

Name _____

A.P. Essay Tips (**Open Essay**)

Date _____

English 12 A.P./Mrs. Glynn, Ms. Henry

1. Read the prompt carefully. Underline the words in the task that define what you need to do. Then number the tasks. If the topic already suggests addressing the “so what” factor, make sure that’s underlined and numbered. If not, add the words “so what factor” to the task. Literally write those words beneath the task.

In many novels, a child plays an all-important part. Choose a novel of recognized literary merit in which a child is significant and write an essay that explains how the author presents the child’s point of view and how the child’s values are related to the central themes of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

The conflict between an idealistic and a pragmatic, or realistic, response to life is a recurrent theme in literature. Choose a work in which such a conflict is central. Write an essay in which you analyze the reasons for the conflict and its effect upon one idealistic a character and one representative of the realistic attitude.

Take each numbered item into consideration as you plan your essay.

2. Briefly outline (with a few words or phrases) how you will approach your essay. This should include a thesis statement that addresses the topic in the prompt. You don’t have a lot of time, so when I say briefly, I mean it. This process should take no more than 2-3 minutes. *Make sure that the ideas in your outline effectively address the topic/prompt.*

3. Write your essay. As you do, remember the following:

- Your introduction should include a thesis statement and perhaps another sentence or two. **Refrain from writing long, elaborate introductions.** Doing so will eat up your writing time, may lead you off topic, and will fail to earn you any points. A strong thesis statement is all you really need.
- When possible, use notable quotations from the work you’ve chosen to support your statements.
- Use specific examples (scenes, conversations, important moments, characters, symbols, literary elements, etc.) to support your thesis. Remember that specificity is often the difference between a merely competent essay and an outstanding essay.
- Vary your sentence structure to make for more sophisticated writing and more interesting reading.
- Avoid general (vague) statements. Check back periodically to ensure you are addressing the topic.
- Use transitions between paragraphs and within paragraphs to achieve a logical “flow” of ideas.
- Write in the present tense and maintain it throughout the paper.
- Address the “so what” factor. Usually the “so what” factor has to do with the theme and its effect on the reader.
- If time permits, craft a concluding paragraph. Don’t sacrifice your body paragraphs for a conclusion.

5. Go back and reread the prompt. Then proofread your paper.

Review the following to avoid careless errors!

1. ADDRESS ALL ASPECTS OF THE PROMPT

2. PRONOUN-ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT:

INCORRECT Through the experiences of Huckleberry Finn, the **reader** comes to understand **their** own feelings about prejudice.

CORRECT Through the experiences of Huckleberry Finn, the **reader** comes to understand **his** own feelings about prejudice. (or you can use **her** or **his/her**)

3. SKIPPING LINES BETWEEN PARAGRAPHS: DON'T DO IT (whether you are hand writing or typing). This is incorrect. The indentation at the beginning of the paragraph already indicates a new paragraph. A space is redundant. A space is like saying the same thing twice. ☺

4. APOSTROPHES (plural vs. possessive vs. contractions). We know you think you know this, but many of you don't. Sorry, but it's the truth, Ruth.

Plural means more than one. Generally, to make a noun plural, you add an s (NO APOSTROPHE) The **cats** are hiding under the bed.
The prejudice of the **citizens** became evident.

Possession:

- For a singular noun, add an **apostrophe** and an **s**. (Ed's journal, a week's salary)
- For a plural noun ending in s or es, add an **apostrophe** after the final s. (five countries' navies, three years' time, the Joneses' boat)
- For a plural noun NOT ending in s, add an **apostrophe** and an **s**. (children's swimsuits, people's choice, men's club)
- For names that are difficult to pronounce when an apostrophe and an s are added, add the **apostrophe** only. (Zeus' lightning bolt, Jesus' name, Achilles' heel, Odysseus' journey)
- If the names of two or more persons are used to show joint ownership, give only the last names the possessive form. (Jessica and John's party, Mom and Dad's car)
- If the names of two or more persons are used to show separate ownership, give each names the possessive form. (Nicole's and Meredith's iPods, Keith's and Josh's textbooks)

Contractions: Apostrophes are also used to make contractions. The apostrophe indicates where there is a letter/are letters missing. (can't = cannot, **it's = it is**, **they're = they are**, **could've = could have**)

Letters, numerals, and words referred to as words: The **ONLY** time you use an apostrophe to form a plural is when forming the plural of *letters*, *numerals*, and *words referred to as words* (ABC's, three A's, two 5's, yes's and no's, no and's, if's, or but's)

Numbers missing in a date: (class of '99, blizzard of '78)

5. UNDERLINE the title of major works (books and plays). You need not mention the title of the work more than once. Save your words for more important statements.

6. PASSIVE VOICE—Avoid it!

PASSIVE (not as strong) Mrs. Griffiths is shocked by Clyde's selfish actions.
CORRECT (stronger construction) Clyde's selfish actions shock Mrs. Griffiths.