

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF AP LITERATURE

I am the Prompt, thy Prompt; thou shalt have no other Prompt before me. Thou shalt read the Prompt with rapt attention; the Prompt is thy friend. Thou shalt address the Prompt. Thou shalt not just get the general idea of the Prompt, nor shalt thou fight the Prompt or substitute thine own ideas for the Prompt, or simply restate the Prompt.

Thou shalt not postpone, omit or bury thy Thesis Statement.

Thou shalt not commit plot-summary, nor shalt thou cohabit with Reading Comprehension, for it is an abomination in my sight.

Thou shalt not commit free-floating generalization, but shall support and develop thy every assertion.

Thou shalt not confuse complexity with confusion, or subtlety with indecisiveness or shifting perspective with self-contradiction; thou shalt not attribute thine own insensitivity or ignorance to authorial ineptitude. The fact that thou gettest not the point doesn't mean that the passage hath no point: thou hast missed the point. Deal with it.

Thou shalt read every MC question with the same exquisite care that thou devotest to the essay Prompt: thou shalt not 'get the drift.' By the same token, thou shalt strive to read what the writer actually wrote, not what thou expectest him or her to have written.

Thou shalt not finish early. Thou shalt spend plenty of thy time planning thine essay responses and reading them over.

Thou shalt guess in an educated manner when thou knowest not the answers.

Thou shalt not merely identify literary and stylistic devices, but shalt show how they function.

Thou shalt never permit thyself to become discouraged: I am the prompt, thy Prompt. Thou shalt maintain thy focus, attention and confidence. Yea, though thou hast totally screwed up thy last essay, this next essay maketh a fresh start.