The Multiple-Choice Section

The multiple-choice section of the AP Language and Composition Exam consists of 50 to 55 questions. You will have 60 minutes to read the passage and answer the questions. This section is worth 45 percent of your total score. It tests your ability to read carefully, closely, and critically. If you keep these three Cs in mind, you should be able to do well.

Scoring

In the multiple-choice section, you receive one point for each correctly answered question. Until 2011, you were penalized a quarter of a point for each incorrectly answered question. This is no longer the case. Therefore, you should strive to answer all of the questions, even the ones you really don't know. However, it's always worthwhile to improve your odds by eliminating answer choices you know are wrong.

Vocabulary

While vocabulary knowledge is important to scoring well on the test, it would not be worthwhile to provide you with a vocabulary list, as the vocabulary employed by the AP examiners ranges from the mundane to

the esoteric. (If you don't know what *esoteric* means, look it up!) If you have time on your hands, review the list of vocabulary words for the SAT. You can find these online or in an SAT review book. Pay attention to adjectives that could describe an author's tone or attitude. Some common tone/attitude words are *bitter, condescending, contemplative, contemptuous, choleric, caustic, disdainful, derisive, erudite, patronizing, reverent, ridiculing,* and *sardonic.*

Focusing on the Text

You **must** read the passage before you begin to answer the multiple-choice questions. The passage must inform your responses to the multiple-choice questions; the questions should not inform your reading of the text. If you read the questions first, you might find yourself skimming the text for the answer. You then run the risk of overlooking key information.

Keep in mind that the multiple-choice questions are based solely on the text as it exists on the page in front of you. Do not impose your own views or external knowledge onto the text. If you impose your own views, ideas, or knowledge onto the text, you risk ignoring what the author is saying. What the text says is important; what you want it to say is irrelevant. You must read the text with an open mind, allowing what it says to inform your answers.

Clues from the Prompt

Typically, the passages will be from a different century, and we don't mean the twentieth. Some of the language may be archaic and/or include unfamiliar vocabulary. The passages are presented with little to no context. Thus, you won't necessarily know when the passage was written, why it was written, or who wrote it. If this information is given, pay attention to it. It will probably read something like this:

Example 1: This passage is taken from an eighteenth-century essay about the environment.

Example 2: This passage is taken from an autobiographical work written in the nineteenth century.

In the first example, the subject of the essay and the century in which it was written are given: eighteenth century, the environment. When you read the passage and answer the questions, keep the subject in mind. If you find yourself choosing an answer that has little to do with the subject, you might want to rethink your choice. If your answer still strikes you as correct, then go for it. In addition, the fact that the passage is from the eighteenth century should alert you to the possibility that familiar words might have unfamiliar connotations and denotations.

In the second example, you are told the type of work from which the passage is taken—an autobiography. Autobiographies are written in the first person and typically contain subjective observations and anecdotal accounts. The passage will probably be about a particular event that the author found significant or important in some way. Your job is to figure out what that event was and why it had significance or importance for the author.

The Three Cs

Reading critically, carefully, and closely requires that you read with a pen in your hand. For many students, underlining and making marginal notes while reading is a foreign and uncomfortable prospect. Get over it! You have a limited amount of time in which to read and answer the questions. Each minute counts. If you do not have to search the text for an answer because you have already marked it, you will save time. Underline what you think is important. Circle words that you think are significant. In the margins, include your responses as you read.

Reading critically means that letting the text engage your mind as you read. This engagement should take the form of writing notes in the margins. If something seems odd or unclear, you might write a question mark, whereas an exclamation point might signal that the author wrote something funny or unexpected. Use the form of annotation that comes most naturally to you.

Reading carefully means paying close attention to the author's word choice to ensure that you do not misconstrue meaning. Don't skim the text. The passage on the exam is chosen not only for its length but also because it contains enough information with which to generate questions. Reading carefully allows you to unpack the information it provides. Again, marginal notes and annotations are important here as well.

