# AP English: Literature and Composition Prose Passage Questions

**1984 - 2011**

1. Read the following passage carefully. Then write a coherent essay showing how this passage provides a

characterization and evaluation of Emma more than Harriet.

1985 The excerpts below represent early and later drafts of a prose passage that records the writer's thoughts on how the experience of war affected his attitude toward language.

Write a well-organized essay in which you discuss the probable reasons for the writer's additions and deletions and the ways in which those revisions change the effect of the paragraph.

1986 The passage below is the opening of a novel. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you define the narrator's attitude toward the characters and show how he directs the reader's perceptions of those characters through his use of such stylistic devices as imagery, diction, narrative structure, and choice of specific details.

1987 In the selection below, George Eliot presents a conception of leisure that has lost its place in the society of her own time. Write an essay in which you describe her views on "old Leisure" and on leisure in the society of her own time and discuss the stylistic devices she uses to convey those views.

1988 Below is a complete short story. Read it carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze the blend of humor, pathos, and the grotesque in the story.

1989 Read the following passage carefully. Then write an essay that describes the attitude of the speaker toward Captain MacWhirr and that analyzes the techniques the speaker uses to define the captain's character.

1990 Write a well-organized essay in which you analyze the style and tone of the passage below, explaining how they help to express the author's attitudes.

1991 Read the following passage from *The Life of Samuel Johnson* by James Boswell. Then, in a well-organized essay, discuss the ways Boswell differentiates between the writing of Joseph Addison and that of Samuel Johnson. In your essay, analyze Boswell's views of both writers and the devices he uses to convey those views.

1992 In the following excerpts from the beginning and ending of Tillie Olsen's short story "I Stand Here Ironing," a mother's reflections are prompted by another person's concern about her daughter. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the narrative techniques and other resources of language Olsen uses to characterize the mother and the mother's attitudes toward her daughter.

1993 In the following excerpts from an essay, Lytton Strachey presents his conception of Florence Nightingale. In a well-organized essay, define Strachey's view and analyze how he conveys it. Consider such elements as diction, imagery, syntax, and tone.

1994 Read the following passage carefully. Then write an essay showing how the author dramatizes the young heroine's adventure. Consider such literary elements as diction, imagery, narrative pace, and point of view.

1995 Read the following short story carefully. Then write an essay analyzing how the author, Sandra Cisneros, uses literary techniques to characterize Rachel.

1996 Read the following passage from Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The House of the Seven Gables*. Then write a careful analysis of how the narrator reveals the character of Judge Pyncheon. You may emphasize whichever devices (e.g. tone, selection of detail, syntax, point of view) you find most significant.

1997 Read carefully the following passage from Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, a novel about the relocation of Japanese Canadians to internment campus during the Second World War. Then in a well-organized essay, analyze how changes in perspective and style reflect the narrator's complex attitude toward the past, In your analysis, consider literary elements such as point of view, structure, selection of detail, and figurative language.

1. Read carefully the following passage from George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch* (1871). Then write an essay in which you characterize the narrator's attitude toward Dorothea Brooke and analyze the literary techniques used to convey this attitude. Support your analysis with specific references to the passage
2. In the following passage from Cormac McCarhjty’s novel *The Crossing* (1994), the narrator describes a dramatic experience. Read the passage carefully. Then in a well-organized essay, show how McCarthy’s techniques convey the impact of the experience on the main character.
3. In the following passage from *The Spectator* (March 4, 1712), the English satirist Joseph Addison creates a character who keeps a diary. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze how the language of the passage characterizes the diarist and his society and how the characterization serves Addison’s satiric purpose. You may wish to consider such elements as selection of detail, repetition, and tone.
4. The passage below is taken from the novel *Tom Jones* (1749) by the English novelist and playwright Henry Fielding. In this scene, which occurs early in the novel, Squire Allworthy discovers an infant in his bed. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the techniques that Fielding employs in this scene to characterize Mr. Allworthy and Mrs. Deborah Wilkins.
5. In the following excerpt from a recent British novel, the narrator, a young man in his early twenties, is attending a play with his new girlfriend Isabel when she unexpectedly discovers that her parents are in the theater. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the author produces a comic effect. (Alain de Botton, *Kiss and Tell*)
6. (B) Read carefully the following passage from the beginning of a contemporary novel. Note the author’s use

of such elements as diction, syntax, imagery, and figurative language. Then write an essay in which you

analyze how the author’s use of language generates a vivid impression of Quoyle as a character.

