

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED IN AP ENGLISH EXAMS

TERMS USED IN ESSAY INSTRUCTIONS

The following are the most important terms used in the instructions for AP essay questions. All of them have been used at least once and often more frequently. You should be familiar with the meanings of these terms.

! allegory

The device of using character and/or story elements symbolically to represent an abstraction in addition to the literal meaning. In some allegories, for example, an author may intend the characters to personify an abstraction like hope or freedom. The allegorical meaning usually deals with moral truth or a generalization about human existence.

! allusion

A reference in a work of literature to a prior work, a historical event or character, made in order to increase meaning in the current work.

! ambiguity

The multiple meanings, either intentional or unintentional, of a word, phrase, sentence, or passage.

! analogy

A similarity or comparison between two different things or the relationship between them. An analogy can explain something unfamiliar by associating it with or pointing out its similarity to something more familiar. Analogies can also make writing more vivid, imaginative, or intellectually engaging.

! atmosphere

The emotional mood created by the entirety of a literary work, established partly by the setting and partly by the author's choice of objects that are described. Even such elements as a description of the weather can contribute to the atmosphere. Frequently, atmosphere foreshadows events. See mood.

! attitude

An author's, speaker's, character's opinion of or feelings toward a subject. Attitudes may shift either slightly or from one extreme to the other. Authors often create readers' attitudes by manipulating characters' attitudes.

! colloquial / colloquialism

The use of slang or informalities in speech or writing. Not generally acceptable for formal writing, colloquialisms give a work a conversational, familiar tone. Colloquial expressions in writing include local or regional dialects.

! detail

Items or parts that form a larger picture or story. Authors choose or select details to create effects in their works or evoke responses from the reader.

! devices of sound

(Sound Devices) The technique of arranging words to create a mood, or a general effect of pleasant or harsh sound, to imitate another sound, or to reflect a meaning.

! diction

Word choice. An author chooses words to create effects that enhance the meaning of his work. Words that can be discussed as examples of an author's diction as it enhances the meaning of the work can often be used also as examples of detail that enhances meaning. One can distinguish between diction and detail by rewording; if changing the words in a passage to their synonyms changes the effect, the effect is achieved by the diction; if changing the words does not change the effect, the effect has been achieved by the author's choice of detail. For the AP exam, you should be able to describe an author's diction (for example, formal or informal, ornate or plain) and understand the ways in which diction can complement the author's purpose. Diction, combined with syntax, figurative language, literary devices, etc., creates an author's style. See syntax

! didactic

From the Greek, didactic literally means "teaching". Didactic works have the primary aim of teaching or instructing, especially the teaching of moral or ethical principles.

! euphemism

From the Greek for "good speech," euphemisms are a more agreeable or less offensive substitute for a generally unpleasant word or concept. The euphemism may be used to adhere to standards of social or political correctness or to add humor or ironic understatement. Saying "earthly remains" rather than "corpse" is an example of euphemism.

! extended metaphor

A metaphor developed at great length, occurring frequently in or throughout a work. See metaphor.

! figurative language

Language that uses figures of speech (non-literal comparisons) such as metaphor, simile, and irony.

! genre

The major category into which a literary work fits. The basic divisions of literature are prose, poetry, and drama. However, genre is a flexible term; within these broad boundaries exist many subdivisions that are often called genres themselves. For example, prose can be divided into fiction (novels and short stories) or nonfiction (essays, biographies, autobiographies, etc.). Poetry can be divided into lyric, dramatic, narrative, epic, etc. Drama can be divided into tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, etc. On the AP language exam, expect the majority of the passages to be from the following genres: autobiography, biography, diaries, criticism, essays, and journalistic, political, scientific, and nature writing.

! imagery

The sensory details of a work - the "word-pictures", "sound effects", tactile, kinesthetic, or other sensory responses evoked in the reader to describe, arouse emotion or represent abstractions. On a physical level, Imagery uses terms related to the five senses; we refer to visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, or olfactory imagery. On a broader and deeper level, however, one image can represent more than one thing. For example, a rose may present visual imagery while also representing the color in a woman's cheeks. An author, therefore, may use complex imagery while simultaneously employing other figures of speech, especially metaphor and simile. In addition, this term can apply to the total of all the images in a work. On the AP exam, pay attention to how an author creates imagery and to the effect of that imagery.

! inference / infer

To draw a reasonable conclusion from the information presented When a multiple-choice question asks for an inference to drawn from a passage, the most direct, most reasonable inference is the safest answer choice. If an

inference is implausible, it is unlikely to be the correct answer. Note that if the answer choice is directly stated, it is not inferred and is wrong.

