

Teaching Students to Detect the Link Between Theme and Literary Devices



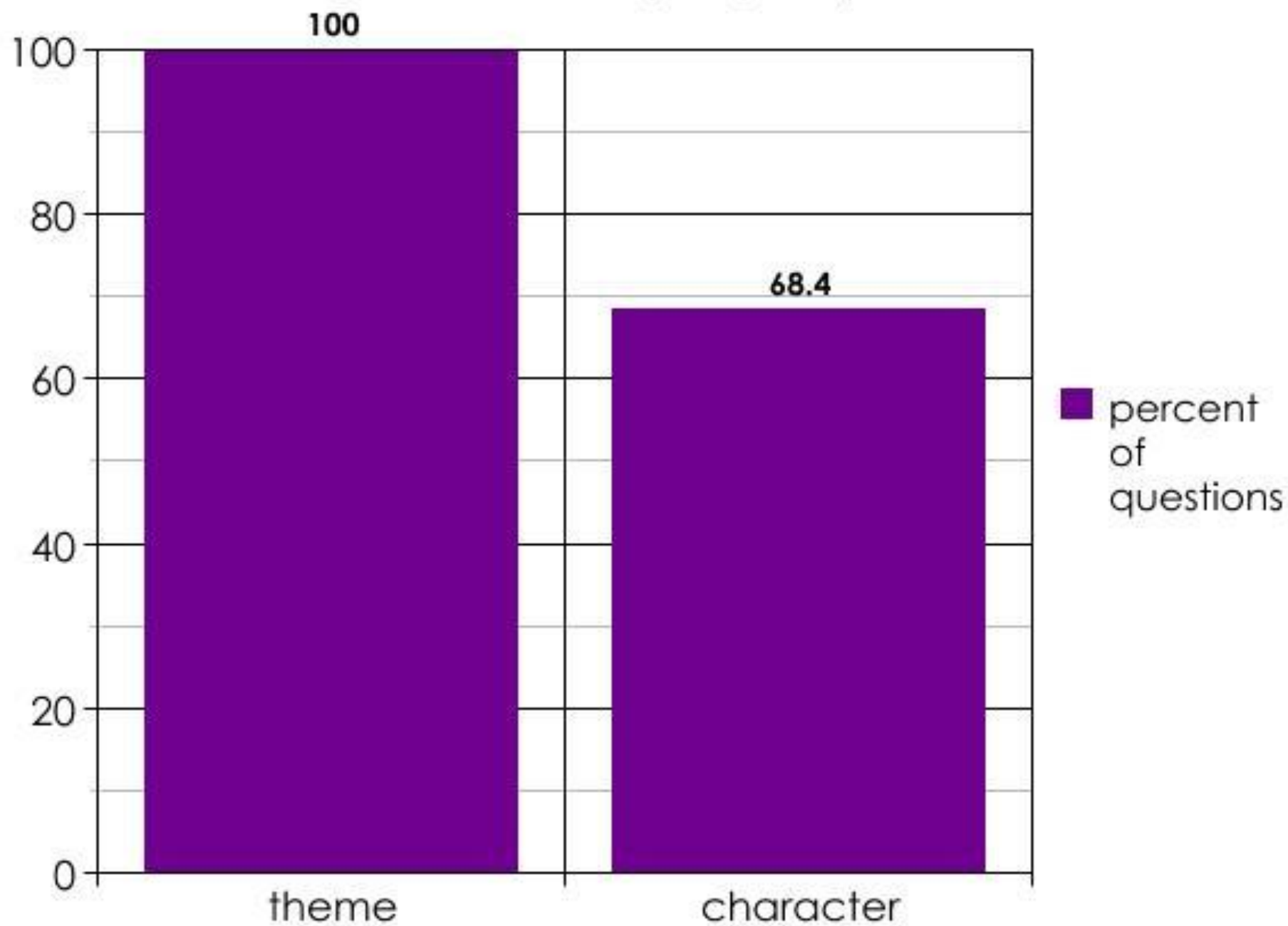
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AP English Literature open prompts 2001-2010



Guide students to search for larger thematic meaning.

