

The AP Literature Exam Section I: Multiple-Choice Questions

Introduction

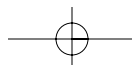
The multiple-choice section of the exam normally contains between fifty and sixty questions on four different passages. One passage has at least fifteen questions and is reused on a future exam. Two of the passages are prose; two are poetry. Though the poems are usually complete works, the prose passages are likely to be taken from longer works such as novels or works of nonfiction.

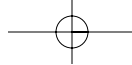
The four passages represent different periods of British and American literature. It is likely that one is chosen from the sixteenth or the early seventeenth century and one from the restoration or eighteenth century, unless these periods are represented by passages on the essay section of the test. The two other sections are from nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers. The exam as a whole is likely to include several works by female and minority writers.

You may, by extraordinarily good luck, find a passage on the exam that you've studied in your English class, but the odds are heavily against it. The passages chosen for the exam are almost always those that have not found their way into textbooks and anthologies. Though your AP class should study shorter poems of poets like Shakespeare and Donne, and though a sonnet by one or the other may someday appear on the exam, it will not be one of the popular favorites like "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" or "Death, be not proud." The passages are often by writers you are familiar with, but the text is not likely to be familiar to you. To be prepared for the multiple-choice section, you must be able to sight-read a reasonably complex poem or passage of prose written in English within the last five centuries. If your studies are limited to a narrow period — the twentieth century, say — you will be at a serious disadvantage on the multiple-choice section of the exam.

The passages chosen for the exam are not easy. They must be complex enough to generate fifteen or so multiple-choice questions that discriminate among the 200,000 students taking the exam. If the passages are too hard or too easy, they won't work.

To answer the multiple-choice questions, you don't need any special historical or philosophical knowledge. The passages are self-contained and self-explanatory. If a particularly difficult word occurs that is crucial to the understanding of the passage, it is explained in a footnote. But the exam expects you to be familiar with the common terms of literary analysis and to have some familiarity with classical mythology and the more popular parts of the Old and New Testaments. Because so much of British and American literature of the earlier periods is religious, it is quite possible that a religious poem by a writer like George Herbert or Edward Taylor or Anne Bradstreet may be on the exam. But the examiners are eager to make sure that no one is given any special advantage, and if a religious text is used, it should be just as accessible to a nonbeliever as to an evangelical and to a modern Moslem or a Jew as to a Christian. The questions will always be on literary, not doctrinal, issues.





Part II: Analysis of Exam Areas

Be glad if you have a teacher who insists on spending weeks on seventeenth- or eighteenth-century works when you would rather be talking about Vonnegut or Stoppard. Unless you're comfortable with the unfamiliar vocabulary, syntax, and conventions of the literature written before our time, you'll have trouble with the multiple-choice section of the exam and possibly with two-thirds of the essay section as well.

Though it will be helpful if you practice multiple-choice exams before you take the exam in May, your first task is to learn to analyze a poem and a prose passage. To practice your skills, you'll find the best exams are those published by the Advanced Placement Program of the College Board. The multiple-choice section of some past literature exams are available and can be ordered. Though several commercially published AP study guides contain sample multiple-choice exams, their questions and choice of texts are often not sufficiently like those on the real exams to make them very useful. (The exams in this book, it goes without saying, are an exception to this rule.)

There is no quick and easy way to master the analysis of literature. If there were, you wouldn't need to spend four years in high-school English classes, and English teachers would be selling real estate or practicing law or be out of a job. The Advanced Placement literature exam is testing all that you've learned about reading and writing English in junior and senior high school. But you can develop a method for approaching the literary texts you'll be asked to read on the AP exam.

Analyzing Poems

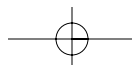
Some students have trouble with sight-reading poetry because they don't know where to start. They see the word "death" in the first line and "tomb" in the third and jump to the conclusion that this poem (which, in fact, is a sentimental lover's pitch to a woman who has turned him down) must be about mortality, and then spend the next ten minutes trying to make the poem fit these gloomy expectations.

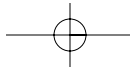
To avoid premature conclusions, and to prepare yourself for the kind of questions the multiple-choice section asks, try going through each poem asking the following questions in something like this order.

1. What is the dramatic situation?

That is, who is the speaker (or who are the speakers)? Is the speaker a male or female? Where is he or she? When does this poem take place? What are the circumstances?

Sometimes you'll be able to answer all the questions: The speaker is a male psychopath living in a remote cottage, probably in Renaissance Italy, who has strangled his mistress and is sitting with her head propped upon his shoulder (Browning's "Porphyria's Lover"). Sometimes you'll be able to answer only a few, and sometimes only vaguely: The speaker is unnamed and unplaced and is speaking to an indeterminate audience. No matter. Already you've begun to understand the poem.





The AP Literature Exam Section 1: Multiple-Choice Questions

2. What is the structure of the poem?

That is, what are the parts of the poem and how are they related to each other? What gives the poem its coherence? What are the structural divisions of the poem?

In analyzing the structure, your best aid is the punctuation. Look first for the complete sentences indicated by periods, semicolons, question marks, or exclamation points. Then ask how the poem gets from the first sentence to the second and from the second to the third. Are there repetitions such as parallel syntax or the use of one simile in each sentence? Answer these questions in accordance with the sense of the poem, not by where a line ends or a rhyme falls. Don't assume that all sonnets will break into an 8-6 or a 4-4-4-2 pattern, but be able to recognize these patterns if they are used.

Think about the logic of the poem. Does it, say, ask questions, then answer them? Or develop an argument? Or use a series of analogies to prove a point? Understanding the structure isn't just a matter of mechanics. It will help you to understand the meaning of the poem as a whole and to perceive some of the art, the formal skills that the poet has used.

3. What is the theme of the poem?

You should now be able to see the point of the poem. Sometimes a poem simply says "I love you;" sometimes the theme or the meaning is much more complex. If possible, define what the poem says and why. A love poem usually praises the loved one in the hope that the speaker's love will be returned. But many poems have meanings too complex to be reduced to single sentences. When this is true, a good multiple-choice writer won't ask for a single theme or meaning.

4. Are the grammar and meaning clear?

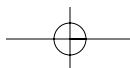
Make sure you understand the meaning of all the words in the poem, especially words you thought you knew but which don't seem to fit in the context of the poem. Also make sure you understand the grammar of the poem. The word order of poetry is often skewed, and in a poem a direct object may come before the subject and the verb. ("His sounding lyre the poet struck" can mean a poet was hit by a musical instrument, but as a line of poetry, it probably means the poet played his harp.)

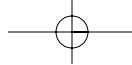
5. What are the important images and figures of speech?

