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# **What to Teach in the AP English Literature Class**



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# Feeling overwhelmed by all you must teach?

novels  
and plays  
and poems  
and literary devices  
and genres  
and literary periods  
and vocabulary  
and writing



# Do my AP students need to know . . .

anaphora?  
and ballad stanza?  
and metonymy?  
and neoclassicism?  
and polysyndeton?  
and realism?  
and scansion?  
and synecdoche?  
and *terza rima*?  
and villanelle?  
and volta?



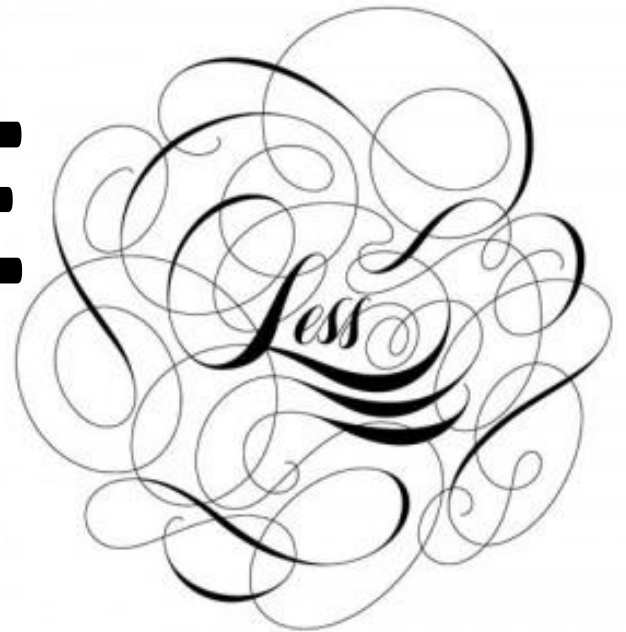


LESS IS MORE.

**TEACH**



**GRADE**



# ***Advice for teachers from College Board 2009 Student Response Q & A:***

- “Teach students to write articulate and persuasive statements on the meaning of texts and passages. The ability to interpret details linked to large themes or ideas will thrive if students have an eye and a vocabulary for meaning.”
- “Teach students to think, make notes, and prewrite before they begin to answer the question. . . . Ask them to revise first drafts to expand and deepen their argument about the meaning of a passage.”

# ***Advice for teachers from College Board 2009 Student Response Q & A:***

- “Teach students to write with confidence about literary elements and devices *and also* to write articulate arguments about what these elements contribute to the meaning of the text as a whole.”
- “Give students ample practice with close reading, both verbally and in writing, so that they can move from summary of a [text] to its broader meaning and the way meaning is revealed by symbols, tone, and figurative language.”



# ***Advice for teachers from College Board 2009 Student Response Q & A:***

- “Encourage research on words in dictionaries (including the OED), reward growing vocabularies, and emphasize the importance of language.”
- “Teach a wide range of texts, from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as from more recent times, and from English, American, and world literature.”



