THE EXAM

Yearly, the AP English Literature Development Committee prepares a three-hour exam that gives students the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the skills and abilities previously described. The AP English Literature and Composition Exam employs multiple-choice questions that test the student's critical reading of selected passages. But the exam also requires writing as a direct measure of the student's ability to read and interpret literature and to use other forms of discourse effectively. Although the skills tested in the exam remain essentially the same from year to year, each year's exam is composed of new questions. The essay is scored by college and AP English teachers using standardized procedures.

Ordinarily, the exam consists of 60 minutes for multiple-choice questions followed by 120 minutes for essay questions. Performance on the essay section of the exam counts for 55 percent of the total grade; performance on the multiple-choice section, 45 percent. Examples of multiple-choice and essay questions from previous exams are presented below and are intended to represent the scope and difficulty of the exam. In the questions reproduced here, the authors of the passages and poems on which the multiple-choice questions are based are Henry Fielding, Elizabeth Bishop, Charlotte Brontë, and Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Sample Multiple-Choice Questions

Questions 1–13. Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers.

Mr. Jones, of whose personal accomplishments we have hitherto said very little, was, in reality, one of the handsomest young fellows in the world. His face, besides being the picture of health, had in it the most apparent marks of sweetness and good-nature.

(5) These qualities were indeed so characteristic in his countenance, that, while the spirit and sensibility in his eyes, though they must have been perceived by an accurate observer, might have escaped the notice of the less discerning, so strongly was this good-nature painted in his look, that it was remarked by almost every one who saw him.

(10) It was, perhaps, as much owing to this as to a very fine complexion that his face had a delicacy in it almost inexpressible, and which might have given him an air rather too effeminate, had it not been joined to a most masculine person and mien: which latter had as much in them of the Hercules as the former had of the Adonis. He was besides active, genteel, gay and good-humoured, and had a flow of animal spirits which enlivened every conversation where he was present.

(15) When the reader hath duly reflected on these many charms which all centered in our hero, and considers at the same time the fresh obligations which Mrs. Waters had to him, it will be a mark more of prudery than candour to entertain a bad opinion of her because she conceived a very good opinion of him.
But, whatever censures may be passed upon her, it is my business to relate matters of fact with veracity. Mrs. Waters had, in truth, not only a good opinion of our hero, but a very great affection for him. To speak out boldly at once, she was in love, according to the present universally received sense of that phrase, by which love is applied indiscriminately to the desirable objects of all our passions, appetites, and senses, and is understood to be that preference which we give to one kind of food rather than to another.

But though the love to these several objects may possibly be one and the same in all cases, its operations, however, must be allowed to be different; for, how much soever we may be in love with an excellent sirloin of beef, or bottle of Burgundy; with a damask rose, or Cremona fiddle; yet do we never smile, nor ogle, nor dress, nor flatter, nor endeavour by any other arts or tricks to gain the affection of the said beef, etc. Sigh indeed we sometimes may; but it is generally in the absence, not in the presence, of the beloved object.

The contrary happens in that love which operates between persons of the same species, but of different sexes. Here we are no sooner in love than it becomes our principal care to engage the affection of the object beloved. For what other purpose, indeed, are our youth instructed in all of the arts of rendering themselves agreeable? If it was not with a view to this love, I question whether any of those trades which deal in setting off and adorning the human person would procure a livelihood. Nay, those great polishers of our manners, who are by some thought to teach what principally distinguishes us from the brute creation, even dancing-masters themselves, might possibly find no place in society. In short, all the graces which young ladies and young gentlemen too learn from others, and the many improvements which, by the help of a looking-glass, they add of their own, are in reality those very spicula et faces amoris* so often mentioned by Ovid; or, as they are sometimes called in our own language, the whole artillery of love.

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*The spears and flames of love

1. The structure of the sentence beginning in line 5 does which of the following?

   (a) It stresses the variety of Mr. Jones's personal attributes.
   (b) It implies that Mr. Jones is a less complicated personality than the speaker suggests.
   (c) It disguises the prominence of Mr. Jones's sensitive nature and emphasizes his less readily discerned traits.
   (d) It reflects the failure of some observers to recognize Mr. Jones's spirit and sensibility.
   (e) It belies the straightforward assertion made in the previous sentence.
2. In context, the word “sensibility” (line 6) is best interpreted to mean
   (a) self-esteem
   (b) forthright and honest nature
   (c) capacity to observe accurately
   (d) ability to ignore the unimportant
   (e) awareness and responsiveness