Step one:

You must first decide on the topic of the literary work. Choose an abstract concept like *unrequited love, freedom, abuse, jealousy, self-pity, or apathy* that the work explores. Then, finish this sentence:

The _____ by _____
(genre) (title) (author)

is about _____.
(topic/abstract concept)





Teach students to investigate the human condition.

Step two:

Now, you need to state what the literary work expresses about the topic. If a poem is about *jealousy*, what idea does it express about that concept? Finish by inserting a clause to complete the following statement:

The _____ by _____
(genre) (title) (author)

is about _____ and reveals that
(topic/abstract concept)

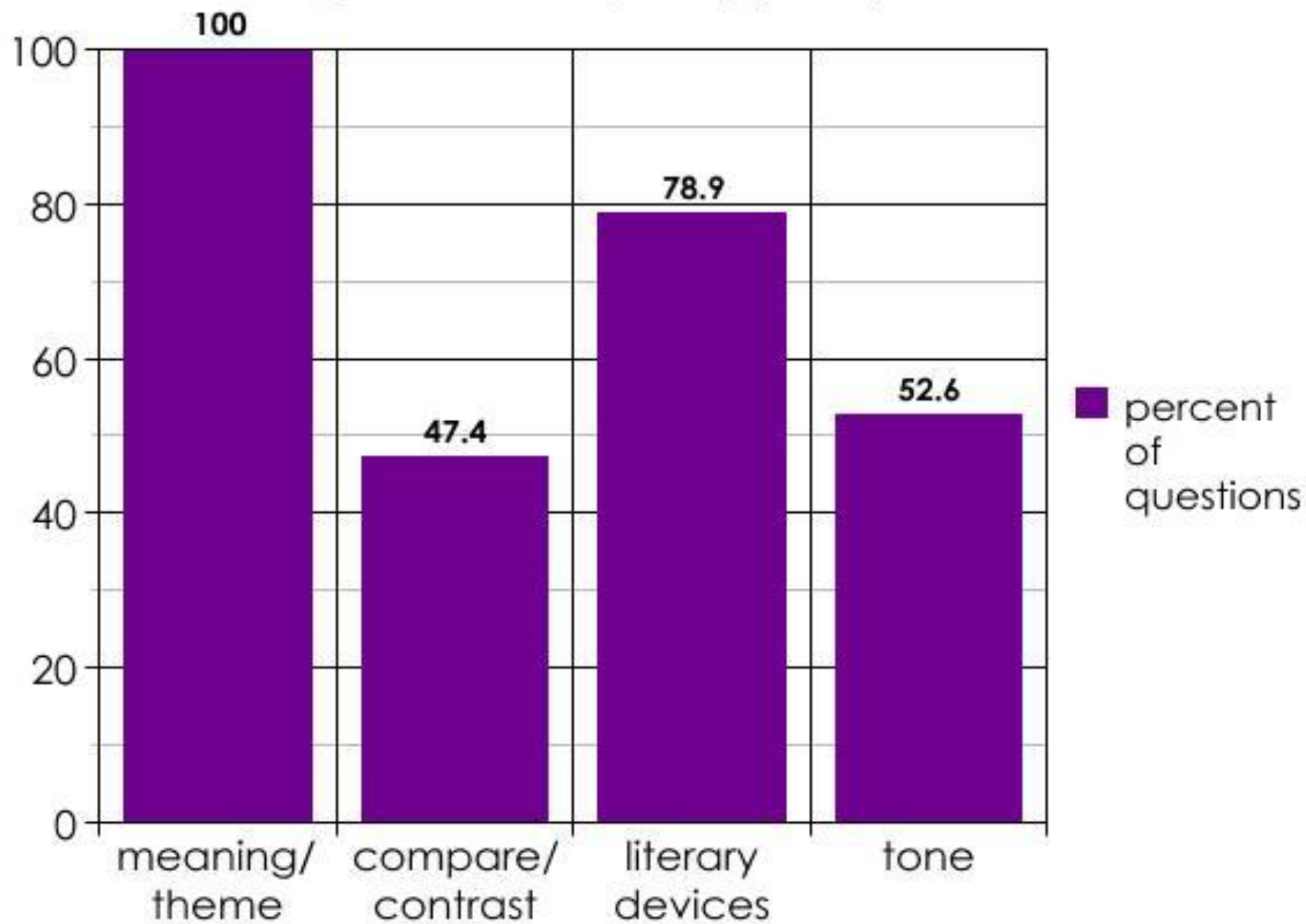
(opinion statement about humanity or human condition)

