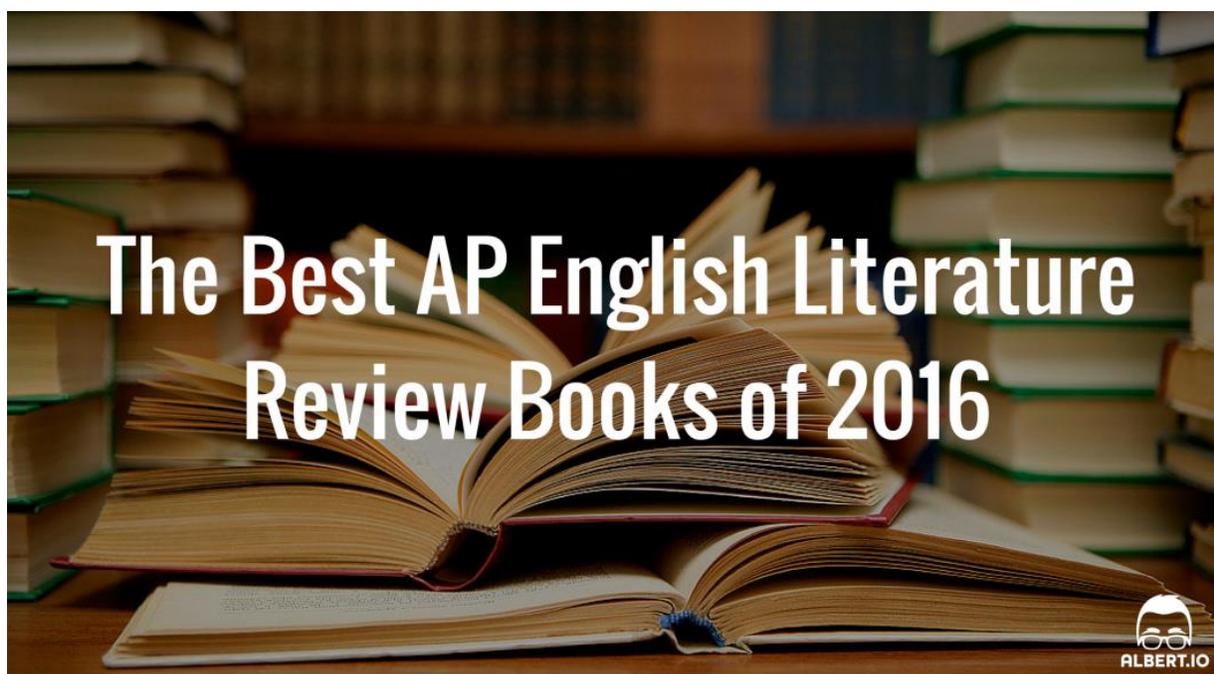
Effective preparation for the AP English Literature free response section depends on accepting that practice makes perfect. Strive throughout the time you spend studying to practice as perfectly as possible.

With this analysis of the rubric itself and the discussion of the five graduated questions you should ask about your practice essays, you've got a few more tools to use in ensuring that your practice is as perfect and precise as possible.

Ensure that your essays cover appropriate material. Analyze your organization. Examine your diction and usage of rhetorical strategies. Criticize your understanding of the prompt, the text, and the elements you've called out in the essay. Scrutinize your style.

By performing these five actions, you're increasing your odds of putting forth a solid performance on test day.

# The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016



You are most likely a bit apprehensive about the AP English Literature & Composition exam in early May. It certainly is a challenging, rigorous course, but your having found this page means that you are well on your way to figuring out how to get that elusive score of 5, which only about 8% of examinees received last year. Let's calm your nerves by figuring out which review book will make you feel more confident by test date.

## The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

The good news is, there is a wide variety of test review material for you, and our job here is to sift through the choices and steer you in the right direction. When looking for a review book, always keep the following in mind:

- Breadth and scope of the book
- Organization
- Quality of sample questions and answers given
- Additional resources (online resources, apps) provided

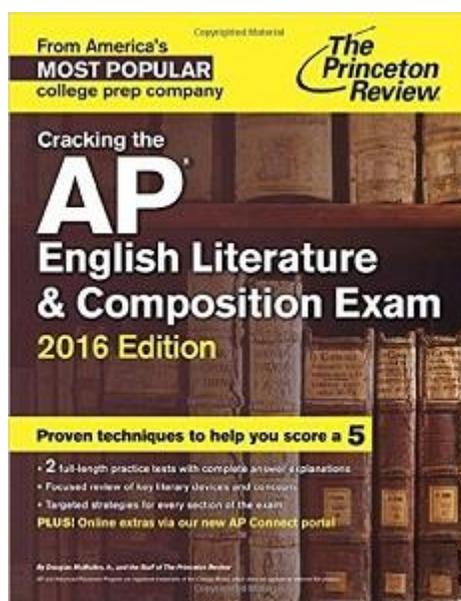
Briefly, the test has two separate sections, the first 60 minutes (and 45% of the overall score) consists of multiple-choice comprehension questions, while the remaining 120 minutes (and 55% of the overall score) consists of three free-response questions, of which one of them lets you choose the literary work to base your essay off.

Without going into too much detail on the contents of the exam, there is an available list of authors from poetry, drama, fiction (novels and short stories), and expository prose that you can find on the [AP English Literature & Composition Course Description](#) (pages 10-11) as well as other useful information about the exam and sample questions of all types.

Which book is best to fit with your study schedule depends on how much time you have left until the exam, whether you are cramming or have time to do a more comprehensive study. There are a lot of books to choose from out there, and we've found the pros and cons of 5 of the better known more titles. Funny thing is, this test is hard to prepare for, as you know, so what we're going to care about more here in our review is how much practice you're given in the book and what style of content review there is. That's where these books differ the most. Without further ado...

# The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

## [Cracking the AP English Literature & Composition Exam, 2016 Edition](#)



This 288-page review book by the guys and gals at The Princeton Review promises to streamline your test-taking strategies to fit the exam better, reviewing key literary devices and concepts that will keep your analysis in line and writing sound spot on. Keep in mind that advice will only go so far for this AP exam and probably the most valuable test prep help you'll get is by writing essays, comparing them with samples, and having concepts and ideas which will streamline the way you approach each essay and answer each comprehension question (since the free-response section comprises 55% of your score!) Get pencil/pen to paper stat!

The book is divided into 7 parts, but the best parts are the diagnostic test (Part II), the test-taking strategies (Part IV), the content review (Part V), and the final practice test (Part VI).

# The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

## Highlights:

- 2 full-length practice tests (one at the beginning before you begin your studies using this book, one at the end after you've gone through the book)
- Plenty of sample essays/questions
- The book does an excellent job explaining the different literary movements and themes (but that comprises the majority of the content review)
- Has plenty of prose and poetry questions with explanations following on how to “crack” the questions
- The explanations for the multiple-choice questions won't leave you in doubt either because they're particularly well written!
- A glossary at the end of the book
- Bits of humor here and there

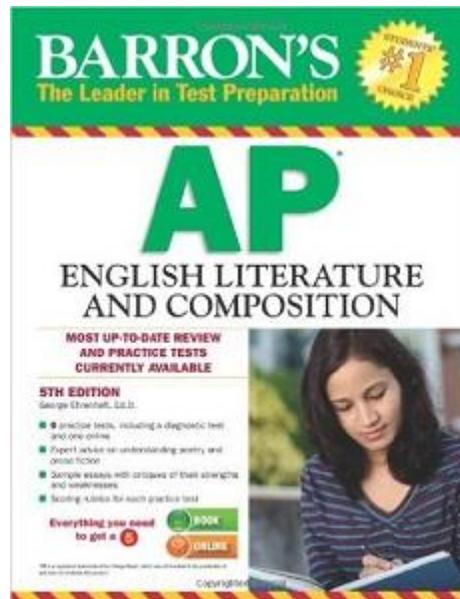
## Downsides:

- Free-response essay section could go into more detail, since this is 55% of the test
- More content review would help some students (and this book is lacking content review of drama)
- The Princeton Review is a bit notorious for copying from earlier editions  
But, we're still off to an okay start!

## GRADE: B

# The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

## [Barron's AP English Literature and Composition, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition](#)



Let's check out how another classic test-prep title fares. This 336-page review book is slightly larger than Princeton Review's. Its organization is something done particularly well and is a godsend for the stressed-out student. It starts off by giving you multiple-choice answering strategies (with explanations on language and rhetoric), and valuable advice on structuring and writing the different kinds of essays to make them look stronger. Having taken the book's advice, the student is presented with a diagnostic test, followed by a more comprehensive content review, and finally a bunch of practice tests.

# The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

## Highlights:

- Diagnostic test
- 5 full-length practice exams give you lots and lots of questions to practice
- You can also do extra online practice test
- An extra CD can be purchased containing two additional tests
- One of the things that this book manages to do, but some others don't is a review of all three major literary styles: prose, poetry, and drama (many review books ignore drama altogether)
- A section on how to analyze famous novels that is concise and useful
- There's much more to be had in this title's content review versus, for example, the Princeton Review's
- The multiple-choice questions are a bit harder than the ones on the actual test, so you're practicing for something slightly more challenging
- Glossary of terms and index

## Downsides:

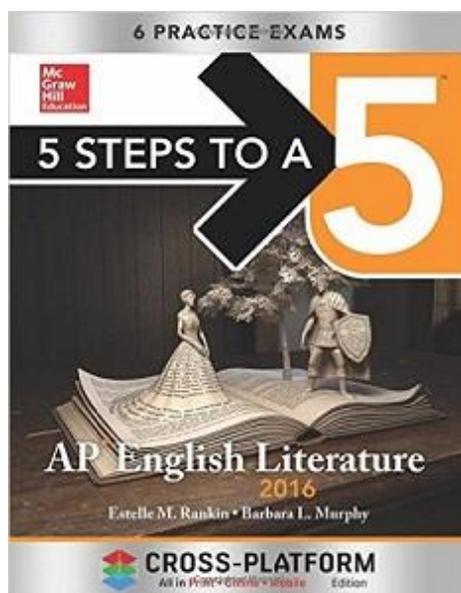
- Perhaps the section on poetry is a bit too long (but of course, if that's not your strong suit, then maybe it's worth a peek!)
- Typically uses well-known literary examples, depriving the student of the opportunity to come across and analyze unseen works
- The explanations don't focus too much on explaining why the wrong answers are wrong, but typically only focus on why the "best" answer is right

Good content review and plenty of opportunities to practice! Great as a supplement to your class, but even valuable as a class instruction material.

**GRADE: A**

# The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

## [5 Steps to a 5 AP English Literature, 2016 Edition](#)



Alright, this is another well-known test prep series. This 256-page book is organized into '5 steps' to get you the best score you can get:

- Set up Your Study Program (planning)
- Determine Your Test Readiness (diagnostic test)
- Develop Strategies for Success (advice on answering questions)
- Review the Knowledge You Need to Score High (prose and poetry content review)
- Build Your Test-Taking Confidence (practice exams)

You probably know that it takes more than 5 steps to improve your score, but having this clear organization takes the burden off your mind.

