

Multiple choice questions on the AP Exam are designed in a way that students can demonstrate three important skills:

1. the ability to understand both surface and deeper-level meanings which represent the consensus of all good readers;
2. the ability to determine how structural patterns, grammatical and syntactic relationships, metaphorical language, etc., contribute to that meaning; and
3. the ability to describe how such features function rhetorically in a given piece of writing.

## Critical Reading Skills

### Test-Taking Strategy

Devise a system for highlighting the key elements you read, such as circling, underlining, using brackets and parentheses, or using codes (e.g., "F" for fact and "O" for opinion).

To do well on the AP test, however, you must do more than understand what you read. The test asks you to make judgments about what you are reading, analyze such elements as purpose and style, and evaluate the selections. A critical reader uses the following skills to read effectively:

- Establishing the facts
- Analyzing the reasoning
- Identifying the elements of style
- Recognizing your own response
- Evaluating the literature
- Determining its significance
- Comparing and contrasting the work to other literature

## ANALYZING THE TYPES OF QUESTIONS

The ideal is to know the correct answer as soon as you read the question, but that does not always happen. If you can identify the type of question you are facing, you can employ the best strategies to answer it correctly.

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Most of the multiple-choice questions will test how carefully you read and how well you interpret what you read. These comprehension questions fall into several categories: main idea, rhetoric, modes of discourse, definitions, meaning and purpose, form, organization, structure, and development.

- **Main Idea Questions.** This type of question frequently appears on the AP English Language Test. The question measures your ability to identify the author's ideas, attitude, and tone. A main idea question may also require you to identify the subject of the passage or to select the choice that best tells what the passage is about. Often, you must piece together facts and make an inference based on those facts.

Most inference questions will include one of these key words: *think, predict, indicate, feel, probably, seem, imply, suggest, assume, infer, and most likely*. When you come upon a question that contains one of these terms, return to the selection to find specific sentences that the question refers to, and make a sound generalization based on the clues. Skimming the first and last

paragraphs of a passage is another helpful technique for answering these questions because writers often state their topic in the beginning or the end of a selection. Remember that in answering an inference question, you are making a guess, but the best guess is based on facts from the selection.

- **Rhetoric Questions.** A great many of the questions on the exam are in this category. Questions about rhetoric might ask about syntax, point of view, or figurative language. To answer these questions, you must know how language works within a given passage. Not only must you be able to recognize these devices, but you must understand the effects these elements have on the piece of writing.
- **Mode Questions.** A few questions ask you to identify the various rhetorical modes that writers employ. You must understand the differences among narration, exposition, description, and persuasion. Knowing why an author is particularly effective at using a specific mode will help you with other types of questions.
- **Definition Questions.** These are basically vocabulary questions about difficult words in a passage or about ordinary words that are used with a special meaning. Use the context surrounding the word or phrase in the question to arrive at its meaning. Reread the sentence in which the word appears, and then substitute each of the possible choices to see which is closest in meaning. To get the full sense of the idea, you may need to read the sentences that surround the one containing the word or phrase in question. Avoid choosing a word or phrase that looks or sounds like the word to be defined, unless you have checked it in context.
- **Tone or Purpose Questions.** These frequently asked questions ask you to determine how or why the author wrote the material. The tone reflects the writer's attitude toward the subject and the audience. The purpose defines the effect the author wants to have upon the audience. Understanding the tone helps you to understand the purpose. Writers convey purpose through their choice of words and the impression those words create. Some possible tones are *admiration, adoration, optimism, contempt, pride, objectivity, disappointment, respect, surprise, anger, regret, irony, indignation, suspicion, pessimism, and amusement.*
- **Form Questions.** Form is the method of organization that a writer uses. As you read, observe the patterns of organization used. While some authors will use only one form, others may use a combination. Be aware of structure, organization, and development. Look for comparison and contrast, cause and effect, order of importance, logical sequence of events, and spatial order.

### Study Strategy

*As you answer multiple-choice questions in the Practice Tests, try to identify the category of each one. Knowing the question type will help you to identify the best strategy to use for answering the question.*

## FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONS

There may be a few other question types that appear on the test.

- **English Language Questions.** These questions may test your knowledge of English grammar, punctuation, or mechanics, or they may test your understanding of literary terminology.
- **Cultural Questions.** This kind of question tests your knowledge of facts that are a part of our civilization. Well-educated people should know this type of information.