Practice with top 15 open question suggested texts.

1. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (20 times)
2. Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (18 times)
3. Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (15 times)
4. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (14 times)
5. Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (13 times)
F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (13 times)
Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (13 times)
6. Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (12 times)
7. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (11 times)
James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (11 times)
William Shakespeare's *King Lear* (11 times)
8. Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* (10 times)
Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (10 times)
Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (10 times)
Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (10 times)



AP English Literature poetry prompts 2001-2010



Literary Tools:

Devices for Poetry Analysis



- **tone**
- **figurative language**
- **imagery**
- **structure**
- **point of view**
- **speaker**
- **title**

Guide students to examine the clues that lead to a poem's meaning.



1. Notice the title. Make notes about your initial reactions at the top of the poem.
2. Locate the independent clauses in the poem, and read them individually. (They will often not end at the ends of the lines.) Notice any that are questions. For each independent clause, underline the subject once and verb twice.
3. Place boxes around vivid words whose meanings are complex or particularly apt. Look up words that you do not know; underline these words, and write synonyms above the words in the poem.
4. Look for figurative language (similes, metaphors, personification, symbol, allusion). Circle them and draw an arrow to the comparison—or explain the comparison if it is implied. Make notes in margin.



Guide students to examine the clues that lead to a poem's meaning.

5. Identify the speaker in this poem. From what point of view is the poem written? What is the occasion? Is it spoken to someone in particular? Make some notes about your ideas.
6. Locate the shift(s) in the poem (in point of view, tone, and focus); draw a dividing line (or lines) and briefly explain the change. Notice the "turning" words (but, so, yet, however); make an asterisk beside these.
7. Identify the tone of the poem (or tones if there is a shift). Write the tone word(s) in the margin and draw arrows to elements of the poem that support the tone. Use your tone chart for precise words.
8. Read the poem again, aloud, preferably to someone else. Then, complete this sentence at the bottom of the page: *The poem "[title]" by [poet] is about [abstract topic], and it reveals [observation about humanity].*

