

AP English Literature and Composition Common Mistakes · 常见错误

All three essays share one rubric, and the marks concentrate in the evidence-and-commentary row. Most essays lose points by identifying devices instead of explaining their effect, and by treating characters as people rather than as an author's choices. 三篇作文共用一份评分表, 分数集中在“论证”一栏。

Thesis and argument

Writing a thesis that is true of any text – ‘the poet uses imagery to convey emotion’ cannot be disagreed with and earns nothing.

Summarising the plot. A summary shows reading, not interpretation.

Listing devices as an argument. A device inventory is a plan, not a claim.

Hiding the interpretive claim in the final paragraph.

Evidence and commentary

Naming a device without its effect. ‘This is an example of enjambment’ earns nothing; what the line break does to the reading earns the point.

Block-quoting. Long quotations displace commentary, which is where the marks are – quote briefly and embed the words in your sentence.

Writing about the character's psychology as though they were a real person, rather than about the author's choices in constructing them.

Adding a third example where a second explanation was needed.

Analysing a poem line by line to the end, so the essay becomes a walk-through instead of an argument.

Reading the text

Confusing the speaker with the poet, or the narrator with the author.

Assuming the tone from the subject matter. A poem about death may be wry; tone is inferred from diction and syntax, not from topic.

Missing a shift. Most set poems turn somewhere, and locating that turn is often the essay's best move.

Treating metre as decoration. The interest is where a regular pattern BREAKS, and what the break emphasises.

Sophistication

Reaching for it with vocabulary. It is earned by taking a genuine complication seriously or by sustained stylistic control.

Raising a counter-reading and dismissing it in a clause. State the alternative in its strongest form, then answer it.

Ending with a broad statement about literature or humanity rather than about the work.