## ATTACKING THE QUESTIONS: STRATEGIES FOR ACING THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE SECTION

Remember that the more multiple-choice questions you answer correctly, the less pressure you will have to do exceptionally well on the three essays. The following test-taking strategies, combined with your use of critical reading skills, will help you do well on Section I.

### READING THE SELECTIONS

- Most passages have no titles. If a selection is titled, think about what it tells you about the work. You may get a sense of the subject and theme just from the title.
- If there is no title, and there probably won't be, look for the topic sentence or thesis statement. In most writing, you will find it near the beginning. However, since AP exams ask you about challenging literature, you may find the topic sentence at the end or in the middle of the selection. Or you may find that the thesis is implied as opposed to stated.
- Scan the passages to decide the order in which you want to answer them. You do not have to answer the selections in the order presented. You can and should answer the selections and then the questions for each selection in the order that works for you. By showing yourself that you know answers, you build self-confidence.
- After you have decided the order in which you wish to answer the selections, skim for an overall impression of the selection. Then, read the selection carefully. Do not skip over confusing sentences. Repeat this process each time you begin a new selection.
- As you read, highlight words and sentences that seem significant. However, don't spend a great deal of time on this.
- As you read, observe patterns of organization that the writer employs. Patterns may follow a certain sequence or order, set up a compare-and-contrast situation, offer a problem and solution, show cause and effect, or offer a series of examples. Some authors may use more than one system of organization across paragraphs.

### Study Strategy

*If paraphrasing does not come easily to you, try writing paraphrases of the selections in this book.*

- Mentally paraphrase the passages. Paraphrasing helps you to discover the subject and the organization of the selection or the thesis and supporting arguments. The writer's style, transitions, sentence types, language, and literary devices become clear. You can see the framework of the passage in a paraphrase.
- Recall what you can about the author, the literary form, and the historical period.

## IDENTIFYING THE QUESTION TYPE

- Remember that there are six major types of multiple-choice questions: *main idea, rhetoric, mode, definition, tone or purpose, and form*. You may also find a few factual knowledge or cultural questions.
- When answering a main-idea question, the correct choice must be entirely true and include as much relevant information as possible. In many questions, two or three choices might be correct. However, the answer that is most complete is the one to choose.
- When you are asked to make judgments about what is inferred or implied in a selection, you must put together clues from the passage. You must be able to support your answer with specific facts or examples from the selection.
- Questions that ask about the meaning of words or phrases are best answered by substituting your choice in the sentence or paragraph. If the choice makes sense, you have the correct answer.
- In answering a question about tone or purpose, pay attention to word choice. This type of question asks you to determine how or why the writer created the selection. Authors convey that information through diction.

## ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS

### Test-Taking Strategy

*Don't check off or circle on the answer sheet the numbers of unanswered questions. This could confuse the machine that grades your paper and cause an error in your score.*

- Reread lines, sentences, or paragraphs that are identified in the questions. In fact, scan or reread any selection if you do not immediately know the answer to a question.
- Just as you choose the order to attack the passages, choose how you wish to answer the multiple-choice questions. If you understand the passage, answer the questions in order.
- If you are not confident about a passage, skip difficult questions, and answer the easy ones first. Be sure to mark in the test booklet the ones you have not answered. If you skip questions, check to be sure that you also skip that number on your answer sheet.

STRATEGIES FOR ANSWERING OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS/ MAKING EDUCATED GUESSES	
ANSWER CHOICE	REASON TO ELIMINATE
1. too narrow	too small a section of the selection covered, based on the question
2. too broad	an area wider than the selection covered, based on the question
3. irrelevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nothing to do with the passage</li> <li>• relevant to the selection but not the question</li> </ul>
4. incorrect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• distortion of the facts in the selection</li> <li>• contradiction of the facts in the selection</li> </ul>
5. illogical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not supported by facts in the passage</li> <li>• not supported by cited passage from the selection</li> </ul>
6. similar choices	GO BACK AND REVIEW 1-5 TO TEASE OUT THE DIFFERENCES.
7. <i>not/except</i>	answers that correctly represent the selection

- Read the question stem carefully, and be sure to read all the answer choices. Since the directions often ask for the best answer, several choices may be logical. Look for the most inclusive answer or the generalization.
- Look for consistency in the answers to the questions about a passage. If a choice seems contradictory to other answers you have given, rethink that choice.
- Many times, the key to finding the correct answer is to narrow the choices and to make an intelligent guess. Eliminate some answers by finding those that are obviously unrelated, illogical, or incorrect. Having reduced the number of choices, you can make an educated guess from among the remaining possibilities. Use the techniques presented in the chart above to reduce the number of choices.

