To whom it may concern:

I would like to take an opportunity to explain the rationale behind the multiple choice tests the students are taking in AP American Language and Composition. Language and Literature classes build on the prior knowledge students have gained throughout their careers in education. Many ideas in literature do not change: diction, tone, mood, purpose, audience, etc., and the students have spent years learning and being assessed on literature related aspects. Up to this point, the students have been working on reading and annotating texts for the purpose of identifying, supporting, and commenting on how literature related aspects affect the text. The skills they have been learning and practicing in class relate directly to life-long text interaction skills (including both college and beyond) and help prepare them for the passages they will see on the AP Language Exam. The students have also focused, more specifically, on a few of the aspects mentioned previously in relation to analyzing rhetoric: diction, tone, purpose, and rhetorical devices because our current focus is on rhetorical analysis and how what the author does in writing influences the purpose of the piece. They have been using these skills to interact with texts inside and outside of class.

Taking multiple choice exams are nothing new to the students, and the aspects covered in the questions are not aspects the students have not learned throughout their educational careers. However, the question stems and answer choices are on a much higher level than what they are used to, and the more interaction they have with them, the easier it becomes to see patterns. The lessons and practice in class continue to remediate and/or prepare them for interaction with the questions they see in the multiple choice section, which already cover aspects they have learned prior to and while taking the class.

The grading of the multiple choice tests is intended to give the students the most opportunity to improve and learn the patterns associated with the question stems. If one were to read and annotate a passage and answer questions with prescribed answers by providing textual evidence/justification for each answer choice, he/she should be able to recall that knowledge upon seeing the question again. Each time the student revisits the question, he/she must take another look at the text and see where he/she may have missed a piece of crucial textual evidence. Once all students have completed Test 1, we will review the piece and move on to Test 2. Because the lessons in class have, up to this point, remediated the knowledge contained in the question stems, the main struggles they face are seeing questions of that caliber and having to provide textual evidence to support an answer. These are all skills that we have been practicing in class and at home. The wording of the questions is difficult, and without teaching the test, they have been introduced to and been working with test appropriate vocabulary, information, and skills. The tests are designed to work on many levels: showcase gained knowledge thus far (why they take it 1 time), provide repetition in developing knowledge of vocabulary and question stems (why we allow them to take it multiple times), and learn to hone practiced skills and apply them in differing areas to include writing, speaking, listening, reading, and critical thinking (why we review upon final completion). Each question has five possible answers, two of which seem correct. By consistently looking back at the text for evidence in support of a chosen answer the student moves closer to being able to predict the language and choices on the test and supporting inquiry based learning. We do not review during each portion or provide answers between each portion because students are forced to again think critically about the text and the answer choices instead of making choices by process of elimination. Please understand the tests are to both assess progress and provide an opportunity to learn critical thinking skills and are based upon and build on the knowledge students have gained throughout their literary careers and in this course. We feel this is a more effective way to do what is right for students and progress in learning than to implement traditional tests and then curve them because doing only such would not provide as much additional opportunity to learn and be successful in that learning. This strategy also proved to increase scores with pre-20th century texts (where we placed our focus for multiple choice tests) in the multiple choice section on the exam this past year.

If students are finding they struggle, I offer tutoring every day after school, before school by appointment, and every day through email until 10:00 pm. I am including the standards we have coved thus far in the American Literature portion of the curriculum. Please review the syllabus for the College Board standards that are covered for writing, etc.

ELAGSE11-12RL1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

ELAGSE11-12RL2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

ELAGSE11-12RL3 Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

ELAGSE11-12RL4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

ELAGSE11-12RL5 Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

ELAGSE11-12RL6 Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

ELAGSE11-12RL10 By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

ELAGSE11-12RI4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

ELAGSE11-12RI5 Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

ELAGSE11-12RI6 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

ELAGSE11-12RI9 Analyze foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (including The Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address) for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features. For British Literature, American Literature, and Multicultural Literature use comparable documents of historical significance.

ELAGSE11-12SL1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions(one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues,* building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

ELAGSE11-12SL3 Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

ELAGSE11-12SL4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range or formal and informal tasks.

ELAGSE11-12L3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

a. Vary syntax for effect, consulting references (e.g., Tufte’s *Artful Sentences*) for guidance as needed; apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading.

ELAGSE11-12L4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 11-12 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

b. Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., *conceive, conception, conceivable*).

c. Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, or its etymology, or its standard usage.

d. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

ELAGSE11-12L5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.

b. Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

ELAGSE11-12L6 Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.