



SCHOLAR COACH, INC.

AP ENGLISH LITERATURE · FREE RESOURCE

MCQ Error Log, Annotation Guide, and Timed Writing Calendar

Three tools for steady improvement: an error log that turns each missed question into a pattern, an annotation code system for close reading, and a timed-writing calendar that rotates the three essays.

Part 1: The MCQ error log

Missed questions are your best data. A score tells you how much you missed; the log tells you why. Record every miss the day you miss it.

How to fill in each column

- **Source and question:** e.g., "Practice Exam 2, Q23."
- **Skill:** the code from the answer key (CHR, SET, STR, NAR, FIG, LAN, with the skill number).
- **Question type:** speaker's attitude, function of lines, word in context, shift, and so on.
- **Cause code:** choose from the list below.
- **Next time I will:** one concrete action written as a command.

Cause codes

CODE	MEANING	TYPICAL FIX
R	Misread the passage or the question	Underline what the question asks before looking at the choices
V	Did not know a word	Add it to your vocabulary list
T	Did not know a term or device	Review the Literary Terms Master Glossary
E	Eliminated the right answer too early	Find evidence <i>against</i> a choice before crossing it out
D	Fell for a distractor (too broad, too narrow, opposite, true but not asked)	Name the distractor type in the log
S	Ran short of time	Use the four-quarter pacing plan

CODE	MEANING	TYPICAL FIX
C	Ignored the context: answered a word-in-context question from the usual meaning	Reread the sentence before and after the line
P	Misjudged the speaker or the shift	Mark the speaker and turns before answering

Blank log

SOURCE / Q#	SKILL	QUESTION TYPE	CAUSE CODE	WHY I CHOSE THE WRONG ANSWER	NEXT TIME I WILL...

Example entries

SOURCE / Q#	SKILL	QUESTION TYPE	CAUSE CODE	WHY I CHOSE THE WRONG ANSWER	NEXT TIME I WILL...
Practice Exam 2, Q8	NAR 4.B	Speaker's attitude	D	I chose "bitter" but the speaker is wistful; the choice was too strong	Match the strength of the adjective to the evidence in the lines
Practice Exam 2, Q19	FIG 5.A	Meaning in context	C	I picked the usual meaning of "temper" but the sentence uses the older sense	Reread the sentence and test each meaning in place

Two-week pattern review

SKILL	ERRORS THIS PERIOD	ERRORS LAST PERIOD	TREND
CHR (character)			
SET (setting)			
STR (structure)			
NAR (narration)			
FIG (figurative language and word choice)			
LAN (literary argumentation)			

Count your cause codes too. If most misses share one cause, fix that habit first. If most share one skill, spend your next study block there.

Part 2: Annotation guide for close reading

Annotation is a way of *thinking* on the page. Aim for a small number of marks that point to meaning, not a page full of highlighter.

The code system

MARK	WHAT IT SIGNALS
Box a word	A word you do not know, or a word with strong connotation
Underline	A phrase that carries the main idea or the strongest image
Circle	A repeated word or image (a pattern)
Wavy line	Figurative language
Star (*)	A key moment or turning point
Double slash (//)	The shift or turn
Arrow (→)	Cause and effect, or a link between two details
S, T, N (in the margin)	Speaker, tone, narration, with a one- or two-word note
?	A question or something confusing to return to

Poetry annotation, step by step

1. **First read:** read for sense only. Write a one-line paraphrase beside the poem.
2. **Second read:** mark the speaker, the situation, and the tone.
3. **Third read:** mark shifts (//), patterns (circles), and figurative language (wavy lines).
4. **Margin notes:** beside each mark, write a short note on *function*, e.g., "personification → makes nature hostile."
5. **Bottom line:** write a one-sentence statement of what the poem is about and what it suggests.

Prose annotation, step by step

1. **Orient:** identify who is narrating and the situation.
2. **Track the character:** note what the character wants, fears, or hides.
3. **Mark the turn:** find where the passage changes direction.
4. **Mark choices:** diction, sentence structure, and details that create tone.
5. **Bottom line:** write what the passage reveals about the character or situation.

Worked example: annotating a short passage

Passage (public domain; Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour," 1894):

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky.

MARK	NOTE
Underline "repression and even a certain strength"	Her character: controlled, strong, but restrained
// at "But now"	The turn from her usual composure to a new look
Box "dull stare" and "fixed away off yonder"	Her attention has left the room; something has changed
Circle "blue sky"	A hopeful image (patches of blue sky recur)
Bottom line	She is controlled, but something beyond grief is beginning to open inside her.

Part 3: Timed writing calendar

The weekly rhythm

Aim for **one full timed essay per week** (40 minutes), rotating the three types, plus **two short drills** (15 minutes each). Always complete the reflection sheet in the Essay Planners document.

Sample 12-week calendar

WEEK	TIMED ESSAY	SHORT DRILL	REFLECTION FOCUS
1	Poetry (Q1)	Write 5 theses for 5 short poems	Did my thesis interpret or just describe?
2	Prose (Q2)	Find the shift in 3 passages	Did I find the turn?
3	Literary argument (Q3)	Build a mental map of one novel	Did my evidence come from the text?
4	Poetry (Q1)	N-F-I on 5 images	Did I explain function?
5	Prose (Q2)	Revise a weak paragraph	Did I move beyond summary?
6	Literary argument (Q3)	Write 3 thesis statements for one work	Was my thesis about the work as a whole?
7	Poetry (Q1)	Add a sophistication move to an old essay	Was it sustained?
8	Prose (Q2)	Write a conclusion that adds, not repeats	Did my conclusion add value?
9	Literary argument (Q3)	Match one work to 5 different prompts	Can I adapt my work?

WEEK	TIMED ESSAY	SHORT DRILL	REFLECTION FOCUS
10	Poetry (Q1)	Timed 20-minute plan and thesis only	Pacing
11	Full FRQ section (all three, 2 hours)	None	Stamina and timing
12	The type I scored lowest on	Review the error log	Plan the final weeks

Blank calendar

WEEK OF	ESSAY	PROMPT / TEXT	TIME USED	SCORE (A / B / C)	ONE THING TO FIX

Tips

- **Time yourself for real.** An untimed essay measures something else.
- **Score against the rubric**, not against how you feel about the essay.
- **Keep every essay** and reread your first thesis next to your latest one.
- **Rotate the types**, with extra weeks for the essay you score lowest on.

Want a plan built around **your** student?

BOOK NOW →