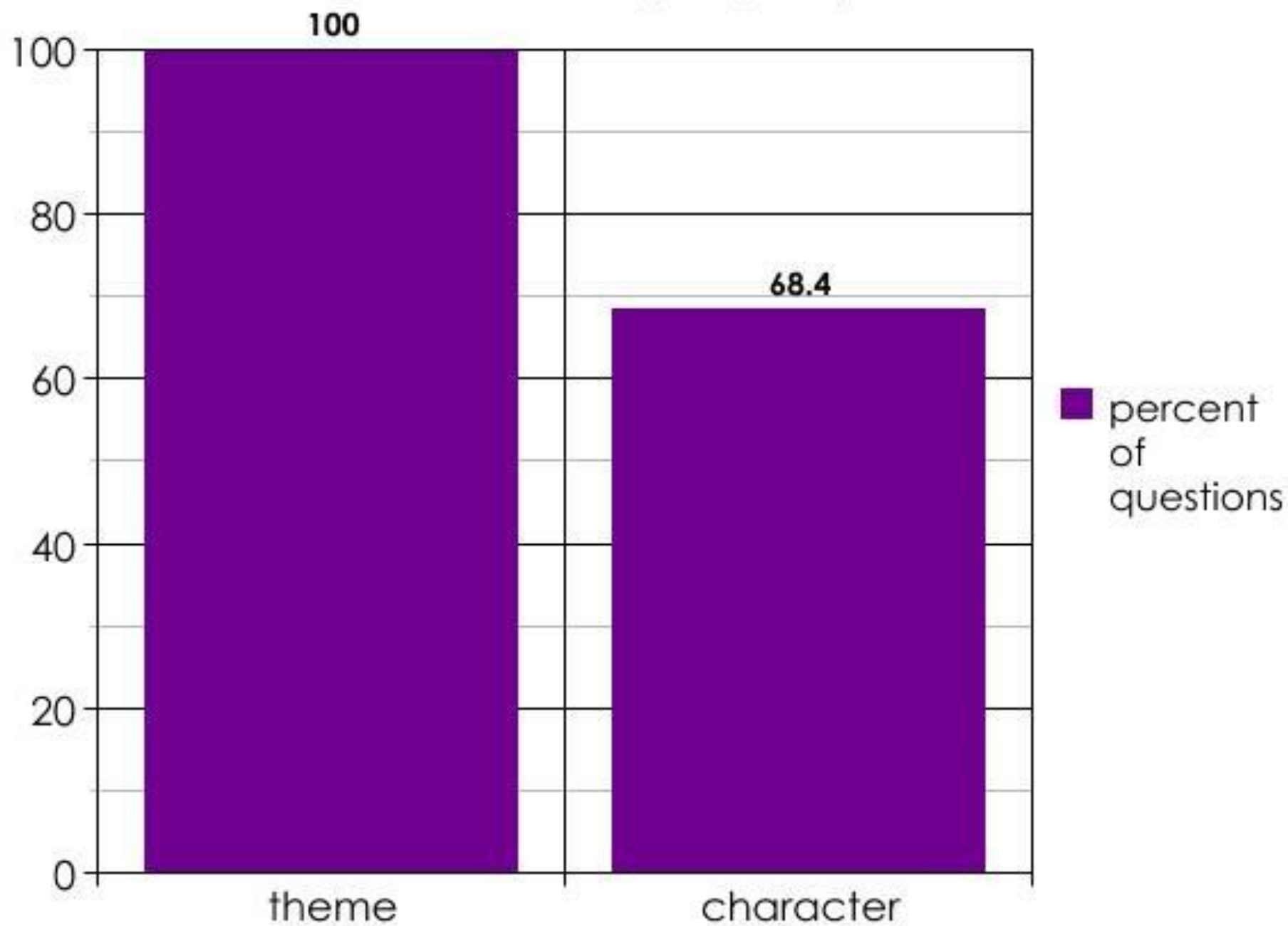
## ***LESS***

- terminology
- literary works
- memorizing words
- writing assignments
- grades

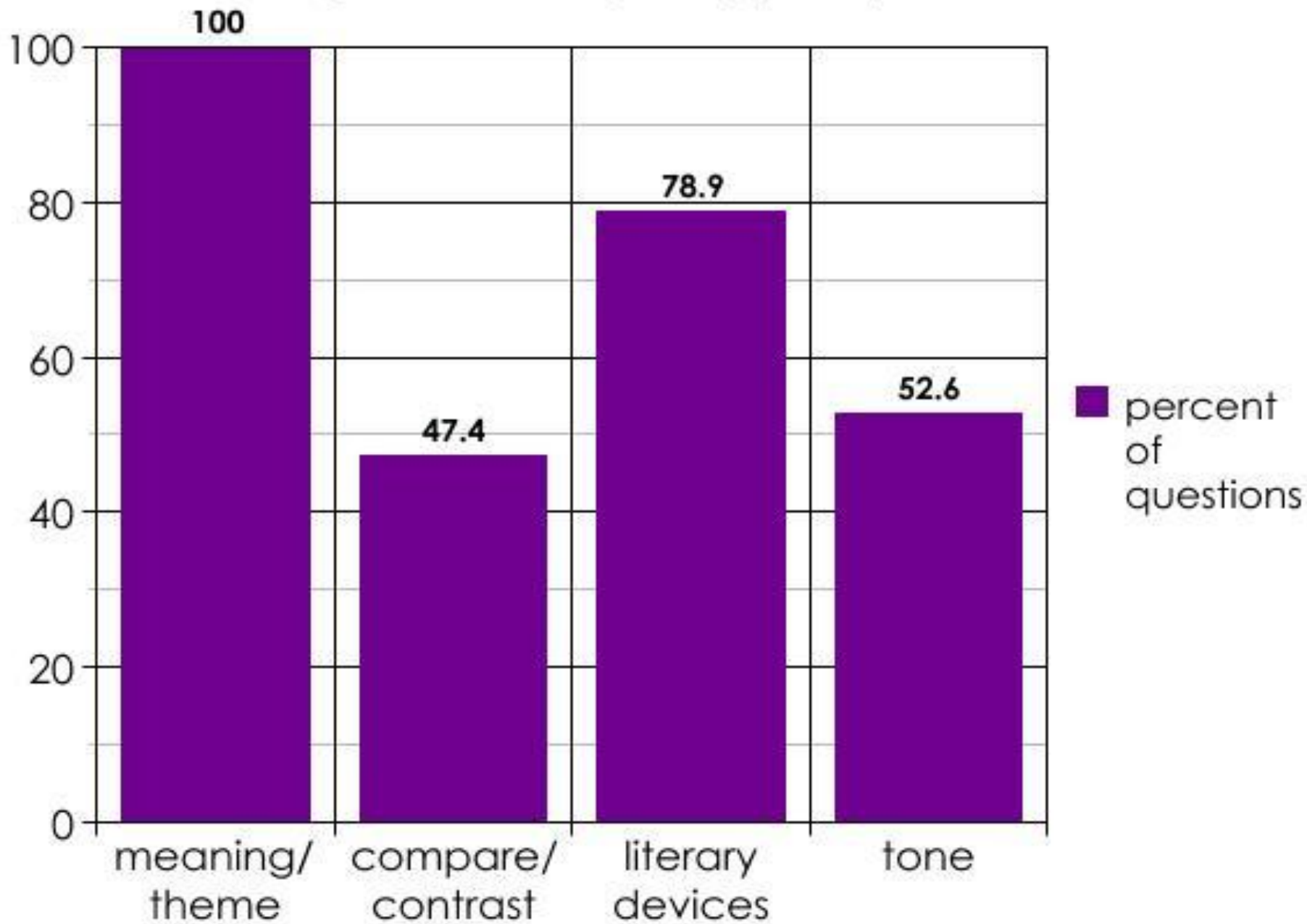
