

AP English Literature and Composition - Literary Terms Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide



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Questions

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- 1. What is the term for excessive sentimentality that can lead to a laughable effect?**
 - A. Bathos**
 - B. Pathos**
 - C. Referentiality**
 - D. Sentimentality**
- 2. In poetry, what is a couplet?**
 - A. A three-line stanza**
 - B. A stanza containing five lines**
 - C. A pair of lines that rhyme**
 - D. A stanza of four lines**
- 3. What term describes excessive pride or arrogance that results in the protagonist's downfall in a tragedy?**
 - A. Hubris**
 - B. Hamartia**
 - C. Tragic flaw**
 - D. Nemesis**
- 4. What term describes the formation of a word by imitating a sound associated with its referent?**
 - A. Alliteration**
 - B. Onomatopoeia**
 - C. Assonance**
 - D. Consonance**
- 5. Which element in a narrative refers to the peak of action or the turning point?**
 - A. Exposition**
 - B. Climax**
 - C. Resolution**
 - D. Falling action**

- 6. In poetry, what does the term "pentameter" specifically relate to?**
- A. Rhyme scheme**
 - B. Line length**
 - C. Stanza structure**
 - D. Alliteration**
- 7. What do we call a fanciful expression, typically an extended metaphor between dissimilar objects?**
- A. Metonymy**
 - B. Allegory**
 - C. Conceit**
 - D. Symbolism**
- 8. What does the theme of a story typically represent?**
- A. The primary position of the author**
 - B. The underlying main idea of the story**
 - C. The conflict faced by the protagonist**
 - D. The author's tone and style**
- 9. What term is used to describe the atmosphere felt in a particular literary work?**
- A. Nuance**
 - B. Tension**
 - C. Atmosphere**
 - D. Conflict**
- 10. What process involves revealing a character's personality?**
- A. Characterization**
 - B. Exposition**
 - C. Imagery**
 - D. Motivation**

Answers

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1. A
2. C
3. A
4. B
5. B
6. B
7. C
8. B
9. C
10. A

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Explanations

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1. What is the term for excessive sentimentality that can lead to a laughable effect?

A. Bathos

B. Pathos

C. Referentiality

D. Sentimentality

The term that refers to excessive sentimentality leading to a laughable effect is bathos. Bathos occurs when an attempt to evoke deep emotions falls flat, often resulting in humor instead of pathos. It typically arises when a serious tone is abruptly replaced by a trivial one, creating an unintended comedic effect. This concept plays a crucial role in literature, where writers may purposely employ bathos to highlight the absurdity of a situation or to critique overly sentimental expressions. In contrast, pathos refers to the quality that evokes pity or sadness and does not necessarily imply the same level of exaggeration or humor. Referentiality involves the relationship of a text to other texts or contexts, whereas sentimentality describes a tendency towards excessive emotional response but does not specifically address the humorous outcome associated with bathos. Thus, bathos is the most fitting term for describing this particular phenomenon.

2. In poetry, what is a couplet?

A. A three-line stanza

B. A stanza containing five lines

C. A pair of lines that rhyme

D. A stanza of four lines

A couplet is defined as a pair of lines that typically rhyme and have the same meter. This form is commonly used in poetry to create a sense of rhythm and to link ideas or concepts within the two lines. Couplet structures play a significant role in various poetic forms, including sonnets, where they often serve to encapsulate a theme or conclusion. The other options refer to different stanza forms: a three-line stanza is known as a tercet, a stanza containing five lines is termed a quintet, and a stanza of four lines is called a quatrain. Each of these forms has its unique characteristics and uses in poetry, distinguishing them clearly from the concept of a couplet. Thus, the defining element of a couplet as two rhyming lines makes it a fundamental and recognizable structure in poetry.

3. What term describes excessive pride or arrogance that results in the protagonist's downfall in a tragedy?

A. Hubris

B. Hamartia

C. Tragic flaw

D. Nemesis

The correct term is hubris, which refers specifically to excessive pride or arrogance that leads a protagonist to disregard warnings or violate moral codes. In many tragedies, this overwhelming self-confidence causes the character to make decisions that ultimately result in their downfall. Hubris is a critical element in understanding the trajectory of tragic heroes in literature, as it often sets in motion their inevitable fate, illustrating the theme of the limitations of human understanding and the consequences of overstepping bounds. While terms like hamartia and tragic flaw might also relate to elements that contribute to the protagonist's failure, they do not specifically emphasize pride or arrogance like hubris does. Hamartia refers more broadly to a misstep or error in judgment, which may not necessarily stem from pride. Nemesis describes the retributive justice or fate that befalls the hero as a result of their hubris, rather than the hubris itself. Thus, hubris encapsulates the essence of excessive pride leading to downfall distinctly and accurately.

4. What term describes the formation of a word by imitating a sound associated with its referent?

A. Alliteration

B. Onomatopoeia

C. Assonance

D. Consonance

The term that describes the formation of a word by imitating a sound associated with its referent is onomatopoeia. Onomatopoeia occurs when a word phonetically resembles or suggests the sound that it describes, such as "buzz" for the sound a bee makes, or "clang" for the sound of metal striking metal. This sound-symbolic quality gives onomatopoeic words a vividness and immediacy that enhances the imagery in writing. Alliteration refers to the repetition of initial consonant sounds in closely placed words, which contributes to the rhythm and musicality of language but does not specifically imitate sounds. Assonance involves the repetition of vowel sounds within closely placed words; like alliteration, this enhances the auditory quality of language but is not sound imitative. Consonance also involves the repetition of consonant sounds, typically at the end or in the middle of words, but similarly lacks the direct association with imitating sounds. Each of these terms serves a different purpose in the realm of sound devices in poetry and prose, but onomatopoeia uniquely captures the essence of mimicking real-world sounds.

