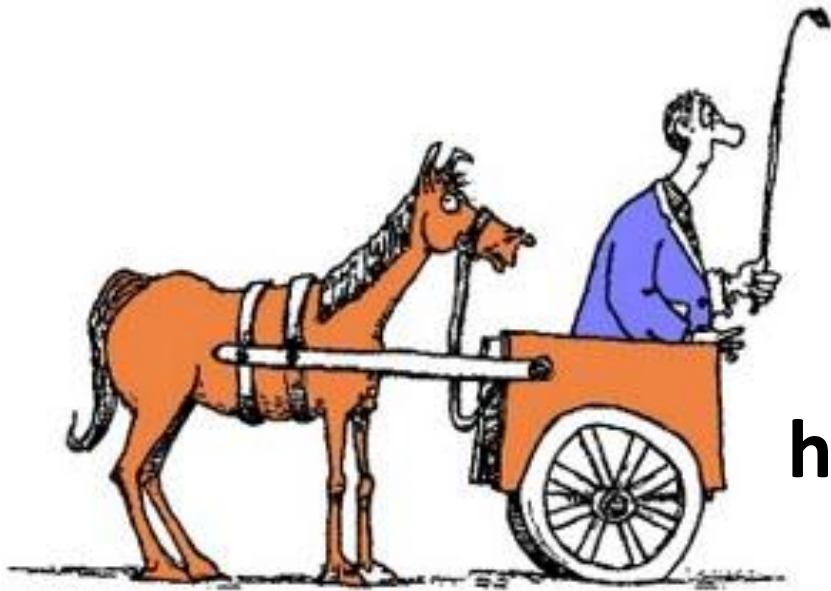


Putting the Horse in Front of the Cart: Teaching Students to Write Well-Developed AP Exam Essays



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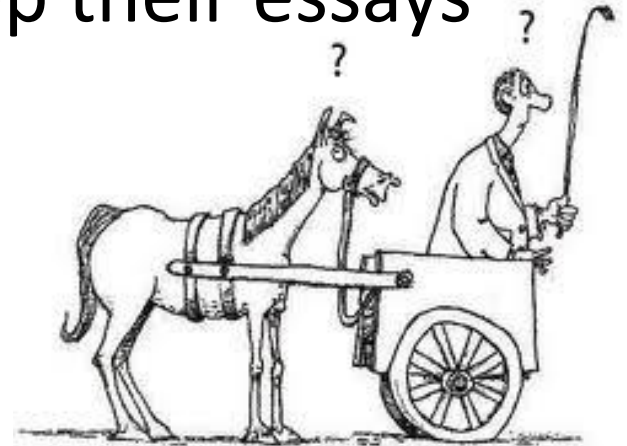
2012 Georgia Teacher of the Year Finalist

Luella High School

The Cart before the Horse

Cart

- Students identify literary devices.
- Students select details that represent literary devices.
- Students organize and develop their essays according to literary devices.