# The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

## Highlights:

- Diagnostic test is included
- Access to McGraw-Hill Education's AP Planner app (including extra practice questions)
- 2 full-length exams
- 3 different study guides depending on your learning style
- The appendix contains a review of literary movements and lots of other goodies (a reading guide, recommended poets/authors, a glossary, and an **extremely** valuable list of websites to orient yourself towards more and more content review!)
- The authors are not a faceless corporation and they have good credentials. Rankin taught AP Literature for more than 25 years and Murphy taught AP courses (including AP English Language & Comp.) for 20 years and has been an AP reader for many years.

## Downsides:

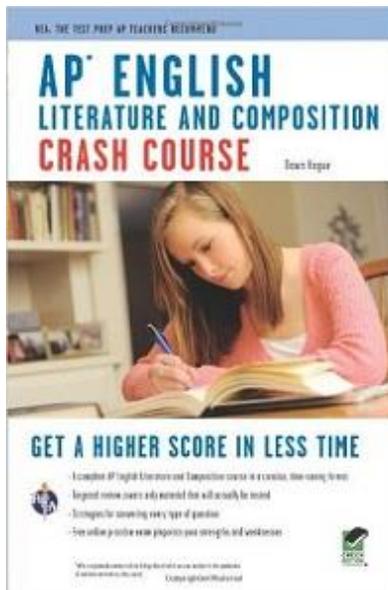
- Content review is missing drama
- Occasional errors in the answers
- The content review section is lacking something that the Barron's book has, which is how to analyze a particular book (which is fabulously useful)

All in all a pretty decent choice, however!

**GRADE: B+**

# The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

## [AP English Literature and Composition Crash Course](#)



The Crash Course series are designed for study at a faster pace. You shouldn't be waiting until the last minute to study for the test, but if that's you, this book might be useful for you. This 240-page book is the shortest of the ones we've looked at so far. The main four parts of this book are a content review, followed by test-taking tips on reading passages, essay writing, and multiple choice questions, respectively. Rest assured, this book is chock-full of tips and advice.

# The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

## Highlights:

- Access to the online REA Study Center (with a free practice exam)
- Well-organized as a last minute cramming book (but you have to have already read the literary works because this book doesn't give you much information!)
- Makes studying for English Literature seem like studying for Biology. But, of course, this is only a good thing if memorization is your strong suit
- A crash course on many concepts like literary periods (in a timeline for the visually inclined!)
- A discussion of fiction, drama, and poetry, and famous literary works' main points organized into a reader-friendly list
- Explains diction, imagery, figurative language, point of view, syntax, and tone as well as giving examples of how authors use these literary elements

## Downsides:

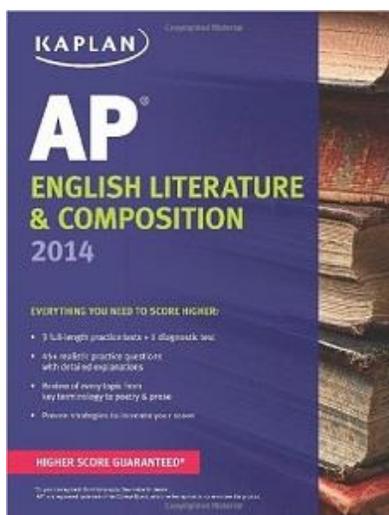
- Only particularly useful if cramming
- Superficial information abounds and, despite its title as a crash course, there are lots of long paragraphs that students will want to skip until they get to another chart or visual
- Works better as a reference for teachers on how to determine their curriculum
- No index or glossary of terms at the end of the book

Good practice questions with good explanations are invaluable. This might be a good reference only if you can recall a lot of literary works and detail from class already, thereby using this review book as a tool to get your test-taking skills up to par. That being said, the content tends to be kind of superficial. If you're the kind of student who studies for any test by memorizing facts, this book might merit a higher grade, but as for the majority of students, I have to give it a:

**GRADE: B**

# The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

## [Kaplan AP English Literature and Composition, 2014 Edition](#)



Kaplan, of course, is a well-known tutoring company. This 360-page book of theirs has some unique points which is to be expected from a tutoring company with in-class experience. Kaplan boasts that they invest \$4.5 million annually in creating and updating their products which means either 1) everyone who works there uses that money to line their pockets or 2) their products are kept up-to-date and maintain a quality standard, so let's hope it's the latter.

But, just as a side note, don't always trust a single company to provide quality study prep materials for all subjects (i.e. don't buy all your AP review books from the same company); sometimes they are right on with a subject, and then off the mark with another. That's why we have these book review posts, to let you know when they get it right, and when they make a misstep!

The book's most important sections are the diagnostic test (Part Two), exam content and test-taking strategies review (Part Three), and the subsequent practice tests (Part Four)

# The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

## Highlights:

- A diagnostic test
- 3 full-length practice exams at the end of the book
- Practice questions at the end of each content review section
- Tips and tricks from teachers and students who were able to get 5's on the exam
- The best part of the book is Part 3, which consists of a section of key terms and a passage from Thoreau which exhibits many of those terms, a section on writing tips for the essay, and then two sections on poetry and prose, respectively
- An index at the end and a 2-page color study sheet for key literary terms
- The author Pivarnik-Nova has been an AP English/AP Lit teacher for over 20 years

## Downsides:

- No online resources
- No section on drama

But, for the most part, it does what it sets out to do!

**GRADE: A-.**

## The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

### So which one is the best?

It depends on how much time you have to study. There are roughly two types of study guides that we've seen, crash-course types and more in-depth review types. Of the former, the Crash Course book is the one that does brevity with the most success, but then again it is severely lacking in practice opportunities.

Of the more holistic review books, the one that stands out above the rest is Barron's. Barron's has a great set of practice exams, comprehensive content review, and online resources. It is the review book that is best for all kinds of students. Kaplan's is decent too, but it doesn't have any online resources. And 5 Steps to a 5 is not as good in its content review and needs at least one more practice exam. To get more practice exams, however, you can just use [AP Central](#) if necessary to supplement.

### Final Verdict:

Book Title	Biggest Pro	Biggest Con	Perk	Grade
Cracking the AP English Literature & Composition Exam	Plenty of practice and some very good explanation	Free-response section a bit sparse		B

## The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

Book Title	Biggest Pro	Biggest Con	Perk	Grade
Barron's AP English Literature and Composition	5 Practice exams included in the book (including the diagnostic test)	Poetry perhaps over-emphasized	Online practice test and/or two practice tests available with purchase of CD-ROM	A
5 Steps to a 5 AP English Literature	Smart organization	If it had another practice exam, I'd probably give it an A	Access to McGraw-Hill Education's AP Planner app	A-
AP English Literature and Composition Crash Course	As expected from this series, provides copious test-taking tips and is ideal for cramming	Doesn't review course material into much detail	Access to the online REA Study Center (with a free practice exam)	B

## The Best AP English Literature Review Books of 2016 Cont.

Book Title	Biggest Pro	Biggest Con	Perk	Grade
Kaplan AP English Literature and Composition	Almost everything a test prep book should do, it has, and does, with creativity	No online resources		A-

There are honestly a few close contenders, but the best AP English Literature & Composition book is Barron's AP English Literature and Composition. This book gives you the complete study experience, and the amount of practice questions available exceeds expectations. As always, you can supplement these books with [AP Central](#) practice questions and [Albert.io](#). If you're especially devoted to the AP English Literature & Composition exam, though, I would certainly suggest not only getting one review book. Choose another one that complements well!

Some students swear by the Crash Course series, but for AP English Literature it doesn't perform as well. The information is too superficial, some of the advice is common sense, and if you're looking for superficial information and common sense advice, the internet is full of that (and it's free too online). I would not suggest cramming for this exam, because cramming doesn't really help as much as it would for another subject which requires more memorization. Please, please, please leave some time to digest all the information!

Best of luck on your exam! By the end of this intensive studying, you might be able to get into those exclusive literary circles!

Have a great review book that's not on our list? [Let us know!](#)



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# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List

Knowing which literary works to study when preparing to face the AP English Literature exam takes some thought on your part. You can prepare your own AP English Literature reading list using some of the following selections and the commentary I've provided.

Whatever you do, be well read when going into this test. Have some knowledge, basic knowledge at least, on a wide variety of texts from novellas to epics and everything in between.

The following reading list, complete with some commentary on these works' merits and purpose as study materials as well as a general synopsis, should give you a solid pool of AP English Literature works from which you can choose the ones that work best for you.

## **The Top 10 AP English Literature Reading List**

You can't argue with hard statistics. The College Board has kept track of the most frequently cited the AP English Literature works from 1971 through 2014. This portion of the list is devoted directly to these ten works. It could be of great importance that you at the very least gain some familiarity with these titles, as the likelihood that one of these will appear somewhere on the test is pretty high.

# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

## **1. *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison**

Ellison's *Invisible Man* is a long read but it is definitely worth the time spent due to the way it tackles race and bigotry and its effect on the minds of the parties involved in issues of race. *Invisible Man* covers race, identity, ideology, and stereotypes. Further, it tells the story of a marginalized character who eventually overcomes alienation, invisibility, and defies a society that is unable and unwilling to recognize the individuality of the black man. This is the most frequently referenced title on the AP English Literature reading list at 26 citations since 1971.

## **2. *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte**

*Wuthering Heights* is one of the most widely regarded pieces on the AP English Literature reading list. *WH* is a good example of Gothic Romanticism that deals heavily with questions of emotion and violence. It's particularly accessible and discusses class and gender comfortably from the perspective of a woman. This is one of the most frequently cited literary works on the AP Literature exam. It has been included in some form or fashion on 20 different years' tests since 1971.

I personally recommend analyzing this piece while looking out for the poetry and mastery of composition that Emily Bronte wields in her only published novel. *Wuthering Heights* is long but meaningful read.

## **3. *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens**

*Great Expectations* is another Victorian novel that is very frequently included on the AP Literature exam. Since 1971, it has been cited 18 times. It is considered a Victorian Bildungsroman, German for "Novel of Formation," simply described as a coming-of-age story.

*Great Expectations* is probably one of the most versatile titles on this list because it addresses many of the Victorian-era genres of the novel, including satire, crime, Silver Fork, Newgate, Gothic, serial fiction, romance, politics, and history.

# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

Read Dickens' *Great Expectations* as if you need to mark a trail to get back to the beginning, your starting point. With Dickens, it's about the particular points he mentions. Those points throughout the story inform your reading of *Great Expectations*, not the purpose of the novel itself.

Make sure you don't focus on plot with any Dickens piece. Plots are his weakest point. Concentrate on instances of his beautiful use of language.