! irony

A figure of speech in which speaker's (author's) intent and actual meaning differ - a pattern of words that turns away from direct statement of its own obvious meaning; the contrast between what is stated explicitly and what is really meant; the difference between what appears to be and what actually is true. In general, there are three major types of irony used in language: (1) In verbal irony, the words literally state the opposite of the writer's (or speaker's) true meaning. (2) In situational irony, events turn out the opposite of what was expected. What the characters and readers think ought to happen is not what does happen. (3) In dramatic irony, facts or events are unknown to a character in a play or piece of fiction but known to the reader, audience, or other characters in the work. Irony is used for many reasons, but frequently, it's used to create poignancy or humor.

! metaphor

A figure of speech in which a comparison is expressed without using "like", "as", or "than."

! mood

This term has two distinct technical meanings in English writing. The first meaning is grammatical and deals with verbal unity and a speaker's attitude. The indicative mood is used only for factual sentences. For example, "Joe eats too quickly." The subjunctive mood is used for a doubtful or conditional attitude. For example, "If I were you, I'd get another job." The imperative mood is used for commands. For example, "Shut the door!" The second meaning of mood is literary, meaning the prevailing atmosphere or emotional aura of a work. Setting, tone, and events can affect the mood. In this usage, mood is similar to tone and atmosphere.

! narrative techniques

Methods used in telling a story. These methods include (but are not limited to) point of view (of the writer), viewpoint (of a character), sequencing of events, manipulation of time, dialogue, or interior monologue.

! omniscient point of view

The narrator of the story knows, and tells, what is in the minds of all the characters, can speak directly to the reader and comment on the characters, their actions and motives, and can shift from time to time or place to place.

! paradox

A statement that appears to be self-contradictory or opposed to common sense but upon closer inspection contains some degree of truth or validity. The first scene of *Macbeth*, for example, closes with the witches' cryptic remark "Fair is foul, and foul is fair...."]

! parallelism

Also referred to as parallel construction or parallel structure, this term comes from Greek roots meaning "beside one another." It refers to the grammatical or rhetorical framing of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs to give structural similarity. This can involve, but is not limited to, repetition of a grammatical element such as a preposition or verbal phrase. A famous example of parallelism begins Charles Dickens's novel *A Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity...." The effects of parallelism are numerous, but frequently they act as an organizing force to attract the reader's attention, add emphasis and organization, or simply provide a musical rhythm.

! parody

A work that closely imitates the style or content of another with the specific aim of comic effect and/or ridicule. As comedy, parody distorts or exaggerates distinctive features of the original. As ridicule, it mimics the work by repeating and borrowing words, phrases, or characteristics in order to illuminate weaknesses in the original. Well-written parody offers enlightenment about the original but poorly written parody offers only ineffectual imitation. Usually an audience must grasp literary allusion and understand the work being parodied in order to fully appreciate the nuances of the newer work. Occasionally, however, parodies take on a life of their own and don't require knowledge of the original.

! pedantic

An adjective that describes words, phrases, or general tone that is overly scholarly, academic, or bookish.

! point of view

The author's choice of narrating position - from outside the story by an omniscient narrator, from outside by a narrator who is limited (can see into the mind of one or a few characters), from inside the story as a main character (first person participant) or from inside the story as a minor character (first person observant).

! resources of language

The techniques of language an author may use to accomplish his purpose. These techniques include diction, imagery, detail, figurative language, syntax.

! rhetoric

From the Greek for "orator," this term describes the principles governing the art of writing effectively, eloquently, and persuasively.

! rhetorical modes

This flexible term describes the variety, the conventions, and the purposes of the major kinds of writing. The four most common rhetorical modes and their purposes are as follows: (1) The purpose of exposition (or expository writing) is to explain and analyze information by presenting an idea, relevant evidence, and appropriate discussion. The AP language exam essay questions are frequently set up as expository topics. (2) The purpose of argumentation is to prove the validity of an idea, or point of view, by presenting sound reasoning, discussion, and argument that thoroughly convince the reader. Persuasive writing is a type of argumentation having an additional aim of urging some form of action. (3) The purpose of description is to re-create, invent, or visually present a person, place, event, or action so that the reader can picture that being described. Sometimes an author engages all five senses in description; good descriptive writing can be sensuous and picturesque. Descriptive writing may be straightforward and objective or highly emotional and subjective. (4) The purpose of narration is to tell a story or narrate an event or series of events. This writing mode frequently uses the tools of descriptive writing. These four writing modes are sometimes referred to as modes of discourse.