5. Which element in a narrative refers to the peak of action or the turning point?

A. Exposition

B. Climax

C. Resolution

D. Falling action

The peak of action or the turning point in a narrative is known as the climax. This moment typically represents the highest emotional intensity and crucial decision of the protagonist, where they confront their main conflict. At the climax, the stakes are at their highest, and the outcome of the story begins to unfold. It serves as a pivotal moment that sets the direction for the subsequent events in the narrative. In contrast, exposition introduces the background and context of the story, establishing characters and setting. The resolution comes after the climax and falling action, providing closure to the plot and resolving any remaining conflicts. Falling action refers to the events that follow the climax, leading towards the resolution, where tensions begin to decrease. Hence, identifying the climax is essential in understanding the structure and progression of a narrative.

6. In poetry, what does the term "pentameter" specifically relate to?

A. Rhyme scheme

B. Line length

C. Stanza structure

D. Alliteration

Pentameter specifically relates to line length in poetry. It denotes a line that consists of five metrical feet, which can vary depending on the specific type of foot used (like iambs, trochees, etc.). This term is significant because it provides a rhythmic structure to the poem, contributing to its musicality and flow. For example, iambic pentameter, which features a pattern of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, is commonly used in English poetry, notably in the works of Shakespeare. Knowing this term helps readers understand not just the rhythm but also the emotion and pacing within a poem. In contrast, rhyme scheme refers to the pattern of rhymes at the end of lines, stanza structure pertains to the arrangement and organization of lines within stanzas, and alliteration involves the repetition of initial consonant sounds in closely positioned words. These elements, while important in poetry, are distinct from the concept of pentameter, which focuses solely on the pattern of syllables in a line.

7. What do we call a fanciful expression, typically an extended metaphor between dissimilar objects?

- A. Metonymy**
- B. Allegory**
- C. Conceit**
- D. Symbolism**

A fanciful expression that typically functions as an extended metaphor between dissimilar objects is referred to as a conceit. This literary device is characterized by its imaginative association and often surprising comparisons that invite readers to examine relationships between seemingly unrelated things. Conceits often go beyond typical metaphors or similes, creating an elaborate and sometimes complex connection that enhances the meaning or themes within a work. For instance, in poetry, a poet might compare love to a ship at sea, detailing the intricacies of both experiences in a way that unfolds a deeper significance. This inventive engagement invites a deeper consideration of emotions or concepts, expanding the reader's understanding. Other options include metonymy, which involves substituting the name of one thing with the name of something closely associated; allegory, which refers to a narrative that conveys a deeper meaning or moral often through symbolic figures; and symbolism, where an object or action represents a larger idea or concept. While these terms employ figurative language, they do not convey the same fanciful and extensive comparisons that define conceits.

8. What does the theme of a story typically represent?

- A. The primary position of the author**
- B. The underlying main idea of the story**
- C. The conflict faced by the protagonist**
- D. The author's tone and style**

The theme of a story is fundamentally the underlying main idea that conveys the author's message or insight about life, human nature, or society. It acts as the central thread that ties together various elements of the narrative, such as characters, setting, and plot. Themes often explore universal concepts and can be expressed as a statement, reflecting significant moral or philosophical insights. Other choices may touch upon important aspects of literature but do not encapsulate the essence of what a theme represents. The primary position of the author is not the same as the theme itself; rather, it could pertain to the author's stance or perspective. The conflict faced by the protagonist is a narrative element that can support the development of the theme but is not the theme itself. Similarly, the author's tone and style describe how the story is told, which affects the reader's experience but does not define the story's core idea. Thus, the correct choice underscores the significance of the theme as the central, unifying idea of the narrative.

9. What term is used to describe the atmosphere felt in a particular literary work?

- A. Nuance
- B. Tension
- C. Atmosphere**
- D. Conflict

The term that describes the atmosphere felt in a particular literary work is indeed "Atmosphere." This concept refers to the overall emotional setting or mood that pervades a narrative, impacting how readers feel as they engage with the text. Atmosphere is created through various elements such as setting, tone, and imagery, and it plays a crucial role in shaping readers' responses to the characters and events. Understanding atmosphere enables readers to appreciate the subtleties of a story and how these emotional undercurrents can enhance themes and character development. For example, a dark and suspenseful atmosphere might evoke feelings of fear or tension, whereas a bright and cheerful atmosphere might create a sense of joy or optimism. Nuance, while important in discussing the intricacies of meaning and subtle distinctions in literature, does not specifically address the overall mood of a piece. Tension refers more to the strain or anxiety created within the narrative, particularly in the buildup of conflicts or challenges faced by characters. Conflict specifically pertains to the struggles or clashes between opposing forces, whether internal or external, but does not encapsulate the broader emotional experience that atmosphere does. Thus, atmosphere is the most accurate term to signify the feeling that pervades a literary work.

10. What process involves revealing a character's personality?

- A. Characterization**
- B. Exposition
- C. Imagery
- D. Motivation

Characterization is the process that involves revealing a character's personality through various means, such as their thoughts, actions, speech, and interactions with other characters. It can occur directly, when the author explicitly describes the character's traits, or indirectly, when readers infer personality traits from the character's behavior and dialogue. This layered approach allows readers to form a more nuanced understanding of the character and their role within the narrative. Exposition, while important for setting the scene and providing background information, does not primarily focus on character development but rather on giving context to the story's events. Imagery refers to the use of descriptive language that appeals to the senses, enhancing the visual experience of the narrative but not specifically aimed at character portrayal. Motivation pertains to the reasons behind a character's actions, which is a component of characterization rather than a standalone process for revealing personality. Thus, characterization is the most comprehensive term for this particular process.