What are the important literal sensory objects, the images, such as a field of poppies or a stench of corruption? What are the similes and metaphors of the poem? In each, exactly what is compared to what? Is there a pattern in the images, such as a series of comparisons all using men compared to wild animals? The most difficult challenge of reading poetry is discriminating between the figurative ("I love a rose" — that is, my love is like a rose, beautiful, sweet, fragile) and the literal ("I love a rose" — that is, roses are my favorite flower). Every exam tests a reader's understanding of figurative language many times in both the multiple-choice and essay sections.

6. What are the most important single words used in the poem?

This is another way of asking about diction. Some of the most significant words in a poem aren't figurative or images but still determine the effect of the poem. A good reader recognizes which words — usually nouns and verbs, adjectives and adverbs — are the keys to the poem.





Part II: Analysis of Exam Areas

7. What is the tone of the poem?

Tone is a slippery word, and almost everyone has trouble with it. It's sometimes used to mean the mood or atmosphere of a work, though purists are offended by this definition. Or it can mean a manner of speaking, a tone of voice, as in "The disappointed coach's tone was sardonic." But its most common use as a term of literary analysis is to denote the inferred attitude of an author. When the author's attitude is different from that of the speaker, as is usually the case in ironic works, the tone of voice of the speaker, which may be calm, businesslike, even gracious, may be very different from the satiric tone of the work, which reflects the author's disapproval of the speaker. Because it is often very hard to define tone in one or two words, questions on tone do not appear frequently on responsibly written multiple-choice exams. Tone is a topic you can't afford to ignore, however, because the essay topic may well ask for a discussion of the tone of a poem or a passage of prose.

8. What literary devices does the poem employ?

The list of rhetorical devices that a writer may use is enormous. The terms you should worry about are, above all, metaphor, simile, and personification.

9. What is the prosody of the poem?

You can, in fact, get away with knowing very little about the rhyme, meter, and sound effects of poetry, though versification is not difficult once you're used to the new vocabulary you need and can hear the difference between an accented and an unaccented syllable. The essay question has not asked about sound in a poem for several years now, and the last time a question asked about the "movement of the verse," the answers on that part of the question were so vague as to be of no use in the grading. But it is, of course, always possible that such a task may turn up as part of the essay question. Chances are that of the thirteen to fifteen multiple-choice questions asked on each of the two poems, only one question will ask about the meter or the use of rhyme or the sound effects of a line. So a total of just two of the fifty-five questions may be on metrics.

Answering Multiple-Choice Poetry Questions

Types of Questions

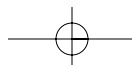
This process of analysis — or whatever your own method may be — should precede your answering of the multiple-choice questions. The question writer has already gone through the same process, and the questions that you find on the exam will be very much like the ones you've just asked yourself.

1. Questions on **dramatic situation**:

Examples:

Who is speaking?

Where is she?



To whom is the poem addressed?
Who is the speaker in lines 5–8?
Where does the poem take place?
At what time of the year does the poem take place?

2. Questions on structure:

Examples:
How are stanzas 1 and 2 related to stanza 3?
What word in line 20 refers back to an idea used in lines 5, 10, and 15?
Which of the following divisions of the poem best represents its structure?

3. Questions on theme:

Examples:
Which of the following best sums up the meaning of stanza 2?
With which of the following is the poem centrally concerned?
The poet rejects the notion of an indifferent universe because . . .

4. Questions on grammar and meaning of words:

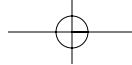
Examples:
Which of the following best defines the word “glass” as it is used in line 9?
To which of the following does the word “which” in line 7 refer?
The verb “had done” may best be paraphrased as . . .

When answering questions on grammar or meaning, you must look carefully at the context. In questions of meaning, more often than not, the obvious meaning of a word is not the one used in the poem. If it were, there would be no reason to ask you a question about it. The answers to a question about the meaning of the word “glass,” for example, might include

- (A) a transparent material used in windows
- (B) a barometer
- (C) a mirror
- (D) a telescope
- (E) a drinking vessel

Without a context, you would have to call all five answers right. On an exam, a poem with a line like “The glass has fallen since the dawn” might well ask the meaning of “glass” with these five options, and the logical answer would be **B**. The next line of the poem would make the correct choice even clearer.

Similarly, grammar questions may exploit double meanings. The verb form “had broken” looks like a past perfect tense: I had broken the glass before I realized it. But a poem might also say “I had broken my heart unless I had seen her once more” in which case



Part II: Analysis of Exam Areas

“had broken” is not a past perfect indicative verb, but a subjunctive in a conditional sentence. And this sentence could be paraphrased as “If I had not seen her once more, it would have broken my heart.”

5. Questions on **images** and **figurative language**:

You should expect a large number of these. Because the poems used on the exam must be complex enough to inspire ten to fifteen good multiple-choice questions, it is rare that a poem which does not rely on complex figurative language is chosen.

Examples:

To which of the following does the poet compare his love?

The images in lines 3 and 8 come from what area of science?

The figure of the rope used in line 7 is used later in the poem in line . . .

6. Questions on **diction**:

Examples:

Which of the following words is used to suggest the poet’s dislike of winter?

The poet’s use of the word “air” in line 8 is to indicate . . .

The poet’s delight in the garden is suggested by all of the following words EXCEPT . . .

Notice that some questions use a negative: “all of the following . . . EXCEPT” is the most common phrasing. The exam always calls attention to a question of this sort by using capital letters.

7. Questions on **tone**, **literary devices**, and **metrics**:

Examples:

The tone of the poem (or stanza) can best be described as . . .

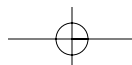
Which of the following literary techniques is illustrated by the phrase “murmurous hum and buzz of the hive”? (onomatopoeia)

The meter of the last line in each stanza is . . .

Examples of Poetry Selections, Questions, and Answers

Set 1

The following poem, a sonnet by Keats, is a good example of the level of difficulty of the poetry on the literature exam. The selected poems are usually longer than the sonnet, but shorter poems appear sometimes. Read this poem carefully. Then answer the twelve multiple-choice questions that follow. Choose the best answer of the five.



The AP Literature Exam Section 1: Multiple-Choice Questions

On the Sonnet

- If by dull rhymes our English must be chained,
 And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet
 Fettered, in spite of pained loveliness,
 Let us find out, if we must be constrained,
 (5) Sandals more interwoven and complete
 To fit the naked foot of poesy;
 Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the stress
 Of every chord, and see what may be gained
 By ear industrious, and attention meet;
 (10) Misers of sound and syllable, no less
 Than Midas of his coinage, let us be
 Jealous of dead leaves in the bay-wreath crown;
 So, if we may not let the Muse be free,
 She will be bound with garlands of her own.