! rhetorical strategy

(Strategy) The management of language (arrangement of techniques) in order to achieve a specific effect or purpose. The classic appeals (ethical, logical, and pathetic) or use of contrast, or the creation of cumulative effect (when the description is made in successively larger terms to make the effect of the whole seem bigger, or the reverse, describing in progressively smaller terms to minimize the effect of the whole) are some examples of strategies.

! rhetorical techniques

Devices of effective or persuasive language, such as contrast, repetition, rhetorical question, paradox, understatement, syllogism, and the many strategies of argument discussed in a speech textbook.

! sarcasm

From the Greek meaning "to tear flesh," sarcasm involves bitter, caustic language that is meant to hurt or ridicule someone or something. It may use irony as a device, but not all ironic statements are sarcastic, that is, intending to ridicule. When well done, sarcasm can be witty and insightful; when poorly done, it's simply cruel.

! satire

Writing that seeks to promote positive change by use of wit or ridicule. Satire is often comedy that exposes errors in order to correct vice and folly. Regardless of whether or not the work aims to reform humans or their society, satire is best seen as a style of writing rather than a purpose for writing. It can be recognized by the many devices used effectively by the satirist such as irony, wit, parody, caricature, hyperbole, understatement and sarcasm. The effects of satire are varied, depending on the writer's goal, but good satire, often humorous, is thought provoking and insightful about the human condition.

! setting

The place and time that a story "happens"

! simile

A comparison expressed using "like", "as", or "than."

! structure

The arrangement of materials within a work; the relationship of the parts of a work to the whole; the logical divisions of a work. The most common principles of structure are series (A,B,C,D,E), contrast (A vs. B, C vs. D, E vs. A) and repetition (AA, BB, AB). The most common units of structure are -- novel: chapter; play: scene, act; poem: line, stanza.

! style

The way an author uses language to convey his ideas; An author's style includes his diction, syntax, imagery, figurative language, selection of detail, and tone. The consideration of style has two purposes. (1) An evaluation of the sum of the choices an author makes in blending diction, syntax, figurative language, and other literary devices. Some authors' styles are so idiosyncratic that we can quickly recognize works by the same author (or a writer emulating that author's style). Compare, for example, Jonathan Swift to George Orwell or William Faulkner to Ernest Hemingway. We can analyze and describe an author's personal style and make judgments on how appropriate it is to the author's purpose. Styles can be called flowery, explicit, succinct, rambling, bombastic, commonplace, incisive, or laconic, to name only a few examples. (2) Classification of authors to a group and comparison of an author to similar authors. By means of such classification and comparison, one can see how an author's style reflects and helps to define a historical period, such as the Renaissance or the Victorian period, or a literary movement, such as the romantic, transcendental, or realist movement.

! syllogism

From the Greek for "reckoning together," a syllogism (or syllogistic reasoning) is a deductive system of formal logic that presents two premises (the first one called "major" and the second "minor") that inevitably lead to a sound conclusion. A frequently cited example proceeds as follows:

major premise: All men are mortal.

minor premise: Socrates is a man.

conclusion: Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

A syllogism's conclusion is valid only if each of the two premises is valid. Syllogisms may also present the specific idea first ("Socrates") and the general second ("All men").

! symbol

Something which is itself and also "stands for" or signifies something else; a concrete object that represents an abstract entity or concept. However, symbols and symbolism can be much more complex. One system classifies symbols in three categories: (1) Natural symbols use objects and occurrences from nature to represent ideas commonly associated with them (dawn symbolizing hope or a new beginning, a rose symbolizing love, a tree symbolizing knowledge). (2) Conventional symbols are those that have been invested with meaning by a group (religious symbols, such as a cross or Star of David; national symbols, such as a flag or an eagle; or group symbols, such as a skull and crossbones for pirates or the scales of justice for lawyers). (3) Literary symbols are sometimes also conventional in the sense that they are found in a variety of works and are generally recognized. However, a work's symbols may be more complicated as is the whale in *Moby Dick* and the jungle in *Heart of Darkness*. On the AP exam, try to determine what abstraction an object is a symbol for and to what extent it is successful in representing that abstraction

! syntax

The structure of a sentence; the arrangement of words in a sentence. Discussion of syntax in a work could include discussion of the length or brevity of sentences, the kinds of sentences (declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, imperative sentences, rhetorical questions; periodic or loose sentences; simple, complex, or compound sentences) and the impact on the reader of the author's choices of sentence structure.

