

Reviewing the Prose Essay

Objective for the Week

For an AP® English Literature prose analysis essay, students will analyze the prompt, discuss the passage with their peers, practice outlining and writing thesis statements, write an essay, and score and discuss sample essays.

Duration

Five 45-minute class sessions

Resources

1. Study Guide: Prose Analysis



2. Rubric: Prose Analysis



College Board Objectives from the 2020–21 CED

- **Skill LANG 7.B:** Develop a thesis statement that conveys a defensible claim about an interpretation of literature and that may establish a line of reasoning.
- **Skill LANG 7.C:** Develop commentary that establishes and explains relationships among textual evidence, the line of reasoning, and the thesis.
- **Skill LANG 7.D:** Select and use relevant and sufficient evidence to both develop and support a line of reasoning.

Student Activities

- Students will read the 2006 prose essay prompt and passage, from *Lady Windermere's Fan*, and discuss the theme of the passage.
- Students will write a debatable thesis statement to the prompt and score their work with the rubric. They will then either outline or complete a pre-writing activity.
- Students will write an essay in a timed setting.
- Students will self-evaluate their essays and reflect on their work using the College Board rubric.
- Students will review student samples and score them using the 1/4/1 rubric from College Board. Students will discuss the strengths of the student samples and debate their scores with their peers.

SELF-PACED OPTION

Although these lesson plans are designed for teachers to assign to students remotely, they could also be administered on a self-paced schedule with some modifications.

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LESSON PLAN

DAY ONE

Resource

Study Guide: Prose Analysis



- Assign the 2006 AP® English Literature prose prompt (which can be found on the College Board’s website under “The Exam” tab by clicking “Past Exam Questions”; the passage is an excerpt from Oscar Wilde’s *Lady Windermere’s Fan*).
https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/_ap06_frq_englishlit_51753.pdf
- After carefully reading the study guide, students should closely annotate the prompt of the question.
- Have students read and annotate the passage. In groups (or online discussion forum or FlipGrid), pose these questions so they can start thinking analytically about the excerpt: What do the characters in this scene seem to value? How do these values reveal something about their society? Have students use textual evidence to back up their responses.

DAY TWO

- Instruct students to write a debatable thesis statement for the 2006 AP® English Literature prose prompt that they discussed in the previous lesson.
- Students will share their thesis statements in a group (or online discussion forum) and discuss the following questions: Did the thesis earn the thesis point? Why or why not? What could be improved in this thesis? What is working well in this thesis?
- Students should then individually write an outline or a pre-writing for the 2006 prose prompt.

DAY THREE

- Time students for 40 minutes as they write an essay responding to the 2006 AP® English Literature prose prompt. You may wish to allow students to use their prewriting from the previous session.
- If you are teaching remotely, have students time themselves or use your LMS to create a timed quiz/writing assignment.

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DAY FOUR

Resource

Rubric: Prose Analysis



- Distribute the provided prose prompt rubric (student-friendly version of the new College Board rubric).
- Instruct students to read the rubric and assign a score to their own paper.
- Students should then write a reflection, providing the score they gave themselves in the 1/4/1 structure. Below the score, they should write a paragraph explaining why they feel they deserve the score they gave themselves and what they would like to do better or differently when they write their next essay.
- Instruct students to submit their timed essays and the reflection.

DAY FIVE

- Distribute the 2006 AP® English Literature prose prompt samples and commentary for question two. (College Board scored these on the old 9-point rubric, so they haven't been converted to the new 1/4/1 scale.) https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/ap06_englishlit_samples_q2.pdf
- Instruct students to read each of the three essays and determine what score the essay should learn. Make sure they are specific about the 1/4/1 score rating.
- In groups, pose the following discussion question: What score would you give each essay and why? Feel free to respectfully disagree and debate.
- After giving groups time to discuss, have them share their key takeaways with the class.
- If you are teaching online, move the debate to a discussion forum and have students complete this task virtually.

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THE PROSE FICTION ANALYSIS ESSAY

The Prose Fiction Analysis essay includes a prompt that gives a preview of the passage, then asks a specific question about how the author uses literary elements and techniques to accomplish a particular goal. The prompt will instruct you to do the following four things in your essay:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

How to Approach it

You have 40 minutes to write each essay. The following gives a guideline for how much time to spend on each of the following steps, but these are not set in stone. As you practice, you can experiment with whether you'll do better with a little more time for reading, a little more time for planning, exactly the suggested times, or something else.

1. Read the Prompt—2 minutes

- Read carefully, and identify what the question is asking. Read twice to be sure you understand.
- There's no need to read the four bullet points (reproduced above)—they'll be the same on every exam.

2. Read the Passage—8 minutes

- While reading the passage, focus on the task presented in the prompt. Your essay needs to address the question in the prompt to earn points.
- Read the passage through once, focusing on a basic understanding. Translate difficult language to yourself as you go, and if there are parts you can't make any sense of (or get bored with), skip over them.
- Read the passage through a second time, looking for evidence you can use in your essay. Look for literary elements that you can identify and underline them, then make notes in the margins about what you notice. Don't worry about interpretation at this point; just focus on identifying things that stand out to you.
- It doesn't matter if you can attach a fancy name to any particular technique the author uses, you just need to be able to identify it. You might note that the author uses the text of letters that characters write to each other without being able to name that "epistolary intrusion," and you'll still get your point across.