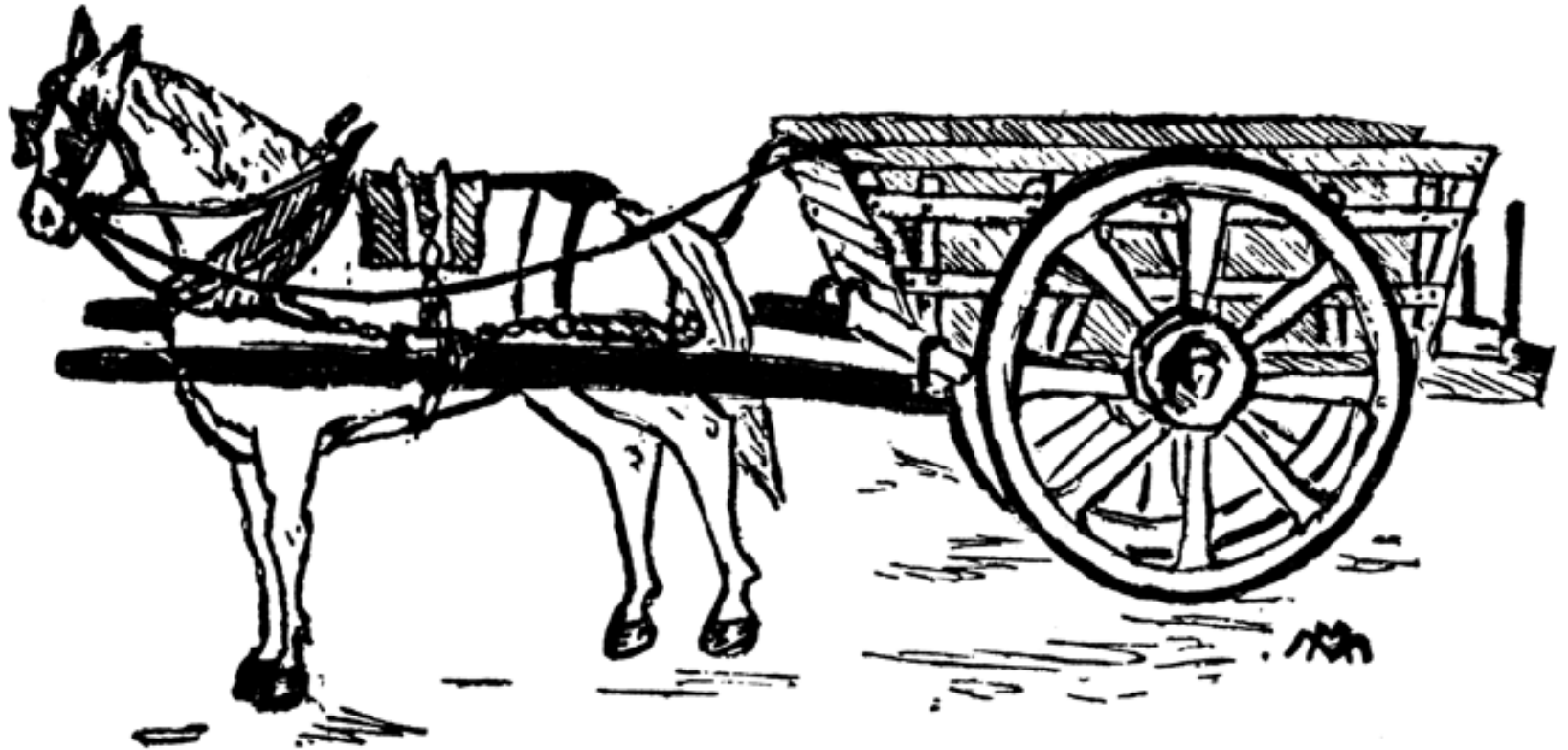


Horse

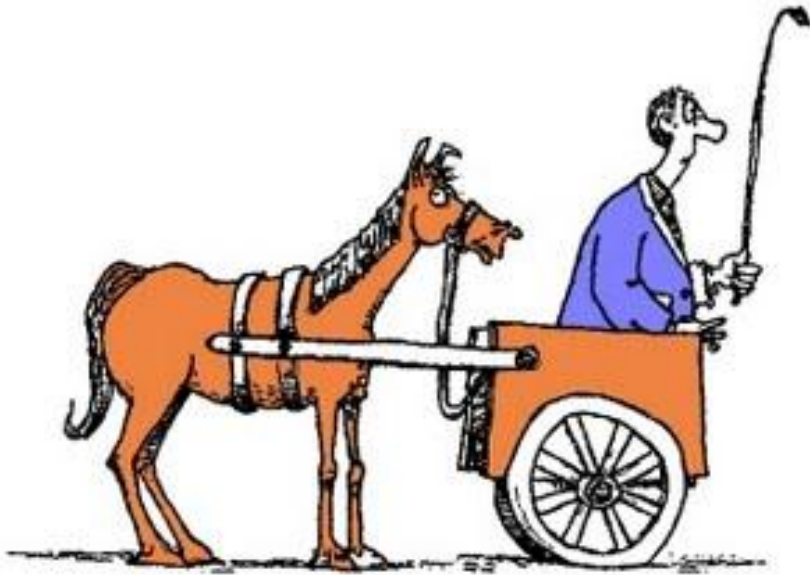
- Students, thus, do not focus on meaning.