Reading closely does not mean holding the passage up to your nose! Reading closely is much like reading carefully. There is no real separation between the two. However, for our purposes, reading closely entails annotating the rhetorical strategies the author may be using. This may include, but is not limited to, devices such as asyndeton, polysyndeton, loose sentences, and others. Look for patterns, motifs and repetitions that might indicate the author's attitude or the tone of the passage as a whole.

To sum up: **Think. Use your pencil to underline and annotate. Leave yourself out.**

The Attractive Distracter

As you well know by now, the multiple-choice section of the exam tests your ability to read critically, carefully, and closely. In order to test how good you are at this skill, the examiners often include answer choices that vary only slightly. The answer that reads as though it might be correct is an attractive distracter. It distracts you from the correct answer. Thus, the difference between an attractive distracter and the correct answer is subtle. The bad news is that sometimes none of the answers seem

quite accurate. In this case, your job is to choose the answer that **best** answers the question.

The attractive distracter functions a lot like the boy or girl whom you date even though you know he or she is bad for you. The attractive distracter shakes, shimmies, and flexes its muscles. Its appeal is so powerful, it is difficult to resist its charm. Be strong. Do not choose it. It is wrong.

You will know when you have encountered one of these attractive distracters if you have eliminated all but two choices, and these choices look almost the same. It is your job to figure out where the difference lies. It could be in connotation—the hidden meaning implied by the word. It could be denotation—what the word actually means. It could be a matter of implication. Consider context. Regardless of where the difference lies, these are frustrating answer choices because they are so similar. If all else fails, just dive in and make a choice. However, think about the choices in as many different ways as you can so that your choice is as informed as it can be.

Types of Questions

Overview Questions

Before taking the exam, it is useful to have a working knowledge of the types of questions you will encounter and what these questions are asking. Typically, the questions refer to the passage in chronological order. Thus, the first question will never ask you about a detail that appears in the last paragraph of the passage. Typically, it asks an overview question—a question that asks about the passage as a whole. (At times, the last question may also be an overview question.) Here are a few examples.

- The speaker in the passage is best be described as...
- The author's attitude is best be described as...
- The passage as a whole is best described as...
- The author's tone in the passage is best described as...

The first thing to note is the phrase "best described as." This phrase implies that the correct answer will not be an exact fit. The correct answer will be the closest or most likely answer to the question. In these types of questions, you will not find a choice that corresponds exactly to with what the question asks. In addition, all of the above questions are asking you to consider the entire passage before you choose an answer.

Attitude and Tone

Overview questions frequently focus on attitude and tone. The words "attitude" and "tone" have come to mean nearly the same thing. "Attitude" is the author's position on the subject. The author's "attitude" is revealed through "tone." For example, if the passage is a satire, the tone could be ironic or mocking. You can identify the tone and, by extension, the author's attitude by focusing on word choice (diction) and how the author seems to approach the subject. Frequently, the answer choices will include a pair of descriptive words: sympathetic yet critical, reverent and respectful, sanctimonious and condescending, feigned indignation, cruel indifference, mock serious.

Two other types of overview questions are the "except" question and the question that provides three or four choices. In this type of question, you must figure out which combination of sources applies. These questions are difficult because, again, they often ask you to consider the passage or a particular paragraph as a whole. However, these questions can also deal with only a few lines of text.

In paragraph 2, the speaker employs all of the following EXCEPT

A. concrete diction
B. parallel structure
C. analogy
D. simile
E. understatement

The author's style is characterized by

I. technical diction
II. condescending tone
III. parallel syntax

A. I only
B. II only
C. I and II
D. III only
E. I, II and III

Organization Questions

These questions can focus on the passage as a whole, or can be about a particular paragraph. Here are a few examples.

- The principal contrast employed by the author in the passage is between...
- Paragraph 2 moves from...
- The structure of lines 59–68 can best be described as...
- The development of the passage can best be described as...
- The style of the passage is best characterized as...

