

Terms for the Multiple-Choice and Essay Sections

Some of the following terms may be used in the multiple-choice questions and/or answers, or in essay-section instructions. You might choose to incorporate others into your essay writing, for example, to help explain the effect of a literary device mentioned in the essay prompt.

ad hominem argument From the Latin meaning “to or against the man,” this is an argument that appeals to emotion rather than reason, to feeling rather than intellect.

allegory The device of using character and/or story elements symbolically to represent an abstraction in addition to the literal meaning. In some allegories, for example, an author may intend the characters to personify an abstraction like hope or freedom. The allegorical meaning usually deals with moral truth or a generalization about human existence.

alliteration The repetition of sounds, especially initial consonant sounds in two or more neighboring words (as in “she sells sea shells”). Although the term is not used in the multiple-choice section, you can look for alliteration in any essay passage. The repetition can reinforce meaning, unify ideas, and/or supply a musical sound.

allusion A direct or indirect reference to something that is presumably commonly known, such as an event, book, myth, place, or work of art. Allusions can be historical (like referring to Hitler), literary (like referring to Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*), religious (like referring to Noah and the flood), or mythical (like referring to Atlas). There are, of course, many more possibilities, and a work may simultaneously use multiple layers of allusion.

ambiguity The multiple meanings, either intentional or unintentional, of a word, phrase, sentence, or passage.

analogy A similarity or comparison between two different things or the relationship between them. An analogy can explain something unfamiliar by associating it with, or pointing out its similarity to, something more familiar. Analogies can also make writing more vivid, imaginative, and intellectually engaging.

antecedent The word, phrase, or clause referred to by a pronoun. The AP English Language and Composition Exam occasionally asks for the antecedent of a given pronoun in a long, complex sentence or in a group of sentences.

antithesis A figure of speech involving a seeming contradiction of ideas, words, clauses, or sentences within a balanced grammatical structure. The resulting parallelism serves to emphasize opposition of ideas. The familiar phrase “Man proposes, God disposes” is an example of antithesis, as is John Dryden’s description in *The Hind and the Panther*: “Too black for heaven, and yet too white for hell.”

aphorism A terse statement of known authorship that expresses a general truth or moral principle. (If the authorship is unknown, the statement is generally considered to be a folk proverb.) An aphorism can be a memorable summation of the author’s point.

apostrophe A figure of speech that directly addresses an absent or imaginary person or personified abstraction, such as liberty or love. The effect may add familiarity or emotional intensity. William Wordsworth addresses John Milton as he writes, “Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour: England hath need of thee.”

atmosphere The emotional mood created by the entirety of a literary work, established partly by the setting and partly by the author’s choice of objects that are described. Even such elements as a description of the weather can contribute to the atmosphere. Frequently, atmosphere foreshadows events. See **mood**.

caricature A representation, especially pictorial or literary, in which the subject’s distinctive features or peculiarities are deliberately exaggerated to produce a comic or grotesque effect. Sometimes caricature can be so exaggerated that it becomes a grotesque imitation or misrepresentation. Synonymous words include *burlesque*, *parody*, *travesty*, *satire*, *lampoon*.

chiasmus A figure of speech based on inverted parallelism. It is a rhetorical figure in which two clauses are related to each another through a reversal of terms. The purpose is usually to make a larger point or to provide balance or order. In classical rhetoric, the parallel structures did not repeat words, such as found in Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*: "His time a moment, and a point his space." However, contemporary standards allow for repeated words; a commonly cited example comes from John F. Kennedy's inaugural address: "... ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

clause A grammatical unit that contains both a subject and a verb. An independent, or main, clause expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence. A dependent, or subordinate, clause cannot stand alone as a sentence and must be accompanied by an independent clause. Examine this sample sentence: "Because I practiced hard, my AP scores were high." In this sentence, the independent clause is "my AP scores were high," and the dependent clause is "Because I practiced hard."

colloquialism Slang or informality in speech or writing. Not generally acceptable for formal writing, colloquialisms give work a conversational, familiar tone. Colloquial expressions in writing include local or regional dialects.