Horse = theme and meaning

Cart = support (details and literary devices)

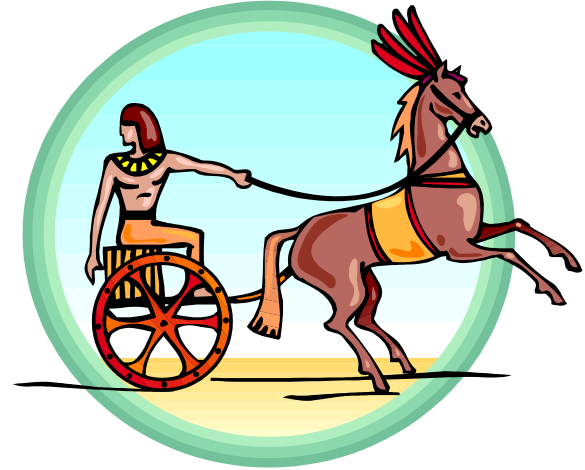


With poetry, teach theme first, then (fewer) literary devices.



- **tone**
- **structure**
- **point of view**
- **figurative language**
- **title**

The Horse before the Cart



Horse

- Students articulate meaning.
- Students determine tone.
- Students recognize complexity (_____ yet _____).

Cart

- Students organize and develop their essays according to meaning and ideas.
- Students support meaning with textual detail and limited literary devices.

Guide students to examine elements that contribute to a poem's meaning.

1. What is the theme?
2. Identify the speaker in this poem. From what point of view is the poem written? What is the situation? Is it spoken to someone specific?
3. Locate the shift(s) in the poem. Where does the point of view, tone, and/or focus change? Draw a dividing line (or lines) to separate the distinct sections of the poem. Mark the "turning" words (but, so, yet, however).
4. Identify the tones of the poem using precise words. Write the tone word(s) in the margin next to sections.
5. Choose the dominant literary devices of the poem, one per section.
6. Determine the organizational pattern of the poem.
7. Contemplate the title. How does the title relate to meaning?

Teach students to use complex vocabulary to convey complex ideas.

acquiescent

passive, compliant, submissive, yielding, conceding

detached

aloof, disinterested, indifferent, impassive

funereal

somber, grave, glum, sullen, saturnine

intransigent

uncompromising, intractable, unyielding

mordant

caustic, acerbic, scathing, sarcastic

portentous

ominous, fateful, crucial, awe-inspiring

chagrined

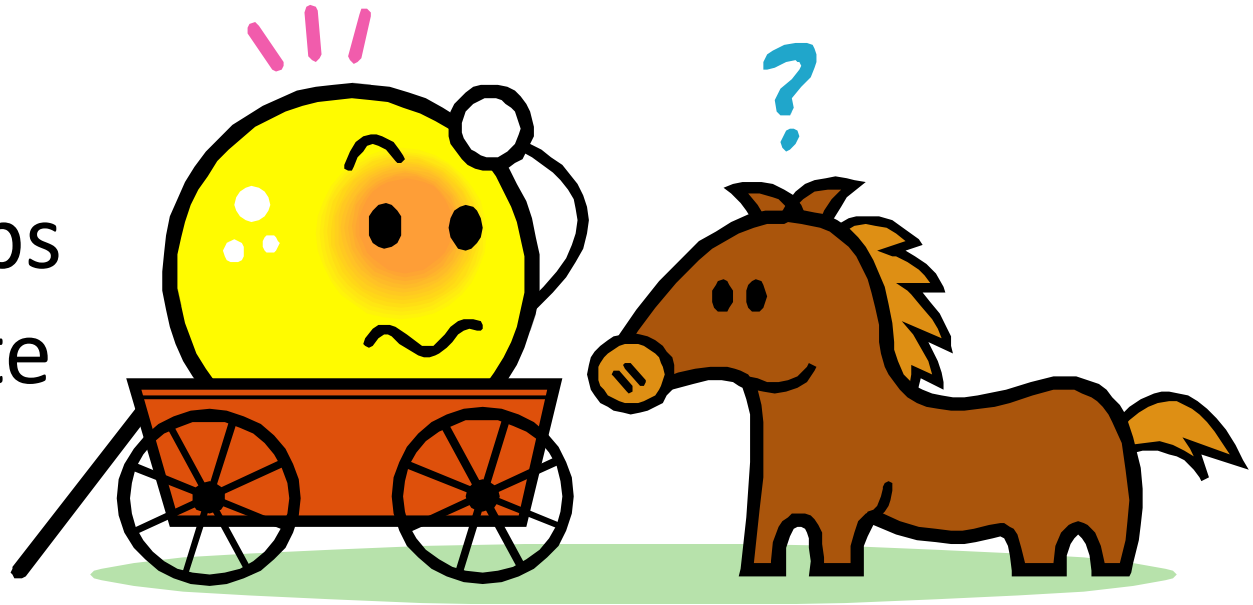
mortified, embarrassed, vexed, unsettled

