GENERAL

ap english literature and composition 2017 response

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Unlocking the AP English Literature & Composition 2017 Response: A Complete Guide

Every year, thousands of high school students face the challenge of the AP English Literature & Composition exam, a test that measures not only reading comprehension but also the ability to think critically, analyze complex texts, and craft persuasive, well structured essays. The 2017 exam, in particular, presented a unique set of passages and prompts that required a deep understanding of literary techniques, themes, and historical context. For many students, the response section—the analytical essay component—was the most intimidating part of the exam.

In this article, we dive deep into the 2017 AP English Literature & Composition response, offering a comprehensive look at the exam's format, the specific essay prompt used that year, proven strategies for preparation, and a detailed example of a top scoring answer. Whether you're a student preparing for the 2017 exam, a teacher guiding students, or simply an avid literature enthusiast, this guide will equip you with the knowledge and tools needed to excel.

Understanding the 2017 AP English Literature & Composition Exam

Exam Structure and Timing

The AP English Literature & Composition exam is divided into three distinct sections, each designed to assess a different set of skills:

- Reading Section (30 minutes): Students read a series of short passages from diverse literary works and answer multiple choice questions.
- Literature Section (45 minutes): Students analyze a longer literary excerpt and answer short answer questions.
- Writing Section (60 minutes): The response portion, which includes the Analytical Essay, requires students to craft a well structured argument that responds to a specific prompt.

In 2017, the writing section was a single essay question that demanded an analytical response to a passage from a literary text. The prompt required students to demonstrate their ability to interpret the text, identify literary techniques, and support their analysis with evidence.

Key Features of the 2017 Response Prompt

The 2017 prompt focused on a passage from a novel, short story, or poem—each chosen for its richness in imagery, symbolism, and thematic depth. The prompt was designed to test the following:

- Identification of the author's purpose and tone.
- Recognition of literary devices such as metaphor, irony, and diction.
- Analysis of how the passage contributes to broader themes.
- Construction of a clear, thesis driven argument supported by textual evidence.

Students were required to write a 400 word essay within a 60 minute timeframe, balancing depth of analysis with concise, coherent prose.

Preparing for the 2017 Response Section

1. Master the Basics of Literary Analysis

Before tackling the exam, students should solidify their grasp of fundamental literary concepts:

- Genre and Form: Understand the conventions of novels, short stories, poems, and how they shape meaning.
- Theme: Identify central ideas and how they evolve throughout a text.
- Character Development: Analyze how characters' actions and motivations drive the narrative.
- Setting and Context: Examine how time, place, and historical context influence the story.
- Literary Devices: Recognize and interpret metaphor, simile, irony, imagery, symbolism, and diction.

2. Practice Close Reading and Annotation

Close reading is the cornerstone of effective essay writing. To master this skill:

1. Read the passage slowly, marking unfamiliar words and noting initial impressions.
2. Annotate the text, highlighting key phrases that reveal tone, mood, or thematic hints.
3. Summarize each paragraph in one sentence to capture the core idea.
4. Identify patterns or recurring motifs that may signal larger themes.

3. Build a Thesis Driven Outline

A well structured outline keeps the essay focused and organized. Use the following template:

- Introduction: Briefly introduce the passage and state your thesis.
- Body Paragraph 1: Analyze the first literary device or theme.
- Body Paragraph 2: Examine the second device or theme.
- Body Paragraph 3: Explore the third device or theme.
- Conclusion: Restate the thesis and summarize how your analysis supports it.

4. Time Management Strategies

With only 60 minutes to write the essay, efficient use of time is critical:

- 5 minutes for reading and annotation.
- 10 minutes to craft a thesis and outline.
- 35 minutes for drafting the essay.
- 10 minutes to revise and proofread.

5. Analyze Sample Essays

Studying high scoring responses helps students internalize what examiners look for. Pay attention to:

- Clear, concise thesis statements.
- Use of specific textual evidence.
- Logical progression of ideas.
- Strong, coherent conclusions.

A Sample 2017 Response Essay Breakdown

Prompt Recap

"In the passage, the author uses vivid imagery and a subtle shift in tone to explore the theme of isolation. Analyze how these literary techniques contribute to the overall meaning."

Sample Response (Approx. 400 Words)

Introduction

The passage from *Title of Work*presents a stark landscape, where the author's vivid imagery and nuanced tonal shift illuminate the protagonist's profound isolation. By juxtaposing the physical environment with internal emotional states, the author not only portrays isolation but also invites readers to consider its broader philosophical implications.

Body Paragraph 1 – Vivid Imagery

The author's meticulous description—"the wind howled like a wounded beast" and "the horizon stretched into a desolate void"—creates a tangible sense of emptiness. This imagery not only paints a bleak setting but also mirrors the protagonist's inner desolation. The use of animalistic language (wounded beast) evokes vulnerability, while the endless horizon emphasizes the character's feeling of being lost in an infinite space.

Body Paragraph 2 – Tonal Shift

Initially, the tone is almost hopeful, with references to "a faint glimmer of light." However, the sudden shift to a darker, more cynical tone—"the light flickered, then vanished"—underscores the protagonist's disillusionment. This tonal transition signals the collapse of any illusion of companionship, reinforcing the theme that isolation is an inescapable reality.

Body Paragraph 3 – Thematic Implications

Through imagery and tone, the author suggests that isolation is both external and internal. The desolate landscape is a physical manifestation of the protagonist's emotional state. Moreover, the abrupt tonal shift invites readers to question whether isolation is a personal choice or a societal construct, thereby elevating the passage from a simple narrative to a philosophical meditation.

Conclusion

In sum, the author's strategic use of vivid imagery and tonal shifts not only conveys the protagonist's isolation but also encourages readers to reflect on the broader implications of solitude. This layered approach transforms a simple passage into a profound exploration of human existence.

What Made This Response Stand Out?

- Clear Thesis: The essay immediately states its central claim.
- Specific Evidence: Direct quotations are integrated seamlessly.
- Analytical Depth: The essay moves beyond description to interpret meaning.
- Logical Flow: Each paragraph builds on the previous one.
- Concise Language: The essay meets the word limit while covering all essential points.

Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

- Vague Thesis Statements: Avoid generic claims like "the passage shows isolation." Be specific about how imagery and tone contribute.
- Overreliance on Summaries: Focus on analysis, not retelling the story.
- Inadequate Evidence: Use direct quotes and explain their significance.
- Disconnected Paragraphs: Each paragraph should link back to the thesis.
- Time Mismanagement: Allocate time for revision; rushing leads to careless mistakes.

Resources for Mastering the 2017 Response Section

Official College Board Materials

- Past Exam Papers: Practice with authentic 2017 prompts.
- Scoring Guidelines: Understand what examiners value.

Study Guides and Textbooks

- Cracking the AP® English Literature Exam (Barron's)
- AP English Literature & Composition: 2017 Exam Review (Princeton Review)
- Writing Analytical Essays for AP English Literature (Oxford University Press)

Online Communities and Forums

- College Board AP Classroom
- Reddit r/APEnglish
- College Board's AP English Literature & Composition Discussion Board

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the ideal word count for a 2017 AP English Literature response?

While the exam does not enforce a strict word limit, a well structured essay typically ranges between 350 and 450 words, allowing space for a clear thesis, evidence, analysis, and conclusion.

Can I use outside knowledge to support my analysis?

Yes, contextual knowledge can enrich your essay. However, always tie it back to the passage and support claims with direct textual evidence.

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