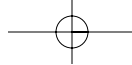
1. The “we” (“us”) of the poem refers to
 - A. literary critics
 - B. misers
 - C. readers of poetry
 - D. the Muses
 - E. English poets
2. Which of the following best describes the major structural divisions of the poem?
 - A. Lines 1–3; 4–6; 7–9; 10–14
 - B. Lines 1–8; 9–14
 - C. Lines 1–6; 7–9; 10–12; 13–14
 - D. Lines 1–4; 5–8; 9–12; 13–14
 - E. Lines 1–6; 7–14
3. The metaphor used in the first line of the poem compares English to
 - A. carefully guarded treasure
 - B. Andromeda
 - C. a bound creature
 - D. a necklace
 - E. a sonnet
4. In lines 2–3, the poem compares the sonnet to Andromeda because
 - I. both are beautiful
 - II. neither is free
 - III. both are inventions of classical Greece
 - A. III only
 - B. I and II only
 - C. I and III only
 - D. II and III only
 - E. I, II, and III
5. The main verb of the first grammatically complete sentence of the poem is
 - A. “must be” (line 1)
 - B. “be chained” (line 1)
 - C. “Fettered” (line 3)
 - D. “let . . . find” (line 4)
 - E. “must be” (line 4)

Part II: Analysis of Exam Areas

6. The phrase “naked foot of poesy” in line 6 is an example of which of the following technical devices?
- A. simile
 - B. personification
 - C. oxymoron
 - D. allusion
 - E. transferred epithet
7. In line 9, the word “meet” is best defined as
- A. suitable
 - B. concentrated
 - C. unified
 - D. distributed
 - E. introductory
8. The poet alludes to Midas in line 11 to encourage poets to be
- A. miserly
 - B. generous
 - C. mythical
 - D. magical
 - E. royal
9. In line 12, the phrase “dead leaves” probably refers to
- A. boring passages in poetry
 - B. the pages of a book of poetry
 - C. worn-out conventions of poetry
 - D. surprising but inappropriate original metaphors
 - E. the closely guarded secrets of style that make great poetry
10. All of the following words denote restraint EXCEPT
- A. “chained” (line 1)
 - B. “Fettered” (line 3)
 - C. “constrained” (line 4)
 - D. “interwoven” (line 5)
 - E. “bound” (line 14)
11. Which of the following best states the central idea of the poem?
- A. Poems must be carefully crafted and decorously adorned.
 - B. Poets must jealously guard the traditional forms of the sonnet.
 - C. Sonnets should be free of all restrictions.
 - D. The constraint of the sonnet form will lead to discipline and creativity.
 - E. Poems in restricted forms should be original and carefully crafted.
12. The poem is written in
- A. rhymed couplets
 - B. blank verse
 - C. rhymed iambic pentameter
 - D. Shakespearean sonnet form
 - E. rhymed triplets

Answers for Set 1

- E.** The first question asks you to identify the speaker and his audience. This is one of the poems which tell us nothing about the time period or the location of the speaker. But we do know he is a poet, because the poem is called “On the Sonnet” and deals with his ideas about how the sonnet should be composed. Because he speaks of English as “chained” by the rhymes of poetry (and because he writes in English), we infer that the speaker and his audience are English poets. The correct choice is **E**. The next-best choice is **A**, but though the poem does include some literary criticism, **E** is the “best” answer. The very existence of this poem tells us the speaker is a poet, and his plural pronoun defines his audience as like himself.
- C.** The best choice here is **C**, dividing the poem at the semicolons (which may have been periods) at the end of lines 6, 9, and 12. Those of you familiar with other sonnets will recognize that this is an unusual poem. Most sonnets break naturally in units of eight and six lines (Italian sonnets especially) or into three four-line units and a closing couplet (the English, or Shakespearean, sonnet). But it is these restrictions Keats is complaining about. And so his poem falls into units of six, three, three, and two lines. And it pays no attention to the abba, abba, cdcdcd rhyme scheme of the Italian sonnet or to the abab, cdcd, efef, gg of the Shakespearean sonnet. Notice that you cannot stop at the comma in line 3. The first three lines are a dependent clause, and the sentence is not yet grammatically coherent.
- C.** The metaphor presents English chained without defining any more clearly whether the language is compared to a human or an animal. The comparison to Andromeda in line 2 is a simile.
- B.** This is an example of a question where part of your answer comes from reading the poem carefully and part from your general information. Both I and II are clear from the poem, because both Andromeda and the sonnet are said to be “sweet” and to have “loveliness” and both are “Fettered.” Though Andromeda is the creation of Greek mythology — she was chained to a rock and rescued by Perseus — the sonnet is not an ancient Greek poetic form.
- D.** The main verb of the sentence is “let (us) find.” The verbs “must be chained” and “Fettered” are part of the dependent clause.
- B.** There is no “like” or “as,” so the figure is a metaphor, not a simile. It is also a personification, in this case, a metaphor in which poetry is represented as possessing human form, having a foot that can wear a sandal. Keats is probably punning here on another meaning of foot, the term to denote the metric unit of a line of verse.
- A.** As it is used here, “meet” is an adjective meaning “suitable” or “fitting” (compare Hamlet’s line “meet it is I set it down” or the phrase “meet and just”).
- A.** This question calls for a literal reading of the line, not an explanation of the figure. Surprisingly, because Midas is usually viewed as a fool or a villain, Keats urges poets to be miserly, like Midas, though not with money but with the sounds and syllables of their poems.



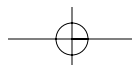
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- 9. C.** Here the question calls for an explanation of the metaphor “dead leaves.” The adjective “Jealous” in this sentence does not mean “envious,” as it usually does, but “watchful” or “very attentive to.” The poet is urging other poets to scrupulously keep “dead leaves” from the bay-leaf crown that is traditionally associated with the poet. The metaphor, in keeping with the advice of the rest of the poem, is probably a reference to poetic practices that are no longer alive or natural like the green leaves of the laurel (bay) wreath. The word “leaves” here might be a play on “leaf” as “page,” but the more important meaning is the metaphorical one, and **C** is the best of the five options.
- 10. D.** The question combines diction and structure. The word “interwoven” in its context refers to the structure of the sandal. Arguably, because an interwoven sandal fits the foot, even this word suggests constraint, but the question calls for the best answer of the five, and constraint is much more clearly the denotation of the other four choices. The reference of the sandals metaphor is probably to the rhyme scheme into which the poem (the foot) must fit. The more interwoven rhyme scheme Keats has in mind is the one he uses here: not the abab, dcde, efef, gg of the traditional English sonnet where new rhymes appear in each of the following quatrains, but the “interwoven” abc, abd, cabcdede.
- 11. E.** This is the theme-of-the-poem question. Though Keats may agree with choice **A**, this poem doesn’t make this point. In all multiple-choice sets, beware of the answer that in itself is true or morally uplifting or an idea that poems often express but which is not the issue in the poem you’re dealing with. Good, wrong answers, test writers believe, must sound true even if they are irrelevant. Choice **B** is an idea some poets may hold, but this poem rejects the traditional forms if they have become “dead leaves.” Choice **C** is not an issue here. Keats begins with the condition of English poetry chained by rhymes, and though this suggests some sympathy with the idea of even greater freedom, the poem never advocates giving up all restrictions. Choice **D** is another of those good-sounding wrong answers. It is an idea that many poets, perhaps including Keats, would endorse, but it is not the theme of this sonnet. Choice **E** is the best of the five.
- 12. C.** This is an example of a question on the metrics of the poem. Choice **C** is right; **A**, **B**, **D**, and **E** are all untrue. Given the concern of this poem with the rhyme scheme of the sonnet, one should not be surprised to find a question about the rhyme scheme Keats uses here in a set of questions on the poem.