fervent

ardent, zealous, fanatical, impassioned

Practice analyzing poetry free-response questions.

In groups,
follow steps
to annotate
a poem:



1. "A Story" (Li-Young Lee)
2. soliloquy from *Henry VIII* (William Shakespeare)
3. "Dulce Et Decorum Est" (Wilfred Owen)

Organizing an AP Essay

Introduction:

- Be brief and direct.
- Do not parrot the prompt; answer it.
- Compose a thesis that clearly responds to prompt, recognizes complexity (___ yet ___), and offers insight into topic. It should provide focus for the essay and should not contain a list.
- Add a thematically connected hook if you have time.

Organizing an AP Essay

Body:

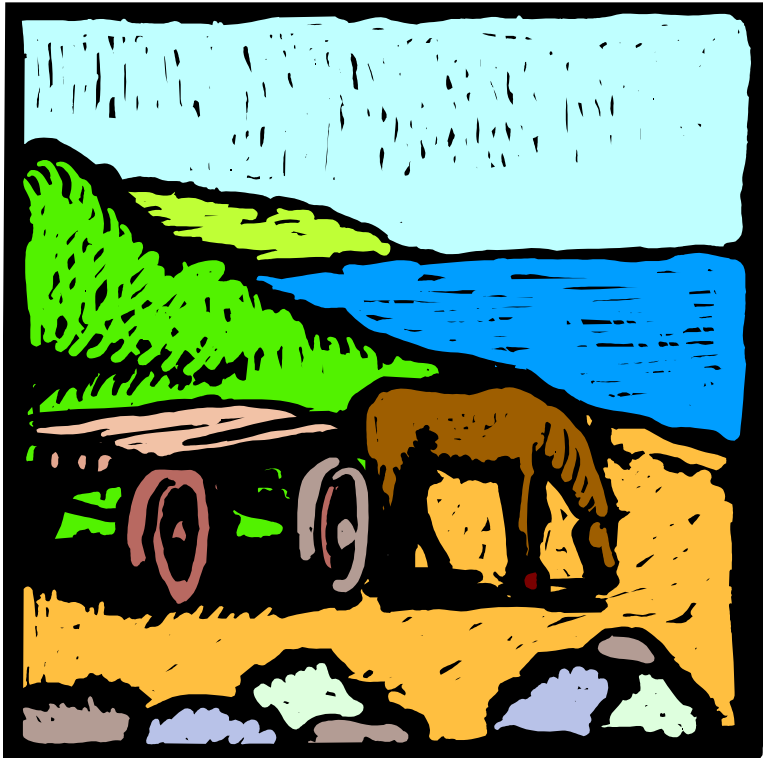
- Write only two body paragraphs if possible. Two allows you to focus on duality and complexity.
- Organize paragraphs according to idea and meaning rather than literary device.
- Provide multiple textual references (not just one detail or device) as support in each body paragraph.
- Do not allow long quotations to control the paragraph. Use pointed and precise textual references.
- Only include references and literary elements that clearly support the thesis and topic sentence.

Organizing an AP Essay

Conclusion:

- One or two sentences will work.
- Do not repeat the thesis.
- Make a thematic connection. Explain what the passage can teach us about the human experience.

