



Student Performance Q&A:

2002 AP[®] Latin Literature Free-Response Questions

The following comments are provided by the Chief Reader about the 2002 free-response questions for AP Latin Literature. *They are intended to assist AP readers as they develop training sessions to help teachers better prepare their students for the AP Exams.* They give an overview of each question and its performance, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content with which students frequently have the most problems are included. Some suggestions for improving student performance in these areas are also included. Readers are encouraged to use their expertise to create strategies for teachers to improve student performance in specific areas.

LL 1

What was intended by the question?

The intent was a clear, literal translation of Catullus 9, lines 1-8.

How well did students perform?

As a whole, the students did very well. Even though this poem may well have been first read in the early weeks of the school year, most students were familiar enough with the poem and comfortable enough with the Latin to be awarded credit for at least half of the available points.

What were common errors or omissions?

The better students see and understand the grammatical structures and make vocabulary guesses based on the requirements of the grammar, rather than trying to create a structure from the recognition of only the individual words.

Since many students had trouble with *antistans* (#3), often translating it as a pure adjective (e.g., “my favorite”), this frequently meant that either *milibus trecentis* or *mihi* (and sometimes both of them) were not handled well. The students continue to misconstrue the tense, person and mood of the verbs. This was especially evident with *venisti*, *visam* and *audiam* which gave the students multiple opportunities for imaginative new translations. The greatest problem involved the genitive plural *Hiberum* (“of the Iberians/Spaniards”) which most students decided to take as the adjective “Spanish”, as the singular genitive “of Spain”, and even in the accusative singular as that famous Roman traveler “Hiberum”.

Based on your experience at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that could improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Drill the forms! Drill the vocabulary! Common words mistranslated:

- *milibus* (translated as “soldiers” and “miles”)
- *unanimos* (translated as “unspirited” and “unanimous”)
- *incolumem* (translated as “inhabitant” and “columns”)

LL 2

What was intended by the question?

Students were asked to provide an interpretation of a very familiar poem as one of playfulness or seriousness, using the Latin text as support.

How well did students perform?

Most students offered a satisfactory discussion of the poem. A smaller number presented very insightful and discerning arguments for their interpretations, but relatively few appeared unfamiliar with the poem or unable to make any pertinent comments.

What were common errors or omissions?

- Latin support from the text was stronger than for many essay questions, but precision eluded many students, especially when pronouns were involved.
- Less strong essays tended to impose assumptions on the text, e.g., that grief for a dead pet is silly, or that Catullus viewed the bird as a rival for Lesbia's attention, instead of deriving an interpretation from the poem itself. Other essays, with some good Latin support from within the text, sometimes added lengthy, extraneous interpretations based on other poems by Catullus, especially poem 2, (sparrows, mourning) or on allegorical or symbolic views.

Based on your experience at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that could improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Make sure that students practice writing essays that help them show as much support *from the text* as possible. More text-based support from an interpretation is always better than less. Explain that the phrase "throughout the text" is important.

Allegorical interpretations or interpretations of double entendres generally did not produce well-argued papers. Students who wrote them tended to base their interpretation on single words or ideas extraneous to this poem.

Arguments based primarily on sound patterns or rhetorical effects were seldom strong and well constructed.

LL 3

What was intended by the question?

The students were asked to discuss an awkward social situation and the poet's reaction to it. The readers expected the information to be presented in a well-developed essay with liberal and confident Latin support.

How well did students perform?

The readers felt that the students did not perform particularly well. The question left broad room for inferences about the awkward social situation. Some students responded with essays both well documented and nuanced while others struggled to recognize the situation.

What were common errors or omissions?

Students did not refer accurately to the Latin throughout to support their arguments. They especially struggled with the second and third couplets. They mistranslated the present contrary to fact condition (lines 3-4) and misconstrued key elements in the last couplet. Students who failed to recognize the awkward social situation set out in line 1 filled in with general information about the Lesbia-Catullus relationship or with references from other poems in the corpus. The Latin was not difficult, but students misinterpreted the poem because of careless errors on basic syntax and forms. Some students felt the need to discuss the historicity of the poem rather than viewing the poem as a work of imagination.

Based on your experience at the AP reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that could improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Teachers should remind students to read the question carefully and train them to use the whole passage to answer the question. Careful citation of the Latin should also be encouraged. Finally, teachers should make clear to the students what an accurate paraphrase of the Latin is.

LL 4

What was intended by the question?

Candidates were asked to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of a passage. This question tested their ability to translate, identify content, Roman customs, and figures of speech.

How well did students perform?

Candidates scored throughout the whole range although scores tended to be either in the upper range or lower, depending on their knowledge of the passage.

What were common errors or omissions?

Candidates had difficulty with vocabulary, especially the words *aemulam* and *detrahi*. In question 1. (c), they were often unsure of the speaker. Candidates were unable to identify Appius Claudius.