Like the questions on tone, these questions might provide you with answer choices made up of pairs. Some of these questions require you to consider how sentences flow one from the other. Do sentences contrast with each other? Do they move from the particular to the general, or from the general to the specific? Does the passage have a thesis followed by supporting evidence? Does it have chronological development?

Questions of Style

Style questions can include a wide variety of answers. Again, knowledge of vocabulary is essential. The author's style is the way in which

the particular passage is written. The following is a sampling of what you might encounter in answers to these questions:

- **Satirical writing** uses wit to point out the flaws and foibles of society/humanity to effect change.
- **Informal writing** is casual and uses language more suitable to everyday speech than to the written word.
- **Symbolic writing** is meant to represent or point to something other than the literal meaning of the passage.
- **Pedantic writing** is overly formal and sometimes includes the ostentatious use of language.
- **Didactic writing** is meant to instruct or provide advice.
- **Descriptive writing** includes specific details that often appeal to the five senses.
- **Abstract writing** is based on general principals and theories rather than specific examples or instances.
- **Technical writing** relates to a particular science, field, or profession and may contain industry-specific jargon.

Purpose and Main-Idea Questions

These questions ask you to identify why the author is writing the passage or what the central idea is in the passage. Believe it or not, sometimes an author's purpose is difficult to discern. You will have to ask yourself why the author is addressing that particular subject, how the subject is developed, and what types of evidence the author employs. Purposes can vary widely: to inform, to justify, to rationalize. Main-idea questions are straightforward. The examiners want you to identify the most important idea or point of the passage as a whole. To figure this out, look for an idea the author keeps returning to, one that is relevant to each paragraph of the passage.

Vocabulary in Context Questions

When a question asks you to identify the meaning of a word in context, your understanding of the meaning of that word may be irrelevant. The implication of this question is that either the word's connotation or its denotation is not the one that is most commonly understood. Connotations are how the word has come to be understood; denotation is the dictionary definition of the word. Thus, in order to answer these questions correctly, you will have to consider the words, phrases, and sentences that precede and follow the word as well as the sentence in which the word appears.

Strategy Questions

Strategy questions ask why the author has made a particular choice in a passage or sentence. These questions can also ask you to identify the strategy that the author has employed. This can be a rhetorical strategy such as abstract diction, catalogue, metaphor, or parallel syntax. It can include questions about appeals—logos, ethos, pathos—as well as questions about rhetorical fallacies: bandwagon, *ad hominem*, or appeal to tradition. If you are unfamiliar with any of these, look at their definitions in the section on rhetoric on page 47.

Inference and Implication Questions

An inference is something that you, the reader, do. It is a conclusion you draw based on evidence in the text. An implication is what the text, itself, does. It is a conclusion that the author wants you to draw by providing clues. Questions about inference and implication are typically worded as follows:

- The implication of lines 4–8 is...
- From lines 12–16 you can infer that...

Meaning Questions

Meaning questions are often followed by that tricky and irritating phrase "best expressed." This means that the answer will not be an exact fit.

Typically these questions refer to a few lines from the passage. The question will ask you to choose what you think is the literal meaning of the passage. In this way, these questions differ from the inference or implication questions because the meaning should be overtly stated in the text itself; you should not necessarily have to infer what the text means.

Grammar Questions

Grammar questions ask about grammar—no surprise here. For example, these questions might ask you to identify the antecedent to which a pronoun refers. The questions would look something like: "In line 47, what does 'it' refer to?" You will need to trace the pronoun back until you hit upon the word that makes the most sense as an antecedent. You might also have a question about which word modifies another. For example: "Which of the following modifies the word 'statement' in line 2?" Again, it is not possible to cover all the forms this question might take, so just be aware that grammar questions are also fair game on the exam.

Footnote Questions

Footnote questions are fairly new to the AP Language and Composition Exam. Footnotes indicate scholarship, and the AP is a scholarly exam; therefore, the examiners feel students should recognize the importance of footnotes and understand what the footnotes state. You can expect multiple-choice questions that ask you to analyze the information provided in footnotes.