## **4. *King Lear* by William Shakespeare**

*King Lear*, referenced 17 times since 1971, is the most frequently cited work by Shakespeare.

*King Lear* is a brutal play containing themes ranging from familial love and duty to anger and deception. It's a play that provides you with many different elements of story to discuss as well as elements of style. The actual story is too complicated to briefly summarize, so trust the numbers and read this play before taking the test.

## **5. *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky**

The main theme of *Crime and Punishment* is redemption via suffering. This is another long but worthwhile read at 545 pages. The purpose of *Crime and Punishment* is to provide a psychological analysis of the young Raskolnikov's crime to reveal how this psychological analysis itself keeps us imprisoned.

Intellectualizing events, says Dostoevsky, keeps us imprisoned.

As the name tells us, Crime and Punishment and their relationship to each other are major themes in the story. Think about questions of sacrifice when reading studying this piece. Nihilism, the superhero complex, alienation, and poverty are also analyzed at length.

# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

## **6. *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad**

*Heart of Darkness* is lauded on many of the AP English Literature prep message boards as a go-to literary work for the free response section with good reason. It's a relatively short novella and an interesting read involving mystery, psychology, and adventure. *Heart of Darkness* is particularly useful in questions about the modern world in that it was somewhat prophetically written. It deals with the question of imperialist greed particularly pointedly.

Above all else, *Heart of Darkness* effectively explores and answers questions about morality and how the ambiguity of right and wrong can justify actions. Keep this in mind.

## **7. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte**

*Jane Eyre* is a highly cited Victorian Romantic novel. At its core, this is a story of a woman yearning for more than what traditional society would allow her to have. Not only is it well known, it's more relevant today due to the recent push for social equity for women.

## **8. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain**

*Huck Finn* is probably one of the best-known titles on this list among American students and with good reason. It's rich and complex, yet decipherable by students. If, perhaps, you're asked about the era of Slavery or Reconstruction, *Huck Finn* should really come to mind. It relentlessly discusses slavery and racism and the hypocrisy of civilized society. Consider the Mississippi River a symbol for remaining in the middle of the road on issues of race and use that to inform your reading of *Huck Finn*.

# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

## **9. *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville**

*Moby Dick* is universally accepted as an expansive, masterful work of fiction. However, Melville himself described this novel as a meditation on America. Read key portions of this text at least and gain an understanding of Melville's particular use of symbolism. There are many pertinent symbols that may appear on the AP English Literature exam.

## **10. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce**

Another bildungsroman, coming-of-age story, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is an examination of how morality and religion can confine the artist. *A Portrait* reflects Joyce's own development as a young boy through adulthood at university. Read *A Portrait* with an eye for Joyce's stream of consciousness style. As Stephen, the main character, develops morally and psychologically, the style of Joyce's writing adapts and grows, so to speak. Utilize this title on questions of how style can inform the meaning of the development of characters.

# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

## The Lost Generation

It could be of use to you to compartmentalize your reading list in terms of time period. For instance, take the Lost Generation. Many of the most frequently cited literary works from 1971 to 2014 were written by Lost Generation, World War I era, authors. Not only is this an interesting time period that seems to be receiving more attention as the years draw on, many of the following titles from this era reflect the distinct American voice in literature in a lyrical, interesting, and unique way.

### **11. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston**

Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a good example of a stylistic masterwork, which you can benefit from knowing. Hurston juxtaposes the Southern Black dialect with the voice of a literary narrator. If you're asked about her work, the chances are that an understanding of her style and structure will score you points.

### **12. *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald**

Probably one of the best-known Lost Generation literary works, *The Great Gatsby* has become iconic in high school English Literature education. F. Scott Fitzgerald's work has come to represent the Jazz Age in America. If you were asked about early-20<sup>th</sup> century American society, *The Great Gatsby* would be a kind of touchstone work to analyze.

### **13. *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner**

Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, his fifth novel, would be a good example for you to use if asked about stream of consciousness, how that style develops tone, and how that style aids in character development. It's written in 59 chapters from 15 points of view that develop each character in manageable chunks, which is made much more easily understood by the intimate tone of stream of consciousness writing. Furthermore, it's viewed as part of the foundation of the Southern Renaissance.

# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

## **14. *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner**

Faulkner's fourth novel, *The Sound and the Fury*, is another exercise in style. He used stream of consciousness writing once more to tell a personal story of fear about the corruption of family values. *The Sound and the Fury* provides, most of all, a pathway to impress a reader. This is a difficult book to decipher, but, if you can get a handle on how Faulkner utilizes point of view within it, this piece can be of great value to you in both the multiple choice and free response sections of the exam.

## **15. *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway**

*The Sun Also Rises* represents the pinnacle, in my opinion, of the Iceberg Theory. That is to say that Hemingway's style of characterization and description, likely considered sparse by most, actually inspired a curiosity in readers that could only have been intentional.

This novel is not only representative of Hemingway's style; it is representative of the Lost Generation in itself, insofar as it chronicles fictionalized stories of American expatriates in Europe.

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# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

## Literature WWI – Present

The following literary works appear on the College Board’s most frequently cited list and were published after WWI. These titles can be useful references to this time period in particular.

### **16. *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller**

*Catch-22* comments on war by reducing it to a bureaucratic concern. Use this literary work in discussions of plot and how devices, like the Catch-22 rule which constitutes the reason that Heller wrote this piece, serve to form the plot of a story.

### **17. *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko**

*Ceremony* is a commentary on how tradition and spirituality can serve as a source of healing. It takes place from the point of view of a service-age Native American man who returns from World War II with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. He is mentally unstable and turns to alcohol to ease his mind, but, eventually, he returns to his spirituality, healing from it.

### **18. *Beloved* by Toni Morrison**

*Beloved* explores Mother-Daughter relationships and the psychological impact that slavery has had on the African-American community in this country. Use *Beloved* to comment on the importance of identity and also community.

### **19. *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker**

*The Color Purple* is an epistolary novel set in rural Georgia in the 1930s. It deals with racism and sexism, along with women’s rights. The power of language also plays an important role in *The Color Purple*. Walker writes Celie’s letters in a way that reflects her progression in emotional and psychological development.

# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

This development through language reinforces the idea that access to language, the ability to express one's self, is integral in the development of a sense of self.

## **20. *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams**

Williams used much of his own personal experience in writing *The Glass Menagerie*. This is a four-character play with a main theme of accepting reality. Each character in *The Glass Menagerie* retreats into their own world to escape the realities to which they cannot relate. Look for this selection in free response prompts about symbolism. Laura's array of delicate glass animals is the single strongest symbol in the play and a strong symbol in general. This *Glass Menagerie* comes to represent Laura herself and her escape her own illusory world.

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# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

## Shakespeare

Many of William Shakespeare's works appear on the most frequently cited list. Surely you've studied Shakespeare if you're preparing to take the AP English Literature exam now, but it couldn't hurt to refresh your memory of the following works by the Bard of Avon.

### **21. *Othello***

*Othello* is a story of love and deception built upon a soldier's insecurity with his life outside of soldiering. Questions and prompts about *Othello* may be concerned with issues of an isolated character and characteristics that contribute to that isolation.

### **22. *The Tempest***

One of the prominent themes in *The Tempest* is the artist in relation to his creation. Prospero can be viewed as a kind of artist, in that he controls the fate of every other character. It's as if Shakespeare inserted himself into the story as Prospero. *The Tempest* is widely regarded as Shakespeare's "Farewell" performance.

### **23. *The Merchant of Venice***

*The Merchant of Venice* is important to your preparation for the AP English Literature exam because it covers a timeless debate about racial and religious supremacy. This work could appear on either the multiple choice or free response sections because it explores the concept of dynamic characters using a culturally-charged and well-defined example: Shylock the Moneylender.

# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

## **24. *Hamlet***

*Hamlet* has been performed more than any other Shakespearean work. For this reason alone, it would be a good idea to familiarize yourself with it. There are many religious, philosophical, and psychoanalytical undercurrents in *Hamlet*, interpretation of which could aid in free responses and multiple choice questions pertaining to character.

## **25. *Macbeth***

*Macbeth* is somewhat of a cautionary tale warning against the allure of evil as a means of power. Studying *Macbeth* is a good opportunity for you to develop your critical analysis skills in tragedy.

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# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

## The Classics

The classical works also enjoy frequent citations on the AP Literature exam. These 5 classic works could appear on the multiple choice section of the test as well as on the free response section.

### 26. *Antigone* by Sophocles

*Antigone* addresses issues of authority, faith, and fidelity. Sophocles examines how adherence to the laws of the state over those of a personal belief system can result in the destruction of the state. He uses the family drama of the character Antigone to highlight this.

### 27. \**Candide* by Voltaire

Understand *Candide* to be a unique coming-of-age story. It's a satirical novella that questions the efficacy or even the very purpose of remaining optimistic in the face of the great hardships of the world. Keep in mind that *Candide* is a unique take on the bildungsroman, and it's a relatively short read.

### 28. *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles

*Oedipus Rex (The King)* demonstrates a unique take on the Greek Tragedy. Rather than utilizing the sealed fate-type of arrangement that would have made sense to the audience of the time, Sophocles made Oedipus' faults contribute to his downfall.

### 29. *Medea* by Euripides

*Medea* contains some feminist undertones, a revolutionary occurrence for the time. Medea wants to take control of her own life in a patriarchal society, a task that drives her to the extreme of committing murder. Furthermore, the structure of the play as it was actually performed could be of interest to you. In every scene, the only actors are Medea and someone else.

# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

## 30. **\*\**Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley**

*Frankenstein* represents, arguably, the first science fiction story but does so while remaining true to Shelley's Gothic and Romantic roots. A circumstantial theme within *Frankenstein* that could be need-to-know information for you is that the entire novel is a study in how power can corrupt. The power of knowledge allows Victor to animate "The Beast." The power of his hatred for his creation pushes him toward his own death. The story in itself is a study in power and its dangers.

\**Candide* was first published in 1759. While it does not necessary belong in a group with the ancient plays, it is still considered a classic literary work.

\*\**Frankenstein* was first published in 1818. Though it doesn't match the time period of the other works on this list, it still could be considered a literary classic to which many other literary works can be considered intertextually related, like the other selections in this section.

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# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

## Other Helpful Texts

The list above is full of familiar titles. If you can use a title from the following list of works not referenced as often yet still literary, you may be able to score points for the breadth of your literary knowledge.

### **31. *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams**

*Streetcar* is considered one of the greatest American plays of all time. Like *The Glass Menagerie*, *Streetcar* also deals with the interplay between reality and fantasy and is considered at least vaguely autobiographical. Consider reading this piece along with *Menagerie*.

### **32. *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe**

*Things Fall Apart* chronicles the life of a Nigerian and comments on the effect of British colonialism and Christianity. Read this novel if you're searching for a piece that comes from a different culture. Also, check out the work of Ngugi wa Thiong'o if you're interested in African perspectives on fiction.