Set 2

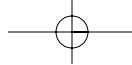
The following poem, a sonnet by Wordsworth, was written twelve years before the Keats poem you just studied. Read this poem carefully, analyze it quickly, and then answer the multiple-choice questions that follow.

- Nuns fret not at their convent’s narrow room;
 And hermits are contented with their cells;
 And students with their pensive citadels;
 Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom
 (5) Sit blithe and happy; bees that soar for bloom,
 High as the highest Peak of Furness-fells,
 Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells:

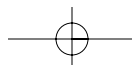


The AP Literature Exam Section 1: Multiple-Choice Questions

- In truth the prison, unto which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is: and hence for me,
(10) In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground;
Pleased if some souls (for such there needs must be)
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.
- Which of the following best represents the structural divisions of the poem?
 - Lines 1–4; 5–8; 9–12; 13–14
 - Lines 1–7; 8–10; 11–13; 14
 - Lines 1–7; 8–9½; 9½–14
 - Lines 1–8; 9–11; 12–14
 - Lines 1–9; 10–13; 14
 - Which of the following best describes the organization of the poem?
 - A series of logically developing ideas with a concluding personal application
 - A series of examples followed by a generalization and a personal application
 - A generalization followed by examples
 - A specific assertion followed by examples followed by a contradiction of the initial assertion
 - An answer followed by a question that cannot be answered
 - In line 3, the phrase “pensive citadels” can be best paraphrased as
 - towers in which students are imprisoned
 - castles under siege
 - dreary fortresses
 - refuges for contemplation
 - strongholds that inspire thought
 - The “we” of line 8 could refer to all of the following EXCEPT
 - criminals
 - poets
 - nuns
 - hermits
 - students
 - In line 8, “prison” is parallel to all of the following EXCEPT
 - “narrow room” (line 1)
 - “pensive citadels” (line 3)
 - “Peak of Furness-fells” (line 6)
 - “foxglove bells” (line 7)
 - “scanty plot of ground” (line 11)
 - Lines 8–9 (“In truth the prison, unto which we doom/Ourselves, no prison is”) is an example of
 - hyperbole
 - personification
 - alliteration
 - simile
 - paradox

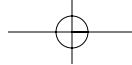

Part II: Analysis of Exam Areas

- 7.** In line 10, the assertion “’twas pastime” is parallel to all of the following phrases EXCEPT
- A. “fret not” (line 1)
 - B. “are contented” (line 2)
 - C. “Sit blithe” (line 5)
 - D. “Will murmur” (line 7)
 - E. “we doom” (line 8)
- 8.** The figure of speech in line 11 (“Within the Sonnet’s scanty plot of ground”) is
- A. a simile comparing the writing of poetry to a field
 - B. a simile comparing the poet and a farmer
 - C. a metaphor comparing the sonnet and a small piece of land
 - D. a metaphor comparing the pleasures of writing poetry and the pleasures of gardening
 - E. an apostrophe
- 9.** In line 14, “there” refers to
- A. the sonnet (line 11)
 - B. the soul (line 12)
 - C. pleasure (line 12)
 - D. weight (line 13)
 - E. liberty (line 13)
- 10.** Which of the following phrases from the poem best sums up its central idea?
- A. “hermits are contented with their cells” (line 2)
 - B. “Maids at the wheel . . . / Sit blithe and happy” (lines 4–5)
 - C. “the prison, unto which we doom / Ourselves, no prison is” (lines 8–9)
 - D. “such there needs must be” (line 12)
 - E. “Who have felt the weight of too much liberty” (line 13)
- 11.** From the poem, the reader may infer all of the following about the speaker EXCEPT that he
- A. feels deep compassion for the nuns
 - B. sometimes finds liberty onerous
 - C. respects literary conventions
 - D. finds conventional verse forms congenial to his talent
 - E. has written a number of sonnets
- 12.** The rhyme scheme of this poem is especially appropriate because
- I. lines 1–8 employ the traditional abba, abba, of the Italian sonnet
 - II. it is restricted to only four rhymes in the 14 lines
 - III. it makes judicious use of slant rhymes
- A. III only
 - B. I and II only
 - C. I and III only
 - D. II and III only
 - E. I, II, and III



