

AP Multiple Choice Test Strategies:

About the Exam:

- The AP Multiple Choice Section equals **45%** of your total score. It lasts **one hour** and usually contains **55 questions**.
- Expect **four passages** with **12-16 questions each**. Allow about **15 minutes per passage**.
- Expect **two poems** and **two prose** passages (occasionally a piece of drama)
- **Scoring = one point** for a correct answer, **zero points** for a blank answer, **¼ point deduction** for a wrong answer.
- Test only uses literature from **1575—present** (no Middle English or Old English)
- One passage will include a **minority writer**.
- Expect **17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th century** passage.

General Strategies:

- **WRITE on the test.** Paraphrase in the margins; underline key passages, names, adjectives, descriptions of characters, diction that reveals tone...
- **Read the directions carefully:** Know if each question has one or more correct option. Know how much time remains (this governs your strategy)
- **Preview the passage:** Read through the questions for a particular passage quickly and answer the easiest questions first. **Don't** skip from passage to passage.
- **Read through the passage a second time and answer more difficult questions:** You may pick up cues for answers from the first reading, or become more comfortable in the testing situation
- **If time allows, review both questions and answers:** It is possible you mis-read questions the first time
- **Cover the options, read the stem, and try to answer:** Select the option that most closely matches your answer
- **Read the stem with each option.**

Strategies to answer difficult questions:

- **Eliminate options you know to be incorrect.** Mark on the exam; cross off wrong answers
- **If any part of the answer is false, the entire answer is wrong**
- **Question options that don't fit grammatically with the stem**
- **Question options that are totally unfamiliar to you**
- **Pay close attention to absolutes** (always, never, definitely) **and qualifiers** (often, seemingly, possible).
- **"All of the above:"** If you know two of three options seem correct, "all of the above" is a strong possibility
- **Number answers:** Toss out the high and low and consider the middle range numbers
- **"Look alike options:"** One is probably correct; choose the best but eliminate choices that mean basically the same thing, and thus cancel each other out
- **Echo options:** If two options are opposite each other, chances are one of them is correct
- **If two alternatives seem correct,** compare them for differences, then refer to the stem to find your best answer
- **Guess only if you can positively eliminate two or more options.** Otherwise, leave it blank.
- **Use hints from questions you know** to answer questions you do not.
- **Remember that you are only looking for the best answer,** not merely a correct one.