

# Tackling the Timed-Writing Questions on the AP Exam

## Pre-writing

- Devote at least ten of your forty minutes to the pre-writing process.
- Read the text at least three times before beginning the writing process. Mark the text thoroughly as you read.
- Underline each part of the question to make sure that you cover all the parts.
- Remember that the AP Exam is asking students to **recognize complexity**. Approach each prompt with the goal of seeing the topic/character/issue as \_\_\_\_\_ *yet* \_\_\_\_\_.
- Use an outline strategy as an analysis tool:

State general theme of the work here as a reminder.

parts of  
the prompt

specific examples  
from the text

## Writing and Thinking

- Attack the question immediately. Take a stand in a clear and focused thesis. An essay is not a mystery novel, so there's no need to create suspense by withholding information until the end.
- Don't blindly repeat the prompt or create a throw-away first paragraph. A restating of the prompt + a laundry list of main points ≠ thesis paragraph.
- Do not restate the essay or thesis in the conclusion. For closure, ask yourself "so what?" and conclude something.
- An essay is not an information dump site; a thesis is not a dump truck.
- Don't ask questions in your essay. Your task is to assert ideas and back them up with details.
- Avoid the five-paragraph canned essay. Use organic organization. Your organization technique should enhance analysis.
- Avoid formulaic writing. Be bold and independent.
- Do not paraphrase the literary works. Regurgitation is not a substitute for critical thinking.

## General Suggestions

- Avoid first person if possible in your response. Use objective third person instead.
- Understand the holistic grading system:
  - \* Did the student understand what he or she read?
  - \* Did the student answer the question asked?
  - \* How well is the essay written?
- Don't be a critic of the work or the prompt; answer the prompt, and don't evaluate the work's merit.