Answers for Set 2

1. **C.** Line 8 and half of line 9 state the thesis of the poem: that a self-chosen restriction is not a restriction at all. The first seven lines of the poem give six different examples of self-chosen restrictions: the nuns in their convent, the hermits in their cells, the students withdrawn to contemplation, the maids at their spinning wheels, the weaver at the loom, and finally the bee which seeks nectar in the narrow confines of the foxglove blossom. Lines 9, 10, and 11 apply the idea of self-elected restrictions to the poet's choosing to write in the difficult and limiting sonnet form. Lines 12–14 express the poet's satisfaction in others' finding the same pleasure in his sonnets. The structure then is that described in **C**.
2. **B.** The organization is explained by **B**. Notice that one of the divisions of the poem falls in the middle rather than at the end of a line. Though the rhyme scheme of abba, abba suggests an eight-line unit to begin the poem, the real unit is seven lines.
3. **D.** A citadel is a tower, a fortress, a refuge. The adjective “pensive” means thoughtful, meditative. Because a citadel cannot think, the phrase is surprising. The device the poet uses here is a transferred epithet, the shift of a word or phrase from the noun it would logically modify to another. Shakespeare writes of a sailor high on the “giddy mast” of a ship in a storm. It is, of course, the sailor, not the mast, who is “giddy.” It is the students here who are “pensive,” but the adjective is transferred to modify the place where they meditate.
4. **A.** The exception is the criminals. A criminal in prison has not chosen prison voluntarily, while, according to the poem, the nun, poet, hermit, and students have chosen the restrictions of the convent, the sonnet, the cell, or the citadel.
5. **C.** The prison is parallel to other self-chosen forms of restriction such as the narrow room, citadels, bells (or flowers) of the foxglove, and the scanty plot of the sonnet. In line 6, the reference to bees flying as high as the mountain peak is to demonstrate the freedom the bees might enjoy contrasted with the narrow space inside the foxglove flower, which they choose instead. Choice **C** is the opposite of prison, not a parallel.
6. **E.** This is a paradox, an apparently self-contradictory statement. To say a prison is not a prison is paradoxical. Another term for this figure is oxymoron.
7. **E.** The phrase is the expression of the speaker's pleasure in restriction. The phrases parallel to this are “fret not,” “are contented,” “Sit blithe,” and “Will murmur,” all of which are used to express satisfaction with elected restraints. The exception, and right answer, is “we doom.”
8. **C.** This is a metaphor (a simile would use “like” or “as”) comparing the sonnet and a small plot of land. Apostrophe is direct address to a person or thing.
9. **A.** The “there” refers to the sonnet, where the poet has found and, he hopes the reader will find, some pleasure.
10. **C.** This option, using the prison metaphor, explicitly states the theme of the sonnet.
11. **A.** There is no reason to feel compassion for the nuns, whose confinement is self-chosen. That he has “felt the weight of too much liberty” supports **B**. That he finds pleasure in the restrictions of the sonnet suggests his respect for tradition and for conventional restrictive forms.



Part II: Analysis of Exam Areas

- 12. B.** Among a number of possible rhyme schemes for the sonnet, the poet has chosen one of the most restrictive, in keeping with the thesis of the poem that a chosen restraint is not restraining. The first eight lines have only two rhymes (as in the Italian sonnet), and only two more rhymes are used in lines 9–14. A slant rhyme is an off-rhyme, a rhyme that is incomplete. If “bells” were rhymed with “calls” or “ills,” both rhymes would be slant rhymes. This poem, predictably, does not take advantage of this license.

Analyzing Prose

Though the analysis of a prose passage is like the analysis of a poem in many ways, there are important differences quite apart from the absence of meter. The prose selections are normally longer than the poems, running from 450 to 850 words. Like the poetry, they represent writing in English in the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Some of the prose is more difficult because of differences between style in the earlier periods and that of our time. Some passages are on unfamiliar subjects. Excerpts come from a variety of both fictional and nonfictional sources: novels, short stories, history, philosophical writing, sermons, journals, letters, essays, biographies, autobiographies, or literary criticism, and the list could go on.

One approach to sight-reading prose is to deal first with the issues of genre (the kind of work, such as novel or essay) and content, then, of structure, and finally, of style.

1. genre

From what kind of a work is the selection taken? Is it fiction or nonfiction?

If you're dealing with a work of fiction, chances are you'll have to think about the character or characters in the passage, while a work of nonfiction probably focuses on an issue, on an idea, or on the narrator, him or herself.

2. narrator

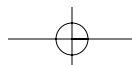
Whether the passage is from a work of fiction or of nonfiction, you must be aware of who is speaking and what his or her attitudes are toward the characters or the subject of the passage. If you can, identify who is speaking, where and when, why, and to whom. You will often be unable to answer all of these questions, but answer as many of them as you can.

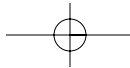
3. subject

Ascertain what the purpose of the passage is. Is it to present an argument or to introduce a character? To cajole, or entertain, or stir to action? If you can define an author's purpose clearly, most of the questions on the interpretation of meaning will fall neatly into place.

4. structure

The normal unit of prose is the paragraph, and the passages on the AP exam run from a single long paragraph (the prose writers of the seventeenth century sometimes wrote paragraphs that seem as long as chapters to modern readers) to ten shorter paragraphs. As with a poem, try to see how each part advances the progress of the whole. How are the paragraphs related to each other and to the passage as a whole?





5. style

The style of prose is determined by diction, imagery, figurative language, and syntax — all matters you deal with in the analysis of poetry. In addition, the analysis of prose is certain to raise questions about the rhetoric of a passage, that is, its use of words to persuade or influence a reader. There is, of course, a rhetoric in poetry, but the questions about rhetoric are more likely to be asked about prose passages.

Answering Multiple-Choice Prose Questions

Types of Questions

Most of the multiple-choice questions on the prose passage take the following forms:

1. Questions on **situation and content**: on the passage as a whole; on a single paragraph; on a single sentence.

Examples:

The main subject of the passage is . . .

The primary distinction made in the first paragraph is between . . .

According to lines 3–7, which of the following is the chief . . .

In the third paragraph, the author is chiefly concerned with . . .

2. Questions on **meaning of words or phrases**:

Examples:

As it is used in line 2, the word *x* can be best understood to mean . . .

In line 7, the word *x* employs all of the following meanings EXCEPT . . .

The phrase *xyz* is best understood to mean . . .

3. Questions on **grammar**:

Examples:

In the opening clause, the word “which” refers to . . .

In line 12, the antecedent of “it” is . . .

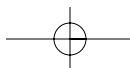
The subject of the long sentence that makes up the third paragraph is . . .

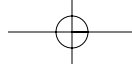
4. Questions on **diction**:

Examples:

The speaker’s choice of verbs in the paragraph is to stress the . . .

The speaker’s anger is suggested by all of the following EXCEPT . . .





Part II: Analysis of Exam Areas

5. Questions on **figurative language**:

Examples:

The comparison in lines 1-3 compares . . .

The analogy of the second paragraph compares . . .

The phrase xyz is best read as a metaphor relating to . . .

The purpose of the astronomy metaphor in line 9 is to . . .

6. Questions on **structure**:

Examples:

The transitions from the first to the second and the second to the third paragraph are dependent upon . . .

The last paragraph of the passage is related to the first chiefly by . . .

7. Questions on **literary techniques**:

Examples:

In the third paragraph, the description of the cat on roller skates is an example of . . .

All of the following phrases are paradoxes EXCEPT . . .

The phrase “silent scream” is an example of . . .

8. Questions on **rhetoric**:

Examples:

The rhetorical purpose of lines 1–6 is to . . .

The argument of the passage can best be described as progressing from . . .

Which of the following best describes the function of the last sentence?

The effect of shifting from the past to the present tense in the third paragraph is . . .

The happiness of the speaker is conveyed primarily by the use of . . .

9. Questions on **tone**:

Examples:

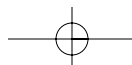
The tone of the passage may be described as . . .

In discussing x in the second paragraph, the speaker adopts a tone of . . .