### **33. *Obasan* by Joy Kogawa**

Joy Kogawa displays her mastery of the imagery of serenity in *Obasan*. This piece is rife with examples of figurative language.

### **34. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by Edward Albee**

Albee challenges the prevailing notions of success for both individuals and families in this play. This is one more work that comments on reality vs. fantasy.

### **35. *Wise Blood* by Flannery O'Connor**

O'Connor's first novel, *Wise Blood*, deals with the crisis of faith that can follow the return of those who have seen war. Consider how O'Connor's style affects the exploration of faith in *Wise Blood*.

# The Ultimate AP English Literature Reading List Cont.

## Conclusion

Now that you have such a list of possibilities, which ones will you choose to study? The majority of these texts will serve you well in preparing for the AP English Literature exam, so you can't really go wrong.

The bottom line is that by reading and retaining as much information as possible before test day comes, you're maximizing your odds of receiving the grades you want. I hope the list above helps you figure out which texts will help you maximize your scores. Happy reading!

**[Start your AP English Lit Exam Prep today](#)**

# Advice from AP English Literature Students for Future APers



*[Image Source: Flickr](#)*

Last spring, Jodi G. from Saugus High School sent us an insightful list of AP English Literature tips her graduating class of 2014 students compiled for her future students. We thought we'd share this wonderful resource. Thanks Jodi for sending this over!

# Advice from AP English Literature Students for Future Apers Cont.

Dear Incoming Apers,

I'd like to begin by congratulating you for your initiative. You, unlike many of your peers, have chosen to take a challenging AP English Literature Course during your senior year. You deserve a pat on the back. I'm sure you have plans to attend college next year – this class will serve to help you get accepted and to be more compatible with the college level of writing and reading. My one piece of advice would be...

**Seriously, the entire AP English Literature class boils down to two things:** reading and writing. The more books you read, the more options you have.

**Don't fall victim to senioritis.** Keep up with your work – don't get lazy. Actually read all assigned works. Cramming a 300 page novel into one night is really not doable – I know, I tried!

**Always do the work.** At this moment I am filling out a survey on all the work we did this year and I realize that if I had actually done all of it I would have learned a lot this year!?!?

**I actually enjoyed the work we read this year** – it addressed many universal themes.

**Don't despair. Ms. G** makes drab lectures funny with her cheery attitude and “wacky” expressions like “cillax” and “You're freaking me out!”

**The material is pretty interesting and is different from the writing you learned in 11<sup>th</sup> grade.** I was surprised how different this level was from what we learned in AP Lang.

**Pay attention – detail is important.** Appreciate all the great novels and poems we get to read.

## Advice from AP English Literature Students for Future Apers Cont.

**I enjoyed being able to easily chat about the interesting works.**

**I was surprised that we seemed to have random conversation that didn't touch on the literature,** but they always came back to the topic or theme and helped us learn.

**The amount of material we covered snuck up on me.** It goes so fast, it doesn't seem like we are covering it all.

**I like the open environment where I never feel like I am being pressured to change my opinion.**

**Know a few books very, very well.** You will need it for that open-ended essay.

**It is really important to know a great variety of literary terms.** It is very similar to AP Lang, but a ton more poetry.

**Get plenty of sleep and take care of yourself.** Talk to Ms. G about problems – she is here to help you succeed.

**She is really helpful!** Trust her – she knows 99.9% what she is doing. Be thankful for her “reprieves”. She will get you there.

**Approach Socratic seminars with a positive attitude.** Don't be afraid to talk and participate. Most of the time, there are no wrong answers. (Even with her read-my-mind questions!)

**To prepare for the test** – I suggest that you show up for the after school and weekend session and do a full-length timed test. It helps a lot!

**Gradewise...** the essays are very important...40% of the grade. So do them!

## Advice from AP English Literature Students for Future Apers Cont.

**Having a positive attitude and trying hard are the key to succeeding throughout the year.**

**The novels that we read – particularly *The Kite Runner* – were very helpful.**

**She has good things to say – so listen.** Pay attention to the essays because they are good practice for the exam.

**The projects are fun.** With the author project, pick your favorite author and actually read the books this time, because you will definitely use it on the exam.

**Learn to annotate really well.** If it is the one thing you learn – learn it well.

**You could end up BSing the day-to-day assignments,** but the kids who did regretted it because they didn't feel prepared when the test rolled around. This isn't the type of class where someone is going to be on top of you constantly checking ...be self motivated, have an open mind and strive to stay organized and you will succeed.

**Remember to outline before you start writing.** Anyone can write a bland essay structure, but the readers want personal flare. Don't be afraid to leave the rigid structures and write. Don't freak out...it's just English.

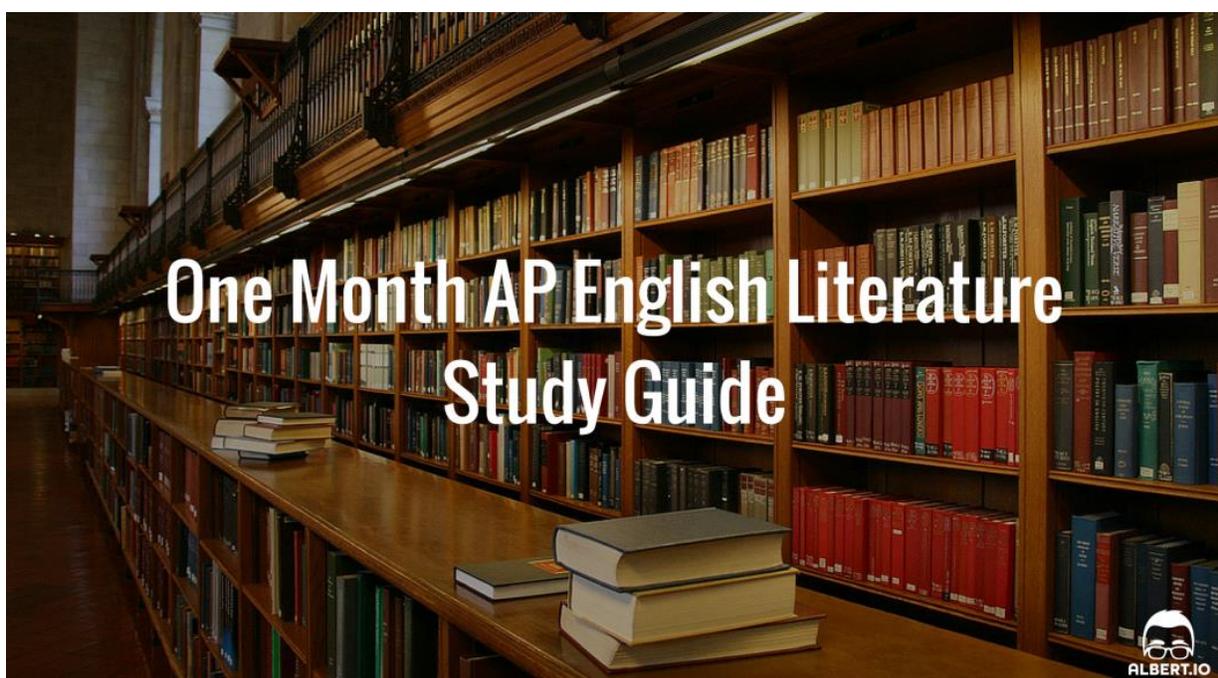
**Stick it out!** – once you have completed the AP Test at the end of the year it will all have been worth it.

**Prepare yourself for a “wacky” year** – you will find that phrase very funny (later.) This is an AP class like no other!

Oh, and after all that, enjoy your senior year. We all did.

Good luck,  
The APers of the Graduating Class of 2014

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide



If you're reading this, then you're likely gearing up for the final stretch of preparation for the AP English Literature Exam. And that might seem more than a little scary. But don't worry, we're here to help this AP study guide will help you sharpen your skills with processing, thinking about, and articulating a variety of English literature, from poems older than Columbus' voyage to the first science fiction novel. More important than any piece of literature we touch on in this study plan, however (and any piece of literature we don't), this guide is designed to help you work on your ability to understand what pieces of writing are getting at and how, and help you develop a skill in identifying and connecting those big points in your writing.

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

Remember: you don't have to have ready every piece of literature here cover to cover, so long as you know how to pick up the important parts when they're presented and turn around and talk about them.

## **A few notes before we begin:**

Feel free to adapt this study plan to whatever suits you best. How you review the information and what parts of the study plan you focus on should be altered to fit how you learn best. You're the one learning all this, so make sure you do it in a way that makes it easiest for you to learn. Play to your strengths, challenge your weaknesses and make this plan however you deem best. Also, make sure to take care of yourself throughout all this study period – particularly as the exam starts getting closer. Not only do you probably not want to ruin your health over an exam, but self-care can also prove incredibly useful for your performance on the exam. Eating and sleeping well is a big part of helping our brains learn and remember new information. You'll want to use that to your advantage. What you'll need:

1. Our primary tool for this will be our AP English Literature Albert.io questions, found [here](#). Unlike most Albert.io courses, where the information is arranged chronologically by subject and we tackle them one section at a time, we're going to be sampling a mix of mediums throughout the course, allowing you to whet your critical thinking and reading skills on a variety of subjects. Rather than a body of information you have to memorize, AP English Literature is a skill, so we're going to want to keep fresh on all forms of literature throughout the course.
2. Some form of note taking materials, be it a word processor on your computer, paper and pens, or whatever other medium you prefer. Not only does this help you hold onto any important thematic information, the act of writing (or typing) also reinforces the information by applying it to a new context. So it's a bit of two birds with one stone.

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

3. You'll also want to have access to [AP Central](#)'s free response questions from previous years. These are actual questions asked in previous years, so you can gain a lot of insight into the sort of question you'll be asked on your exam. We'll also use a few of them to test your knowledge and question answering skills at the end of the study plan.

4. Another handy thing here will be College Board's own [Official Course Description](#) and [Overview](#) for AP English Literature. These not only serve as the exam explained by its creators, but the Course Description has a practice test we're going to use early on to gauge your knowledge.

5. Somewhere you can listen to audio with or, alternatively, headphones. We're going to be supplementing some of our Albert.io information with videos, so you'll want to make sure you're in a position to hear them, one way or another (Though there will be closed captions on most of the files too, so don't worry, you have options).

Optional (but helpful) stuff:

1. Any books, novels, or compositions about AP English Literature or the works covered here. As we mentioned, you shouldn't worry about trying to find and read every single covered work in its entirety, but if you have a collection of Shakespeare or a copy of *Jane Eyre* lying around, feel free to use that to supplement our readings and knowledge.

2. Any study guides or workbooks of appropriate quality you have for AP English Literature. Whether you got it from class or on your own, don't be afraid to use alternative sources to widen what you're testing yourself on or to approach anything you may be struggling with here from a new angle. Having a wider range of how you learn this knowledge available can only help you.