## ***MORE***

- theme and meaning
- close reading
- building vocabulary
- revisions
- self-assessment and sample analysis

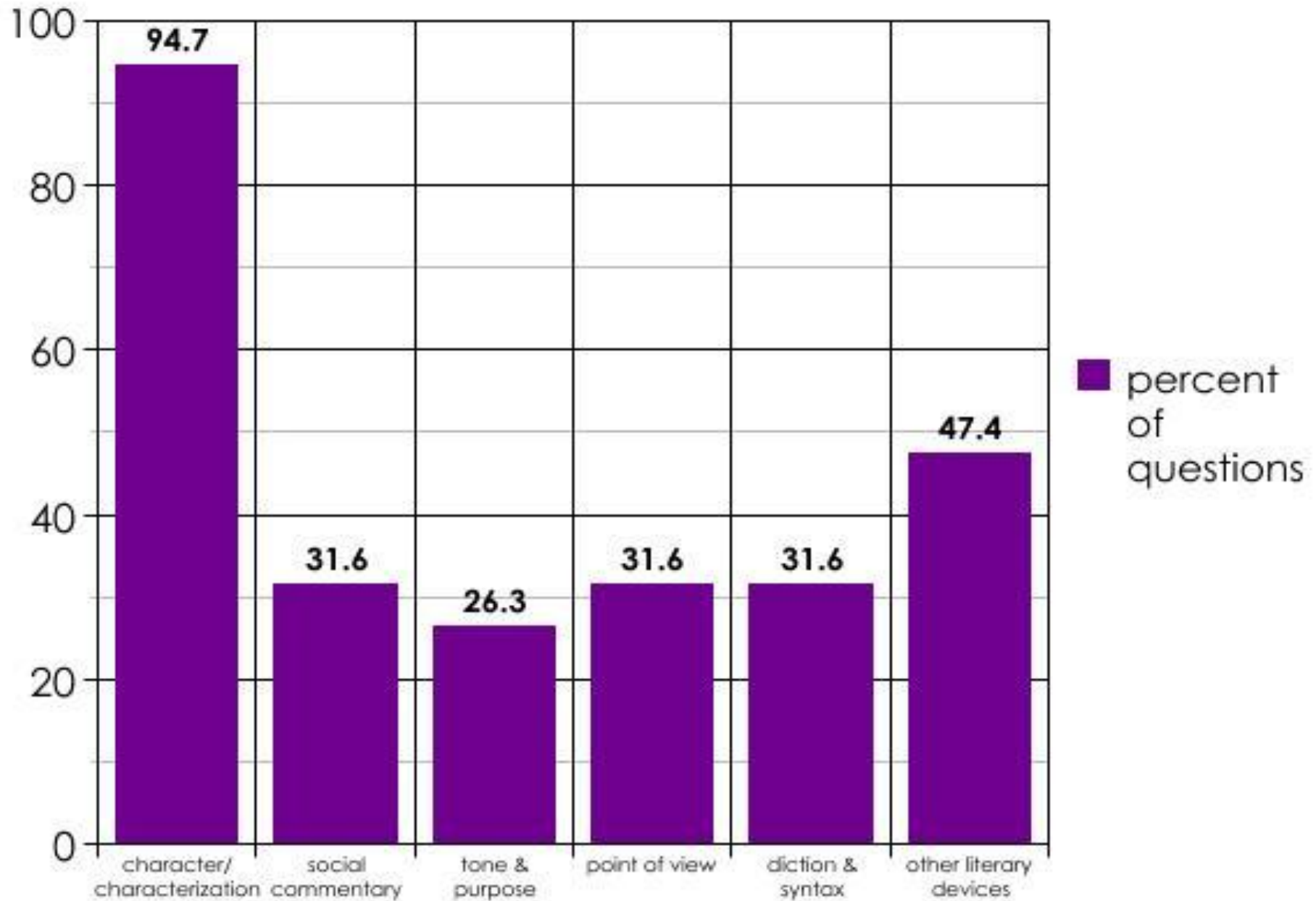
AP English Literature open prompts 2001-2010