2003 The following passage is an excerpt from “The Other Paris,” a short story by the Canadian writer Mavis

Gallant. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, explain how the author uses narrative

voice and characterization to provide social commentary.

1. The following passage comes from the opening of “The Pupil” (1891), a story by Henry James. Read the

passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the author’s depiction of the three characters

and the relationships among them. Pay particular attention to tone and point of view.

2004 (B) The following passage comes from Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Mary Barton* (1848), a novel about mill workers

living in Manchester, England, in the 1840s. In this scene, George Wilson, one of the workers, goes to the house of Mr. Carson, the mill owner, to request care for a fellow worker dying of typhus. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Gaskell uses elements such as point of view, selection of detail, dialogue, and characterization to make a social commentary.

1. Printed below is the complete text of a short story written in 1946 by Katharine Brush. Read the story

carefully. Then write an essay in which you show how the author uses literary devices to achieve her

purpose. (“Birthday Party”)

2005 (B) Read the passage below and write an essay discussing how the characterization in the passage reflects

the narrator’s attitude toward McTeague. In your essay, consider such elements as diction, tone, detail, and

syntax.

1. The following passage is an excerpt from *Lady Windemere’s Fan*, a play by Oscar Wilde, produced in 1892.

Read the passage carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the playwright

reveals the values of the charactes and the nature of their society.

2006 (B) Read the passage below, which comes from a nineteenth-century novel. Then, in a well-developed

essay, discuss how the narrator’s style reveals his attitudes toward the people he describes.

1. Read carefully the following passage from Dalton Trumbo’s novel *Johnny Got His Gun* (1939). Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how Trumbo uses such techniques as point of view, selection of detail, and syntax to characterize the relationship between the young man and his father.

2007 (B) In the following passage, contemporary novelist Seamus Deane reflects on his childhood experiences with books and writing. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Deane conveys the impact those early experiences had on him.

2008 The following passage is taken from *Fasting, Feasting,* a novel published in 1999 by Indian novelist Anita Desai. In the excerpt, Arun, an exchange student from Indian, joins members of his American host family for an afternoon at the beach. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the author uses such literary devices as speech and point of view to characterize Arun’s experience.

2008 (B) Jane Austen’s novel *Northanger Abbey* (1818) opens with the following passage. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the literary techniques Austen uses to characterize Catherine Moorland.

2009 The following selection is the opening of Ann Petry’s 1946 novel, *The Street*. Rad the selection carefully and then write an essay analyzing how Petry establishes Lutie Johnson’s relationship to the urban setting through the use of such literary devices as imagery, personification, selection of detail, and figurative language.

2009 (B) The passage below is the opening of *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948) a novel written by Zora Neale Hurston. Read the passage carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze the literary techniques Hurston usees to describe Sawley and to characterize the people who live there.

2010 In the following passage from Maria Edgeworth’s 1801 novel, *Belinda*, the narrator provides a description of Clarence Hervey, one of the suitors of the novel’s protagonist, Belinda Portman. Mrs. Stanhope, Belinda’s aunt, hopes to improve her niece’s social prospects and therefore has arranged to have Belinda stay with the fashionable Lady Delacour.

Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze Clarence Hervey’s complex character as Edgeworth develops it through such literary techniques as tone, point of view, and language.

2010 (B) The following passage is taken from the story “Cherry Bomb” by Maxine Clair. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how Clair uses literary techniques to characterize the adult narrator’s memories of her fith-grade summer world.

2011 The following passage is from the novel *Middlemarch* by George Eliot, the pen name for Mary Ann Evans (1819-1880). In the passage, Rosamond and Tertius Lydgate, a recently married couple, confront financial difficulties.

Read the passage carefully. Then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze how Eliot portrays these two characters and their complex relationship as husband and wife. You may wish to consider such literary devices as narrative perspective and selection of detail.

2011 (B) The following passage is the opening of the novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998) by the Cree novelist and playwright Tomson Highway. Read the passage carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how Highway uses literary devices to dramatize Okimasis’ experience.