

CLEP® Analyzing and Interpreting Literature: At a Glance

Description of the Examination

The Analyzing and Interpreting Literature examination covers material usually taught in a general two-semester undergraduate course in literature. Although the examination does not require familiarity with specific works, it does assume that candidates have read widely and perceptively in poetry, drama, fiction and nonfiction. The questions are based on passages supplied in the test. These passages, taken primarily from American and British literature, have been selected so that no previous experience with them is required to answer the questions.

The examination contains approximately 80 multiple-choice questions to be answered in 98 minutes. Some of these are pretest questions that will not be scored. Any time candidates spend taking tutorials and providing personal information is additional to actual testing time. Because writing about literary texts is central to the study of literature, some colleges may require candidates to take an optional essay section in addition to the multiple-choice section. The essay section is 90 minutes long and is made up of two 45-minute questions.

Knowledge and Skills Required

Questions on the Analyzing and Interpreting Literature examination require candidates to demonstrate the following:

- Ability to read prose, poetry and drama with understanding
- Ability to analyze the elements of a literary passage and to respond to nuances of meaning, tone, imagery and style
- Ability to interpret metaphors, to recognize rhetorical and stylistic devices, to perceive relationships between parts and wholes, and to grasp a speaker's or author's attitudes
- Knowledge of the means by which literary effects are achieved
- Familiarity with the basic terminology used to discuss literary texts

The examination emphasizes comprehension, interpretation and analysis of literary works. A specific knowledge of historical context (authors and movements) is not required, but a broad knowledge of literature gained through reading widely and a familiarity with basic literary terminology is assumed.

The following outline indicates the relative emphasis given to the various types of literature and the periods from which the passages are taken. The approximate percentage of exam questions per classification is noted within each main category.

Genre

- 35–45% Poetry
- 35–45% Prose (fiction and nonfiction)
- 15–30% Drama

National Tradition

- 50–65% British Literature
- 30–45% American Literature
- 5–15% Works in Translation

Period

- 3–7% Classical and pre-Renaissance
- 20–30% Renaissance and 17th Century
- 35–45% 18th and 19th Centuries
- 25–35% 20th and 21st Centuries

Study Resources

The most relevant preparation for the Analyzing and Interpreting Literature exam is attentive and reflective reading of the various literary genres of poetry, drama and prose. You can prepare for the test by:

1. Reading a variety of poetry, drama, fiction and nonfiction
2. Reading critical analyses of various literary works
3. Writing analyses and interpretations of the works you read
4. Discussing with others the meaning of the literature you read

Textbooks and anthologies used for college courses in the analysis and interpretation of literature contain a sampling of literary works in a variety of genres. They also contain material that can help you comprehend the meanings of literary works and recognize the devices writers use to convey their sense and intent. To prepare for the exam, you should study the contents of at least one textbook or anthology, which you can find in most college bookstores. You would do well to consult two or three texts because they do vary somewhat in content, approach and emphases.

A recent survey conducted by CLEP® found that the following textbooks (first author listed only) are among those used by college faculty who teach the equivalent course. You might find one or more of these online or at your local college bookstore. HINT: Look at the table of contents first to make sure it matches the Knowledge and Skills Required for this exam.

CLEP® Analyzing and Interpreting Literature: At a Glance

Abcarian, <i>Literature: The Human Experience</i> (Bedford/St. Martin's)
Arp and Johnson, <i>Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense</i> (W.W. Norton)
Booth, <i>Norton Introduction to Literature</i> (W.W. Norton)
Damrosch, <i>Longman Anthology of World Literature</i> (Longman)
DiYanni, <i>Literature: Approaches to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama</i> (McGraw-Hill)
Gardner, <i>Literature: A Portable Anthology</i> (Bedford)
Gwynn, <i>Literature: A Pocket Anthology</i> (Penguin Academics)
Kennedy and Gioia, <i>Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama and Writing</i> (Pearson/Longman)
Kirsznner and Mandell, <i>Literature: Reading, Reacting, Writing</i> (Wadsworth)
Lawall, <i>Norton Anthology of World Literature</i> (W.W. Norton)
Meyer, <i>The Bedford Introduction to Literature</i> (Bedford/St. Martin's)

These resources, compiled by the CLEP test development committee and staff members, may help you study for your exam. However, none of these sources are designed specifically to provide preparation for a CLEP exam. The College Board has no control over their content and cannot vouch for accuracy.

