

Name \_\_\_\_\_

A.P. Essay Tips (Prose Essay)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

1. Read the prompt carefully. Make sure you know what you should be looking for as you read the passage. "Title is vital," says Mrs. Glynn. If the passage is titled, be sure you take that into consideration as you read and plan your essay.
2. As you read, mark up the passage. For example, underline important phrases and words, circle main ideas, write notes in the margin. You can come up with your own method of underlining, circling, and marking the pages with different marks indicating how you want to use the info. in your essay. How you mark up the passage is up to you, but you **should** get into the routine of doing it.
3. 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.*
4. 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.
  - Include quotes from the passage (when appropriate) to support your statements. Quote early and often. Quote specific words/phrases (important diction, important dialogue, imagery, symbols, syntax, literary elements, etc.) to support your thesis. If the prompt asks for you to address specific elements, make sure those are listed in your outline so you don't forget to discuss them. Remember that specificity is often the difference between a merely competent essay and an outstanding essay.
  - Remember that you need not limit yourself to the elements listed in the prompt.
  - Vary your sentence structure to make for more sophisticated writing and more interesting reading.
  - Be specific. Avoid general (vague) statements.
  - Periodically check over (quick glance) what you've written and what your thesis states 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. For example, in addition to discussing where and how the author uses imagery, discuss what the effect of the imagery is (and don't simply say it's to paint a picture for the reader). Usually the "so what" factor has to do with the theme and the effect literary devices have 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 reminders. Avoid careless errors!**

**1. ADDRESS ALL ASPECTS OF THE PROMPT.**

*Turn over for more tidbits.*

## 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) Ex., The **cats** are hiding under the bed. Ex., 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.

## 7. USAGE ERRORS—Avoid them!

a. **then/than:** Then relates to time or a result of something. Than is used when making a comparison.

b. **could have, could've, should have, should've, would have, would've (not could of, should of, would of)**

c. **affect vs. effect**

**affect** (v.) [*v. uh-fekt*] = to influence, to act on

Ex. Your criticism negatively **affects** my self-esteem.

**affect** (n.) [*n. af-ekt*] = Feeling or emotion, especially as manifested by facial expression or body language

Ex. "The soldiers seen on television had been carefully chosen for blandness of **affect**."  
--Norman Mailer.

**effect** (vt.) [*i-fekt*] = to cause (used with an object)

Ex. Obama hopes to **effect** change in America.

**effect** (n.) [*i-fekt*] = result; the power to produce results

Ex. Exposure to the sun had the **effect** of wrinkling his skin.