Based on your experience at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that could improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Students should have a grasp of Latin vocabulary (especially of that found in Cicero). When citations are made, the translations should be literal. They should be able to name figures of speech and not merely describe them. The students should have a grasp of Roman culture, i.e., a triumph (“what does this mean?”); *imagines* (“what are these?”); and a tribune (“who is this?”).

LL 5

What was intended by the question?

The purpose of LL5 was to evaluate the candidate’s command of Ciceronian vocabulary, syntax, and grammar based on translation of a brief passage from the *Pro Caelio*.

How well did students perform?

Scores ran the full range. While there were some excellent performances, many scored in the lower range.

What were common errors or omissions?

Students experienced difficulty with grammar, especially indirect statements, verb tenses, degree of the adjective (adverb), plurals for singulars and identifying *coniungerent* as transitive. The students also had the most difficulty with the following vocabulary: *turpitude, oratio, voluptas, eruditus*.

Based on your experience at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that could improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Students should be reminded to read carefully and take their time. They should work carefully on tenses and voice of the verb and drill with vocabulary. They should be able to translate literally and know what this means. Teachers should encourage their students to re-read their translations for sense and clarity.

LL 6

What was intended by the question?

Students were asked to evaluate Cicero's rhetorical strategy based on a brief introductory passage from *Pro Caelio* 1.2.

How well did students perform?

Student scores ran the full range. Students who knew the context were able to perform well.

What were common errors or omissions?

Students misunderstood whose allies were intended. They did not focus on this passage but often used much correct material from other passages of the *Pro Caelio*. Students neglected to deal with the 2nd part of the question "the intended effect on the jury." Students failed to use the Latin from throughout the passage and often confused the characters in the passage.

Based on your experience at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that could improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Students should learn to develop a thesis statement and then write their essay. Students need to practice citing proper Latin. They should practice identifying passages: "where is this from?" "who is speaking?" and "what are the circumstances?"

LL 7

What was intended by the question?

The question checked the students' understanding of the passage with short translation, comprehension, or figure of speech questions.

How well did students perform?

The students on the whole did very well on the first two questions and on identifying Quintilius as virtuous in #3. They did reasonably well on the figure of speech, but most fell short of full credit on #5.

What were common errors or omissions?

In #1, Melpomene was called a girlfriend, and the gift often was identified as various kinds of liquids. The metaphor in #2 was associated with poetry, especially eternal fame in poetry; Quintilius was often referred to as "she." In #3, most students missed the "extent" part of the question, and many misread the Latin, saying that Quintilius lacked the virtues listed. There was

great confusion with chiasmus in #4, and the misreading of the final *is* in *flebilis* has long resulted in incorrect figures of speech or incorrect word groupings. The most frequent problem in #5 was the failure to follow directions. Latin often was not written out or translated properly. *Bonis*, for example, was frequently used to modify “tears” or Quintilius. The comparative in the second phrase was taken to mean that Quintilius was good but Vergil was better, that Vergil (who had died) was a more lamentable person than Quintilius was, or that no one was more pitiful than Vergil. *Occidit* was taken to mean that Quintilius killed many good men.

Based on your experience at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that could improve the performance of their students on the exam?

More precise checking of translations by students, increasing their knowledge of vocabulary in context, and practice in interpretation would be helpful. Teachers should understand that students do not have to write essay responses to this type of question; they should make the point and move on. In addition, students must be careful to follow directions. When asked to write out and translate Latin phrases, they must do exactly what they are asked.

LL 8

What was intended by the question?

Students were asked to produce a literal translation of the third and fourth stanzas of Ode 3.13.

How well did students perform?

Students performed very well in comparison to past years’ translations in all authors. There were many 9s this year within a broad range of scores. Most students found something within the passage which they could translate correctly so that a range of 5-7 was attainable by a majority.

What were common errors or omissions?

Common errors included the following: reversing the adjectives *atrox* and *flagrantis*, mistranslating *pecori* as “heart” or “chest”; treating *vago* as a first person singular verb; omitting *quoque*; missing the exact meaning of *desiliunt* and translating it as “flow” or mistranslating it as “be silent.” Some students also seemed to offer translations based on memory of the sacrifice in the earlier part of the poem.

Based on your experience at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that could improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Teachers might tell students to leave out with blank lines what they do not know rather than corrupt the translation with guesses which compound errors. However, when students have attempted a full translation, they should also go back and check to see that every word has been translated.

LL 9

What was intended by the question?

The students were asked to discuss the philosophical advice of the golden mean and illustrate the philosophy with three contrasting images gathered from the three stanzas of the poem. The readers expected the information to be written in a well-developed essay with liberal and confident Latin support.

How well did students perform?

