Unit 6: Cognition
Our next unit is “Cognition.” Cognition is just another term for “thinking.” The way the AP folks organize it, this encompasses memory, problem solving, and creativity.

Memory is any indication that learning has persisted over time. How do we turn information from our surroundings into something our brain can remember? How is that information stored? How do we access that information when we need it? How come we can remember some pieces of information and not others? After studying memory theory you will have a greater handle on these questions.

When we solve problems, we are accessing information we have learned and remembered and applying it to new situations. Sometimes our prior experiences help us come to solutions, sometimes they hinder the process. In this unit we will explore why. At this point, we will also explore the role language has in this process.

Finally, creative thinking can be taught. You will be exposed to ways to help you think more creatively.

Unit Objectives
The following is a description of learning objectives for the major content areas covered in the AP Psychology Exam during this unit, as well as the approximate percentages of the multiple-choice section devoted to each area. This listing is not intended to be an exhaustive list of topics. All of these topics are likely to appear on the AP exam in some way, shape, or form. Other material we talk about and/or in your reading could also find its way on the unit assessment.

Cognition (8-10% of AP exam)
In this unit you learn how humans convert sensory input into kinds of information. You will examine how humans learn, remember, and retrieve information. This part of the course also addresses problem solving, language, and creativity.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

• Compare the similarities and differences of various cognitive processes:
  • Effortful versus automatic processing;
  • Deep vs. shallow processing;
  • Focused vs. Divided attention
• Describe and differentiate psychological and physiological systems of memory (e.g. short-term memory, procedural memory)
• Outline the principles that underlie effective encoding, storage, and construction of memories.
• Describe strategies for memory improvement
• Synthesize how biological, cognitive, and cultural factors converge to facilitate acquisition, development, and use of language
• Identify problem-solving strategies as well as factors that influence their effectiveness
• List the characteristics of creative thought and creative thinkers
• Identify key contributors in cognitive psychology (e.g. Noam Chomsky, Hermann Ebbinghaus, Wolfgang Kohler, Elizabeth Loftus, George A. Miller).

Text Readings
• Coon p. 251-282 (All of Chapter 8); p.283-303 (Some of Chapter 9)
• Barron’s Chapter 7
Key Terms
By the end of the unit you should be able to properly and accurately use the terms at the beginning of Chapter 7 of Barron’s, as well as the terms in bold interspersed throughout the pages assigned in Coon, in written and verbal communication.

Planned Assignments & Assessments (subject to change)
- Open Note Collaborative Quiz #1: “Introduction & Memory” (Coon Chapter 8, associated pages in Barron’s)
- Reading Quiz #2: “Thinking, Language, Problem Solving, Creative Thinking, and Intuition” (Coon p. 283-303; associated pages in Barron’s)
- Cognition Unit Test
- Cognition Independent Investigation

Current Timetable (subject to change)
- Last day of unit planned for Friday December 19