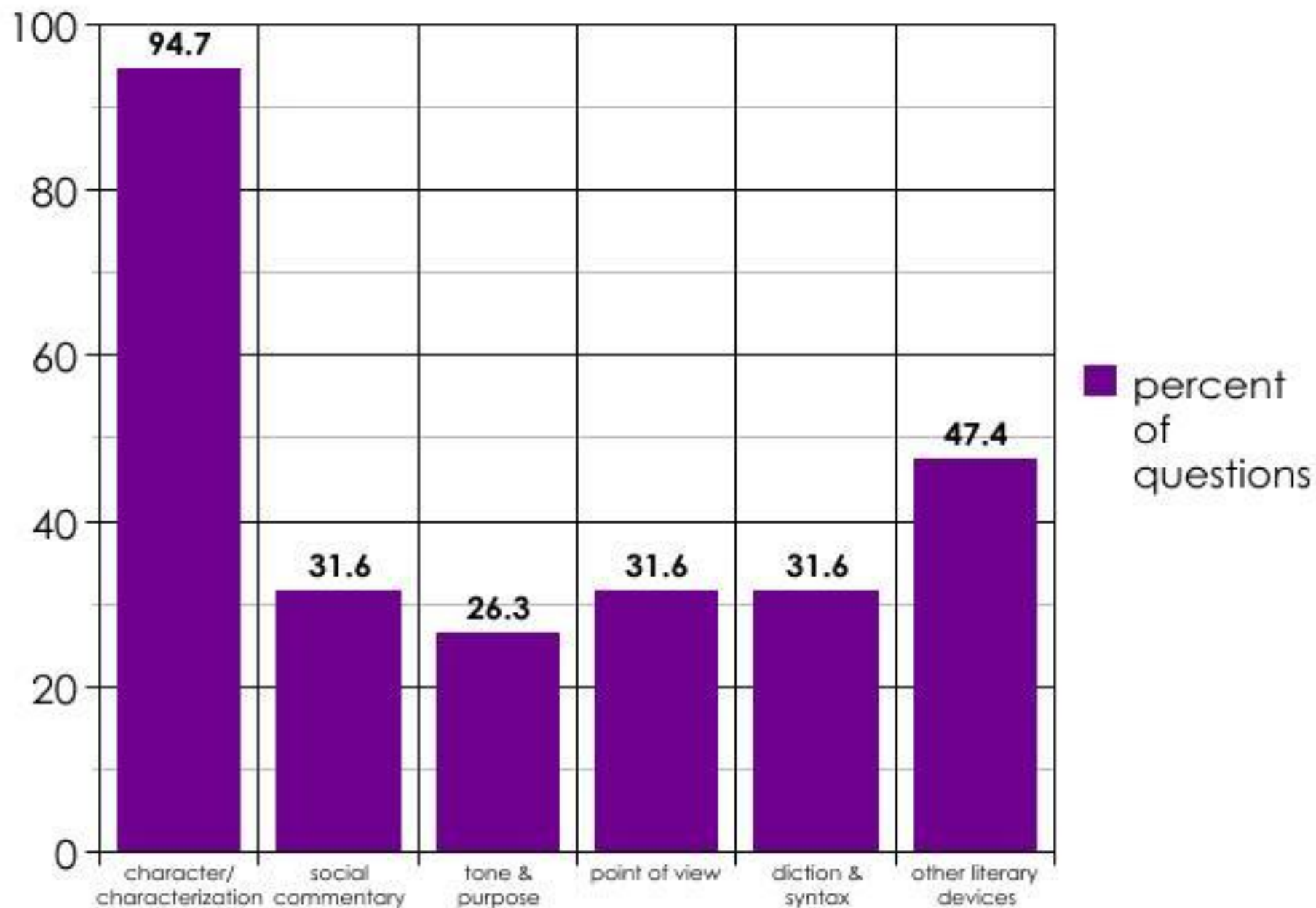
Practice investigating the clues of poetry.

In groups, follow steps to annotate a poem:

1. “To Helen” (Poe)
2. “Helen” (H. D.)
3. “EPΩΣ” (Bridges)
4. “Eros” (Stevenson)
5. “A Barred Owl” (Wilbur)
6. “The History Teacher” (Collins)
7. “When I Have Fears” (Keats)
8. “Mezzo Cammin” (Longfellow)



AP English Literature prose prompts 2001-2010



Devices for Prose Analysis: Tools for Discovering Meaning



- **characterization**
- **point of view**
- **tone**
- **satire**
- **author's purpose**
- **setting**
- **selection of detail**



Instruct students to scrutinize a passage to detect its meaning.