conceit A fanciful expression, usually in the form of an extended metaphor or surprising analogy between seemingly dissimilar objects. A conceit displays intellectual cleverness due to the unusual comparison being made.

connotation The nonliteral, associative meaning of a word; the implied, suggested meaning. Connotations may involve ideas, emotions, or attitudes. See **denotation**.

denotation The strict, literal, dictionary definition of a word, devoid of any emotion, attitude, or color. See **connotation**.

diction Related to style, diction refers to the writer's word choices, especially with regard to their correctness, clearness, or effectiveness. For the AP Language and Composition Exam, you should be able to describe an author's diction (for example, formal or informal, ornate or plain) and understand the ways in which diction can complement the author's purpose. Diction, combined with syntax, figurative language, literary devices, and so on, creates an author's style. **Note:** This term frequently appears in the essay question's wording. In your thesis, avoid phrases such as, "The author uses diction. . . ." Because diction, by definition, is *word choice*, this phrase really says, "The author chooses words to write . . .", which is as redundant (and silly) as claiming, "A painter uses paints to paint." At least try to put an adjective in front of the word "diction" to help describe it, such as "stark diction" or "flowery and soft diction." See **syntax**.

didactic From the Greek, "didactic" literally means "instructive." Didactic works have the primary aim of teaching or instructing, especially the teaching of moral or ethical principles.

euphemism From the Greek for "good speech," euphemisms are a more agreeable or less offensive substitute for generally unpleasant words or concepts. The euphemism may be used to adhere to standards of social or political correctness, or to add humor or ironic understatement. Saying "earthly remains" rather than "corpse" is an example of euphemism.

extended metaphor A metaphor developed at great length, occurring frequently in or throughout a work. See **metaphor**.

figurative language Writing or speech that is not intended to carry literal meaning and is usually meant to be imaginative and vivid. See **figure of speech**.

figure of speech A device used to produce figurative language. Many compare dissimilar things. Figures of speech include, for example, apostrophe, hyperbole, irony, metaphor, metonymy, oxymoron, paradox, personification, simile, synecdoche, and understatement.

generic conventions This term describes traditions for each genre. These conventions help to define each genre; for example, they differentiate between an essay and journalistic writing or an autobiography and political writing. On the AP Language and Composition Exam, try to distinguish the unique features of a writer's work from those dictated by convention.

genre The major category into which a literary work fits. The basic divisions of literature are prose, poetry, and drama. However, "genre" is a flexible term; within these broad boundaries exist many subdivisions that are often called genres themselves. For example, prose can be divided into fiction (novels and short stories) or nonfiction (essays, biographies, autobiographies, and so on). Poetry can be divided into such subcategories as lyric, dramatic, narrative, epic, and so on.

Drama can be divided into tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, and so on. On the AP Language and Composition Exam, expect the majority of the passages to be from the following genres: autobiography, biography, diaries, criticism, and essays, as well as journalistic, political, scientific, and nature writing.

homily This term literally means “sermon,” but more informally, it can include any serious talk, speech, or lecture involving moral or spiritual advice.

hyperbole A figure of speech using deliberate exaggeration or overstatement. Hyperboles often have a comic effect; however, a serious effect is also possible. Often, hyperbole produces irony at the same time.

imagery The sensory details or figurative language used to describe, arouse emotion, or represent abstractions. On a physical level, imagery uses terms related to the five senses; we refer to visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, or olfactory imagery. On a broader and deeper level, however, one image can represent more than one thing. For example, a rose may present visual imagery while also representing the color in a woman’s cheeks. An author, therefore, may use complex imagery while simultaneously employing other figures of speech, especially metaphor and simile. In addition, this term can apply to the total of all the images in a work. On the AP Language and Composition Exam, pay attention to *how* an author creates imagery and the effect of that imagery.

inference/infer To draw a reasonable conclusion from the information presented. When a multiple-choice question asks for an inference to be drawn from the passage, the most direct, most reasonable inference is the safest answer choice. If an inference is implausible, it’s unlikely to be the correct answer. Note that if the answer choice is directly stated, it is *not* inferred and is wrong.