# AP English Literature poetry prompts 2001-2010



# AP English Literature prose prompts 2001-2010



# Teach students to relate literary terminology to meaning.

## Prose

- tone
- figurative language
- imagery
- diction & syntax
- point of view
- irony
- characterization
- author's purpose
- setting

## Poetry

- tone
- figurative language
- imagery
- diction & syntax
- point of view
- irony
- structure
- shift
- title



**Focus on theme and meaning.**

# Guide students to search for larger thematic meaning.

## Step one:

You must first decide on the topic of the literary work. Choose an abstract concept like *unrequited love*, *freedom*, *abuse*, *jealousy*, *self-pity*, or *apathy* that the work explores. Then, finish this sentence:

The \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_  
(genre) (title) (author)

is about \_\_\_\_\_.  
(topic/abstract concept)



# Teach students to focus their analysis on the human condition.

## Step two:

Now, you need to state what the literary work expresses about the topic. If a poem is about *jealousy*, what idea does it express about that concept? Finish by inserting a clause to complete the following statement:

The \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_  
(genre) (title) (author)

is about \_\_\_\_\_ and reveals that  
(topic/abstract concept)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(opinion statement about humanity or human condition)

# Practice with top 15 open question suggested texts.

1. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (22 times)
2. Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (19 times)
3. Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (18 times)
4. Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (16 times)
5. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (15 times)
6. Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (15 times)  
Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (15 times)
7. Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (14 times)  
F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (14 times)  
William Shakespeare's *King Lear* (14 times)
8. James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (13 times)  
Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (13 times)
9. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (12 times)  
Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (12 times)  
Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (12 times)

# Creating a thematic thesis for an AP Exam open FRQ prompt

## 1979 prompt:

Choose a complex and important character in a novel or a play of recognized literary merit who might, on the basis of the character's actions alone, be considered evil or immoral. In a well-organized essay, explain both how and why the full presentation of the character in the work makes us react more sympathetically than we otherwise might. Avoid plot summary.

## Thesis that parrots the prompt:

Nathan Price, from *The Poisonwood Bible*, is evil, yet Kingsolver makes him sympathetic.

# Compose a thematic *Mad Lib* thesis.

In \_\_\_\_\_'s \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
(author) (genre) (title)  
the character \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ for his or her  
(name) (synonym of *evil*)  
\_\_\_\_\_; however, he or she is developed  
(explain immoral behavior)  
more sympathetically through \_\_\_\_\_,  
(describe author's technique)  
ultimately revealing \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
(theme, an assertion about the human condition)



# Unit 1: Family Bonds and Binds

## Literary Works

- Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*
- Wilson's *Fences*

## Assessments

- 2011 AP Exam poetry FRQ ("A Story")
- prose FRQ from *The Poisonwood Bible*
- 1990 AP Exam open FRQ (*Fences*)
- thematic dialogue project



**LESS**

**IS**

**MORE**