



AP[®] English Literature and Composition

About the Advanced Placement Program[®] (AP[®])

The Advanced Placement Program[®] has enabled millions of students to take college-level courses and earn college credit, advanced placement, or both, while still in high school. AP Exams are given each year in May. Students who earn a qualifying score on an AP Exam are typically eligible, in college, to receive credit, placement into advanced courses, or both. Every aspect of AP course and exam development is the result of collaboration between AP teachers and college faculty. They work together to develop AP courses and exams, set scoring standards, and score the exams. College faculty review every AP teacher's course syllabus.

AP English Program

The College Board offers two courses in English studies, each designed to provide high school students the opportunity to engage with a typical introductory-level college English curriculum.

The AP English Language and Composition course focuses on the development and revision of evidence-based analytic and argumentative writing and the rhetorical analysis of nonfiction texts.

The AP English Literature and Composition course focuses on reading, analyzing, and writing about imaginative literature (fiction, poetry, drama) from various periods.

There is no prescribed sequence of study, and a school may offer one or both courses.

AP English Literature and Composition Course Overview

The AP English Literature and Composition course focuses on reading, analyzing, and writing about imaginative literature (fiction, poetry, drama) from various periods. Students engage in close reading and critical analysis of imaginative literature to deepen their understanding of the ways writers use language to provide both meaning and pleasure. As they read, students consider a work's structure, style, and themes, as well as its use of figurative language, imagery, and symbolism. Writing assignments include expository, analytical, and argumentative essays that require students to analyze and interpret literary works.

RECOMMENDED PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisite courses for AP English Literature and Composition. Students should be able to read and comprehend college-level texts and to express themselves clearly in writing.

AP English Literature and Composition Course Content

The course content is organized into nine units, arranged in a logical, suggested sequence. Teachers create their own curricula by selecting and sequencing texts and tasks, and students develop the skills of literary analysis and composition as they repeatedly practice analyzing poetry and prose, then compose arguments about interpretations of literary works. At the end of each unit, teachers have the option of assigning Progress Checks to gauge student progress.

The suggested unit organization is as follows:

- Short Fiction (Units 1, 4, 7)
- Poetry (Units 2, 5, 8)
- Longer Fiction or Drama (Units 3, 6, 9)

The following big ideas serve as the foundation of the course, enabling students to create meaningful connections among concepts. Each big idea correlates with an enduring understanding, a long-term takeaway related to the big idea:

- **Character:** Characters in literature allow readers to study and explore a range of values, beliefs, assumptions, biases, and cultural norms represented by those characters.
- **Setting:** Setting and the details associated with it not only depict a time and place, but also convey values associated with that setting.
- **Structure:** The arrangement of the parts and sections of a text, the relationship of the parts to each other, and the sequence in which the text reveals information are all structural choices made by a writer that contribute to the reader's interpretation of a text.
- **Narration:** A narrator's or speaker's perspective controls the details and emphases that affect how readers experience and interpret a text.
- **Figurative Language:** Comparisons, representations, and associations shift meaning from the literal to the figurative and invite readers to interpret a text.
- **Literary Argumentation:** Readers establish and communicate their interpretations of literature through arguments supported by textual evidence.

Course Skills

The following skill categories, tied to the big ideas, describe what skills students should develop during the course:

- Explain the function of character.
- Explain the function of setting.
- Explain the function of plot and structure.
- Explain the function of the narrator or speaker.
- Explain the function of word choice, imagery, and symbols.
- Explain the function of comparison.
- Develop textually substantiated arguments about interpretations of part or all of a text.

AP English Literature and Composition Exam Structure

AP ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION EXAM: 3 HOURS

Assessment Overview

The AP English Literature and Composition Exam assesses student understanding of the skills and essential knowledge outlined in the course framework. The exam is 3 hours long and includes 55 multiple-choice questions and 3 free-response questions.

Format of Assessment

Section I: Multiple-choice | 55 Questions | 60 Minutes | 45% of Exam Score

- Five sets, with 8–13 questions per set, with each set preceded by a passage of prose fiction or poetry
- Each section will include at least two prose fiction passages and at least two poetry passages

Section II: Free-response | 3 Questions | 2 Hours | 55% of Exam Score

- Question 1: Poetry Analysis (6 points)
- Question 2: Prose Fiction Analysis (6 points)
- Question 3: Literary Argument (6 points)

Exam Components

Sample Multiple-Choice Question

Students are given a passage of writing and asked to respond to a set of prompts and questions based on the passage. Below is one example.

The main purpose of the repetition of negative diction in lines 21–27 (“and with . . . friends”) is to emphasize the difference between the

- (A) crowded streets and the empty houses.
- (B) grand mansions and the small-town setting.
- (C) natural light and the artificial light.
- (D) aristocracy and the middle class.

Sample Free-Response Question

This **passage** is excerpted from Jamaica Kincaid’s novel *Lucy*, published in 1990 and can be found on the AP English Literature and Composition Classroom Resources Page. In this passage, the narrator describes the beginning of a new phase in her life. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Kincaid uses literary elements and techniques to portray the complexity of the narrator’s new situation.

In your response, you should do the following:

- ♦ Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- ♦ Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- ♦ Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- ♦ Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.