
Chapter 1

Scoring High on the AP English Language & Composition Exam

About the Book

This test-preparation guide provides all the tools you'll need to do well on the Advanced Placement Examination in English Language & Composition. In addition to test-taking techniques and the information required by the test—such as literary definitions and essay structure—you will find complete lessons that teach you the skills demanded by this test. The instructional passages of this book teach you critical reading skills by using material beyond the range of the AP exam. You will be taught by lesson and example how to write high-scoring essays that demonstrate all you have learned.

To complement the chapters on critical reading, Chapter 4 focuses on the test itself and prepares you for it specifically. Everything you need to know for the test is encapsulated in this chapter. You will find helpful facts about the AP exam, along with a breakdown of the questions into easily recognizable types. As the time of the test approaches, you will be able to concentrate on this chapter for the most time-efficient preparation.

Our book also provides three full-length practice tests. Our exams include thorough explanations of the answers for added instruction and self-diagnosis of problem areas. We also include a glossary of literary terms with 65 entries, all fully defined.

About the Test

The Advanced Placement Examination in English Language & Composition is geared toward the student who has studied the mechanics of writing and rhetoric at an advanced level, and wishes to pursue college credit.

Take care not to confuse the AP Examination in English Language & Composition with the AP Examination in Literature & Composition. The **Literature** exam focuses on literature and literary criticism, while the **Language** exam deals with

writing as a craft. This book is designed to help you prepare for the AP Examination in English Language & Composition *only*.

The AP English Language & Composition Exam is divided into two sections:

- *Section 1 – Multiple-Choice (60 minutes—accounts for 45% of total score)*
Five or six reading passages, with an average of 10 questions each.
- *Section 2 – Free-Response (up to 120 minutes—accounts for 55% of total score)*
Three essay questions.

The first section consists of five or six reading passages and sixty multiple-choice questions, which you will have one hour to complete. Each passage will be followed by an average of ten questions and thereafter the passage will not be referred to again. Do not feel pressured to remember each reading—just digest them one at a time and move on. After reading the passage, you will have approximately one minute to answer each question.

The second section of the AP English Language & Composition Exam consists of three essay questions, and is divided such that you will have forty minutes to write each essay. Do not expect to be able to go back to an essay after the allotted time has elapsed. Note that each essay has very specific instructions, and most have a passage which you will read critically to answer the essay question. Your essays will be scored according to the essay structure, the clarity of your writing, and the extent to which you have answered the question.

Scoring the Exam

The multiple-choice section of the exam is scored by crediting each correct answer with one point and deducting one-fourth of a point for each incorrect answer. Unanswered questions receive neither a credit nor a deduction. The free-response essays are graded by more than 5,000 instructors and professors who gather together each June for a week of non-stop AP essay grading. Each essay booklet is read and scored by four graders. Each grader provides a score for the individual essays. This score is a number on a scale from 0 to 9, 0 being the lowest and 9 the highest. The graders are not aware of each other's scores. When the essays have been graded four times, the scores are averaged—one score for each of the three essays—so that the free-response section is composed of three scores.

The three essays are weighted equally, and the total weight of the free-response section is fifty-five percent of the total score. The multiple-choice section accounts for forty-five percent of the total score. Each year the overall grades may fluctuate because the grading scale depends upon the performance of students in past AP administrations. The following method of scoring, along with the corresponding chart, will give you an **approximation** of your score. It will not indicate the exact score you would get on the actual AP English Language & Composition Examination—just the score you achieved on the sample tests in this book.

Multiple-Choice Scoring:

$$\frac{\text{Number correct}}{\text{Number correct}} - \left(\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{\text{Number incorrect}}{\text{Number incorrect}} \right) = \frac{\text{Raw score (rounded to nearest whole number)}}{\text{Raw score (rounded to nearest whole number)}}$$

Essay Scoring:

$$\frac{\text{Question 1 (out of 9)}}{\text{Question 1 (out of 9)}} + \frac{\text{Question 2 (out of 9)}}{\text{Question 2 (out of 9)}} + \frac{\text{Question 3 (out of 9)}}{\text{Question 3 (out of 9)}} = \frac{\text{Essay score (rounded to nearest whole number)}}{\text{Essay score (rounded to nearest whole number)}}$$

As you can see, there is a deduction for guessing on the multiple-choice section, so you are discouraged from random guessing or filling in of answers. Depending on the number of multiple-choice questions, the Essay score is multiplied by approximately 3.3 to 3.8. This is called the Weighted Essay score. (If necessary, the Multiple-Choice score is also weighted.)

Each section of the test is weighted according to time allotted to that section; that is, the Multiple-Choice score counts approximately 60 points, and the Weighted Essay score counts approximately 90 points, to make a total of approximately 150 points. The Multiple-Choice score is added to the Weighted Essay score to get a Composite score, which is rounded to the nearest whole number. The Composite score Ranges are then determined for the final AP Grade. The following table is approximate, since the Composite Score Range varies a few points from year to year.

<u>Composite Score Range</u>	<u>AP Grade</u>
101-150	5
90-100	4
70-89	3
50-69	2
0-49	1

You may want to give your essays three different grades, such as a 5, an 8, and a 6, and then calculate your score three ways: as if you did well, average, and poorly. This will give you a safe estimate of how you will do on the actual exam. Try to be objective about grading your own essays. If possible, have a friend, teacher, or parent grade them for you. Make sure your essays follow all of the AP requirements before you assess the score.

The Composite Score

To obtain your composite score, use the following method:

$$\frac{\text{multiple-choice raw score}}{\text{multiple-choice raw score}} = \text{_____ (weighted multiple-choice score—do not round)}$$

$$3.333 \times \frac{\text{free-response raw score}}{\text{raw score}} = \text{_____} \quad (\text{weighted free-response score—do not round})$$

Distribution of Grades

Distribution of grades varies from year to year and from testing to testing. The following table is an approximate distribution of grades for an AP English Language & Composition Examination and an approximation of the percentage of people earning the grade.

	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent Earning Grade</u>
Extremely well-qualified	5	10
Well-qualified	4	20
Qualified	3	35
Possibly qualified	2	30
No recommendation	1	5

How to Use this Book

It is important to note that critical reading is a skill, and that while memorization will serve for the mastery of literary terminology, practice is your only means to critical reading. Chapters 2 and 3 of this book have been designed to help you hone your critical reading and writing skills. Once you have practiced these skills, move on to Chapter 4, which coaches you for the format and time limits of the AP exam. If the test date is near, it may be a better idea for you to start with the coaching chapter and practice tests, since they provide direct instruction for the exam format. Ideally, it's best to use the six-week schedule in the front of this book.

How to Contact the AP Program

To obtain a registration bulletin or to learn more about the Advanced Placement Examinations, contact:

The College Board Advanced Placement Program
P.O. Box 6671
Princeton, NJ 08541-6671
Phone: (609) 771-7300
Website: www.collegeboard.com/ap