

Exam Overview

The AP English Language and Composition Exam assesses student understanding of the skills and essential knowledge outlined in the course framework. The exam is 3 hours and 15 minutes long and includes 45 multiple-choice questions and 3 free-response questions. The details of the exam, including exam weighting and timing, can be found below:

Section	Question Type	Number of Questions	Exam Weighting	Timing
I	Multiple-choice questions	45	45%	60 minutes
	Reading questions	23–25		
	Writing questions	20–22		
II	Free-response questions	3	55%	2 hours, 15 minutes (includes one 15-minute reading period)
	Question 1: Synthesis (6 points)			
	Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis (6 points)			40 minutes recommended per essay
	Question 3: Argument (6 points)			

The exam assesses the following four big ideas for the course, as detailed below:

Big Ideas
Rhetorical Situation
Claims and Evidence
Reasoning and Organization
Style

How Student Learning Is Assessed on the AP Exam

Section I: Multiple-Choice

The eight AP English Language and Composition skill categories are assessed in the multiple-choice section, with the following weighting:

Skill Category	Exam Weighting
1: Rhetorical Situation – Reading	11–14%
2: Rhetorical Situation – Writing	11–14%
3: Claims and Evidence – Reading	13–16%
4: Claims and Evidence – Writing	11–14%
5: Reasoning and Organization – Reading	13–16%
6: Reasoning and Organization – Writing	11–14%
7: Style – Reading	11–14%
8: Style – Writing	11–14%

The multiple-choice section will include five sets of questions, as detailed below:

Set	Number of Questions Per Set	Skills Assessed
1	11–14	Reading skills (1,3,5,7)
2	11–14	Reading skills (1,3,5,7)
3	7–9	Writing skills (2,4,6,8)
4	7–9	Writing skills (2,4,6,8)
5	4–6	Writing skills (2,4,6,8)

Section II: Free-Response

The second section of the AP English Language and Composition Exam includes three questions.

FREE-RESPONSE QUESTION 1: SYNTHESIS

Free-response question 1 presents students with six sources organized around a specific topic. Two of the provided sources are visual, including at least one quantitative source. The remaining sources are text-based excerpts containing about 500 words per source. Students are asked to write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the provided sources and develops their own position on the topic. This question assesses students' ability to do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Select and use evidence from at least three of the provided sources to support the line of reasoning. Indicate clearly the sources used through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. Sources may be cited as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the description in parentheses.
- Explain how the evidence supports the line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating the argument.

All Synthesis essay questions will be worded in a similar way. A sample question and the stable prompt wording are provided below.

Sample Question

Eminent domain is the power governments have to acquire property from private owners for public use. The rationale behind eminent domain is that governments have greater legal authority over lands within their dominion than do private owners. Eminent domain has been instituted in one way or another throughout the world for hundreds of years.

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the sources and develops your position on the notion that eminent domain is productive and beneficial.

Stable Prompt Wording

The text in italics will vary by question, while the remainder of the prompt will be consistently used in all Synthesis essay questions.

[*Subject introduction*].

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source.

Write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the sources and develops your position on [*specific subject from the introduction*].

FREE-RESPONSE QUESTION 2: RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Free-response question 2 presents students with a passage of nonfiction prose of approximately 600 to 800 words. Students are asked to write an essay that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices. This question assesses students' ability to do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to develop and support the line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports the line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating the argument.

All Rhetorical Analysis essay questions will be worded in a similar way. A sample question and the stable prompt wording are provided below.

Sample Question

In 1997, then United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright gave the commencement speech to the graduating class of Mount Holyoke College, a women's college in Massachusetts.

Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Albright makes to convey her message that perseverance can make a difference.

Stable Prompt wording

The text in italics will vary by question, while the remainder of the prompt will be consistently used in all Rhetorical Analysis essay questions.

[*Background on the rhetorical situation*]. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices [*the writer*] makes to [*develop/achieve/convey*] [*his/her*] [*argument . . . /purpose . . . /message . . .*].

FREE-RESPONSE QUESTION 3: ARGUMENT

Free-response question 3 presents students with a literary or rhetorical concept or idea. Students are asked to write an essay that argues their position using evidence. This question assesses students' ability to do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Provide evidence to support the line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports the line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating the argument.

All Argument essay questions will be worded in a similar way. A sample question and the stable prompt wording are provided on the following page.

Sample Question

In her book *Gift from the Sea*, author and aviator Anne Morrow Lindbergh (1906–2001) writes, “We tend not to choose the unknown which might be a shock or a disappointment or simply a little difficult to cope with. And yet it is the unknown with all its disappointments and surprises that is the most enriching.”

Write an essay that argues your position on the value of exploring the unknown.

Stable Prompt Wording

The text in italics will vary by question, while the remainder of the prompt will be consistently used in all Argument essay questions.

[Topical discussion/introduction/quotation(s) and background].

Write an essay that argues your position on *[specific subject from the introduction]*.