The *not/except* questions are tricky. You can forget what it is you are looking for and choose a correct answer for the selection but the wrong answer for the question. Convolution? Yes; as you go through each answer, ask yourself, "Is this statement true about the selection?" If you answer "yes," cross off the answer and keep going until you find a choice to which you can answer "no."

## LEARN THE DIRECTIONS NOW

It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the instructions for each part of the test before the real test day. Knowing ahead of time what you have to do can save you time on the day of the test—perhaps enough to answer another one or two questions.

### GENERAL DIRECTIONS FOR THE AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION TEST

On the front page of your test booklet, you will find some information about the test. Because you have studied this book, none of it should be new to you, and much of it is similar to other standardized tests you have taken.

The page will tell you that the following exam will take 3 hours—1 hour for the multiple-choice section and 2 hours for the three essays—and that there are two booklets for this exam, one for the multiple-choice section and one for the essays.

The page will also tell you that SECTION I—

- is 1 hour.
- has 50 questions (or some number from 50 to 60).
- counts for 45 percent of your total grade.

Then, you will find a sentence in capital letters that tells you not to open your exam booklet until the monitor tells you to open it.

Other instructions will tell you to be careful to fill in only ovals 1 through 50 (or whatever the number is) in Section I on your separate answer sheet. Fill in each oval completely. If you erase an answer, erase it completely. You will not receive any credit for work done in the test booklet, but you may use it for making notes.

You will find not only a paragraph about the guessing penalty—deduction of one-quarter point for every wrong answer—but also words of advice about guessing if you know something about the question and can eliminate several of the answers.

The final paragraph will remind you to work effectively and to pace yourself. You are told that not everyone will be able to answer all the questions. The page suggests that you skip questions that are difficult and come back to them if you have time—just what we have been telling you.

## DIRECTIONS FOR THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE SECTION

The specific directions for Section I read like this:

**SECTION I**

**TIME—60 MINUTES**

**54 QUESTIONS**

**Directions:** This section consists of selections of literature and questions on their content, style, and form. After you have read each passage, select the response that best answers the question, and mark the space on the answer sheet.

In general, the directions for each selection and its accompanying multiple-choice questions read like this:

**Questions 1 through 15.** Read the passage carefully and then choose the answers to the questions.

## A FINAL WORD OF ADVICE: EDUCATED GUESSING

One technique that is especially helpful for achieving your best score is educated guessing. Use this technique when you do not immediately know the correct answer.

- Ignore answers that are obviously wrong. See the table on page 71, “Strategies for Answering Objective Questions/Making Educated Guesses,” for reasons why you should eliminate certain types of answer choices.
- Discard choices in which part of the response is incorrect.
- Revisit remaining answers to discover which seems more correct. Remember to eliminate any response that has anything wrong about it.
- Choose the answer you feel is right. Trust yourself. Your subconscious usually will guide you to the correct choice. Do not argue with yourself.

### Test-Taking Strategy

*A partially correct answer is a partially incorrect answer—and a quarter-point deduction.*

You’re probably thinking about the quarter-point penalty for an incorrect answer and are wondering if taking a chance is worth the possible point loss. Recognize that if you use this technique, your chances of scoring higher are excellent. You are not guessing but making an educated guess. You will have to answer 4 questions incorrectly to lose a single point, but answering even 1 question out of 4 correctly that you are not sure about will give you a quarter-point edge. If you have an idea about which choice is correct, act on it. Even the College Board suggests that you try—as long as you can eliminate some answer choices.

## PRACTICE

### Study Strategy

*Always read all the explanations given for correct answers in the Answers and Explanations sections in this book. The logic might offer you an insight that will help you with other questions.*

Now, take the time to practice what you have just learned. Read the selection below that was written in the eighteenth century by Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur. Apply the suggestions and strategies to determine the right answer. Circle the correct answer, and then write out your reasoning on the lines provided below each question.

If you do not understand the question, you may check the explanation immediately. You may refer to the answers question by question, or you may wish to score the entire section at one time. No matter which method you choose, read all the explanations against your own. See where your reasoning and ours differ. If your answer is incorrect, what is the flaw in your reasoning? If your answer is correct, is your reasoning the same as ours, or did we add to your understanding of the question and the process of arriving at the answer?