3. The first two paragraphs indicate that the speaker assumes that
   (a) accurate observers of human nature are rare
   (b) spirited and sensible people are by nature rather effeminate
   (c) a person’s character can be accurately discerned from his or her outward appearance
   (d) a correlation exists between an individual’s “personal accomplishments” (line 1) and his or her physical prowess
   (e) good-naturedness in a person is usually not readily apparent

4. The shift in the speaker’s rhetorical stance from the first sentence of the second paragraph (lines 11–16) to the second sentence (lines 16–18) can best be described as one from
   (a) subjective to objective
   (b) speculative to assertive
   (c) discursive to laconic
   (d) critical to descriptive
   (e) literal to figurative

5. The word “former” in line 15 refers to
   (a) “face” (line 12)
   (b) “delicacy” (line 12)
   (c) “air” (line 13)
   (d) “person” (line 14)
   (e) “mien” (line 14)

6. The speaker’s allusion to Hercules and Adonis (lines 15–16) serves primarily to
   (a) imply an undercurrent of aggressiveness in Mr. Jones’s personality
   (b) suggest the extremes of physical attractiveness represented in Mr. Jones’s appearance
   (c) assert the enduring significance of mythical beauty
   (d) symbolize the indescribable nature of Mr. Jones’s countenance
   (e) emphasize how clearly Mr. Jones’s features reflected his personality
7. The use of the phrase "it will be" in line 21 indicates that the speaker
   (a) wishes the reader to arrive at the same conclusion regarding Mrs. Waters as
   the speaker has
   (b) believes the presentation of Mr. Jones before this passage to have been
   predominantly negative
   (c) expects that the description of Mr. Jones will offend some of the more
   conservative readers
   (d) regards Mrs. Waters' judgment concerning Mr. Jones to be impulsive rather
   than sincere
   (e) fears that the readers will be overly lenient in their judgment of Mrs. Waters

8. The style of the third paragraph differs from that of the first and second
   paragraphs in that it is
   (a) instructive rather than descriptive
   (b) argumentative rather than expository
   (c) interpretative rather than metaphorical
   (d) objective rather than representational
   (e) conversational rather than analytical

9. In the fourth paragraph, the speaker establishes the predominant tone for the
   rest of the passage primarily by
   (a) exaggerating the affection Mrs. Waters has for Mr. Jones
   (b) contrasting the popular understanding of love with the speaker's own view
   of love
   (c) describing candidly the affection Mrs. Waters has for Mr. Jones
   (d) likening the popular conception of love to people's physical appetites
   (e) insisting on the veracity of the speaker's personal opinions concerning
   Mrs. Waters

10. The speaker's attitude toward "dancing-masters" (lines 50–51) might best be
    described as
    (a) assumed arrogance
    (b) grudging respect
    (c) feigned bitterness
    (d) sarcastic vindictiveness
    (e) wry disdain
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11. The passage indicates that the speaker believes which of the following to be true of Mr. Jones?
   (a) He is principally concerned with attracting the attention of women.
   (b) He is naturally suited to engage the affections of women.
   (c) He has practiced extensively the arts and graces with which youths render themselves agreeable.
   (d) He is too good-natured to make full use of "the whole artillery of love" (lines 56–57).
   (e) He has cultivated his good nature and sensibility in order to compete well with other men.

12. The final metaphors of the last paragraph (lines 54–57) suggest that this passage most probably precedes a description of
   (a) the way in which Mr. Jones acquired his manners and good-nature
   (b) a costume ball at which Mr. Jones and Mrs. Waters meet and dance
   (c) a scene in which Mr. Jones prepares himself for a meeting with Mrs. Waters
   (d) an attempt by Mr. Jones to engage the affections of Mrs. Waters with the help of classical love poetry
   (e) an encounter between Mr. Jones and Mrs. Waters couched in the terminology of war

13. The speaker's tone in the passage can best be described as which of the following?
   (a) Flippant
   (b) Whimsical
   (c) Pretentious
   (d) Satirical
   (e) Contemptuous

Questions 14–23. Read the following poem carefully before you choose your answers.

   Sestina

   September rain falls on the house.
   In the failing light, the old grandmother
   sits in the kitchen with the child
   Line beside the Little Marvel Stove,*
   (5) reading the jokes from the almanac,
       laughing and talking to hide her tears.