! theme

A main thought expressed by the work, also called the "meaning of the work as a whole"

! thesis

An assertion to be demonstrated ("proved") with use of logic and evidence.

! tone

The manner in which an author expresses his attitude. Tone is a result of the combination of choices the author makes in his use of language. Tone may shift during a work, or even during brief sections of a work.

! viewpoint

The attitude of the narrating persona toward events, other characters, or ideas. A shift of viewpoint may enhance meaning. Viewpoint may shift because of a character's place in time (In *A Separate Peace*, the older Gene sees events differently from the sixteen-year-old Gene, and even comments on the misperceptions of his younger self) or because of a change in understanding (In Cheever's "Reunion", the narrating son sees the real nature of his father emerge to contradict the son's childhood image of him and to warn the son of his own future).

! wit

In modern usage, intellectually amusing language that surprises and delights. A witty statement is humorous, while suggesting the speaker's verbal power in creating ingenious and perceptive remarks. Wit usually uses terse language that makes a pointed statement. Historically, wit originally meant basic understanding. Its meaning evolved to include speed of understanding, and finally (in the early seventeenth century), it grew to mean quick perception including creative fancy.

TERMS USED IN MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

The following terms have been used in multiple-choice questions and answers. The more important ones are marked with an asterisk.

! **allegory**

A story in which people, things, and events have another meaning. Examples of allegory are Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

! **ambiguity**

Multiple meanings a literary work may communicate, especially two meanings that are incompatible.

! **apostrophe**

Direct address, usually to someone or something that is not present. Keats's "Bright star! would I were steadfast" is an apostrophe to a star, and "To Autumn" is an apostrophe to a personified season.

! * **connotation**

The implications of a word or phrase, as opposed to its exact meaning (denotation). Both China and Cathay denote a region in Asia, but to a modern reader, the associations of the two words are different.

! * **convention**

A device of style or subject matter so often used that it becomes a recognized means of expression. For example, a lover observing the literary love conventions cannot eat or sleep and grows pale and lean. Romeo, at the beginning of the play is a conventional lover, while an overweight lover in Chaucer is consciously mocking the convention.

! * **denotation**

The dictionary meaning of a word, as opposed to connotation.

! **didactic**

Explicitly instructive. A didactic poem or novel may be good or bad. Pope's "Essay on Man" is didactic; so are the novels of Ayn Rand.

! **digression**

The use of material unrelated to the subject of a work. The interpolated narrations in the novels of Cervantes or Fielding may be called digressions, and *Tristram Shandy* includes a digression on digressions.

! **epigram**

A pithy saying, often using contrast. The epigram is also a verse form, usually brief and pointed.

! **euphemism**

A figure of speech using indirection to avoid offensive bluntness such as "deceased" for "dead" or "remains" for "corpse."

! **grotesque**

Characterized by distortions or incongruities. The fiction of Poe or Flannery O'Connor is often described as grotesque.

! * hyperbole

Deliberate exaggeration, overstatement. As a rule, hyperbole is self-conscious, without the intention of being accepted literally. "The strongest man in the world" or "a diamond as big as the Ritz" are hyperbolic.

! invective

An emotionally violent, verbal denunciation or attack using strong, abusive language.

! jargon

The special language of a profession or group. The term jargon usually has pejorative associations, with the implication that jargon is evasive, tedious, and unintelligible to outsiders. The writings of the lawyer and the literary critic are both susceptible to jargon.

! * literal

Not figurative; accurate to the letter; matter of fact or concrete.

! lyrical

Songlike; characterized by emotion, subjectivity, and imagination.

! * oxymoron

A combination of opposites; the union of contradictory terms. Romeo's line "feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health" has four examples of the device.

! parable

A story designed to suggest a principle, illustrate a moral, or answer a question. Parables are allegorical stories.

! * paradox

A statement that seems to be self contradicting but, in fact, is true. The figure in Donne's holy sonnet that includes "I never shall be 'chaste except you ravish me'" is a good example of the device.

! parody

A composition that imitates the style of another composition normally for comic effect. Fielding's *Shamela* is a parody of Richardson's *Pamela*. A contest for parodies of Hemingway draws hundreds of entries each year.

! * personification

A figurative use of language which endows the nonhuman (ideas, inanimate objects, animals, abstractions) with human characteristics. Keats personifies the nightingale, the Grecian urn, and autumn in his major poems.