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

## WEEK 1

### Day 1

Alright, we're going to start by reviewing a basic summary of what is at the heart of the AP Literature course, and what to expect on the exam. Head over to the [Course Overview](#) and read over it. If you find any important points or ideas you want to keep in mind as we go through the study plan, make sure to mark those down in your notes.

Continuing our summary of what exactly to keep in mind for English, we're going to check out the first [video of Crash Course](#)'s AP English Literature section. It's a speech on reading and understanding you may have gotten from your teacher or some other source, but it neatly summarizes what to focus on and think about as we go throughout this.

Okay, now that we've had that orientation for ourselves, we're going to buckle down and tackle some work. Let's pull up the AP English Lit [Course Description](#) On pages 12-27 (according to the description itself, not the pdf), there will be some practice questions to sample the sort of questions you'll be dealing with on the exam. You'll want to answer the questions, and then check your answer against the answer key at the end. Don't worry if you got questions wrong; this is to get a taste of what to expect and to gauge how comfortable you are with answering these sorts of questions. We'll have plenty of time to sharpen up throughout the study plan.

### Day 2

Now that we've taken a look at what to expect and tested the waters let's start our second day by picking up the study plan proper.

We're going to start at the poetry section of the practice questions on [Albert.io](#), with the questions on "The Pardoner's Prologue".

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

As with the practice questions on the Course Description, most of this comes down to reading a passage and responding to questions about it. After you answered the question, check the correct answer, and look through the explanation as to why the correct answer is the correct one, especially if you got it wrong.

*(Note: we highly suggest you register for full access on [Albert.io](https://albert.io) for this. Not only will you be able to access the high difficulty practice questions, but you will be able to see the explanation on the multiple choice questions no matter if you answered it correctly or not.)*

Next, we'll move down to the prose section of the sample questions and answer a few questions on *Belinda*. As with the poetry questions, this will be passage based. Don't worry if you haven't read *Belinda* in its entirety, though: while it certainly doesn't hurt to know the entire context of the story, the questions are designed to be answered just by critically thinking about and responding to the passage presented. So work with what you got, and don't sweat the rest.

## Day 3

We'll start the day with another round of practice questions on [Albert.io](https://albert.io), this time for poetry questions on "Thou Blind Man's Mark". Remember to pay attention to the explanations, and feel free to take notes on anything you find useful.

Next up, let's get started on the drama section questions on [Albert.io](https://albert.io) with the questions for *Antigone*. Try to keep in mind that more important than knowing all the facts of the whole play is thinking critically about the passage presented.

To wrap up the day, you'll want to head over to the [free response](https://albert.io) section of [Albert.io](https://albert.io) to try to answer the question on "How do I Love Thee". Try to conduct this question in exam like conditions, so put away any notes or distractions, and write a short response to the best of your abilities.

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

When you're done, compare your answer—or better yet, get a friend to compare your answer—against the rubric at the bottom, to figure out how well you wrote against the expectations of the prompt.

*(Helpful Tip: If responding to the question seems a little daunting, or if you're getting tripped up on the devices of the prompt, you might want to check out the poetry guides on the [outline](#) section of [Albert.io](#) first. The “How to Approach Poetry Passages” outline is especially handy here.)*

## Day 4

Today we're going to break slightly from our usual patterns to focus on the works of Shakespeare. This won't be the last time we focus on the bard, but he's important enough in the context of literary history to be featured a lot, including all of today's material. We know that this work, like a lot of the older material, is a bit hard to understand in terms of language, but if you're able to break through the dated terminology you should be able to find some really good literature worth studying, not to mention a whole lot of dirty jokes.

On [Albert.io](#), we're going to start the day by answering the poetry section questions on Sonnets 19 and 11. By now you'll want to be getting into the habit of reading the explanations, and taking notes on any themes or ideas you think you should keep in mind for later questions or the exam.

We'll conclude the day down in the drama section with one of Shakespeare's comedies—*A Midsummer's Night Dream*. Remember that even if you haven't read or seen the play, you're really only working with the selected passages, which you can pull up in the “show passage” link beneath the question.

Great job so far, we're nearly through the first week. Enjoy the rest of your day; you'll want to come back on your last two days focused and able to finish strong.

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

## Day 5

Today we're starting, as you may have guessed, with some practice questions on [Albert.io](#). Let's gear up in the poetry question, with the questions based on "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning".

Once we've warmed up with that, we'll continue to the prose section, to answer the questions associated with *Northanger Abbey*.

Now let's take a little bit of a break to pull up the [Crash Course video](#) on the life and work of one Emily Dickinson. In addition to some fun information on one of history's more famous recluses, it should give us some thematic and authorial background on today's free response question.

Now that we've gotten a quick rundown (or reminder) on who the heck Emily Dickinson was and what sort of themes her poetry touched on let's go to the [free response](#) section of [Albert.io](#) to answer the question comparing "Every Morning" with "Because I could not stop for Death". As with last time, try to answer the question in exam like conditions, and compare your answer with the rubric once you're done.

## Day 6

*(Note: This is our first "weekend" day. Basically, this will be about double the material as a usual day, and you can choose to tackle it all in one day and have the other day free, or split it up among two days.)*

This first part of the day (or this first day, if you're splitting things up on the weekend session) is going to be another focus on our old friend Shakespeare. We'll start today, naturally, at [Albert.io](#), in the drama section to be precise, to answer the questions on *Henry VIII*.

With that done, we're going to shift from history to tragedy, with a few questions on the notorious "Scottish Play": *Macbeth*.

## One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

With those two out of the way, go and take a quick break for yourself to relax and recoup your sanity. If you plan to break up the weekend session into two days, here would be a good place to do so.

Now that you're back, we're going to tackle just a little bit more Shakespeare with the poetry section questions on Sonnet 138.

Now that we've accomplished that let's head down to the prose section and jump ahead a few centuries to *The Moonstone*, and answer the questions there.

To finish our first week, we're going to hit up the [free response](#) section of Albert.io, and try out all this big thinking and ideas and themes on our first open question. Click the question on Sympathy, and answer the question accordingly.

Like previous free responses, you'll want to answer this question in exam-like conditions and check the rubric after the fact. Unlike previous free response, this is not a response to a single question but a big thematic question, from which you'll have to draw what you know about the big themes of several works of your choice to respond. This will have a few suggested texts, which you may or may not be familiar with, but feel free to draw from any texts with relevant ideas to form the basis of your answer.

And there's our first week over and done! Congratulations, you're off to a great start—you've applied your critical thinking skills on the likes of such great writers such as Shakespeare and Dickinson, and begun working out your ability to identify and talk about the important parts of poetry, prose, and drama alike. Enjoy the rest of your weekend, and we'll see you back here for Week 2.

[Start your AP English Literature Prep today](#)

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

## WEEK 2

Alright, welcome back for the second week of our one-month study plan. Here we're going to continue to work on our skills for processing poetry, prose, and drama while dealing with some of the most famous works of English fiction throughout history. We'll also be seeing an increase in free response questions, to help shift our influence from reading comprehension to the next step of working with and synthesizing what we take from the texts to our big ideas. Alright, here we go.

### Day 1

Let's start our day and week with a video or two from our old friends at Crash Course, this time on *Frankenstein*. The channel actually has [two videos](#) on the novel, and depending on your time and how comfortable you are with the work already feel free to watch one or both.

Afterward, you'll want to head over to [Albert.io](#) to answer some prose questions on, shockingly, *Frankenstein* (we apologize to anyone harmed by that pun). Remember that, whether you read the full novel or not, you should be able to infer the answer from the individual passages, and to pay attention to the explanations of the answers after.

We're going to shift gears as we wind down today, heading up to answer the poetry multiple choice for "A Lecture Upon the Shadows".

### Day 2

Today we'll be focusing on a variety of close reading, with a little prose, a little poetry, and a reading based essay question. Let's start with the poetry on [Albert.io](#), namely those for "The Retreat".

While we're on multiple choice, let's head over to the prose section and answer our questions for *The Awakening*.

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

Finally, we'll wrap up the day with a quick free response question. You'll want to go to the [free response section](#) of Albert.io, pull up the prose free response question on *Babylon Revisited*. Remember to take it in exam-like conditions and check your work against the rubric! If you feel that you might have missed any key points from the rubric, consider going back into exam conditions and rewriting your answer with the rubric's expectations in mind.

## Day 3

Today we'll be focusing on only one set of multiple choice questions, but they're a doozy. Pull up [Albert.io](#), and scroll on down to answer the questions haunting *Heart of Darkness*. There are a lot to get through, but tackle them like you would any other and try to keep the larger themes and structures that arise from the sections in your mind.

Once you get through that, we still have a little bit more work for the day—head over to the [free response section](#), go down to the synthesis questions, and tackle the prompt on Frame Narration. This is another one you'll be pulling from your knowledge to answer though *Heart of Darkness* and *Frankenstein* are both provide good examples of this if you're familiar with either of them.

Great job! By now you should be getting a good feel for both the rigors of the multiple choice questions and the bigger sort of synthesis problems. These can be pretty tricky skills to pin down and develop, so you've been doing great if you've kept up with us so far.

## Day 4

Today will be a bit of a return to our usual pace, with a mix of multiple choice and a quick close reading free response. Let's start, as usual, on [Albert.io](#). Head over to the poetry section, and take a crack at "To Sir John Lade on his Coming of Age".

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

Next, let's change tasks to tackle the prose questions on *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. By now hopefully you are comfortable with answering these sort of passage based questions, and should be developing your techniques to read through them quickly and thoroughly (If you're still struggling with anything, remember that we have some handy [outlines](#) to how to approach these questions and passages here on Albert.io)

To wrap up the day, you'll want to go to the [free response](#) page, to answer the poetry free response question on "The Flea" and "The Sun Rising".

## Day 5

Today we're going to be tackling another work with a lot of practice questions on it, this time from our old friend the bard. *Hamlet* is regarded as being pretty groundbreaking in how it approached its characters and its plot, so having, at least, a passing familiarity with the play can really bolster your knowledge base for the Literature exam. Before we begin, you may want to familiarize yourself with the important themes and significance of the play via Crash Course's [two videos](#) on the play.

When that's done, go down to the drama section on the practice questions at [Albert.io](#), and knock out the large section on *Hamlet*.

## Day 6

Alright, here comes our second weekend day. Remember that this day easily splits in two if you find it a bit much to chew through all these pieces in one day. Now buckle down, and let's knock out the last pieces to the first half of our AP Study Plan.

Let's start with some poetry multiple choice questions on [Albert.io](#), these for "The Chimney Sweeper".

## One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

With that done, move over to the prose section to answer the multiple choice questions on *The Dead*. Remember as you go throughout these questions to focus on comprehension and interpretation more than memorizing the details of each work of literature.

Now that we're nearing a normal day's workload, you should take a quick break to relax and recharge yourself for the second half of the day. Alternatively, if you plan to split up the weekend session into two parts, this would be the ideal place to do so.