The readers felt that the students performed very well for several reasons: the question was well written in that it directed the students in a very specific manner; the students for the most part were able to understand the Latin needed for the support of their answer; the students were generally able to write a discerning essay using the Latin cited from the poem.

What were common errors or omissions?

Many students left out one of the three sets of contrasts in writing their essays. Some students wrote an entire essay based on the understanding of a very few Latin words which they recognized; these essays in no way satisfied the demands of the question. Many students who did not recognize the passage wrote about the “carpe diem” philosophy.

Based on your experience at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that could improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Teachers should direct their students to write answers which satisfy the question based on the passage cited; i.e., teachers should train students not to include in their answers information from other Horace poems which they have read, information from parts of the specific poem which were not cited on the test; information from their knowledge about Horace’s life and times. In addition, students should understand that literary devices and sound effects very rarely support their arguments, which should be based more specifically on the ideas gathered from the passage.

LL 10

What was intended by the question?

The intent was to evaluate a student’s ability to recognize a specific passage and its context, and to translate accurately enough to interpret the author’s intent.

How well did students perform?

The scores covered the full range from 0 to 8.

What were common errors or omissions?

- Not following directions to cite an appropriate word or phrase when requested and/or not giving a correct translation for the cited words.
- Not knowing vocabulary (e.g., *speculator*, *inerme*, *frangit*).
- Not recognizing the reference to the Trojan War and inventing another war (the Thracian War).

Based on your experience at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that could improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Teachers need to emphasize the importance of citing and translating Latin as a part of writing responses to questions. Students should be familiar with the figures of speech which are listed in the *AP Latin Course Description* instead of the textbook they use.

LL 11

What was intended by the question?

Students were asked to write a literal translation of lines from “Daedalus and Icarus”, 8.223-228.

How well did students perform?

The students seemed to perform well. The full range of scores was used, but there were more mid-range and upper scores this year. Students did tend to summarize the story if they could not translate literally.

What were common errors or omissions?

Students still tend to go for false cognates and sometimes build a translation around one or two words such as *solis* and *nudos* and *ceras*. The specific segments which were most troublesome were *audaci* and *rapidi*, misplacing the modifiers or translating them as adverbs. They also missed *tractus*, either not recognizing the participle or not knowing the meaning of the word. Some students translated *tractus* as *tactus* which is given in some Latin books. The *egit iter* chunk seemed to cause a great deal of difficulty. Both enclitics, *-que*, were difficult as the omission still left a translation which made sense. The *rapidi vicinia solis* chunk was very difficult. Most students missed the pluperfect tense in *tabuerant* if they knew the meaning of the verb. And *carens remigioque* was the other impossible chunk. Students made up their own version, disregarding tense, voice, case, number, and sense. They made participles out of *cupido*. If the scoring guidelines had not allowed the historical present for the verbs *mollit*, *quatit*, *percipit*, the scores would have been lower.

Based on your experience at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that could improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Teachers should have the students write literal translations in class. They should grade translations using the “chunking” method. Teachers must hold the line on tense, voice, number, adjective agreement, and translating adjectives as adjectives instead of adverbs. Students need to account for every word in a translation and not ignore any.

LL 12

What was intended by the question?

The intent was to elicit a well-organized, insightful essay, supported with liberal use of specific, appropriate references from the Latin throughout the passage, contrasting the reality of Pyramus and Thisbe’s situation with their hopes and desires.

How well did students perform?

The full range of scores was used but the majority of the students performed at the “3” level. Most students were able to define the contrast and to support it with some Latin. Many brought in figures of speech, word placement, etc., to illustrate the reality and desires of Pyramus and Thisbe. Many made no attempt to answer the question, but wrote a summary of the story.

What were common errors or omissions?

The strongest essays were those of students who combined the most thorough knowledge of the text within the framework of their own ideas. Most students were able to cite the Latin but were unable to maintain their citations throughout the passage. There was frequent vocabulary confusion in key words: *paries* – parents, *pateres* – allow, parents, fathers, *oscula* – eyes, *fatemus* –fate, and *invide* – any adjective meaning “bad.”

Students told the plot rather than analyzing or contrasting. They gave their opinion rather than basing the argument on the Latin. Many students thought that the last two lines referred to their plans to sneak away “at night.”

Many students introduced the essay with the idea of the contrast but did not sustain it. Many relied on summary, using their knowledge of the story. They got off the track addressing issues which were not in the passage; i.e. foolishness of defying one’s parents. They were unable to give a close textual reading.

Based on your experience at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that could improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Students need to be trained to address the main points of the question in their introduction. Teachers should practice writing short essays with their students in class. Students should stick to the passage given rather than bring in their knowledge of the rest of the poem. They should make an outline including the Latin support selected for each point they would like to include in their essay. They also need to practice vocabulary on a regular basis.