Writing Guides:

Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL):

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>

Glossary of Literature Terms:

http://www.gale.cengage.com/free_resources/glossary/

<http://dianahacker.com>

Literature Resources:

Virtual Public Library:

<http://www.virtualology.com/virtualpubliclibrary/halloffamousauthors/>

Luminarium Anthology of English Literature:

<http://www.luminarium.org/lumina.htm>

Bartleby.com Great Books Online:

<http://bartleby.com/>

Voice of the Shuttle Literature (in English):

<http://vos.ucsb.edu/browse.asp?id=3>

Visit www.collegeboard.org/clepprep for additional literature resources. You can also find suggestions for exam preparation in Chapter IV of the *CLEP Official Study Guide*. In addition, many college faculty post their course materials on their schools' websites.

Sample Test Questions

The following sample questions do not appear on an actual CLEP examination. They are intended to give potential test-takers an indication of the format and difficulty level of the examination and to provide content for practice and review. For more sample questions and info about the test, see the *CLEP Official Study Guide*.

My Sorrow, when she's here with me,
Thinks these dark days of autumn rain
Are beautiful as days can be;
She loves the bare, the withered tree;
She walks the sodden pasture lane. 5

Her pleasure will not let me stay.
She talks and I am fain* to list*:
She's glad the birds are gone away,
She's glad her simple worsted grey
Is silver now with clinging mist. 10

The desolate, deserted trees,
The faded earth, the heavy sky,
The beauties she so truly sees,
She thinks I have no eye for these,
And vexes me for reason why. 15

Not yesterday I learned to know
The love of bare November days
Before the coming of the snow;
But it were vain to tell her so,
And they are better for her praise. 20

1. The central subject of the poem is
(A) a couple's conversation about which season each prefers
(B) the speaker's dislike of autumn weather
(C) the speaker's desire to spend time with his companion
(D) how sadness helps the speaker appreciate late autumn
(E) why the speaker's companion is looking forward to winter
2. The poet primarily uses which literary device to characterize the speaker's "Sorrow"?
(A) Symbolism
(B) Parallelism
(C) Foreshadowing
(D) Personification
(E) Irony

CLEP® Analyzing and Interpreting Literature: At a Glance

3. In context, the word “simple” in line 9 most nearly means

- (A) plain
- (B) straightforward
- (C) easy
- (D) rudimentary
- (E) foolish

4. Lines 7–12 “She’s glad ... the heavy sky” are best described as a list of

- (A) what makes late autumn such a sad time
- (B) what the speaker dislikes about his surroundings
- (C) what the speaker’s “Sorrow” finds appealing
- (D) signs that a cold winter is approaching
- (E) signs that the speaker’s “Sorrow” is biased

5. Lines 9–10 suggest that “she” is “glad” because

- (A) the autumn rain is ending
- (B) the mist is another aspect of autumn that pleases her
- (C) she is dressed well for the late autumn weather
- (D) she likes the new silver color of her clothes
- (E) the color of the sky has become more beautiful

6. The phrase “desolate, deserted” (line 11) is an example of

- (A) allusion
- (B) alliteration
- (C) metaphor
- (D) metonymy
- (E) onomatopoeia

7. The phrase “Not yesterday I learned to know / The love of bare November days” (lines 16–17) suggests that

- (A) the speaker fell in love on a November day many years ago
- (B) today is the first day of November

(C) the speaker has never learned to love November days

(D) the month of November has just ended

(E) the speaker has loved November days for a long time

8. In the last stanza (lines 16–20), which of the following reasons does the speaker give for not telling his “Sorrow” how he feels about late autumn days?

- I. The speaker values the perspective given by “Sorrow.”
 - II. It would be useless for the speaker to reveal his or her feelings.
 - III. The speaker is afraid to reveal his or her feelings.
- (A) I only
 - (B) I and II only
 - (C) I and III only
 - (D) II and III only
 - (E) I, II and III

9. The speaker’s attitude in the poem is primarily one of

- (A) fear and despair
- (B) excitement and anticipation
- (C) melancholy tempered with contentment
- (D) frustration with his companion
- (E) surprise leading to joy

Credit Recommendations

The American Council on Education has recommended that colleges grant 6 credits for a score of 50, which is equivalent to a course grade of C, on the CLEP Analyzing and Interpreting Literature exam. Each college, however, is responsible for setting its own policy. For candidates with satisfactory scores on the Analyzing and Interpreting Literature examination, colleges may grant credit toward fulfillment of a distribution requirement, or for a particular course that matches the exam in content. Check with your school to find out the score it requires for granting credit, the number of credit hours granted and the course that can be bypassed with a passing score.

Answers to Sample Questions: 1-D; 2-D; 3-A; 4-C; 5-B; 6-B; 7-E; 8-B; 9-C.