   She thinks that her equinoctial tears
   and the rain that beats on the roof of the house
   were both foretold by the almanac,
   (10) but only known to a grandmother.
   The iron kettle sings on the stove.
   She cuts some bread and says to the child,

*Brand name of a wood- or coal-burning stove
It's time for tea now; but the child
is watching the teakettle's small hard tears
(15) dance like mad on the hot black stove,
the way the rain must dance on the house.
Tidying up, the old grandmother
hangs up the clever almanac

on its string. Birdlike, the almanac
(20) hovers half open above the child,
hovers above the old grandmother
and her teacup full of dark brown tears.
She shivers and says she thinks the house
feels chilly, and puts more wood in the stove.

(25) It was to be, says the Marvel Stove.
I know what I know, says the almanac.
With crayons the child draws a rigid house
and a winding pathway. Then the child
puts in a man with buttons like tears
(30) and shows it proudly to the grandmother.

But secretly, while the grandmother
busies herself about the stove,
the little moons fall down like tears
from between the pages of the almanac
(35) into the flower bed the child
has carefully placed in the front of the house.

Time to plant tears, says the almanac.
The grandmother sings to the marvelous stove
and the child draws another inscrutable house.


14. The mood of the poem is best described as
(a) satiric
(b) suspenseful
(c) reproachful
(d) elegiac
(e) quizzical

15. In line 10, "known to" is best interpreted as
(a) imagined by
(b) intended for
(c) predicted by
(d) typified in
(e) experienced by
16. In line 19, "Birdlike" describes the
   (a) markings on the pages of the almanac
   (b) whimsicality of the almanac's sayings
   (c) shape and movement of the almanac
   (d) child's movements toward the almanac
   (e) grandmother's movements toward the almanac

17. Between lines 24 and 25 and between lines 32 and 33, there is a shift from
   (a) understatement to hyperbole
   (b) realism to fantasy
   (c) optimism to pessimism
   (d) present events to recalled events
   (e) formal diction to informal diction

18. The child's attitude is best described as one of
   (a) anxious dismay
   (b) feigned sympathy
   (c) absorbed fascination
   (d) silent remorse
   (e) fretful boredom

19. All of the following appear to shed tears or be filled with tears EXCEPT the
   (a) child
   (b) teacup
   (c) almanac
   (d) teakettle
   (e) grandmother

20. The grandmother and the child in the poem are portrayed primarily through
    descriptions of their
    (a) actions
    (b) thoughts
    (c) conversation
    (d) facial expressions
    (e) physical characteristics

21. Throughout the poem, the imagery suggests that
    (a) both nature and human beings are animated by similar forces
    (b) most human activities have more lasting consequences than is
        commonly realized
    (c) past events have little influence on activities of the present
    (d) both natural and artificial creations are highly perishable
    (e) the optimism of youth differs only slightly from the realism of age
22. Which of the following literary devices most significantly contributes to the unity of the poem?
   (a) Use of internal rhyme
   (b) Use of epigrammatic expressions
   (c) Use of alliteration
   (d) Repetition of key words
   (e) Repetition of syntactic patterns

23. The poet's attitude toward the characters in the poem is best described as a combination of
   (a) detachment and understanding
   (b) disdain and curiosity
   (c) envy and suspicion
   (d) approval and amusement
   (e) respect and resentment

Questions 24–36. Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers.

Of late years an abundant shower of curates has fallen upon the North of England: they lie very thick on the hills; every parish has one or more of them; they are young enough to be very active, and ought to be doing a great deal of good. But not of late years are we about to speak. We are going back to the beginning of this century: late years—present years—are dusty, sunburnt, hot, arid. We will evade the noon—forget it in siesta, pass the mid-day in slumber—and dream of dawn.

If you think, from this prelude, that anything like a romance is preparing for you, reader, you never were more mistaken. Do you anticipate sentiment, and poetry, and reverie? Do you expect passion, and stimulus, and melodrama? Calm your expectations; reduce them to a lowly standard. Something real, cool, and solid lies before you; something unromantic as Monday morning, when all who have work wak[e] with the consciousness that they must rise and betake themselves thereto. It is not positively affirmed that you shall not have a taste of the exciting—perhaps towards the middle and close of the meal—but it is resolved that the first dish set upon the table shall be one that a Catholic—ay, even an Anglo-Catholic—might eat on Good Friday in Passion Week. It shall be cold lentils and vinegar without oil; it shall be unleavened bread with bitter herbs, and no roast lamb.