invective An emotionally violent, verbal denunciation or attack using strong, abusive language.

irony/ironic The contrast between what is stated explicitly and what is really meant; the difference between what appears to be and what actually is true. Irony is used for many reasons, but frequently, it’s used to create poignancy or humor. In general, three major types of irony are used in language:

1. In *verbal* irony, the words literally state the opposite of the writer’s (or speaker’s) true meaning.
2. In *situational* irony, events turn out the opposite of what was expected. What the characters and readers think ought to happen does not actually happen.
3. In *dramatic* irony, facts or events are unknown to a character in a play or piece of fiction but known to the reader, audience, or other characters in the work.

juxtaposition Placing dissimilar items, descriptions, or ideas close together or side by side, especially for comparison or contrast.

loose sentence A type of sentence in which the main idea (independent clause) comes first, followed by dependent grammatical units such as phrases and clauses. If a period were placed at the end of the independent clause, the clause would be a complete sentence. A work containing many loose sentences often seems informal, relaxed, and conversational. See **periodic sentence**.

metaphor A figure of speech using implied comparison of seemingly unlike things or the substitution of one for the other, suggesting some similarity. Metaphorical language makes writing more vivid, imaginative, thought provoking, and meaningful. See **simile**.

metonymy A term from the Greek meaning “changed label” or “substitute name,” metonymy is a figure of speech in which the name of one object is substituted for that of another closely associated with it. A news release that claims “the White House declared” rather than “the President declared” is using metonymy. This term is unlikely to be used in the multiple-choice section, but you might see examples of metonymy in an essay passage.

mood This term has two distinct technical meanings in English writing. The first meaning is grammatical and deals with verbal units and a speaker’s attitude. The *indicative* mood is used only for factual sentences. For example, “Joe eats too quickly.” The *subjunctive* mood is used for a doubtful or conditional attitude. For example, “If I were you, I’d get another job.” The *imperative* mood is used for commands. For example, “Shut the door!” The second meaning of mood is literary, meaning the prevailing atmosphere or emotional aura of a work. Setting, tone, and events can affect the mood. In this usage, mood is similar to tone and atmosphere.

narrative The telling of a story or an account of an event or series of events.

onomatopoeia A figure of speech in which natural sounds are imitated in the sounds of words. Simple examples include such words as buzz, hiss, hum, crack, whinny, and murmur. This term is not used in the multiple-choice section. If you identify examples of onomatopoeia in an essay passage, note the effect.

oxymoron From the Greek for “pointedly foolish,” an oxymoron is a figure of speech wherein the author groups apparently contradictory terms to suggest a paradox. Simple examples include “jumbo shrimp” and “cruel kindness.” This term does not appear in the multiple-choice questions, but there is a slight chance you will see it used by an author in an essay passage or find it useful in your own essay writing.

paradox A statement that appears to be self-contradictory or opposed to common sense, but upon closer inspection contains some degree of truth or validity. The first scene of *Macbeth*, for example, closes with the witches’ cryptic remark “Fair is foul, and foul is fair. . . .”

parallelism Also referred to as parallel construction or parallel structure, this term comes from Greek roots meaning “beside one another.” It refers to the grammatical or rhetorical framing of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs to give structural similarity. This can involve, but is not limited to, repetition of a grammatical element such as a preposition or verbal phrase. A famous example of parallelism begins Charles Dickens’s novel *A Tale of Two Cities*: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity. . . .” The effects of parallelism are numerous, but, frequently, they act as an organizing force to attract the reader’s attention, add emphasis and organization, or simply provide a pleasing, musical rhythm. Other famous examples include *Julius Caesar*’s “I came, I saw, I conquered,” or, as Tennyson’s poem “Ulysses” claims, “To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”

parody A work that closely imitates the style or content of another with the specific aim of comic effect and/or ridicule. As comedy, parody distorts or exaggerates distinctive features of the original. As ridicule, it mimics the work by repeating and borrowing words, phrases, or characteristics in order to illuminate weaknesses in the original. Well-written parody offers insight into the original, but poorly written parody offers only ineffectual imitation. Usually an audience must grasp literary allusion and understand the work being parodied in order to fully appreciate the nuances of the newer work. Occasionally, however, parodies take on a life of their own and don’t require knowledge of the original.