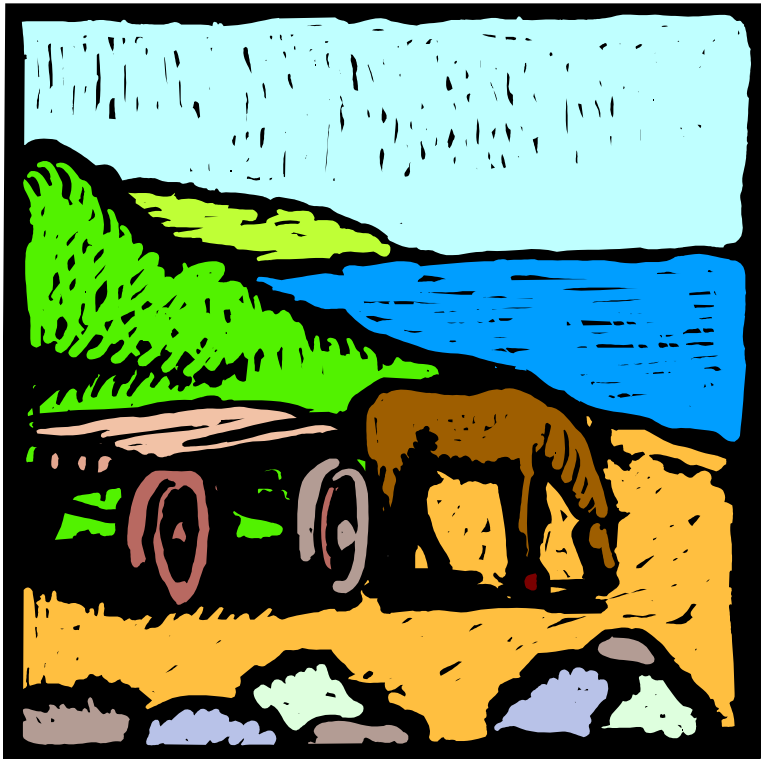
2009 AP Exam Question 1 samples (Wolsey's soliloquy from *Henry VIII*)



Sample A = 6

Sample WW = 8

2011 AP Exam Question 1 samples (Li-Young Lee's "A Story")



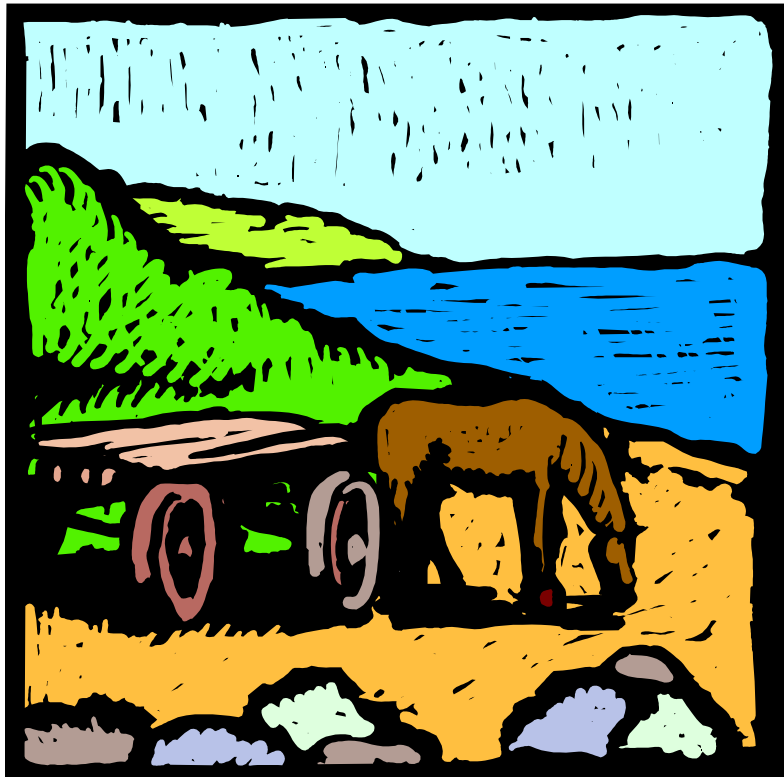
Even scores (2, 4, 6, 8)

- *O, P, Q, R*

Odd scores (1, 3, 5, 7, 9)

- *J, K, L, M, N*

2012 AP Exam Question 3 samples (influence of surroundings on character)



Even scores (2, 4, 6, 8)

- *U, W, Y, BB*

Odd scores (1, 3, 5, 7, 9)

- *T, V, X, Z, AA*

Wild cards

- *R, II*