! * reliability

A quality of some fictional narrators whose word the reader can trust. There are both reliable and unreliable narrators, that is, tellers of a story who should or should not be trusted. Most narrators are reliable (Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway, Conrad's Marlow), but some are clearly not to be trusted (Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart," several novels by Nabokov). And there are some about whom readers have been unable to decide (James's governess in *Turn of the Screw*, Ford's *The Good Soldier*).

! * rhetorical question

A question asked for effect, not in expectation of a reply. No reply is expected because the question

presupposes only one possible answer. The lover of Suckling's "Shall I wasting in despair / Die because a lady's fair?" has already decided the answer is no.

! * soliloquy

A speech in which a character who is alone speaks his or her thoughts aloud. A monologue also has a single speaker, but the monologist speaks to others who do not interrupt. Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" and "O! what a rogue and peasant slave am I" are soliloquies. Browning's "My Last Duchess" and "Fra Lippo Lippi" are monologues, but the hypocritical monk of his "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" cannot reveal his thoughts to others.

! * stereotype

A conventional pattern, expression, character, or idea. In literature, a stereotype could apply to the unvarying plot and characters of some works of fiction (those of Barbara Cartland, for example) or to the stock characters and plots of many of the greatest stage comedies.

! * syllogism

A form of reasoning in which two statements are made and a conclusion is drawn from them. A syllogism begins with a major premise ("All tragedies end unhappily.") followed by a minor premise ("Hamlet is a tragedy.") and a conclusion (Therefore "Hamlet ends unhappily.").

! thesis

The theme, meaning, or position that a writer undertakes to prove or support.

Metrical Terms

The following have been used in the questions or answers of the multiple-choice questions about the metrics of a passage. Those marked with an asterisk are the more important terms; the others appeared only as wrong answers.

! * alliteration

The repetition of identical or similar consonant sounds, normally at the beginning of words. "Gnus never know pneumonia" is an example of alliteration, since despite the spellings, all four words begin with the "n" sound.

! * assonance

The repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds. "A land laid waste with all its young men slain" repeats the same "a" sound in "laid," "waste," and "slain."

! ballad meter

A four-line stanza rhymed abcb with four feet in lines one and three and three feet in lines two and four.

O mother, mother make my bed.
 O make it soft and narrow.
 Since my love died for me today,
 I'll die for him tomorrow.

! * blank verse

Unrhymed iambic pentameter.

Men called him Mulciber; and how he fell
From heaven, they fabled, thrown by angry Jove
Sheer o'er the crystal battlements: from morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve.

Blank verse is the meter of most of Shakespeare's plays, as well as that of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

! * dactyl

A metrical foot of three syllables, an accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables.

! * end-stopped

A line with a pause at the end. Lines that end with a period, comma, colon, semicolon, exclamation point, or question mark are end-stopped lines.

! * free verse

Poetry which is not written in a traditional meter but is still rhythmical. The poetry of Walt Whitman is perhaps the best-known example of free verse.

! * heroic couplet

Two end-stopped iambic pentameter lines -rhymed aa, bb, ee with the thought usually completed in the two-line unit.

When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,
And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,
This lock, the Muse shall consecrate to fame,
And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.

! * hexameter

A line containing six feet.

! * iamb

A two-syllable foot with an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable. The iamb is the most common foot in English poetry.

! * internal rhyme

Rhyme that occurs within a line, rather than at the end.

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!-
Why look'st thou so?"-With my crossbow
I shot the Albatross.

Line three contains the internal rhyme of "so" and "bow."

! onomatopoeia

The use of words whose sound suggests their meaning. Examples are "buzz," "hiss," or "honk."

! * pentameter

A line containing five feet. The iambic pentameter is the most common line in English verse written before 1950.

! * rhyme royal

A seven-line stanza of iambic pentameter rhymed ababbcc, used by Chaucer and other medieval poets.

! * sonnet

Normally a fourteen-line iambic pentameter poem. The conventional Italian, or Petrarchan, sonnet is rhymed abba, abba, cde, cde; the English, or Shakespearean, sonnet is rhymed abab, cdcd, efef, gg.

! * stanza

Usually a repeated grouping of three or more lines with the same meter and rhyme scheme.

! terza rima

A three-line stanza rhymed aba, bcb, cdc. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is written in terza rima.

! * tetrameter

A line of four feet.

Grammatical Terms

! antecedent

That which goes before, especially the word, phrase, or clause to which a pronoun refers. In the sentence "The witches cast their spells," the antecedent of the pronoun "their" is the noun "witches."