pedantic An adjective that describes words, phrases, or general tone that is overly scholarly, academic, or bookish.

periodic sentence A sentence that presents its central meaning in a main clause at the end. This independent clause is preceded by a phrase or clause that cannot stand alone. For example, “Ecstatic with my AP scores, I let out a loud shout of joy!” The effect of a periodic sentence is to add emphasis and structural variety. See **loose sentence**.

personification A figure of speech in which the author presents or describes concepts, animals, or inanimate objects by endowing them with human attributes or emotions. Personification is used to make these abstractions, animals, or objects appear more vivid to the reader.

point of view In literature, the perspective from which a story is told. There are two general divisions of point of view and many subdivisions within those.

1. The *first-person narrator* tells the story with the first-person pronoun, “I,” and is a character in the story. This narrator can be the protagonist (the hero or heroine), a participant (a character in a secondary role), or an observer (a character who merely watches the action).
2. The *third-person narrator* relates the events with the third-person pronouns, “he,” “she,” and “it.” Be aware of two main subdivisions: *omniscient* and *limited omniscient*. In the third-person omniscient point of view, the narrator, with godlike knowledge, presents the thoughts and actions of any or all characters. This all-knowing narrator can reveal what each character feels and thinks at any given moment. The third-person limited-omniscient point of view, as its name implies, presents the feelings and thoughts of only one character, and only the actions of all remaining characters. This definition applies in questions in the multiple-choice section. However, on the essay portion of the exam, the term “point of view” carries a different meaning. When you’re asked to analyze an author’s point of view, address the author’s *attitude*.

predicate adjectives One type of subject complement—an adjective, group of adjectives, or adjective clause that follows a linking verb. It is in the predicate of the sentence, and modifies or describes the subject. For example, in the sentence “My boyfriend is tall, dark, and handsome,” the group of predicate adjectives (“tall, dark, and handsome”) describes “boyfriend.”

predicate nominative A second type of subject complement—a noun, group of nouns, or noun clause that renames the subject. It, like the predicate adjective, follows a linking verb and is located in the predicate of the sentence. For example, in the sentence “Abe Lincoln was a man of integrity,” the predicate nominative is “man of integrity,” as it renames Abe Lincoln. Occasionally, this term or the term “predicate adjective” appears in a multiple-choice question.

prose One of the major divisions of genre, “prose” refers to fiction and nonfiction, including all its forms, because they are written in ordinary language and most closely resemble everyday speech. Technically, anything that isn’t poetry or drama is prose. Therefore, all passages in the AP Language and Composition Exam are prose. Of course, prose writers often borrow poetic and dramatic elements.

repetition The duplication, either exact or approximate, of any element of language, such as a sound, word, phrase, clause, sentence, or grammatical pattern. When repetition is poorly done, it bores, but when it’s well done, it links and emphasizes ideas while allowing the reader the comfort of recognizing something familiar. See **parallelism**.

rhetoric From the Greek for “orator,” this term describes the principles governing the art of writing effectively, eloquently, and persuasively.

rhetorical appeal The persuasive device by which a writer tries to sway the audience’s attention and response to any given work. Three rhetorical appeals were defined by Aristotle:

1. *Logos* employs logical reasoning, combining a clear idea (or multiple ideas) with well-thought-out and appropriate examples and details. These supports are logically presented and rationally reach the writer’s conclusion.
2. *Ethos* establishes credibility in the speaker. Since by definition “ethos” means the common attitudes, beliefs, and characteristics of a group or time period, this appeal sets up believability in the writer. He or she is perceived as someone who can be trusted and is concerned with the reader’s best interests.
3. *Pathos* plays on the reader’s emotions and interests. A sympathetic audience is more likely to accept a writer’s assertions, so this appeal draws upon that understanding and uses it to the writer’s advantage.

