

AP English Literature
Review: Prose Passage Essay

Here is an additional review as you work on your portfolio this week. I have given you links to student samples and commentaries you can use to improve your essays, particularly the last two essays, Peregrine Pickle and Silas Lapham.

As you read through those samples and look at the commentaries, you'll get some good, on-the-ground tips for improving your work.

Looking back at Chapter 5 of *5 Steps to a 5*, Prose Passage, you see some ideas we have gone over repeatedly and then some other ideas we might do well to be reminded of.

On our review day, we will talk about what kinds of questions you might be asked on the exam, but as you work on your portfolio, I highlight these elements:

What the Intro should do

Murphy also talks a good bit about developing the opening of the prose passage essay. While you can get away with just a thesis in that first paragraph, you may find it easier and better to use 2-3 sentences so that you can develop your ideas:

- Be sure to give the title and the author of the piece in the first sentence, acknowledging that you don't have the whole novel in front of you. Say, "In this excerpt from *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy..."
- Be sure your thesis is grammatically seamless, written in active voice (see what I did there?) and sufficiently exigent.

The rest you know...

Are topic sentences sufficiently analytical?

Is there enough evidence, blended frequently in your writing?

Are your own verbs in present and present perfect tenses, even if the passages are in the past tense?

Do you cite the lines you take your quoted passages from?

Do you quote to support your claim (not just for ethos or difficulty of rewording)?

Using the reflective memo to review your choices and the degree to which your work has improved will help you pull information together. I enjoyed writing through some highlights of your work in your college recs—I think it will build your confidence to look back at what you have learned as you have put ideas together this year, even if you don't feel exactly triumphant here at the moment. There is a lot to be proud of, and I would not just say that.