

american literature clep study guide

American Literature CLEP Study Guide

The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) offers students the chance to earn college credit for what they already know, allowing them to accelerate their education. The American Literature CLEP exam tests knowledge of American literary history, major authors, and significant works. This study guide will provide a comprehensive overview of the topics covered in the exam, helpful study strategies, and recommended resources to ensure that you are well-prepared.

Understanding the American Literature CLEP Exam

The American Literature CLEP exam assesses your ability to analyze and interpret literature while demonstrating an understanding of its historical context. It is designed for students who have a background in English literature and can identify key themes, literary movements, and significant writers from the colonial period to the present.

Exam Format and Structure

- Number of Questions: The exam consists of approximately 95 multiple-choice questions.
- Time Limit: You will have 90 minutes to complete the exam.
- Scoring: The raw score is converted to a scaled score ranging from 20 to 80. Most colleges require a minimum score of 50 to earn credit.

Content Areas

The exam covers several content areas, which can be categorized into the following:

1. Historical Context: Understanding the historical background of American literature from various periods.
2. Major Authors: Familiarity with significant authors and their works.
3. Literary Movements: Knowledge of different literary movements and their characteristics.
4. Literary Analysis: Ability to analyze texts, including themes, tone, and symbolism.
5. Critical Reading: Skills in reading comprehension and interpretation of various literary forms.

Key Literary Periods and Movements

To prepare for the exam effectively, familiarize yourself with the major literary periods and movements in American literature:

1. Colonial and Early National Period (1607-1820)

- Key Authors: Anne Bradstreet, Jonathan Edwards, Benjamin Franklin.
- Characteristics: Puritanism, religious themes, early American identity.
- Significant Works:
 - "The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America" by Anne Bradstreet.
 - "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" by Jonathan Edwards.

2. Romanticism (1820-1860)

- Key Authors: Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson.
- Characteristics: Emphasis on emotion, nature, individualism, and the sublime.
- Significant Works:
 - "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe.
 - "Leaves of Grass" by Walt Whitman.

3. Realism and Naturalism (1860-1910)

- Key Authors: Mark Twain, Henry James, Stephen Crane.
- Characteristics: Focus on everyday life, social issues, and the influence of environment on character.
- Significant Works:
 - "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" by Mark Twain.
 - "The Open Boat" by Stephen Crane.

4. Modernism (1910-1945)

- Key Authors: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, T.S. Eliot.
- Characteristics: Experimentation with form, fragmentation, disillusionment after World War I.
- Significant Works:
 - "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald.
 - "The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot.

5. Contemporary Literature (1945-Present)

- Key Authors: Toni Morrison, Kurt Vonnegut, Don DeLillo.
- Characteristics: Diverse voices, postmodernism, exploration of identity and culture.
- Significant Works:
 - "Beloved" by Toni Morrison.
 - "Slaughterhouse-Five" by Kurt Vonnegut.

Important Themes and Literary Devices

An understanding of common themes and literary devices will enhance your analysis skills. Here are some key concepts to review:

Common Themes

- Identity and Self: Exploration of personal and cultural identity.
- Society and Class: Examination of social structures and inequalities.
- Nature and the Environment: The relationship between humans and the natural world.
- Conflict: Internal and external conflicts faced by characters.

Literary Devices

- Symbolism: The use of symbols to represent ideas or concepts.
- Imagery: Descriptive language that appeals to the senses.
- Irony: A contrast between expectation and reality.
- Metaphor and Simile: Comparisons used to create meaning.

Study Strategies for the American Literature CLEP Exam

To maximize your chances of success on the CLEP exam, consider the following study strategies:

1. Create a Study Schedule

- Allocate regular study sessions leading up to the exam date.
- Break down the material into manageable sections based on literary periods and authors.

2. Utilize Practice Tests

- Take advantage of official CLEP practice exams and resources.
- Time yourself to get accustomed to the pace of the actual exam.

3. Read Widely

- Explore a variety of American literature texts to familiarize yourself with different styles and themes.

- Focus on key authors and their most significant works.

4. Join Study Groups

- Collaborate with peers who are also preparing for the exam.
- Discuss themes, authors, and literary analysis to deepen your understanding.

5. Use Online Resources

- Websites like Khan Academy, YouTube, and literary forums can provide additional insights and explanations.
- Consider CLEP-specific study guides and review books.

Recommended Resources

To aid your preparation, the following resources are highly recommended:

- Official CLEP Study Guide: A comprehensive resource directly from the College Board.
- "The Norton Anthology of American Literature": A key text that covers significant works and authors.
- Online Courses: Platforms like Coursera or edX may offer courses on American literature.
- Study Apps: Utilize flashcard apps or CLEP-focused study applications for on-the-go learning.

Conclusion

The American Literature CLEP exam offers an excellent opportunity to earn college credit and demonstrate your knowledge of American literary traditions. By thoroughly reviewing literary periods, understanding key themes and devices, and employing effective study strategies, you can approach the exam with confidence. With diligent preparation and the right resources, success on this exam is well within reach.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the American Literature CLEP exam?

The American Literature CLEP exam is designed to assess a student's understanding of American literary works, authors, and movements, allowing them to earn college credit for knowledge typically gained in an introductory college course.

What topics should I focus on when studying for the American Literature CLEP?

Focus on major American authors, literary movements (such as Romanticism, Realism, Modernism), important literary works, themes, and historical contexts that influenced American literature.

Are there specific texts I should read to prepare for the American Literature CLEP exam?

Yes, familiarize yourself with key texts from authors like Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Toni Morrison, as well as important novels, poems, and plays that are commonly referenced in the exam.

What study materials are recommended for the American Literature CLEP exam?

Recommended study materials include the official CLEP study guide, literature anthologies, online resources, and practice tests that cover American literature topics and exam format.

How can I effectively prepare for the American Literature CLEP exam?

To prepare effectively, create a study schedule, utilize CLEP study guides, engage with online forums for tips, take practice exams to familiarize yourself with the question format, and review key literary movements and their characteristics.

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