Changes to the 2019-20 AP Literature and Composition Course and 2020 Exam

Changes to the Free Response Essay Rubric and Focus:
The FRQ essays will be scored on a 6-point analytic scale:
1. Claim/thesis (1 point)
2. Evidence and commentary to develop the claim (analysis – 4 points)
3. Sophistication/complexity of the student’s argument (interpretation – 1 point)

Reasoning behind the change from a 9-point scale to a 6-point scale: score points “8” and “9” have not been relevant to earning a “5” overall on the exam. The correlation between performance on the multiple choice and essay portions of the exam is high, and a “6” or “7” on every FRQ essay, along with a strong performance on the multiple choice section of the exam, will give the student a “5.” Because this is the case, the “8” and “9” score points for the essays are essentially superfluous.

Exam Composition:
The multiple choice section will have approximately 55 questions.
The breakdown of the periods in which they were composed will the this:
• 25% pre-twentieth century;
• 50% twentieth century; and
• 25% “contemporary (2000 to the present). (In the past, 50% of the texts on the multiple choice section were pre-20th century.)

The FRQ’s will be on one poem (FRQ1); a prose passage from a short story, play, or novel (FRQ2); and a prompt inviting the student to write about a work of choice (FRQ3).

• The list of suggested texts for FRQ3 will have 36-42 works on it, NONE of which will be works in translation or ancient texts (e.g., The Odyssey, The Iliad). Students will be allowed to write about works in translation (e.g., Crime and Punishment, Madame Bovary), but translated works will not be listed in the question prompt.

• What constitutes “literary merit” will no longer be an issue: works of literature characterized by “complexity” will all work as choices about which to write.

• Literary nonfiction (e.g., The Bell Jar, In Cold Blood, Night) will be acceptable choices for FRQ3.

Final Note: The skill most-tested on the updated AP Lit Exam will be to “explain the function of the speaker or narrator in the text.”

Online resources to support AP teachers in 2019-20 will go live in August 2019.