Of late years, I say, an abundant shower of curates has fallen upon the North of England; but at that time that affluent rain had not descended. Curates were scarce then; there was no Pastoral Aid, no Additional Curates' Society to stretch a helping hand to worn-out old rector[s] and incumbents, and give them the
wherewithal to pay a vigorous young colleague from Oxford or Cambridge. The present successors of the Apostles, disciples of
(30) Dr. Pusey and tools of the Propaganda, were at that time being hatched under cradle-blankets or undergoing regeneration by
nursery-baptism in wash-hand basins. You could not have guessed by looking at any one of them that the Italian-ironed double frills
of its net-cap surrounded the brows of a pre-ordained, specially
sanctified successor of St. Paul, St. Peter, or St. John; nor could you have foreseen in the folds of its long nightgown the white
surplice in which it was hereafter cruelly to exercise the souls of
its parishioners, and strangely to nonplus its old-fashioned vicar
by flourishing aloft in a pulpit the shirt-like raiment which had
(40) never before waved higher than the reading-desk.
Yet even in those days of scarcity there were curates: the
precious plant was rare, but it might be found. A certain favored
district in the West Riding of Yorkshire could boast three rods of
Aaron blossoming within a circuit of twenty miles. You shall see
(45) them, reader. Step into this neat garden-house on the skirts of
Whinbury, walk forward into the little parlor—there they are at
dinner. Allow me to introduce them to you: Mr. Donne, curate
of Whinbury; Mr. Malone, curate of Brierfield; Mr. Sweeting, curate
of Nunney. These are Mr. Donne's lodgings, being the habitation
(50) of one John Gale, a small clothier. Mr. Donne has kindly invited
his brethren to regale with him. You and I will join the party, see
what is to be seen, and hear what is to be heard. At present,
however, they are only eating, and while they eat we will talk
aside.

24. In lines 1-4, the primary effect of using clauses that elaborate on one another is to
   (a) establish the eminence of the curates
   (b) create a precise narrative setting
   (c) establish an appropriately solemn tone
   (d) emphasize the sense of abundance being described
   (e) pull the reader into an impressionable frame of mind

25. The phrase “ought to be doing” in line 4 does which of the following in the opening sentence?
   (a) It shifts the focus from generalities to individual cases.
   (b) It replaces descriptive prose with imaginative speculation.
   (c) It presents a judgment on the curates.
   (d) It emphasizes the theoretical rather than the practical.
   (e) It proposes a discussion of the spiritual duties of modern curates.
26. The word “noon” (line 7) refers most directly to the
   (a) period in which the narrative will be set
   (b) period in which the speaker lives
   (c) beginning of the century in which the speaker lives
   (d) central portion of the narrative
   (e) present proliferation of curates

27. The speaker characterizes a “romance” (line 9) as all of the following EXCEPT
   (a) nostalgic
   (b) insubstantial
   (c) fanciful
   (d) exciting
   (e) religious

28. The expectation referred to in lines 9–12 is reinforced most strongly by which of the following phrases?
   (a) “an abundant shower of curates” (line 1)
   (b) “young enough to be very active” (line 3)
   (c) “But not of late years” (line 4)
   (d) “going back to the beginning of this century” (lines 5–6)
   (e) “dream of dawn” (line 8)

29. From the statement “It is not positively affirmed that you shall not have a taste of the exciting” (lines 16–17), the reader may infer that
   (a) suspense is an integral part of the story
   (b) some drama may enter the story
   (c) the reader’s expectations will be confirmed by the story
   (d) the reader’s taste is likely to be changed by the story
   (e) the story depends on melodrama for its effect

30. In the context of the passage, the phrase “cold lentils and vinegar without oil” (line 21) is used as a metaphor for the
   (a) religiosity of Catholics
   (b) austerity of curates
   (c) poverty of the previous era
   (d) serious state of mind of the narrator
   (e) beginning episode of the speaker’s story

31. The speaker implies in the second paragraph that the narrative that follows will most likely be a
   (a) vehement attack on a modern institution
   (b) straightforward account of ordinary events
   (c) witty criticism of eminent social figures
   (d) cautionary tale about a degenerate cleric
   (e) dramatic account of an unexpected occurrence
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32. The phrases "hatched under cradle-blankets" and "undergoing regeneration by nursery-baptism in wash-hand basins" (lines 31–32) imply a contrast between
   (a) believers and disbelievers
   (b) disciples and mentors
   (c) younger clergy and older clergy
   (d) ministers and their congregations
   (e) Roman Catholics and Anglo-Catholics

33. Which of the following aspects of the "disciples of Dr. Pusey" (lines 29–30) is most clearly emphasized by the description of their preaching style in line 39?
   (a) Their humility and moral rectitude
   (b) Their bizarre behavior in the eyes of tradition-minded clergy
   (c) The respect they inspire in their congregations
   (d) The radical nature of the doctrine they preach
   (e) The success with which Dr. Pusey's tenets have been promulgated