Examples of Prose Selections, Questions, and Answers

Set 1

The following passage is taken from George Eliot’s novel *Adam Bede* (1859). Though the passage comes from a work of fiction, it could just as well have appeared as a short essay. To read it, you do not need to know anything about the rest of the novel. The passage was used in the essay section of an AP exam. Read it very carefully. It is not so easy or straightforward as it may at first appear to be. Then answer the multiple-choice questions that follow.



The AP Literature Exam Section 1: Multiple-Choice Questions

Leisure is gone — gone where the spinning-wheels are gone, and the pack horses, and the slow waggons, and the pedlars, who brought bargains to the door on sunny afternoons. Ingenious philosophers tell you, perhaps, that the great work of the steam-engine is to create leisure for mankind. Do not believe them: it only creates a vacuum for eager thought to rush in. Even idleness is eager now — eager for amusement: prone to excursion-trains, art-museums, periodical literature, and exciting novels: prone even to scientific theorising, and cursory peeps through microscopes. Old Leisure was quite a different personage: he only read one newspaper, innocent of leaders, and was free from that periodicity of sensations which we call post-time. He was a contemplative, rather stout gentleman, of excellent digestion — of quiet perceptions, undiseased by hypothesis: happy in his inability to know the causes of things, preferring the things themselves. He lived chiefly in the country, among pleasant seats and homesteads, and was fond of sauntering by the fruit-tree wall, and scenting the apricots when they

- (30) were warmed by the morning sunshine, or of sheltering himself under the orchard boughs at noon, when the summer pears were falling. He knew nothing of weekday services, and thought none the worse of the Sunday sermon if it allowed him to sleep from the text to the blessing — liking the afternoon service best, because the prayers were the shortest, and not ashamed to say so; for he had an easy, jolly conscience, broad-backed like himself, and able to carry a great deal of beer or port-wine, — not being made squeamish by doubts and qualms and lofty aspirations. Life was not a task to him, but a sinecure: he fingered the guineas in his pocket, and ate his dinners, and slept the sleep of the irresponsible; for had he not kept up his charter by going to church on the Sunday afternoons?

(50) Fine old Leisure! Do not be severe upon him, and judge him by our modern standard: he never went to Exeter Hall, or heard a popular preacher, or read *Tracts for the Times* or *Sartor Resartus*.*

*Exeter Hall was a London building used for lectures and meetings, especially of a religious nature. *Tracts for the Times* and *Sartor Resartus* are important Victorian religious and philosophical books.

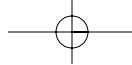
- The phrases “Even idleness is eager now — eager for amusement” (lines 10–11) exemplify which of the following devices?
 - metaphor
 - personification
 - paradox
 - III only
 - I and II only
 - I and III only
 - II and III only
 - I, II, and III
- According to the passage, all of the following are the activities of the present EXCEPT
 - restoring antiques
 - railway excursions
 - reading fiction
 - amateur biology
 - attending lectures

Part II: Analysis of Exam Areas

3. The phrase “innocent of leaders” (line 17–18) can be best said to mean
- A. guiltless of ambition
 - B. free of editorials
 - C. ignorant of competition
 - D. pure as a commander
 - E. blameless of power
4. Old Leisure had not been “made squeamish by doubts and qualms and lofty aspirations” (lines 43–44) because
- A. he has no reason to feel guilty
 - B. his honesty protects him against doubt
 - C. he never thinks about doubt or aspiration
 - D. he has fulfilled his charter by attending church
 - E. they are inventions of the modern age
5. The word “sinecure” in line 45 can be best defined as
- A. a well-rewarded but undemanding position
 - B. a paid vacation
 - C. a hard-won and deserved triumph
 - D. an irresponsible indulgence in pleasure
 - E. an assuming of responsibility for the well-being of others
6. The point of view in the question “had he not kept up his charter by going to church on the Sunday afternoons?” (lines 48–50) is that of
- I. old Leisure
 - II. new or modern leisure
 - III. the narrator of the passage
- A. I only
 - B. II only
 - C. III only
 - D. I and III only
 - E. II and III only
7. In lines 39–41, the phrase “he had an easy, jolly conscience, broad-backed like himself” employs
- A. only one simile
 - B. only one metaphor
 - C. one metaphor and one simile
 - D. two metaphors and one simile
 - E. two similes
8. The social position of old Leisure is suggested by all of the following words EXCEPT
- A. “gentleman” (line 21)
 - B. “pleasant seats” (line 27)
 - C. “port-wine” (line 42)
 - D. “guineas” (line 46)
 - E. “charter” (line 49)

The AP Literature Exam Section 1: Multiple-Choice Questions

9. Old Leisure's observance of his religious obligations may be best described as
- A. hypocritical
 - B. ardent
 - C. grudging
 - D. perfunctory
 - E. skeptical
10. Of the following phrases, all of them work to make a similar point about old Leisure EXCEPT
- A. "rather stout" (line 21)
 - B. "of excellent digestion" (lines 21–22)
 - C. "undiseased by hypothesis" (lines 22–23)
 - D. "able to carry a great deal of beer" (lines 41–42)
 - E. "ate his dinners" (lines 46–49)
11. Of the following techniques, which is the most important in the presentation of old Leisure?
- A. hyperbole
 - B. simile
 - C. personification
 - D. paradox
 - E. apostrophe
12. Compared to the leisure of modern times, old Leisure is characterized as more
- A. religious
 - B. cynical
 - C. unthinking
 - D. eager
 - E. carnal
13. The passage implies all of the following contrasts between the leisure of the past and of the present EXCEPT
- A. rural vs. urban
 - B. science vs. art
 - C. mind vs. body
 - D. complacency vs. aspiration
 - E. belief vs. doubt
14. From the whole passage, the reader can infer that the narrator feels
- I. some nostalgia for the leisure of the past
 - II. an awareness of the complacency of the present
 - III. a concern for the anti-intellectual self-interest of the past
- A. I only
 - B. II only
 - C. I and II only
 - D. I and III only
 - E. I, II, and III
15. The tone of the passage is best described as
- A. gently satirical
 - B. harshly sarcastic
 - C. mawkishly sentimental
 - D. coolly objective
 - E. cheerfully optimistic

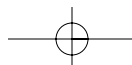


Part II: Analysis of Exam Areas

Answers for Set 1

The instructions tell you that the passage is from a novel but that it may have come from an essay. What is striking about the passage is the characterization of the idea of old Leisure. George Eliot personifies the leisure of the past and devotes most of the passage to describing this fictitious character. In the course of the passage, the speaker or narrator reveals her views about the leisure of her own era and about old Leisure, and she cautions her contemporaries not to be too quick to pronounce the up-to-date to be superior.