Footnotes provide information that the author feels is important and believes the reader may not know. Footnotes also provide a record of the author's research so that the reader can check the author's sources and know from where the author has derived his or her ideas. Thus, footnotes help distinguish between the author's ideas and the ideas that have influenced the author. Footnotes can also include a digression that the author feels is interesting but perhaps not sufficiently relevant to be included in the main text.

There are two odd terms used in footnotes that you might not know. One is *Ibid.*, which is short for the Latin word *ibidem*, which means "the same place." It is the term used to indicate that the citation in the footnote is from the same source as the one that has preceded it.

> 1: Michael Henderson, *The Forgiveness Factor: Stories of Hope in a World of Conflict* (London: Grosvenor Books, 1996), 28–54.
>
> 2: *Ibid.*, 17.

Footnote 1 tells you that the work referenced by the author of the main text is by Michael Henderson. The name of Henderson's book follows. The information in the parentheses indicates where the book was published, by whom and when. The numbers outside the parentheses indicate the pages in the source where the information is found. The "Ibid." that follows in footnote 2 indicates that all of the information provided in footnote 1 is the same for footnote 2, except this time the relevant page number is 17.

The second odd term you may encounter in footnotes is *op. cit.* This term is short for the Latin *opus citatum/opere citato*. It means the work referred to in the footnote has been previously cited. Thus, *op. cit.* is used for a second or later mention of a work when intervening entries have appeared. For example, there might be 15 more footnotes before Henderson appears again. If the reference is the same as the one indicated in footnote 1, then the entry might look like this:

> 18 Henderson, M. *op. cit.* 24–25

If the author finds it necessary, he or she might also include the title of the book in the *op.cit.* reference.

Other Question Types

The above is not an exhaustive list of all the types of questions you will encounter on the exam. The authors of the exam are intelligent

and cunning people. They can devise countless questions with which to interest, irritate, or confuse you. However, the list covers most of the types of questions that typically appear on the exam. Other questions on the exam will be variations on these question types, so this general introduction will help you.

Multiple-Choice Practice

While it helps to know the question types and some strategies for answering them, perhaps the best way to incorporate this knowledge is to practice. Use the strategies described to read and annotate the passage and answer the questions. When you have finished, read the analysis of the question and the answers.

Directions: Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers. This passage is taken from a speech Queen Elizabeth I gave to her troops.

My loving people, we have been persuaded by some, that are careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit ourselves to armed multitudes, for fear of treachery; but I assure you, I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear; I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good will of my subjects. And therefore, I am come amongst you at this time, not as for my recreation or sport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live or die amongst you all; to lay down, for my God, and for my kingdom, and for my people, my honor and my blood, even the dust. I know I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart of a king, and of a king of

England, too; and think foul scorn that Parma[1] or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realms: to which, rather than any dishonor should grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field. I know already, by your forwardness, that you have deserved rewards and crowns; and We do assure you, on the word of a prince, they shall be duly paid you. In the mean my lieutenant general[2] shall be in my stead, than whom never prince commanded a more noble and worthy subject; not doubting by your obedience to my general, by your concord in the camp, and by your valor in the field, we shall shortly have a victory over the enemies of my God, of my kingdom, and of my people.

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1 Parma is a reference to the duke of Parma, in Italy. At the time of this speech, he is preparing to invade England under the King of Spain's command.

2 Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester. He was a particular favorite and close friend of Elizabeth's until his death. For many years he was a suitor for the Queen's hand. It was thought that he and Elizabeth were lovers.