34. The description of a curate in lines 32–40 has the primary effect of
   (a) augmenting the curate's own view of himself
   (b) reflecting the speaker's religious intensity
   (c) indicating the important position in society occupied by the curate
   (d) suggesting the elaborate pretensions of the curate
   (e) emphasizing the respect accorded the curate by his parishioners

35. The phrase "rods of Aaron" (lines 43–44) refers specifically to
   (a) curates
   (b) saints
   (c) trees
   (d) Apostles
   (e) gardens

36. The passage as a whole introduces contrasts between all of the following EXCEPT
   (a) young and old
   (b) present and past
   (c) plenitude and scarcity
   (d) romance and realism
   (e) virtue and vice
Questions 37–46. Read the following poem carefully before you choose your answers.

The Habit of Perfection

Elected Silence, sing to me
And beat upon my whorled ear,
Pipe me to pastures still and be
The music that I care to hear.

Line
(5) Shape nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb:
It is the shut, the curfew seat
From there where all surrenders come
Which only makes you eloquent.

(10) And find the uncreated light:
This ruck and reed which you remark
Coils, keeps, and teases simple sight.

Be shellèd, eyes, with double dark

(15) The can^2 must be so sweet, the crust
So fresh that come in fasts divine!

Nostrils, your careless breath that spend
Upon the stir and keep of pride,
What relish shall the censors^3 send

(20) Along the sanctuary side!

O feel-of-primrose hands, O feet
That want the yield of plushy sward^1
But you shall walk the golden street
And you unhouse and house the Lord.

(25) And Poverty, be thou the bride
And now the marriage feast begun,
And lily-colored clothes provide
Your spouse not labored-at nor spun.

^1Multitude and commotion
^2Vessel for holding liquids
^3Vessels for burning incense
^4Grass-covered land
37. The importance of “Silence” (line 1) is established by all of the following except
   (a) capitalizing the “s”
   (b) alluding to it throughout the poem
   (c) describing it as elected
   (d) imparting to it human qualities
   (e) placing it at the beginning of the poem

38. In the first stanza, the speaker makes use of paradox by doing which of the following?
   (a) Requesting that he be simultaneously serenaded and assaulted
   (b) Expressing both a desire and an apprehension
   (c) Using mere language to depict a religious experience
   (d) Addressing a presence invisible to the reader
   (e) Depicting silence as though it were a kind of sound

39. The reference to “curfew” (line 6) indirectly establishes the
   (a) depth of the silence sought by the speaker
   (b) existence of an ultimate spiritual power
   (c) disparity between what the speaker seeks and what can actually be attained
   (d) connection between the speaker’s past and the future he anticipates
   (e) inability of “lovely-dumb” (line 5) lips to achieve true eloquence

40. Which of the following best conveys the meaning of the word “uncreated” (line 10)?
   (a) Nascent
   (b) Mortal
   (c) Internal
   (d) Imperfect
   (e) Amorphous

41. Which of the following best paraphrases the meaning of line 12?
   (a) Confounds true vision
   (b) Delights the spirit
   (c) Demands visual acuity
   (d) Emits an intense light
   (e) Maintains the simplicity of vision

42. In line 13, the word “hutch” suggests the
   (a) lowly animal nature of human appetite
   (b) personally destructive effects of alcohol
   (c) finite influence of sensual desires on the spirit
   (d) ardor associated with abstinence
   (e) state of poverty sought by the speaker
43. The verb phrase “must be” (line 15) serves primarily to
   (a) suggest that the speaker demands the sensation of sweetness
   (b) indicate that the speaker has not actually experienced the sweetness
   (c) importune the reader to share in the sensation of sweetness described
   (d) modify the tone of emotional intensity established by the previous stanza
   (e) reflect an attitude of ambivalence on the part of the speaker

44. The words “stir” and “keep” (line 18) convey which of the following?
   (A) Attraction and repulsion
   (B) Excitement and exploitation
   (C) Stimulation and sustenance
   (D) Disruption and confusion
   (E) Acquisition and refinement

45. What is the subject of “provide” (line 27)?
   (a) “Poverty” (line 25)
   (b) “bride” (line 25)
   (c) “marriage feast” (line 26)
   (d) “lily-colored clothes” (line 27)
   (e) “spouse” (line 28)

46. The speaker metaphorically likens himself to a
   (a) musician
   (b) bridegroom
   (c) laborer
   (d) gardener
   (e) soldier