rhetorical modes This flexible term describes the variety, the conventions, and the purposes of the major kinds of writing. Sometimes referred to as modes of discourse, the four most common rhetorical modes and their purposes are as follows:

1. The purpose of *exposition* (or expository writing) is to explain and analyze information by presenting an idea, relevant evidence, and appropriate discussion. The AP Language and Composition Exam essay questions are frequently set up as expository topics.
2. The purpose of *argumentation* is to prove the validity of an idea, or point of view, by presenting sound reasoning, thoughtful discussion, and insightful argument that thoroughly convince the reader. Persuasive writing is a type of argumentation having the additional aim of urging some form of action. Many AP Language and Composition Exam essay questions ask you to form an argument.
3. The purpose of *description* is to re-create, invent, or visually present a person, place, event, or action so that the reader can picture that being described. Sometimes an author engages all five senses in description; good descriptive writing can be sensuous and picturesque. Descriptive writing may be straightforward and objective or highly emotional and subjective.
4. The purpose of *narration* is to tell a story or narrate an event or series of events. This writing mode frequently uses the tools of descriptive writing.

rhetorical question A question that is asked merely for effect and does not expect a reply. The answer is assumed.

sarcasm From the Greek meaning “to tear flesh,” sarcasm involves bitter, caustic language that is meant to hurt or ridicule someone or something. It may use irony as a device, but not all ironic statements are sarcastic (that is, intending to ridicule). When well done, sarcasm can be witty and insightful; when poorly done, it’s simply cruel.

satire A work that targets human vices and follies, or social institutions and conventions, for reform or ridicule. Regardless of whether or not the work aims to reform humans or their society, satire is best seen as a style of writing rather than a purpose for writing. It can be recognized by the many devices used effectively by the satirist, such as irony, wit, parody, caricature, hyperbole, understatement, and sarcasm. The effects of satire are varied, depending on the writer's goal, but good satire—often humorous—is thought provoking and insightful about the human condition.

simile An explicit comparison, normally using “like,” “as,” or “if.” For example, remember Robbie Burns's famous lines, “O, my love is like a red, red rose / That's newly sprung in June. / O, my love is like a melody, / That's sweetly played in tune.” See **metaphor**.

style The consideration of style has two purposes:

1. An evaluation of the sum of the choices an author makes in blending diction, syntax, figurative language, and other literary devices. Some authors' styles are so idiosyncratic that we can quickly recognize works by the same author (or writer emulating that author's style). Compare, for example, Jonathan Swift to George Orwell, or William Faulkner to Ernest Hemingway. We can analyze and describe an author's personal style and make judgments on how appropriate it is to the author's purpose. Styles can be called flowery, explicit, succinct, rambling, bombastic, commonplace, incisive, or laconic, to name only a few examples.
2. Classification of authors to a group and comparison of an author to similar authors.

By means of such classification and comparison, one can see how an author's style reflects and helps to define a historical period, such as the Renaissance or the Victorian period, or a literary movement, such as the Romantic, Transcendental, or Realist movement.

subject complement The word (with any accompanying phrases) or clause that follows a linking verb and complements, or completes, the subject of the sentence by either (1) renaming it or (2) describing it. The former is technically called a predicate nominative, the latter a predicate adjective. See **predicate nominative** and **predicate adjective** for examples of sentences. This term is occasionally used in a multiple-choice question.

subordinate clause Like all clauses, this word group contains both a subject and a verb (plus any accompanying phrases or modifiers), but unlike the independent clause, the subordinate clause cannot stand alone; it does not express a complete thought. Also called a dependent clause, the subordinate clause depends on a main clause, sometimes called an independent clause, to complete its meaning. Easily recognized key words and phrases usually begin these clauses—for example: “although,” “because,” “unless,” “if,” “even though,” “since,” “as soon as,” “while,” “who,” “when,” “where,” “how,” and “that.”

syllogism From the Greek for “reckoning together,” a syllogism (or syllogistic reasoning) is a deductive system of formal logic that presents two premises—the first one called “major” and the second “minor”—that inevitably lead to a sound conclusion. A frequently cited example proceeds as follows:

- Major premise: All men are mortal.
- Minor premise: Socrates is a man.
- Conclusion: Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

A syllogism's conclusion is valid only if each of the two premises are valid. Syllogisms may also present the specific idea first (“Socrates”) and the general idea second (“All men”).

symbol/symbolism Generally, anything that represents or stands for something else. Usually, a symbol is something concrete—such as an object, action, character, or scene—that represents something more abstract. However, symbols and symbolism can be much more complex. One system classifies symbols in three categories:

1. *Natural* symbols use objects and occurrences from nature to represent ideas commonly associated with them (dawn symbolizing hope or a new beginning, a rose symbolizing love, a tree symbolizing knowledge).
2. *Conventional* symbols are those that have been invested with meaning by a group (religious symbols, such as a cross or Star of David; national symbols, such as a flag or an eagle; or group symbols, such as skull and crossbones for pirates or the scales of justice for lawyers).

3. *Literary* symbols are sometimes also conventional in the sense that they are found in a variety of works and are generally recognized. However, a work's symbols may be more complicated, such as the whale in *Moby Dick* and the jungle in *Heart of Darkness*. On the AP Language and Composition Exam, try to determine what abstraction an object is a symbol for and to what extent it is successful in representing that abstraction.

syntax The way an author chooses to join words into phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax is similar to diction, but you can differentiate the two by thinking of syntax as referring to *groups* of words, while diction refers to individual words. In the multiple-choice section of the AP Language and Composition Exam, expect to be asked some questions about how an author manipulates syntax. In the essay section, you will need to analyze how syntax produces effects. When you are analyzing syntax, consider such elements as the length or brevity of sentences, unusual sentence constructions, the sentence patterns used, and the kinds of sentences the author uses. The writer may use questions, declarations, exclamations, or rhetorical questions; sentences are also classified as periodic or loose, simple, compound, or complex sentences. Syntax can be tricky for students to analyze. First try to classify *what kind* of sentences the author uses, and then try to determine *how* the author's choices amplify meaning, in other words *why they work* well for the author's purpose.

theme The central idea or message of a work, the insight it offers into life. Usually, theme is unstated in fictional works, but in nonfiction, the theme may be directly stated, especially in expository or argumentative writing. Frequently a theme can be stated as a "universal truth," that is, a general statement about the human condition, about society, or about man's relation to the natural world.

thesis In expository writing, the thesis statement is the sentence or group of sentences that directly expresses the author's opinion, purpose, meaning, or proposition. Expository writing is usually judged by analyzing how accurately, effectively, and thoroughly a writer has proven the thesis.

tone Similar to mood, tone describes the author's attitude toward his or her material, the audience, or both. Tone is easier to determine in spoken language than in written language. Considering how a work would sound if it were read aloud can help in identifying an author's tone. Some words describing tone are "playful," "serious," "businesslike," "sarcastic," "humorous," "formal," "ornate," and "somber." As with attitude, an author's tone in the exam's passages can rarely be described by one word. Expect that it will be more complex. See **attitude** in "Terms for the Essay Section," later in this chapter.

transition A word or phrase that links different ideas. Used especially, although not exclusively, in expository and argumentative writing, transitions effectively signal a shift from one idea to another. A few commonly used transitional words or phrases are "furthermore," "consequently," "nevertheless," "for example," "in addition," "likewise," "similarly," and "on the contrary."

understatement The ironic minimizing of fact, understatement presents something as less significant than it is. The effect can frequently be humorous and emphatic. Understatement is the opposite of *hyperbole*. Two specific types of understatement exist:

1. **litotes:** A figure of speech by which an affirmation is made indirectly by denying its opposite. It uses understatement for emphasis, frequently with a negative assertion. Example: "It was no mean feat" means it was quite hard. "He was not averse to a drink" means he drank a lot.
2. **meiosis:** The Greek term for understatement or belittling; a rhetorical figure by which something is referred to in terms less important than it really deserves. It describes something that is very impressive with simplicity. Example: When Mercutio calls his mortal wound a "scratch" in *Romeo and Juliet*.

wit In modern usage, wit is intellectually amusing language that surprises and delights. A witty statement is humorous, while suggesting the speaker's verbal power in creating ingenious and perceptive remarks. Wit usually uses terse language that makes a pointed statement. Historically, wit originally meant basic understanding. Its meaning evolved to include speed of understanding, and finally (in the early 17th century), it grew to mean quick perception including creative fancy.