1. The speech is characterized by

   A. scolding and rebuke
   B. self-praise and egotism
   C. reassurance and encouragement
   D. pessimism and gloom
   E. condescension and sanctimoniousness

2. The sentence that begins with "Let tyrants fear" (l. 4) does all of the following EXCEPT

   A. deny any tyranny on the part of the queen
   B. imply that the queen's actions are informed by the character of her subjects
   C. hint that the queen may become a tyrant should her subjects fail her
   D. underline the queen's regard for her people
   E. reveal the queen's belief that there is a power higher than her own

3. The speaker refers to "recreation or sport" (l. 7) primarily to

   A. show that she would abandon her leisure activities to support her troops
   B. compare battle to a kind of dangerous game.
   C. imply that victory over Spain will be easily achieved
   D. demonstrate her seriousness of purpose
   E. reveal her priorities as a queen

4. The footnote in line 12 explains

   A. the metonymic reference to Parma
   B. the meaning of the Italian/Spanish alliance
   C. the history of the Spanish/English war
   D. the Italian influence in Spain
   E. the existing invasion of England by Spain

5. The rhetorical device in line 9 is

   A. paradox
   B. anaphora
   C. polysyndeton
   D. metaphor
   E. synecdoche

6. The sentence in ll. 16–18 ("I know…paid you") implies that

   A. Elizabeth will not pay the troops unless they defeat Spain
   B. there is not enough money to pay the troops
   C. honor and victory will be the only payment the troops receive
   D. the troops feel they have not been paid what they are owed
   E. it is a prince to whom the troops must appeal for money

7. The word "concord" (l. 20) means

   A. harmony
   B. aggression
   C. pleasure
   D. pugilism
   E. bellicosity

8. Footnote 2 provides information about

I. the identity of the speaker's lieutenant general
II. the birthplace of the lieutenant general
III. the relationship between the lieutenant general and Elizabeth

   A. I only
   B. II only
   C. I and II
   D. I and III
   E. I, II, and III

9. The speaker is best characterized as

   A. humble yet sanctimonious
   B. self-deprecating but assertive
   C. arrogant and aggressive
   D. resolute yet apologetic
   E. pious yet secular

10. The passage develops mainly through the use of

    A. contrast and parallelism
    B. analogy and metaphor
    C. logical appeal and intellectualism
    D. hearsay and rumor
    E. symbolism and allusion

Answers and Explanations

Initial Observations

First of all, you should have noted that Elizabeth is speaking to her troops. It seems safe to assume that they may be about to engage in battle. Why would a monarch give a speech to her troops? Perhaps she is trying to inspire them, buoy up their spirits, and encourage them. You should have also noticed the date of the speech. The speech is from the 1500's. As a result, words might have definitions other than how we, the modern reader, might define them.

1. C. This is an example of an overview question. Your knowledge of vocabulary and your impression of the passage as a whole will come in handy here. You are probably familiar with the word *scolding*. A rebuke is a criticism or a reprimand similar to but harsher than a scolding. There is nothing in the speech to support answer A. The fact that the speaker would lay down her life for her people (ll. 8–9) indicates that she is not egotistical or sanctimonious. She places herself "amongst" her people (l. 8); she does not view herself as their superior, nor does she talk down, or condescend, to them. Therefore, answers B and E are incorrect. Answer D is incorrect because the speaker claims in lines 5–6 that she trusts her people and finds strength and safety in them. This is an optimistic outlook, not pessimistic.

2. C. *Except* questions are often difficult. It helps to engage the three Cs in order to figure out the various implications of the sentence given

in the stem of the question. The sentence is "Let tyrants fear; I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good of my people." Unlike tyrants who rule through fear and intimidation, the speaker places her "chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good of [her] people." You can eliminate answers B and D based on the sentence above: she gains her strength from and feels safe due to "the loyal hearts and good of [her] people." You can eliminate answer E because the speaker claims that she has "always so behaved myself that, under God." This reference to God revels that she believes there is a superior being watching her actions. In stating, "Let tyrants fear," the speaker implies that tyrants should take heed because she herself will never be one, so you can eliminate answer A. But this should call your attention to answer C. The queen never hints that she may become a tyrant, so this is the correct answer.

3. D. This is a meaning or denotation question. The speaker's point is that she has not come to speak merely because she enjoys it or because it is a source of entertainment for her. She has come because, as she states, she is "resolved, in the midst and heat of battle, to live or die amongst you all" (ll. 8–9). Dying in the heat of battle is a grim but realistic possibility. Elizabeth wants to convince her troops that she both understands the seriousness of their situation and would willingly experience what they might have to experience in battle: death.