! clause

A group of words containing a subject and its verb that may or may not be a complete sentence. In the sentence "When you are old, you will be beautiful," the first clause ("When you are old") is a dependent clause and not a complete sentence. "You will be beautiful" is an independent clause and could stand by itself.

! ellipsis

The omission of a word or several words necessary for a complete construction that is still understandable. "If rainy, bring an umbrella" is clear though the words "it is" and "you" have been left out.

! imperative

The mood of a verb that gives an order. "Eat your spinach" uses an imperative verb.

! modify

To restrict or limit in meaning. In the phrase "large, shaggy dog," the two adjectives modify the noun; in the phrase "very shaggy dog," the adverb "very" modifies the adjective "shaggy," which modifies the noun "dog."

! parallel structure

A similar grammatical structure within a sentence or within a paragraph. Winston Churchill's "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields" speech or Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech depend chiefly on the use of parallel structure.

! periodic sentence

A sentence grammatically complete only at the end. A loose sentence is grammatically complete before the period. The following are (1) periodic and (2) loose sentences.

1. When conquering love did first my heart assail, / Unto mine aid I summoned every sense.
2. Fair is my love, and cruel as she's fair.

Periodic sentences complete the important idea at the end, while loose sentences put the important idea first. Neither is a better sentence. Good writers use both.

! subordinate clause

Like all clauses, this word group contains both a subject and a verb (plus any accompanying phrases or modifiers), but unlike the independent clause, the subordinate clause cannot stand alone; it does not express a complete thought. Also called a dependent clause, the subordinate clause depends on a main clause, sometimes called an independent clause, to complete its meaning. Easily recognized key words and phrases usually begin these clauses - for example: although, because, unless, if, even though since, as soon as, while, who, when, where, how, and that.

! syntax

The structure of a sentence. The way an author chooses to join words into phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax is similar to diction, but you can differentiate them by thinking of syntax as the groups of words, while diction refers to the individual words. In the multiple-choice section of the AP language exam, expect to be asked some questions about how an author manipulates syntax. In the essay section, you will need to analyze how syntax produces effects.

Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition Preparation Guide. Allan Casson. Cliff's Notes, Inc. Lincoln, Nebraska. 1993.

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Types of Questions

1. **Dramatic Situation:** Who is the speaker? What is the situation? To whom is the poem addressed? What is the setting in time or place?
2. **Structure:** How are the stanzas related to each other? How are the stanzas related to the whole poem?
3. **Theme:** What is the meaning of ____ in stanza ___? With which of the following ideas is the poem centrally concerned?
4. **Grammatical relationships and word meanings in context**
5. **Images and figurative language:** How does the author make sensory impressions on the reader? How does the author make the experience that he conveys through the poem accessible to the reader?
6. **Diction**
7. **Tone,** particularly **shifts** in tone
8. **Rhetoric:** the purpose for which the author writes; the progression of the argument (persuasive techniques); the appeal which the author employs.
9. **Literary devices**
10. **Metrics**

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Literary Background Terms

(Not from Cliff's Guide)

- alliteration** the repetition of initial consonant sounds in two or more words in a line of verse or a sentence of prose, e.g. "Rough and ready." "Gnus never know pneumonia" is an example of alliteration since, despite the spellings, all four words begin with the /n/ sound.
- anecdote** a short, narrative summary of an event
- antithesis** a balancing or contrasting of words or ideas for effect:
- "Man proposes, God disposes." (Pope)
 "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." (Shakespeare)
 "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." (Dickens)
- archetype** an image, character, or pattern of circumstances that recurs throughout literature and thought consistently enough to be considered universal. The laurel and olive branches, the snake, whale, eagle, and vulture all are archetypal symbols. An example of an archetypal theme in literature is that of initiation, the passage from innocence to experience. Archetypal characters that recur in literature include the rebel, wise grandparent, generous thief, and prostitute with a heart of gold.
- aside** a dramatic convention by which an actor directly addresses the audience but is not supposed to be heard by the other actors or the stage
- assonance** the similarity or repetition of a vowel sound in two or more words. "Lake" and "stake" are rhyming words; "lake" and "fade" are assonant. "Base" and "face" rhyme; "base" and "fade" are assonant
- caricature** a picture or imitation of a person's features or mannerisms exaggerated in order to be comic or absurd
- sketch** a short piece of writing that reveals or shows something important about a person or fictional character
- characterization** the method an author uses to reveal or describe characters and their various personalities
- Indirect characterization:** what a character thinks, says, feels, does; what others say about the character; the character's physical description
- Direct characterization:** what the author says directly about a character
- classicism** a movement or tendency in art, literature, and music reflecting the principles manifested in the art of ancient Greece and, principally, Rome. Classicism emphasizes the traditional and the universal, placing value on reason, clarity,

balance, and order. Classicism is traditionally taught in opposition to Romanticism, which is concerned with emotions and personal themes.