Terms for the Essay Section

The following words and phrases have appeared in recent AP Language and Composition Exam essay topics. Although what follows is not a comprehensive list of every word or phrase you might encounter, it will help you understand what you're being asked to do for a topic.

attitude A writer's intellectual position or emotion regarding the subject of the writing. In the essay section, expect to be asked what the writer's attitude is and how his or her language conveys that attitude. Also be aware that, although the singular term "attitude" is used in this definition and on the exam, the passage will rarely have only one attitude. More often than not, the author's attitude will be more complex, and the student who presents this complexity—no matter how subtle the differences—will appear to be more astute than the student who only uses one adjective to describe attitude. Of course, don't force an attitude that has no evidence in the passage; instead, understand that an accurate statement of an author's attitude is not likely to be a blatantly obvious idea. If it were that simple, the test committee wouldn't ask you to discuss it.

concrete detail Strictly defined, "concrete" refers to nouns that name physical objects—a bridge, a book, or a coat. Concrete nouns are the opposite of abstract nouns (which refer to concepts like freedom and love). However, as used in the essay portion of the AP Language and Composition Exam, this term has a slightly different connotation. The directions may read something like this: "Provide concrete details that will convince the reader." This means that your essay should include details in the passage; at times, you'll be allowed to provide details from your own life (readings, observations, experiences, and so forth).

descriptive details When an essay uses this phrase, look for the writer's sensory description. Descriptive detail appealing to the visual sense is usually the most predominant, but don't overlook other sensory details. As usual, after you identify a passage's descriptive details, analyze their effect.

devices The figures of speech, syntax, diction, and other stylistic elements that collectively produce a particular artistic effect.

language When you're asked to "analyze the language," concentrate on how the elements of language combine to form a whole—how diction, syntax, figurative language, and sentence structure create a cumulative effect.

narrative devices This term describes the tools of the storyteller (also used in nonfiction), such as ordering events so that they build to a climactic moment or withholding information until a crucial or appropriate moment when revealing it creates a desired effect. On the essay portion of the exam, this term may also apply to biographical and autobiographical writing.

narrative technique The style of telling the "story," even if the passage is nonfiction. Concentrate on the order of events and on their detail in evaluating a writer's technique.

persuasive devices When asked to analyze an author's persuasive devices, look for the words in the passage that have strong connotations—words that intensify the emotional effect. In addition, analyze *how* these words complement the writer's argument as it builds logically. Speeches are often used in this context, because they are generally designed to persuade.

persuasive essay When asked to write a persuasive essay, you should present a coherent argument in which the evidence builds to a logical and relevant conclusion. Strong persuasive essays often appeal to the audience's emotions or ethical standards.

resources of language This phrase refers to all the devices of composition available to a writer, such as diction, syntax, sentence structure, and figures of speech. The cumulative effect of a work is produced by the resources of language a writer chooses.

rhetorical features This phrase refers to how a passage is constructed. If asked to consider rhetorical structure, look at the passage's organization and how the writer combines images, details, or arguments to serve his or her purpose.

sentence structure When an essay question asks you to analyze sentence structure, look at the type of sentences the author uses. Remember that the basic sentence structures are simple, compound, and complex, and variations created with sentence combining. Also consider variation or lack of it in sentence length, any unusual devices in sentence construction, such as repetition or inverted word order, and any unusual word or phrase placement. As with all devices, be prepared to discuss the effect of the sentence structure. For example, a series of short, simple sentences or phrases can produce a feeling of speed and choppiness, which may suit the author's purpose.

stylistic devices An essay prompt that mentions stylistic devices is asking you to note and analyze all of the elements in language that contribute to style—such as diction, syntax, tone, attitude, figures of speech, connotations, and repetition.