Now that you're back let's return to the multiple choice section and answer the questions on *A Doll's House*, under the drama section.

And to wrap up our formal work for the day, head over to the [free response](#) section and pull up the prose free response on *The New England Nun*. Remember to try and take these in exam like conditions, and pay attention to the rubric after you're done.

Alright, before we leave for the week, let's take a moment to review how far we've come in this first half of the study plan. You'll want to briefly review your notes and answers from the past two weeks, both to refresh your familiarity with some of the significant texts we've been covering and to see how your critical reading and thinking skills have developed and changed over the past few days. Getting a good sampling of the breadth of significant English writing will be helpful to you for the exam, but the most important thing is developing your ability to work with and write about both new and familiar passages.

Once you've seen to that, congratulations on reaching the halfway point of the study guide! Try to find some way to celebrate your achievement, and we'll see you next week for beginning of the back end of our Literature study guide.

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# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

## WEEK 3

Alright, time to buckle up for the third week of our AP study guide. This week will bring us to a variety of big works, from the works of Oscar Wilde to a few forays back to our unshakable companion Shakespeare. Most predominant in this week, however, will be poetry. Since many English students find poetry one of the harder forms of literature to make sense of, we're going to dedicate at least a little bit of most days this week to verse, with a few days being particularly poetry intensive. Just a heads up.

### Day 1

We're going to start the week with one more super focused day, this time tackling a whopping 44 questions on *King Lear* under the drama section on [Albert.io](#). As with *Hamlet*, we're going to dedicate the whole day on these questions, so feel free to take your time on paying attention to the themes and big ideas across all these questions.

Fantastic job on getting through those: that was the most questions on a single work we're going to have the whole course! Take it easy the rest of the day, and when you come back remember you've already knocked out the biggest block of multiple choice questions.

### Day 2

Today will be the first of our poetry intensive days, starting off with the [Crash Course video](#) on the poetry of Sylvia Plath. Not only does it capture a lot of the importance and impact of Plath as a poet, but help nails down some of the curiosities of poetry as a medium. If poetry is still giving you some difficulty, this is a good video to help organize your thoughts on the matter.

With the video in mind, let's turn our attention to [Albert.io](#), to answer the poetry question on Plath's "Barren Woman".

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

Don't forget to pay attention to the answers' explanations, and try to take notes on any big trends you're still having trouble with.

Finally, we'll wrap up the day with a little more poetry, covering the multiple choice questions on "The Black Walnut Tree".

## Day 3

We'll be spending the day on [Albert.io](https://albert.io), across a couple of mediums and formats. We're going to start, you guessed it, with some poetry, specifically the multiple choice questions on "An Ode to a Grecian Urn."

With that done, let's squeeze in a little prose before moving on, covering the multiple choice questions on *The Voyage Out*.

And to wind things down, we'll return to poetry but switch from multiple choice to [free response](#), this one on a close reading of the poem "To an Athlete Dying Young". Remember to try to take it in exam like conditions!

## Day 4

Okay, heads up: today will be another poetry intensive day, this time with a whole lot of multiple choice. We start, on [Albert.io](https://albert.io) as usual, with the poetry questions for "Mezzo Cappin".

Up next will be covering a work by the infamously alliterative Walt Whitman, in this case, a few quick questions on his ode "O Captain, My Captain".

We're going to end the day with a bit of a downer, unfortunately, covering a few more multiple choice poetry questions on the World War I inspired "Dulce et Decorum Est", which captures the horror and visceral experience of war pretty vividly. Pretty brutal, but dang does it make for nice poetry.

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

## Day 5

Alright, you've been doing great so far. Today will be something close to what we might call normal for a day on our study plan, with one little curveball at the end. For now, though, let's just head over to [Albert.io](https://albert.io) to answer the prose questions on *The Rainbow*.

Once we've knocked that out, let's go up to the poetry section, to answer the questions on "The Second Coming".

Now we're going to jump back a bit and pick up an old friend: *Hamlet*. Today we're going to tackle the poetry [free response](#) on everyone's favorite angsty Danish prince, and see how familiar you still are with it since we tackled it last week.

## Day 6

And here we are, on our third weekend session! Fantastic job keeping us with us so far, but let's not rest on our laurels. Let's start with some multiple questions on [Albert.io](https://albert.io), particularly the poetry questions on, well, "Poetry".

Next up, let's shift to drama to answer some multiple choice on Oscar Wilde's grand comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Alright, break time. Or time to call it a day and put the second half off to Day 7, if you're splitting the weekend up. Either way, find a way to blow off a bit of steam and we'll see you later!

Alright, welcome back. To round out our [Albert.io](https://albert.io) multiple choice experience for the weekend, let's tackle a couple of prose questions on *Sophistication*.

And, while we're at it, let's hop back to the drama section to tackle the questions on *Trifles*.

## One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

– And finally, let’s finish the chapter in the [free response](#) section, with our synthesis question on Catharsis. Remember, like with the other open-ended questions, this isn’t about closely reading any particular passage, but rather articulating a key theme we see pop up time and time again throughout literature and applying them using specific examples from the texts you know. Also, don’t forget to check you answer against the rubric provided at the bottom once you’re done!

And there we have it, the third week is done! Alright! Just one more to go and you’ll be all set. Sit back and enjoy the rest of your weekend, and we’ll see you back here for the big finale.

[Start your AP English Literature Prep today](#)

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

## WEEK 4

And here we are, on the final week of the study guide. We'll be winding things down with a variety of forms, with a particular emphasis on free response questions. By now you hopefully have a pretty good sense of how to read and respond to passages in multiple choice format by now, so our main attention should be on developing your ability to take all those big ideas and talk about them as interconnected and involved points. That might sound like a lot, but you've been doing it already across these past three weeks, and these next few days will help you hone those skills even further. But enough talk, let's get to it!

### Day 1

We'll start the week in the poetry section of [Albert.io](#), to answer a few quick questions on "Do not go gently into that Good Night". This process should all be pretty familiar to you by now, but don't forget to read over the answer's explanations and write notes on anything you find useful.

After that, we'll hit up the prose section on the same section to answer the multiple choice questions covering *Siddharta*.

Keeping with the same form of literature but moving over to [free response](#), let's finish the day by tackling the close reading free response on *Olikeye*.

### Day 2

Today we're going to start by watching our final CrashCourse video on the section, this time on Victorian classic [Jane Eyre](#). It should be relatively quick, and has something to offer for both students who haven't read the book (or those of you who just skimmed enough to make a few comments in class), and a few fun insights even for those of you who know the book well.

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

To follow up to that video, let's pull up [Albert.io](https://albert.io) and knock out the questions on *Jane Eyre* while the tale of madness, secrecy, and bigamy is still fresh in our mind.

Finally, we'll be changing up our forms if not our tones, with a few multiple choice poetry questions on "Tintern Abbey".

## Day 3

Alright, time for our final hump day of the study plan. We'll start, as usual, with some multiple choice questions on [Albert.io](https://albert.io), in this case in the prose section on passages from Jamaica Kincaid's *Girl*.

With that taken care of, we're going to spend the rest of the day focusing on another of the bigger questions in the [free response section](#). This time, we'll be tackling the thematic synthesis question on *Neighbors*. As with our other synthesis questions, feel free to pull from the suggested questions or choose any relevant works of your own to answer the question. Once you've written up your answer, compare it to the rubric provided, and if you feel yours is particularly off base, consider rewriting the question with the targeted points in mind.

Alright, folks, just half a week left. You've been doing great if you've made it this far with us. Just hang in a little longer and we'll be home free.

## Day 4

Today will be fairly straightforward with some multiple choice and a close reading free response, but we will manage to hit all three of the primary forms of literature we've been covering. Let's start with some prose on [Albert.io](https://albert.io), covering some multiple choice on *Johnny Got his Gun*.

Once we've taken care of that, let's finish up [Albert.io](https://albert.io)'s multiple choice drama section with the questions on *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

Last but not least, let's finish up with a little more practice on our [free response](#) questions, this one in the poetry section for “To his Coy Mistress”.

## Day 5

Going to be a straightforward and relatively easy day for us today. Consider it a calm before the storm of your last weekend session. We're going to spend our day on [Albert.io](#), tying up our loose ends there. We'll start with the last of our poetry sections, with “The Bistro Sytx”.

After that we'll take on the last of our prose passages, this one on *The Known World*. With this, you'll have successfully navigated all three of Albert.io's multiple choice sections. Nicely done!

## Day 6

Alright, end of the road, folks. You've come a long way in a relatively short period of time in regards to critical reading and writing, so consider this weekend session (whether you break it up or not) both a final review to polish up the skills we've developed for the exam, and checkpoint to make sure you're coming away from this study guide with the skills you need. Let's start by reviewing over the notes you've accumulated over the course of the study guide. Depending on how you've approached the multiple choice questions and the Crash Course videos, this could be a lot of ground to cover, but take your time to give the information a thorough review. We'll be here when you're done.

Afterward, let's take a crack at the last of Albert.io's synthesis questions—this one titled Scars. Draw from either the list of provided works or your knowledge, but in any case strive to answer the question in exam-like conditions and review your answer against the rubric once you're done. You might want to consider writing a revised version of your answer after (again in exam like conditions!), depending on where your answer stands compared to the rubric.

## One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

Alright, time for a quick break. Or a not so quick break, if you're splitting up the days here. Either way, take a breather, get your head in a good place, and we'll be back after for your final review.

Now that you're back, we're going to head over to the [checklist](#) section on Albert.io. Here there will be three big lists of things you should know regarding literature, whether from the Albert.io explanations, the Crash Course videos, or the knowledge you've gained from class or other sources. As you go through, check off the ideas you can confidently say you know. Once you've done so, check back to see any of the points you've left unchecked, and review your notes and other resources to fill in the gaps of your knowledge.

For the grand finale, let's look at some questions from previous years of the test themselves. Let's head to [AP Central](#) and click on one of the previous year's tests to choose from. For our purposes here, let's focus on the synthesis question since those are the most involved and kind of our focus here on week 4. That means pulling from the "Question 3" of each year, the ones with the list of titles beneath each prompt. It's up to you which questions you choose (though if you're stumped we suggest 2014's question on [sacrifice](#) and/or 2013's question on [coming of age](#) stories), but try to select and answer TWO synthesis questions in exam like conditions. Once you're done, pull up the sample answers on AP Central (right next to the links for the tests), and compare your answer the examples provided by the site.

And that's it! You've successfully completed our one-month study guide over AP English Literature! You should be coming out of the study guide with a little more familiarity with some of the big names of literature that the AP exam likes to ask about, but much more importantly you should have a finely honed sense of how to read, think, and write critically about the written words, and be able to connect big themes and ideas within and between works of literature. Amazing job with sticking with us throughout this hectic month (no really—give yourself a mental pat on the back or a bowl of ice cream or some such for doing so), and we hope what you've learned will serve you well on the exam and beyond.