4. A. Footnote question! The speaker refers to the duke of Parma as merely "Parma." Obviously the duke is not Parma itself but a representative of Parma, the city in Italy. When one term is substituted for another term with which it is closely related, you have an example of metonymy. E is an example of an attractive distracter because the footnote refers to the preparation for an invasion. However, a preparation does not an invasion make. Therefore, answer E is incorrect. The other answer choices can be easily eliminated as inaccurate.

5. B. Know those rhetorical devices. *Anaphora* is the repetition of words at the beginning of sentences. The speaker repeats "for my" to emphasize the fact that she has come to speak not for her own reward, but for others. No other answer choice is a possibility.

6. D. This is a tricky question because it is an inference question; thus, the answer is not overtly stated in the text. Also, your ability to answer correctly rests on your knowledge of what the speaker means by the word *forwardness* (l. 16). She states, "I know already, by your *forwardness*, that you have deserved rewards and crowns..." The implication of the word *forwardness* in context is that the troops have been bold and maybe even aggressive in their demands for payment. One only becomes bold and aggressive about payment if payment has not been forthcoming. Answers A and C can be easily eliminated because there is no textual evidence to support them.

7. A. Elizabeth is praising her troops, so by the context of "your concord in the camp," you can see that *concord* must be a positive attribute found in a troop encampment. *Harmony* is the only word that fits this description. *Pugilism* is skill in fist fights, and *bellicosity* is a warlike nature, two skills more appropriate on the battlefield than in the camp. *Aggression* and *pleasure* are not virtues in a camp setting.

8. D. The footnote clearly indicates the identity of the speaker's lieutenant general. He is Robert Dudley. It also provides information about the relationship between Elizabeth and Dudley—they were close friends and alleged to be lovers. However, it does not provide information about Dudley's birthplace. Though Dudley is Earl of Leicester, Leicester is not necessarily where he was born. Titles of nobility do not necessarily reflect birthplaces.

9. B. The speaker states, "I know I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman" (ll. 10–11). In naming her body as "weak and feeble," the speaker is engaged in self-deprecation; she is belittling herself. However, the

speaker is also assertive. She claims that she has "the heart of a king" (l. 11) and, "think[s] with foul scorn that...any...dare to invade the borders of my realms" (ll. 12–13). She threatens, "I myself will take up arms" (ll. 14). The heart of a king, scorn, and the threat to use weapons herself are all attributes of an aggressive individual who will protect her realm at any cost. Her use of the words "scorn" and "dare" underscores this aggression. Her point is that she has contempt for any who believe they are courageous enough to invade "her realm." These invaders will not succeed. Answer A and E can easily be eliminated as a result of what I have just explained above. Answer C might be an attractive distracter; however, the fact that she belittles her body precludes arrogance. It is difficult to be arrogant and self-denigrating at the same time. Answer D might also be an attractive distracter. The speaker is quite definitely resolute. She is determined and purposeful. However, she is not apologetic. Even when she refers to the fact that the troops have not been paid, she does not apologize. She merely "assures" them that "they shall be duly paid" (l. 18).

10. A. The speaker employs the conjunction *but* four times from line 3 to line 11. "But," like "however," introduces a statement that disagrees with what has been previously stated. Disagreements are contrasts. Parallel structure, or parallelism, means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. This can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level. The usual way to join parallel structures is with the use of coordinating conjunctions. The speaker's parallelism is developed through the use of the conjunction *but*. On either side of this conjunction, her phrasing is parallel. Answers B and D can be easily eliminated because neither metaphor nor analogy exists in the speech, nor do hearsay and rumor. The speaker's language is concrete and her examples specific. Answer C can be eliminated for the same reason. She does not speak symbolically. She motivates her troops with abstract language by calling them "worthy" and "noble" and by referring to their "valor" (ll. 19–21), but these words are not symbolic in meaning.