1. **E.** The first question asks you to identify the technical devices in “even idleness is eager.” All three terms apply. “Idleness” is personified (and personification is a form of metaphor in which an abstract quality is compared to a person), and an eager idleness is a paradox, an apparent contradiction, because eager and idle seem to be opposites.
2. **A.** The passage lists all of the activities except restoring antiques as leisure activities of the mid-Victorian world.
3. **B.** This question is an example of a vocabulary word where the obvious modern meaning is not relevant. A “leader” is a newspaper editorial. The word is still used by journalists, but it is more common now in England than in the United States. The context of the phrase, introduced by “newspaper,” as well as what we are told of old Leisure’s lack of interest in almost anything requiring some thought, could suggest the right answer even if you had never heard of a “leader” as a “newspaper editorial.”
4. **C.** Doubts, qualms, and lofty aspirations do not bother old Leisure because he never thinks about such serious or disturbing things. He is, we have been told, glad to be ignorant of causes and unconcerned with theories. This phrase is one of several which suggest that the narrator is not wholly on old Leisure’s side. Can we really endorse an approach to life that avoids doubts and aspirations?
5. **A.** A “sinecure” is a position that is well paid but that requires very little work. Unlike the Victorians, celebrated for their earnest approach to life, old Leisure is in the happy position to regard life as a free ride.
6. **A.** Old Leisure, thoughtless as he is, would see no irony in the question and assume the answer is yes. But the narrator is not quite so sure. Though she tweaks old Leisure gently by putting this question in his mouth, it’s hard for a modern reader to believe that the author thinks a snooze in church is an adequate fulfillment of religious duties.
7. **D.** The figurative language here is complex. To begin with, we have the basic metaphor of the passage in which the abstraction, old Leisure, is compared to a person (metaphor one) with the phrase “he had an easy, jolly conscience.” But this conscience is also personified as “jolly” and “broad-backed” (metaphor two) and in being stout is said to be “like himself” (a simile). So the phrase has a simile and two metaphors, both personifications.
8. **E.** One of the subtle touches in George Eliot’s portrait of old Leisure is her clearly placing him in the moneyed class. He is not a farmer who plants crops or gets up early, though he no doubt owns agricultural lands that others work for his profit. He is a “gentleman” (often in British parlance a man of good birth and social position whose wealth is inherited — Mr. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, as Elizabeth proudly tells Darcy, is a “gentleman”). He drinks port, lives among pleasant seats, and fingers his guineas. His guineas, notice, not his pennies or shillings. A guinea was a gold coin equal to a year’s wages of a serving girl in



The AP Literature Exam Section 1: Multiple-Choice Questions

nineteenth-century England. Only the word “charter” here does not suggest old Leisure’s social position.

9. **D.** A case could be made for “grudging,” but given the fact that he does go to church on Sunday, sleeps comfortably, and is satisfied with his performance, “perfunctory” is a better choice.
10. **C.** Another of the pleasures of the passage is the suggestion that old Leisure eats a lot and is, perhaps, a bit overweight — certainly “stout” and “broad-backed.” Though his digestion may be relevant to old Leisure’s girth, the phrase “undiseased by hypothesis” is only a metaphor revealing his anti-intellectuality.
11. **C.** The chief technique is personification.
12. **C.** Old Leisure is presented as more unthinking. Modern leisure may think too much; old Leisure avoids thought at all costs.
13. **B.** The passage does not use the art-science contrast. In fact, modern leisure is said to be interested in both art museums and microscopes, while old Leisure would be indifferent to both.
14. **E.** All three of these ideas are implied. The author sees the charm as well as the limitations of old Leisure and warns against complacency in the paragraph.
15. **A.** The best choice here is **A**, though it is not the whole story. Sometimes you have to select an imperfect answer because the other four are inferior or outrightly wrong. Here, **B**, **C**, **D**, and **E** are all clearly worse than **A**.

Set 2

The following passage, from Joseph Conrad’s short novel *Typhoon*, was used on the essay section of the 1989 literature exam, but it could have been used for multiple-choice questions. Read the passage carefully and choose the best answer of the five options in the multiple-choice questions following the passage.

(5) Captain MacWhirr, of the steamer Nan-Shan, had a physiognomy that, in the order of material appearances, was the exact counterpart of his mind: it presented no marked characteristics of firmness or stupidity; it had no pronounced characteristics whatever; it was simply ordinary, irresponsive, and unruffled...

(10) Having just enough imagination to carry him through each successive day, and no more, he was tranquilly sure of himself; and from the very same cause he was not in the least conceited. It is your imaginative superior who is touchy,

(15) overbearing, and difficult to please; but every ship Captain MacWhirr commanded was the floating abode of harmony and peace. It was, in truth, as impossible for him to take a flight of fancy as it would be for a watchmaker to put together a chronometer with nothing except a two-pound hammer and a whip-saw in the way of tools. Yet the uninteresting lives of men so entirely given to the actuality of the bare existence have their mysterious side. It was impossible in Captain MacWhirr’s case, for instance, to understand what under heaven

Part II: Analysis of Exam Areas

(30) could have induced that perfectly satisfactory son of a petty grocer in Belfast to run away to sea. And yet he had done that very thing at the age of fifteen. It was enough, when you thought it over, to give you the idea of an immense, potent, and invisible hand thrust into the antheap of the earth, laying hold of shoulders, knocking heads together, and setting the unconscious faces of the multitude towards inconceivable goals and in undreamt-of directions.

(40) His father never really forgave him for this undutiful stupidity. “We could have got on without him,” he used to say later on, “but there’s the business. And he an only son, too!” His mother wept very much after his disappearance. As it had never occurred to him to leave word behind, he was mourned over for dead till, after eight months, his first letter arrived from Talcahuano. It was short, and contained the statement: “We had very fine weather on our passage out.” But evidently, in the writer’s mind, the only important intelligence was to the effect that his captain had, on the very day of writing, entered him regularly on the ship’s articles as Ordinary Seaman. “Because I can do the work,” he explained. The mother again wept

1. The word “physiognomy” in line 2 can be best defined as

- A. temperament
- B. personality
- C. face
- D. manner of behaving
- E. pragmatism

(60) copiously, while the remark, “Tom’s an ass,” expressed the emotions of the father. He was a corpulent man, with a gift for sly chaffing, which to the end of his life he exercised in his intercourse with his son, a little pityingly, as if upon a half-witted person.