COMMON LITERARY ELEMENTS

As you read the text, here's a partial list of literary elements you can look for. You won't find all of these things in every passage, nor is this list exhaustive; it's just meant to help you get started thinking about how to read a prose fiction passage:

- **Syntax:** is the sentence structure consistent or varied? Does this contribute to the way in which meaning is conveyed in the passage?
- **Diction:** how does the author's word choice contribute to your understanding of the passage?
- **Symbolism:** are there things in the passage that represent something other than what they are literally?
- **Simile and Metaphor:** does the author use comparisons to enrich your understanding of characters or situations?
- **Imagery:** does the passage include descriptive language that appeals to your physical senses?
- **Personification:** does the author give human characteristics to inanimate objects?

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3. Write a Thesis—3 minutes

- Look at your notes about the evidence that you identified in step 2, and look for trends.
- Look back at the question in the prompt, and think about how the evidence you identified structures an answer to that issue.
- Write down a 1–2 sentence draft thesis statement. Don't worry about perfection here—you can revise it as you write your essay in step 5.

4. Plan the Essay—3 minutes

- *Introduction*: your first paragraph should provide a brief summary of the situation in the passage as it relates to the prompt. Include your thesis at the end; the thesis statement can earn you a point, so make it easy for the graders to find it.
- *Body paragraphs*: plan to write two well-developed body paragraphs in which you cite the evidence you identified in the passage and provide commentary on how it contributes to your interpretation of the passage. In planning your essay, note what the main focus of each paragraph will be (this can either be a specific literary element, or it can be a theme of the passage that is achieved through more than one element). In your outline, also jot down specific line numbers, so you know where to find the relevant evidence while you're writing.
- *Conclusion*: the most important aspect of the conclusion is that you have some type of conclusion. If it's really well-written, it can contribute to earning the point for sophistication, but there is no separate scoring category for the conclusion itself, so don't get stuck trying to compose the perfect wrap-up to your essay.

5. Write—24 minutes

Monitor the time you spend writing, as the proctor won't tell you when to move on to the next essay.

- Write as fast as you can while still keeping your handwriting legible. Also write as much as you can—longer essays tend to earn more points.
- Don't worry if your body paragraphs don't seem to logically flow from one to another—your graders understand that this essay is essentially a rough draft.
- Focus more on explaining how the evidence you cite connects to your interpretation of the passage than on your writing style or vocabulary. Evidence and commentary are worth up to four points, while sophistication is only worth one point, and you have limited time.

SCORING THE ESSAY

Thesis: 0–1 points

Evidence & Commentary: 0–4 points

Sophistication: 0–1 points

NOTES

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Prose Fiction Analysis

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|--|---|--|--|--------------|--------------|
| THEESIS | 0 POINTS | | 1 POINT | | | ROW A | |
| | Does not meet criteria for any of the following reasons: <input type="checkbox"/> No defensible thesis <input type="checkbox"/> Simple restatement of prompt only <input type="checkbox"/> Summary of passage with no connection to prompt <input type="checkbox"/> Describes passage features without making a defensible claim | | <input type="checkbox"/> Defensible interpretation of the passage <input type="checkbox"/> Responds to the prompt | | | | |
| EVIDENCE & COMMENTARY | 0 POINTS | 1 POINT | 2 POINTS | 3 POINTS | 4 POINTS | ROW B | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Simple restatement of thesis (if existing) OR <input type="checkbox"/> Incoherent writing OR <input type="checkbox"/> Prompt not addressed OR <input type="checkbox"/> No textual references made | EVIDENCE: <input type="checkbox"/> Generalized evidence AND COMMENTARY: <input type="checkbox"/> Focuses on overall plot or description of the passage rather than on specific details or techniques <input type="checkbox"/> Literary elements and devices mentioned but not explained | EVIDENCE: <input type="checkbox"/> Some specific evidence <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant evidence AND COMMENTARY: <input type="checkbox"/> Some evidence tied to argument <input type="checkbox"/> Mixes specific evidence and broad generalizations <input type="checkbox"/> Lacks a line of reasoning and progression of ideas <input type="checkbox"/> Simplistic, repetitive, or inaccurate explanations | EVIDENCE: <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient and relevant evidence AND COMMENTARY: <input type="checkbox"/> Uniformly offers evidence to support argument <input type="checkbox"/> Words and details from passage build the interpretation <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple claims are included <input type="checkbox"/> Slight lapses in support of key claims | EVIDENCE: <input type="checkbox"/> Specific and relevant evidence AND COMMENTARY: <input type="checkbox"/> Offers support for all claims <input type="checkbox"/> Well-organized line of reasoning with multiple supporting claims and clear explanations <input type="checkbox"/> Explains the significance of specific words and details, and connects them to the interpretation <input type="checkbox"/> Explains writer's literary techniques with multiple examples that are tied to the interpretation | | |
| | 0 POINTS | | 1 POINT | | | | ROW C |
| | Does not meet the criteria for any of the following reasons: <input type="checkbox"/> Sweeping generalizations of context <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective use of language <input type="checkbox"/> Oversimplifies the passage's complexities <input type="checkbox"/> Thematic interpretation not consistently developed <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative interpretations missing or only hinted at | | <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates sophisticated thinking <input type="checkbox"/> Develops a complex literary argument <input type="checkbox"/> Explores complexities and tensions in passage <input type="checkbox"/> Places interpretation into a larger context <input type="checkbox"/> Employs a vivid and persuasive writing style <input type="checkbox"/> Engages in multiple interpretations of the passage | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

TOTAL POINTS EARNED: / 6