# One Month AP English Literature Study Guide Cont.

Remember to take the exam seriously, but also don't let its importance or intimidation factor daunt you. In the end, it is just one test in one specific subject area. And if you managed to keep to this plan, you should be more than ready. We're sure you'll do great.

***Let us know** what has worked for you. What did you like best about this one month study guide? Do you have recommendations of your own on how to study for the AP English Literature exam?*

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# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips



The AP English Literature and Composition exam is designed to test your ability to think critically and analyze literary excerpts. The test is three hours long and consists of a multiple-choice portion (worth 45% of your grade) and an essay portion (worth 55% of your grade). Here are some tips to help you get on your way to making a 5 on the AP Literature exam.

# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

## The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips

Before you start studying for the AP Literature exam at the end of the year, you need some tips on how to survive the course itself. Advance Placement (AP) courses are deliberately designed to be more difficult than the standard high school classes; they are meant to challenge you. AP courses, English Literature included, require a great deal of studying to make good grades throughout the year. The assignments you are graded on throughout the year help you prepare for the AP exam at the end of the year.

**Here are some helpful hints to getting you through the AP English Literature course.**

**1. Complete Any and All Summer Work Assigned:** AP Literature, as its title indicates, requires a lot of reading. Chances are, your teacher will provide you with a reading list and expect the required titles to be read when you walk into your first day of class. In some cases, you may even be assigned a report or project to be completed before you begin the class. This is more for the teacher to view what literary skills you already possess and what skills will need to be taught to you. However, this doesn't mean you should take the work assigned lightly. If you take it seriously and complete a proficient assignment, it will show your teacher that you are in the course to learn. This attitude will make the school year a lot more bearable for both you and your instructor.

**2. Go to Class:** Missing class leads to missing material. Missing material leads to lower scores on assignments. Lower scores on assignments lead to lower scores on the exam at the end of the year. The bottom line is: don't miss class if you can help it.

# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

**3. Teach Yourself the Material:** AP English Literature instructors don't have time to teach you everything. Since you are probably only in their presence for an hour or two, they have learned to prioritize the material they have to teach. Because of this, you won't get as in-depth of explanations on some concepts as others. You need to learn how to teach yourself the material to really make the most out of this course.

You can really get creative with this. You can teach yourself by conducting good old fashioned research, or just by reading the assigned texts. Or, you can expand your knowledge a little more. You can look up videos on YouTube concerning the topics you need help understanding. You can also use [Albert.io](https://albert.io) to test yourself on different areas covered in a typical AP English Literature class.

**4. Learn How to Analyze Text:** Analyzing literary text is an incredibly large portion of the AP English Literature course. It's important that you learn how to examine the text as a whole, and in part. Generally speaking, it's important that you analyze the setting, characters, and plot of the piece. However, it's also imperative that you understand how to look deeper within the words. Deconstruct the text and examine its theme, look for literary devices, and motives.

**5. Read:** This is literature! Therefore, you should be getting a good amount of reading done. This does not necessarily mean that you have to aim to read an outrageous number of books or anything. You just need to at least make an attempt to read every day. As you read, try to dissect the depth of the text. After a few days of this, you'll be surprised at how easy analysis can come to you once you train your mind to question everything.

**6. Ask Questions:** Your teacher is there to help; it's their job. If there's anything you don't understand, be sure to ask your instructor. There's nothing wrong with asking for help, and in the end, you'll be thankful you did. Understanding a concept you previously had trouble with is sure to be a huge weight off of your shoulders.

# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

**7. Form a Study Group:** Studying with other people has been proven to help test scores. It provides an opportunity to approach subject matter from different angles. Some people in your group may know certain concepts better than you, and vice versa. One of the best ways to make sure you know the material is to teach it to others.

**8. Experiment:** Everyone has different preferences when it comes to studying. Maybe you're a visual learner. Perhaps you like to listen to material to really understand it. The best way to find out what form of studying helps you best is to experiment. Try different methods to see what works best for you. Plus, keeping a variety in your study routine helps keep boredom at bay.

Now that you have a grasp on how to get through the actual coursework of your AP English Literature and Composition class, it's time to learn how to study for the exam at the end of the year.

First, we'll take a look at some tips that are sure to help you ace the first portion of the AP Literature exam: the multiple-choice section. This portion is worth 45% of your total score and it consists of several passages to read and 55 questions to answer, which you have exactly one hour to complete.

Let's get started!

**[Start your AP English Literature Prep today](#)**

# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

## AP English Literature Multiple-Choice Tips

**1. First, Read the Passages:** Yes, you read that correctly. It's a common misconception that you should read the questions before reading the passage, so you can work quickly and scan the text for the correct answer. One vital thing to remember is this: quicker isn't always better. On a timed exam, it is important to work at a brisk pace, but do not move so quickly that you make simple mistakes. It's best to read the passages before even glancing at the questions because it prevents error. By merely scanning the passage for the answers, you're missing out on a plethora of content that could be vital to answering questions correctly later on in the test.

**2. Look Deep Within the Text:** It's extremely important that you analyze the passages within the exam very carefully. Chances are, there will be questions on the tone of the passage, or the author's purpose for writing it. Was it to inform or persuade the audience? Perhaps the author used some literary devices like allusions or irony. Closely read the passages and you will have no problem identifying the answers to questions that are specific to the literature side of AP English.

**3. Carefully Read the Questions:** If you don't understand what the question is asking, you can't possibly expect to know the answer. Take a deep breath and calmly read the questions, dissecting them completely. This will be easier to do for some questions than for others. Once you understand what it is exactly the question is asking, try to recall where in the passage the answer could be located. Also be sure to read the question in its entirety. Sometimes, the writers of the test will throw in certain words or phrases that lead the question in a different direction. For example, the words "EXCEPT" and "NOT" are often used at the end of questions, and this can confuse you. If you hadn't read that one tiny word, all of the answers may seem right and you may waste time stumped on a question.

# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

**4. Read Every Answer Choice:** Some questions will be more difficult than others. Some questions are even designed to trip you up. Be sure to read every single word in every single answer choice; sometimes one word can make all the difference as to whether or not an answer is correct.

**5. Reread Parts of the Passage:** If time permits, reread the parts of the text in which answers are located. Be sure the information matches one of the answer choices. You may even want to put a star, dash, or some other marking beside portions of the text that contain answers. That way, if you have extra time at the end of the test, you can go back and check your answers more quickly.

**6. Use Your Time Wisely:** This is a timed exam. 60 minutes to complete 55 questions. This allows for an average of a minute per question, with some leftover time to account for reading passages. You have absolutely no time to sit at your desk staring blankly at questions you don't quite understand. Luckily, there is no penalty for answers marked wrong—or answers not marked at all—on the AP English Literature exam. This means you should definitely skip the questions you're unsure of. Mark them in some sort of way so that it is noticeable that you haven't answered them yet. Then, if you have some time at the end of the test, you can go back and see if you can come up with the answer. Alternatively, if you can't seem to find an answer: guess! Remember, you're only graded on the number of questions you get right; there's absolutely no penalty for getting a question wrong.

**7. Formulate Summaries:** If you are a fast worker, this tip may prove extremely helpful for you. A few of the multiple-choice questions may test your overall comprehension of the passages you read. In the margins of the page beside the passage, jot down a few bullet points outlining the plot progression. This way you can refer back to your notes when answering questions rather than searching the entire text.

# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

**8. Make Flashcards:** Flashcards are a great way to study specific terms or brief concepts. Since you will be tested on your understanding of certain terms, it is important that you know them like the back of your hand. Try making flashcards of different literary devices and review them periodically throughout the semester.

**9. Study Everywhere:** This may seem a bit extreme, but it really helps. Take the flashcards you've made with you wherever you go. Keep them in your wallet, in your purse, or even in your car. Whenever you have a moment of free time, instead of scrolling through Twitter or Facebook on your phone, run through a review of your terms. It'll stick better in your memory and help your AP Literature exam score in the long run.

**10. Test Yourself:** The most helpful and effective way to prepare for the multiple-choice portion of the AP English Literature exam is by testing yourself. Prepare early in the semester for the exam. Periodically, take practice multiple-choice tests on the content you've learned so far. There are several websites out there dedicated to helping you quiz yourself for the AP Literature exam. One of these is [Albert.io](https://albert.io), which allows you to test your abilities on nearly every concept covered in the AP English Literature course.

**11. Don't Stress It:** The AP English Literature exam is one big test. Sure, it affects the amount of college credit you receive coming out of high school. But at the end of the day, it's just a test. Anxiety and stress can severely affect your ability to function correctly. Over time, it can even start to have negative effects on your mind and body. Some people even develop anxiety disorders. Just remember, your mental health is more important than your grades. Take a deep breath periodically throughout the test. It'll help calm your body and soothe your mind so you can concentrate better. Now that you have some tips on how to tackle the multiple-choice portion of the AP English Literature exam, it's time to focus on the most challenging part: the free response portion.

[Start your AP English Literature Prep today](#)

# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

Here are some tips for nailing the free response portion of the AP English Literature and Composition exam:

## AP English Literature Free Response Portion Tips

**1. Read the Question:** The first step towards writing an awesome essay on the AP Literature exam is reading (and understanding) the question. What are the authors of the test asking for specifically? The answer to this question is the key to writing a well-rounded essay. The scorers of the free response portion want essays that are clear and straight to the point. Simply restating the prompt will result in a huge deduction of points. Regurgitating the question will show the reader that you may not be confident in your ability to dissect passages. This is an extremely bad impression to give, since the interpretation of text is the basis of the entire course.

**2. Come Up with a Thesis:** A well-written thesis is the basis of all successful essays. As mentioned previously, do NOT restate the question. Come up with your own unique topic sentence to answer the question. Make it brief and to the point. You have the rest of the essay to elaborate on your thesis; that will be your body.

**3. Stay Organized:** Organization is key to writing a great essay. Prepare an outline within the first few minutes of writing your essay. Perhaps even use a diagram, if you're a visual learner. A clear and precise outline can help prevent rambling when answering the question in your essay.

**4. Use a High-Level Vocabulary:** Since this is an exam for an Advanced Placement English course, it is imperative that you use a vocabulary that reflects a higher level of education. However, be sure that you use your impressive vocabulary in context. Nothing looks worse than using a word incorrectly in your essay. Be careful: only use words in which you know the definition.

# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

**5. Use Your Resources:** On the first two essays, you will be asked to read a passage and analyze it according to the instructions given in the question. Use the passage to your advantage. Frequently refer back to specific parts of the text. This will show the readers that you paid very close attention to detail when reading the passage. The specific references display the ability to close read, which is a skill covered frequently in an AP English Literature course.