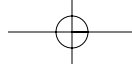
(65) MacWhirr’s visits to his home were necessarily rare, and in the course of years he dispatched other letters to his parents, informing them of his successive promotions and of his movements upon the vast earth. In these missives could be found sentences like this: “The heat here is very great.” Or: “On Christmas day at 4 p.m. we fell in with some icebergs.” The old people ultimately became acquainted with a good many names of ships, and with the names of the skippers who commanded them — with the names of Scots and English shipowners — with the names of seas, oceans, straits, promontories — with outlandish names of lumberports, of rice-ports, of cotton-ports—with the names of islands — with the name of their son’s young woman. She was called Lucy. It did not suggest itself to him to mention whether he thought the name pretty. And then they died.

2. The point of the simile in lines 18–23 (“It was, in truth . . . way of tools”) is to illustrate

- A. a difficulty
- B. an impossibility
- C. a subtlety
- D. a technicality
- E. an unlikeness

The AP Literature Exam Section 1: Multiple-Choice Questions

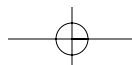
3. The passage represents the young MacWhirr's decision to go to sea as
- A. youthful rebelliousness
 - B. a search for adventure
 - C. personal ambition
 - D. romantic escapism
 - E. an unexplainable action
4. In line 42, the word "undutiful" may be best defined as
- A. unusual
 - B. extreme
 - C. unexpected
 - D. disobedient
 - E. uncharged
5. The phrase "undutiful stupidity" in line 42 reflects the point of view of which of the following?
- I. the narrator of the passage
 - II. MacWhirr's father
 - III. MacWhirr's mother
- A. I only
 - B. II only
 - C. I and II only
 - D. II and III only
 - E. I, II, and III
6. Of the following phrases, which has the effect of reducing our feelings of sympathy for MacWhirr's parents?
- I. "but there's the business. And he an only son, too!" (lines 44–45)
 - II. "His mother wept very much after his disappearance." (lines 45–46)
 - III. "Tom's an ass," (lines 60–61)
- A. II only
 - B. I and II only
 - C. I and III only
 - D. I, II, and III
 - E. III
7. MacWhirr does not comment on the prettiness of the name Lucy in his letters to his parents because
- A. he wants them to know only the external events of his life
 - B. he does not think they care enough about him to be interested
 - C. he has not thought about it himself
 - D. such a comment would be effeminate
 - E. such a comment would suggest that her face was not pretty
8. The word "names" is repeated six times in the last paragraph to
- A. contrast with the single repetition of the singular "name"
 - B. suggest the slow passage of time at sea
 - C. expose the unnatural absence of feeling in Captain MacWhirr
 - D. emphasize Captain MacWhirr's commitment to actuality
 - E. enhance the poetic quality of the prose

**Part II: Analysis of Exam Areas**

- 9.** In the last sentence of the passage, the antecedent of “they” is probably
- A. the old people
 - B. skippers
 - C. Scots ship owners
 - D. English ship owners
 - E. Captain MacWhirr and Lucy
- 10.** MacWhirr’s prose style is best characterized as
- A. episodic
 - B. baroque
 - C. metaphorical
 - D. ironic
 - E. factual
- 11.** The narrator’s prose style differs from that of captain MacWhirr in its use of
- I. figurative language
 - II. irony
 - III. generalization
- A. III only
 - B. I and II only
 - C. I and III only
 - D. II and III only
 - E. I, II, and III
- 12.** To which of the following does the passage attribute MacWhirr’s success as a commanding officer?
- I. his attention to detail
 - II. his lack of imagination
 - III. his ability to do the work
- A. II only
 - B. III only
 - C. I and III only
 - D. II and III only
 - E. I, II, and III
- 13.** All of the following words accurately describe Captain MacWhirr EXCEPT
- A. fanciful
 - B. ordinary
 - C. cool
 - D. serious
 - E. confident

Answers for Set 2

The Conrad passage is centrally concerned with the character of Captain MacWhirr, and it also includes brief comments on and dialogue of his parents. The passage establishes what is to be the key to Captain MacWhirr and to the action of the story. MacWhirr is so completely lacking in imaginative ability that he cannot imagine the power and the peril of a typhoon. And so when others are paralyzed by fear, MacWhirr keeps his head and steers his ship through the storm.



The AP Literature Exam Section 1: Multiple-Choice Questions

1. **C.** “Physiognomy” is a long word for face. Notice that this paragraph does not call MacWhirr firm or stupid or their opposites. It says his face, like his mind, had “no pronounced characteristics.”
2. **B.** The point of the simile is to show impossibility: “as impossible for him . . . as”. Don’t be surprised if you find some multiple-choice questions that strike you as very easy, and don’t assume that because a question seems easy there must be a trick and the right answer must be the unexpected choice. Each set of questions contains a few very hard questions and a few very easy questions. No set is all of one or the other.
3. **E.** The narrator admits that MacWhirr’s decision is unexplainable: “impossible . . . to understand” and wholly “mysterious.”
4. **D.** The word “undutiful” means lacking in a sense of duty, disobedient, disrespectful.
5. **B.** Remember that, in the first paragraph, the narrator doesn’t charge MacWhirr with stupidity. MacWhirr’s mother doesn’t say enough for us to know her opinion, but the idea is certainly one the father would endorse.
6. **C.** The first of the father’s remarks is not that of a dutiful parent, as it suggests that the business is more important than the loss of the company of the child. The third remark is even clearer. The mother’s tears — at least on the first occasion — don’t reduce our sympathy. And why did MacWhirr go off without telling his parents he was leaving? Why didn’t he spare them all their needless worry? The answer, we infer, is that it never occurred to young Tom MacWhirr that his parents would worry. Such an idea requires some ability to imagine what others will feel, and MacWhirr, as we know, has no imagination at all.
7. **C.** Again the key to MacWhirr’s actions is his inability to imagine, to think in terms other than the starkly factual. It would not occur to him to comment on the prettiness of a name because he would never think about whether a name was pretty or not.
8. **D.** To MacWhirr, a name is a name and no more, and the repeated use of the word in the last paragraph drives home the notion of MacWhirr’s life “entirely given to the actuality of the bare existence.” The purpose of a name, to MacWhirr, is to denote a reality.
9. **A.** It is grammatically possible to refer the pronoun to “Lucy” and to “he,” which are, in fact, closer to the “they.” But the logic of the passage as a whole, the focus from the beginning on MacWhirr, should suggest that there is more to follow and that MacWhirr will be more fully described.
10. **E.** MacWhirr’s style is, of course, factual: “The heat here is very great.”
11. **E.** Fortunately, the narrator writes a more sophisticated prose than does MacWhirr, employing all three of these devices, which MacWhirr would not understand.
12. **A.** According to the second paragraph, MacWhirr’s lack of imagination makes for harmony on the ship. MacWhirr may possess the other qualities, but the passage attributes his success to II.
13. **A.** Again, it is MacWhirr’s lack of imagination, his inability to be fanciful, that answers the question.

