

AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

Reading Pre-20th Century Prose Excerpts



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Reading texts published before 1900 may be challenging for several reasons. By knowing a few strategies, you can make sense of the writer's ideas and successfully answer questions about them.



Examples of Pre-20th Century Texts



Diary



Letter



Speech



Essay



Foreword



Challenges of Pre-20th Century Texts

- Unfamiliar contexts and references
- Challenging vocabulary
- Complex sentences
- Lengthy paragraphs



Key Strategy #1

Preview the Passage



Key Strategy

Preview the Passage

- Identify position and content of footnotes
- Observe number and length of paragraphs
- Note the introductory information above the excerpt



Sample introductory information

The excerpt below is from a speech Frederick Douglass delivered at a public meeting hall in Boston, Massachusetts, December 1860, and later published in his newspaper, *The North Star*.



- Author
- Audience
- Occasion
- Date
- Context
- Exigence
- Purpose

The excerpt below is from a speech Frederick Douglass delivered at a public meeting hall in Boston, Massachusetts, December 1860, and later published in his newspaper, *The North Star*.





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Stuff Easy to Understand

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