cliche any expression used so often that its freshness and clarity have worn off, e.g., "tip of the iceberg," "to throw a wet blanket."

climax the high point of conflict and tension preceding the resolution of a drama or story; the point of decision, of inevitability, and of no return

conflict the problem or struggle in a story that triggers the action. There are several basic types of conflict:

Person vs. Person: One character has a problem with one or more of the other characters

Person vs. Society: A character has a problem with some element of society, e.g., school, the law, the accepted way of doing things.

Person vs. Self: A character has a problem deciding what to do in a particular situation (internal conflict)

Person vs. Nature: A character has a problem with some natural happening, e.g., the sea, an avalanche, the bitter cold, or any other element of nature

Person vs. Fate or a godlike entity: A character has to battle what seems to be an uncontrollable problem. Whenever the problem seems to be a strange or unbelievable coincidence, fate can be considered the cause of the conflict.

Person vs. The Supernatural: A character has to battle an otherworldly entity such as a vampire, a werewolf, or evil personified.

connotation the implications of a word or phrase, as opposed to its exact meaning (denotation)

consonance the repetition of consonant sounds within a line of verse or a sentence of prose. Consonance is similar to alliteration except that consonance does not limit the repeated sound to the initial letter of a word, e.g., "such a tide as seems asleep."

couplet two consecutive lines of verse that have the same end rhyme; also, a two-line stanza

denotation the dictionary meaning of a word, as opposed to its connotation

denouement the final solution or outcome (resolution) of a play or story

dramatic monologue a literary work (or part of a literary work) in which a character is speaking to another person who is silent but identifiable. The speaker's words reveal something important about his or her own character.

dramatic poem a narrative poem in which one or more characters speak. Each speaker always addresses a specific listener. This listener may be silent but identifiable (as

in a dramatic monologue such as Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess"), or the listener may be another character who carries on a dialogue with the first speaker (as in Robert Frost's "The Death of the Hired Man").

- empathy** the act of putting yourself in someone else's place and experiencing what that person must feel
- epic** a long narrative poem that tells of the deeds and adventures of a hero
- exposition** 1) a type of writing that is intended to make clear or to explain something that might otherwise be difficult to understand;
 (2) in a play or novel, that portion (generally at the beginning) that helps the reader understand the background or situation in which the work is set
- fable** a short simple story that teaches a lesson or moral. The characters are most frequently animals, but people and inanimate objects are sometimes the central figures.
- farce** literature based on a highly humorous and highly unlikely plot
- flashback** returning to an earlier time (in a piece of literature) for the purpose of making something in the present more clear
- foil** someone who serves as a contrast or challenge to another character
- foot** the smallest repeated pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a poetic line; a unit of meter
- Iambic foot:** a two-syllable foot with the stress on the second syllable:
 • a book • of ver • ses un • der neath • the bough,
 • a jug of wine, • a loaf • of bread • and thou.
- Trochaic foot.** a two-syllable foot that consists of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable”
 • Dou ble • dou ble, • toil and • trou ble,
 • Fi re • burn and • caul dron • bub ble
- Anapestic foot.** a three-syllable foot that consists of two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable:
 • With the sheep • in the fold • and the cows • in their stalls
 • For the moon • ne ver beams • with out bring • ing me dreams • of
 the beau • ti ful Ann * abel Lee
- Dactylic foot:** a three-syllable foot that consists of a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables:
 • Love a gain • song a gain • nest a gain • young a gain
 • This is the • for est prim • e val, the • mur mur ing • pines ...
- Spondaic foot:** a foot that consists of two stressed syllables.

