AP Language and Composition

Vocabulary List

Week 4

Sentence Type: Loose sentence

**litotes** (pronounced almost like “little tee”) – a form of understatement that involves making an affirmative point by denying its

opposite. *Litote* is the opposite of *hyperbole*. Examples: “Not a bad idea,” “Not many,” “It isn’t very serious. I have this

tiny little tumor on the brain” (Salinger, *Catcher in the Rye*).

**loose sentence/non-periodic sentence –** A type of sentence in which the main idea (independent clause) comes first, followed by

dependent grammatical units such as phrases and clauses. If a period were placed at the end of the independent clause,

the clause would be a complete sentence. A work containing many loose sentences often seems informal, relaxed, or

conversational. Generally, loose sentences create loose style. The opposite of a loose sentence is the *periodic sentence*.

Example: I arrived at the San Diego airport after a long, bumpy ride and multiple delays.

Could stop at: I arrived at the San Diego airport.

**metaphor –** A figure of speech using implied comparison of seemingly unlike things or the substitution of one for the other,

suggesting some similarity. Metaphorical language makes writing more vivid, imaginative, thought provoking, and

meaningful.

**metonymy –** (mĕtŏn′ ĭmē) A term from the Greek meaning “changed label” or “substitute name,” metonymy is a figure of speech

in which the name of one object is substituted for that of another closely associated with it. For example, a news release

that claims “the White House declared” rather than “the President declared” is using metonymy; Shakespeare uses it to

signify the male and female sexes in *As You Like It*: “doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat.” The

substituted term generally carries a more potent emotional impact.

**mood –** The prevailing atmosphere or emotional aura of a work. Setting, tone, and events can affect the mood. Mood is similar

to tone and atmosphere.

**narrative –** The telling of a story or an account of an event or series of events.

**onomatopoeia –** A figure of speech in which natural sounds are imitated in the sounds of words. Simple examples include such

words as *buzz, hiss, hum, crack, whinny,* and *murmur*. If you note examples of onomatopoeia in an essay passage, note

the effect.

**oxymoron –** From the Greek for “pointedly foolish,” an oxymoron is a figure of speech wherein the author groups apparently

contradictory terms to suggest a paradox. Simple examples include “jumbo shrimp” and “cruel kindness.” This term

does not usually appear in the multiple-choice questions, but there is a chance that you might find it in an essay. Take

note of the effect that the author achieves with the use of oxymoron.

**paradox –** A statement that appears to be self-contradictory or opposed to common sense but upon closer inspection contains

some degree of truth or validity. (Think of the beginning of Dickens’ *Tale of Two Cities*: “It was the best of times, it was

the worst of times....”)

**parallelism –** Also referred to as parallel construction or parallel structure, this term comes from Greek roots meaning “beside one

another.” It refers to the grammatical or rhetorical framing of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs to give structural

similarity. This can involve, but is not limited to, repetition of a grammatical element such as a preposition or verbal

phrase. (Again, the opening of Dickens’ *Tale of Two Cities* is an example: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of

times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of believe, it was the epoch of

incredulity....”) The effects of parallelism are numerous, but frequently they act as an organizing force to attract the

reader’s attention, add emphasis and organization, or simply provide a musical rhythm.