**6. Prepare Early:** The third free response question on the AP Literature exam is more open ended than the first two. You will be asked a question and you will be given the opportunity to answer it pertaining to a work of literature that you have read in class. It's important that you keep this particular essay question in mind as you work throughout the semester. If a particular work of literature stands out to you, prepare early to choose this as the piece to write about in your third essay.

**7. Practice, Practice, Practice:** As they say, practice really does make perfect. A good option for practicing free response questions involves searching the Internet for old exam rubrics. These show you exactly what the scorers are looking for in an essay. [The AP Literature section of AP Central](#), a website created by the College Board to help with studying for exams, has several practice exams for your use. Take advantage of this and practice writing essays using different prompts from previous exams.

**8. Use a Good Writing Utensil:** Nothing is worse than getting halfway through an essay and having your pen run out of ink, or your pencil getting smudged. Often, readers prefer the look and clarity of black ink to colored ink or the graphite of pencil. Take that into mind when going into the free response portion of the exam.

**9. Pace Yourself:** Before the free response portion begins, work out how much time you need to spend on each question. It may even be helpful to bring a watch to time yourself on each essay. You need to give yourself ample time to complete each question. However, you also need to be sure that you are not rushing through the questions and leaving vital information out of your essays.

# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

**10. Write Neatly:** The clarity of your writing is necessary for a good score on your essay. If the reader cannot decipher your chicken scratch, how can they possibly score it?

**11. Don't Leave Questions Blank:** Although this may be acceptable for the multiple-choice portion of the exam, it is absolutely inexcusable for your essays. You only get three chances to prove your competency in the free response portion. Take advantage of this opportunity to show the readers how much you've learned from taking this AP course.

**12. Understand What the Readers are Looking For:** As we said earlier, rubrics are a great resource to use when preparing for the AP Literature exam. They reflect exactly how your essay will be scored. It's vital to understand exactly what the readers are looking for in a good essay. This includes:

- a) Plot comprehension:** Whether or not you understand what is happening in the passages given to you to read. Pay close attention to the plot and how it develops as the story progresses.
- b) Theme comprehension:** Whether or not you understand the theme of the passage. The theme is the dominating central idea in a work. It's vital that you recognize the theme very early on in your essay.
- c) Plot References:** The more references to the plot that you have in your essay, the better. However, this does not mean restate the entire storyline. This will bore the reader and make it seem like you are dancing around the question. Scorers like for you to be very clear and to the point in your essays.
- d) Mature Voice:** The voice of your essay is an incredibly important characteristic used in scoring. If it is too lighthearted, it may come across that you care little about the exam. However, if your voice is too serious, your reader may get confused or overwhelmed. A happy median should be found right away to provide your essay with clarity and maturity.

## The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

**13. Listen to Your Teacher:** This is perhaps the most important of all the free response tips. Over the course of the semester, your teacher will provide you with ample advice for the exam. Pay close attention to your teacher's guidance. If the information your teacher gives you wasn't relevant, they wouldn't waste their time giving it to you. Your instructor knows the exam; it's only logical to follow their advice.

The AP English Literature and Composition exam is all about analysis of different literary works. Hopefully these tips will help you tackle this massive exam with ease.

# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

## Tips Submitted by AP English Literature Teachers

- 1. Always remember the author's purpose.** Retelling what happened in the story is not an analysis. You must understand and relay why the author wrote it the way he/she did and what he/she is trying to tell readers! That's crucial! Thanks for the tip from Kim F. from Tavares High.
- 2. Be original.** Think about the fact that the AP Test readers have been looking at essays on the same topics for three days. What will you do to be original and stand out that will surprise the reader at 4:30 pm on day three? Brainstorm what everyone else will say before writing. Then, don't write on those topics. Thanks for the tip from Mike G. from MPS.
- 3. "Box the but because shift happens."** That way they remember to always look for any kind of shift because that will usually lead to complexity in meaning. Thanks for the tip from Amber B. at Madison County Schools.
- 4. Answer the question as it is actually asked.** It's easy to see a title or an author and jump to conclusions, and sometimes that means students are writing about what they think the question is asking instead of what the question actually is asking. In the pressure to complete three essays in 120 minutes, it's an easy mistake to make ... and a good one to avoid! Thanks for the tip from Heather I. from Niles North.
- 5. Answer the question in the introduction.** Thanks for the tip from Rhonda G. from Sante Fe Public Schools.
- 6. Focused writing on two or three aspects of the text (characterization, use of devices, etc.) accompanied with analysis will generate a higher score than lightly touching on 5 to 7 aspects.** As a reader we are happy that you can identify techniques, but what we are looking for is analysis. Thanks for the tip from Matt U. at Liberty High.

# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

**7. Always answer the question: “So What?”** Yes, the writer used an extended metaphor, so what? Why did they chose that metaphor? How does that choice reflect the author’s intent? What effect does it create within the text and within the reader? Provide the reader with the “so what” to help drive your analysis deeper. Thanks for the second tip from Matt U. at Liberty High.

**8. Brush up on your vocabulary** – if you don’t understand the vocabulary used in the questions and/or answers, you will not be able to find the correct answer. There are many words with multiple meanings / nuances of meaning that will bring you to the wrong conclusion. Pay attention to the wording of the questions and answers! Thanks for the tip from Susan R. from Palm Beach Gardens High.

**9. Students who read widely and regularly are far more prepared** to write and communicate clearly with a deeper understanding than students who do not read. Reading expands knowledge, vocabulary usage and comprehension and enables students to make connections within and between content areas which real world applications. Thanks for the tip from Elizabeth B. from Harrison High.

**10. Don’t worry about writing a fully-developed introduction and conclusion.** Instead, use your time to focus on meaning. What important insights do you have to share? Make sure you provide much more analysis than plot summary. Begin with a clear thesis and end with one strong concluding statement. Thanks for the tip from Julie H. from Greenville High.

**11. Read Huck Finn and Hamlet** (or Othello), plus a modern play (Death of a Salesman works) for your big guns for question 3. **Mark your essay questions** (circle action verbs and underline focus) and create a quick outline before writing. The time spent will prevent the heartache of not addressing the prompt. It’d be Peggy C. from Cherokee County Schools.

**12. Each essay is worth the same amount of points, but one is set for you to shine** — know three books really well so that you can rock the free-response essay. On the test – do it first while your mind is still fresh. Thanks for the tip from Diane S. from Frederick High School.

## The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

**13. Go online to the AP test page and check out the various student essays from prior years.** What makes an essay a 9? 7? or even a 4? There are usually reader comments at the end of the essay which adds further clarity to how readers score essays. Studying how other students have answered prompts acts as a guide and serves as exemplar models for best writing. Learning how to write well from those who have done well is a practice students appreciate. Thanks for the tip from Pam W. from Sandpoint High.

**14. Find a good literary timeline to conceptualize what you read in terms of the art movement and historical time period.** These can provide insight into the texts as well as help you remember what you have read. Thanks for the tip from Paul H. at Walled Lake Central High.

**15. Have four novels of literary quality and one play that the student is comfortable analyzing so no question #3 can stump the student.** Thanks for the tip from Bill O. from El Molino High.

**16. For all poetry: a. analyze the central purpose, b. explain the speaker's attitude toward the subject, c. Analyze any figurative language.** Thanks for the second tip from Bill O. from El Molino High.

**17. Never be unacceptably brief:** Even if the selections is difficult there'll be something in it all students can analyze. Analyze that and then keep writing! Thanks for the third tip from Bill O. from El Molino High.

**18. Learn and practice using the language and function of literature, poetry, and rhetoric.** Plan and execute their usage in your style, syntax, and art, and use the language when critiquing in workshops and discussing classics. Thanks for the tip from Jon A. from Arts and Communication Magnet Academy.

## The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

**19. Do not merely skim to point out literary devices.** (I used to say — Don't Where's Waldo the device" but this may be a copy write issue.) Zoom deep into the text to identify the device, explain in detail how the device is functioning and then zoom out to explain how it works to support the passage as a whole and how it connects to the universal human condition. This means the difference between writing a college level paper and writing a high school level paper. Thanks for the tip from Jodi G. from Saugus High. Thanks for the tip from Erin M. at Mercy County Senior High.

**20. Deconstruct the prompt** – make sure you understand exactly what it is asking you to do – then use it as a focus for your annotation of the text on Q1 and Q2 and as a launching point for your notes and thesis for Q3. Thanks for the tip from Erin M. at Mercy County Senior High.

**21. Focus on two primary ideas (literary devices, elements of composition, etc...)** for each essay in order to go deeper in analysis of each. Do not try to say something about everything you see, say everything about one or two something! Thanks for the tip from Erin M. at Mercy County Senior High.

**22. Take 10-12 minutes to read and deconstruct the prompt, annotate the poem or passage and develop a thesis before you begin writing the essay.** That thinking and planning time will help you remain focused which will ensure that your essay is clear and cohesive. Thanks for the tip from Erin M. at Mercy County Senior High.

**23. Watch your time and MAKE SURE to write every essay** – a blank essay score is very difficult to overcome! Thanks for the tip from Erin M. at Mercy County Senior High.

**24. Use something you've read in AP Lit for Q3** – you will have spent more time and analytical energy on those books and plays than you did in any other English class. Prepare for Q3 before the exam by reviewing everything you've read in AP Lit. Thanks for the tip from Erin M. at Mercy County Senior High.

# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

**25. Pick two texts, one classic and one modern, get to know them backward and forward as well as the historical context around them.** Thanks for the tip from Michelle Y. from Forest Park High.

**26. Address all aspects of the prompt! Look for complexity!** Thanks for the tip from Lori Mill Creek High School.

**27. Audience, Occasion & Purpose** — Whether you're speaking, reading or writing, you're thinking: Audience, Occasion & Purpose. Thanks for the tip from Mike L at Tilton School.

**28. Turn your words into pictures and your pictures into words.** Meaning: If you have an idea, anchor it to something concrete. If you have something concrete, associate it with an idea. Thanks for the tip from Jeff T at Lynden Christian High School.

**29. When writing essays, always tie your thoughts to the text (embed quotes)!** Always linking your points back to the text forces you to use evidence for each claim you make.

**30. Analyze not summarize!** Thanks for the tip from Lynne B. at Buchholz High School.

**31. Debate the questions.** Get students to debate the answers to AP multiple choice questions without your help. After they “quiz” on a passage and the questions for it, ask them how they think they did. The answer is always mixed, so give them an option: Keep the score they currently have OR discuss the answers in a large group without teacher’s help and take that community grade. They always pick the latter. Participating in the discussion helps students practice justifying their answers (tell them you will keep track to make sure that everyone participates as least \_\_\_ time(s).) As you observe their process, you will gain all kinds of insight into students’ thinking process, they will learn from the ways their classmates explain their choices, and their scores are almost always 100! Thanks for the tip from Wendy R from Weslaco East High School.



# The Ultimate List of AP English Literature Tips Cont.

Are you a teacher or student? Do you have an awesome tip? [Let us know!](#)

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