Compound words are examples of spondees (heartbreak, childhood, football).*

Pyrrhic foot: a foot that consists of two unstressed syllables.*

*Note: Spondees and pyrrhics cannot be used seriously as the only foot in a poem or even in a line of poetry, but poets use them occasionally for variation within poems.

foreshadowing hints and clues of what is to come later in a story or play

free verse poetry that has neither a regular meter nor rhyme scheme

genre a category or type of literature based on its style, form, and content. The mystery novel is a literary genre.

hubris from the Greek word *hubris*, meaning "excessive pride." In Greek tragedy, hubris is often viewed as the flaw that leads to the downfall of the tragic hero.

hyperbole an exaggeration for the sake of emphasis that is not to be taken literally, e.g., starving to death, rivers of blood, as old as time, a million times a day)

monologue any speech or narrative presented wholly by one person to others who do not interrupt

mood atmosphere created by the writer; the emotional response felt by the reader. See tone.

moral the particular value or lesson the author is trying to get across to the reader

motif recurring images, words, objects, phrases, or actions that tend to unify a work of literature

myth a traditional story that attempts to explain a natural phenomenon or to justify a certain practice or belief of a society

narration writing or speaking that relates an event or a series of events; a story

narrative poetry nondramatic poetry that tells a story or presents a narrative

epic--a long poem that relates the great deeds of a hero who embodies the values of a particular society

ballad--a song or songlike poem that tells a story. **Folk ballads** are composed by anonymous poets and are passed down orally from generation to generation.

Literary ballads are composed and written down by identifiable authors, e.g., "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by S. T. Coleridge.

- naturalism** an extreme form of realism in which the author tries to show the relation of a person to the environment or surroundings. Often the author shows the ugly or raw side of that relationship. A person's destiny is controlled by the environment, heredity, and chance.
- oxymoron** a combination of contradictory terms (jumbo shrimp, the living dead, cold fire, feather of lead)
- parable** a short, descriptive story designed to suggest a principle, illustrate a moral, or answer a question; allegorical stories
- parallelism** a similar grammatical structure within a sentence or within a paragraph
- parody** a composition imitating another, usually serious, piece of work. It is designed to ridicule in humorous fashion an original piece of work or its author. The parody is in literature what the caricature and the cartoon are in art.
- pathos** the quality in art and literature that stimulates pity, tenderness, or sorrow in the reader or viewer
- persona** from the Greek word for mask, it is the narrator or speaker of story or poem
- personification** the giving of human characteristics to inanimate objects, ideas, abstractions, or animals
- poetic license** the term used to mean that a poet or other professional writer is allowed to break rules of spelling, grammar, form, or citation to make the rhyme or meter or general effect better suit the purpose
- protagonist** the main character of the story; the character who is changed or who grows or learns as a result of the conflict.
- realism** literature that attempts to represent life as it really is
- rhetorical question** a question asked for its rhetorical effect which neither requires a reply nor intends to induce a reply
- romance** a form of literature that presents life as we would like it to be rather than as it actually is. Usually romance has a great deal of adventure, love, and excitement.
- romanticism** a literary movement with an emphasis on the imagination and emotions

- soliloquy** a speech in which a character who is alone speaks his or her thoughts aloud
- stereotype** a character representing generalized racial or social traits, repeated as typical from work to work with no individualizing traits; his or her nature is immediately familiar to the reader (the mad scientist, the talkative cab driver, the temperamental movie star)
- stock character** a conventional character type belonging by custom to given forms of literature: the vengeance-seeking hero and scheming villain in tragedy; the cruel stepmother and prince charming in fairy tales; the irate police captain and resourceful detective in detective stories.
- stream of consciousness** a style of writing that attempts to imitate the natural flow of a character's thoughts, feelings, reflections, memories, and mental images as the character experiences them.
- theme** the main idea about life that the author intends the reader to extract from the work; a general statement about the human condition. It is always a predication - a complete sentence. It is also called theme statement.
- thesis or thesis statement** a sentence that serves as the plan of the groundwork for an essay by specifying the points the writer is going to use to discuss the topic. It may be thought of as a map of the essay.
- verisimilitude** the semblance of truth; a characteristic whereby the setting, circumstances, characters, actions, and outcomes in a work are designed to seem true, lifelike, real, plausible, and probable.
- voice** in literature: a language style adopted by an author to create the effect of a particular speaker. The voice of a literary piece can be the author or a character (person, animal, or thing) created by the author. Especially in poetry, readers should not always assume that the voice is that of the poet. Identifying the voice is a key to understanding the meaning of the piece.
in writing: the personality and distinct way of "talking on paper" that allow a reader to "hear" a human personality in a piece of writing. Writers' true voices in their writing make it different from that of anyone else. Voice is the individual "sound" of one's writing, closely interwoven with other elements of style.

**Terms Used to Ask
Advanced Placement English
Examination Questions**

and

**Background Terms
for
Study and Discussion
of
Literature**

**Adapted from: *Cliff's Guide to Preparing for Advanced Placement English Examinations*,
by Allan Casson, 1993.**