

## AP English Independent Reading: Guidelines for Written Response

Caret/Burke (Fall 2005-06)

**Overview** The primary goals of the independent reading are to increase your experience as a reader and improve your skills as an analytical writer; on a more personal level, the books you choose to read should offer you the opportunity to engage in a private conversation with yourself about not just literature, but ideas, values—in short, the human experience. Another goal of the essay is to improve your ability to examine how you write about a text. We strongly urge you to make notes as you read, annotate or highlight your text, or use post-it notes (or other tab-like thingies) to mark critical/important places in the text.

**Prompt** Write an essay in response to this prompt, which appeared on a previous AP exam:

**In retrospect, the reader often discovers that the first chapter of a novel or the opening scene of a drama introduces some of the major themes of the work. Write an essay about the opening scene of a drama or the first chapter of a novel in which you explain how it functions in this way and how it connects to overall meaning in the text.**

**Requirements** Your essay should

- be no longer than two double-spaced typed pages.
- LEAVE A 2" MARGIN ON ONE SIDE TO ANNOTATE YOUR ESSAY. FORMAT WILL BE EXPLAINED AND SHOWN IN CLASS.
- be based on your analysis of the first chapter of the novel or the first scene of the drama.
- explain how this chapter or scene applies to the text in general and your claim about a major theme in particular.
- include specific, relevant examples and quotations from the text. You are not limited to using evidence from just the opening scene or chapter.
- contain annotations about your reading/thinking as described below.

**Annotation of Essay** After you finish writing your essay, annotate it in the margins, reflecting on the process you went through as you read the text. **UNDERLINE OR HIGHLIGHT THE PARTS OF YOUR ESSAY THAT YOU ARE ANNOTATING.**

1. Explain why you think the themes you identified in your essay are important.
2. Explain the relevance/significance of the examples/quotations you use to support your ideas about the themes.
3. Jot down questions about anything that still confuses you about the text.
4. Identify ideas, examples, and/or quotations you find particularly interesting and jot down a few comments about how those ideas, examples, or quotations relate to your claim.

**Assessment:** Your responses will be evaluated on the following traits:

- completeness
- ideas
- organization
- development
- fluency
- voice
- conventions

(For a more detailed description of these traits, download the Six Traits Scoring Rubric from the AP class website at [www.englishcompanion.com](http://www.englishcompanion.com))