1. Identify the narrator in the passage. From what point of view is the passage narrated? How does narrative perspective relate to tone?
2. Classify characterization as direct or indirect. Note adjectives in the margin to describe the personality of character(s) as stated or suggested. How do characters' actions, words, and thoughts reveal their traits?
3. Place boxes around vivid words whose meanings are complex or particularly apt. Look up words that you do not know; underline these words, and write synonyms above the words in the passage.
4. Identify the tone(s) of the passage. Write the tone word(s) in the margin and draw arrows to elements of the text that support the tone. Use your tone chart for precise words.
5. Locate the shift(s) in the passage (in point of view, tone, and focus); draw a dividing line(s) and briefly explain the change.

Practice detecting the meaning of prose.

In groups, follow steps to annotate a passage:

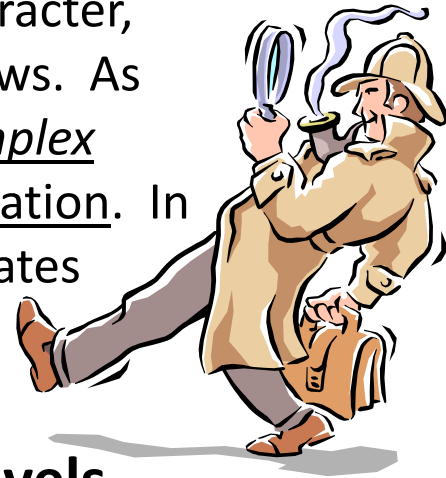
1. from *Johnny Got His Gun* (Trumbo)
2. from “The Pupil” (James)
3. from “The Other Paris” (Gallant)
4. from *The House of the Seven Gables* (Hawthorne)



Using Evidence in Prose Analysis

1. Require characterization analysis for assigned novels.

Jane Austen wrote about Emma, “I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like.” She is certainly a complex character, one whose strengths may be equaled or outnumbered by her flaws. As you read, focus on the ways in which Austen reveals Emma’s complex character by choosing quotations of direct or indirect characterization. In a detailed paragraph for each, explain how the quotation illuminates Emma’s character and reveals the narrator’s attitude—tone—toward the protagonist.



2. Ask students to analyze point of view in assigned novels.

Your task is to analyze McEwan’s use of shifting point of view in the four sections of *Atonement*. How does McEwan’s choice to use different points of view in each section affect the reader’s understanding of events and characters? For each section, you must compose a unified analysis of 250-500 words, beginning with a clearly stated central idea about how the point of view functions in that section to convey meaning and supported with textual evidence. You need to integrate into your analysis four supporting quotations that clearly illustrate the point of view and support your central idea.

Developing the Case: Organizing an AP Essay

Introduction:

- Be brief.
- Do not parrot the prompt.
- Compose a thesis that clearly responds to prompt and provides insight into topic. It should provide focus for the essay and should not contain a list.

Body:

- Organize paragraphs according to ideas related to meaning rather than literary device.
- Provide at least two specific textual references as support in each body paragraph.
- Do not allow long quotations to control the paragraph. Use pointed and precise textual references.
- Only include references and literary elements that clearly support the thesis.

Conclusion:

- Do not repeat the thesis.
- Make a thematic connection. Explain what the passage can teach us about the human experience.



Incorporating Evidence

1. ***Expose***

After clearly expressing an idea, introduce the evidence and provide context.

2. ***Excerpt***

Cite the evidence. When using a quotation, introduce it at the beginning of sentence.

3. ***Explain***

Provide an explanation of the significance of the evidence and reveal how the evidence supports your idea.

Example :

In *As I Lay Dying*, Cash's acts of devotion reveal that love, a verb more than a noun, is selfless. Before her death, he toils to make his mother's life less burdensome, completing Jewel's chores—"work that pa still thought Jewel was doing and that ma thought Dewey Dell was doing" (119)—without recognition. As Addie dies, Cash labors unceasingly in the rain, "soaked, scrawny, and tireless" (69), to construct a coffin that will provide a fitting burial for his mother. Cash functions without concern for himself and conveys the theme that love involves action instead of words.