



## Student Performance Q&A:

### 2002 AP<sup>®</sup> Latin: Vergil Free-Response Questions

The following comments are provided by the Chief Reader about the 2002 free-response questions for AP Latin: Vergil. *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 that students frequently have the most problems with 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.

#### V1

*What was intended by the question?*

The students were asked to write a literal translation of six and a half lines from the *Aeneid* (*Aen.* 12.908-914).

*How well did students perform?*

Although the full range of scores were seen, the majority of the translations earned scores in the mid to lower end of the scoring spectrum. Translations that earned a score of 9 were rare.

*What were common errors or omissions?*

In the first two lines, students had difficulty rendering *quies* as a subject and *oculos* as an object, recognizing that *pressit* was in the perfect tense, and correctly matching nouns with their adjectives. In the last two lines, students often rendered *quacumque* as a modifier of *viam* instead of *virtute*.

In general, students often did not recognize a noun's correct case and/or did not know the meanings of several of the key words in the passage:

- *Avidos* was rendered as "birds."
- *Cursus* was rendered as "chariots" or "limbs."
- *Nequiquam* was rendered as "no" or "never."
- *Velle* was rendered as "is able to" or ignored.
- *Conatibus* was rendered with *aegri* as "fields."
- *Sufficiunt* was rendered as "suffused."
- *Vires* was rendered as "men."
- *Quacumque* was rendered as "who" or "what."
- *Negat* was rendered as "negates."

*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 continue to drill students on common vocabulary words that are spelled alike and to warn students to match carefully nouns and adjectives by cases.

**Note: Since many students appeared to be translating this passage for the first time, teachers should make every effort to finish the entire AP syllabus with their classes.**

## V2

*What was intended by the question?*

The students were asked to translate as literally as possible a five-and-a-half-line passage from the syllabus, part of the memorable scene in which the ghost of Hector appears in a dream to Aeneas.

*How well did students perform?*

The students as a group performed quite well on this question. The readers used the full range of scores with a generally balanced distribution. Encouragingly, many students received a score of 8 or 9. Almost all students earned at least 1 or 2 points, and the readers noticed fewer blank or off-task responses than in previous years.

The students generally experienced little or no difficulty with segments #1 (*Heu fuge*) and #2 (*nate dea*), as well as with segments #17 (*cape*) and #18 (*hos . . . fatorum comites*). Many students receiving a low score were at least able to translate segment #5 (*hostis habet muros*).

Although the readers had expected the conditional construction in segments #10 to #14 to cause problems, they found that many students were able to handle this section quite admirably. Many students who struggled with other parts of the passage received full or partial credit for this section, suggesting that many students had committed to memory a prepared translation for what is admittedly a difficult section. Many who received full credit for the protasis of the condition stumbled in the second part of the statement, or vice versa.

*What were common errors or omissions?*

In segment #3, students often did not translate *-que*; some rendered *te* as vocative. In segments #1 or #4, even the better students sometimes overlooked *ait*. In segment #6, many students failed to take *Troia* as the subject of *ruit*. In segment #8, most students had difficulty with *Sat*, which was either omitted or occasionally rendered as a subjunctive form of *esse*. In segment #9, the students often construed *patriae* as a genitive, either ignoring *-que* or using it to connect clauses. In segment #15, many students did not take *Troia* as the subject of *commendat*. *Sacra* in segment #16 caused a problem for more students than did any other part of the passage; even those students who produced an otherwise perfect response often ignored *-que* and rendered *Sacra* in agreement with either *Troia* or *Penates*. Also in segment #16, many students took *Penates* as the subject of *commendat* and translated *suos* either as a reflexive pronoun (*se*) or as an intensive pronoun (*ipsos*).

*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 continue helping their students — from the very beginning of their study of Latin — to produce an absolutely literal translation. The ability to understand and translate Latin precisely remains the key to success on the entire examination.

### V3

*What was intended by the question?*

Students were asked to write an essay contrasting Dido's feelings in Book IV.20-29 and Book IV.320-330. They were asked to provide support for their ideas about the differences in the emotional content of the two selections by accurate citation of the Latin from throughout these two passages.

*How well did students perform?*

Most students were engaged by the question and had something to say about the issue of Dido's emotions. There were consequently very few blank answers. Students used several methods to frame or structure their essays; the result was a variety of excellent responses. The full range of scores was used on this question.

*What were common errors or omissions?*

On the one hand, familiarity with the history of the Dido-Aeneas relationship often impelled students to be too selective, and thus somewhat restrictive-in their Latin citations from throughout the passages. On the other hand, this oftentimes led to a lengthy exegesis on the history of that relationship which skirted answering the question thoroughly by neglecting the information contained within the passages. Students sometimes reduced the contrast between the passages to "love" in Passage A and "hate" in Passage B.

*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?*

- In order to cite from a passage to support an idea, students must be able to comprehend the Latin fully.
- In order to ensure that their essays have focus and depth, students must base their discussion on citations from throughout the passages. These citations must reflect the ideas conveyed throughout the passages.
- Teachers must insure that students have had practice in answering essay questions according to the directions on the AP exam.
- Students must not **base** their discussion upon meter, figures of speech, word choice and placement or the sound of words

### V4

*What was intended by the question?*

The question directed students to discuss Jupiter's characterization of the future of Rome as described in lines 291-296 of Book 1 of the *Aeneid*.

*How well did students perform?*

Although the full range of scores emerged, the students earned a disproportionately large number of lower-range grades (0-2) because many failed to recognize the passage as dealing with the cessation of war and the establishment of peace and order; these students tended to rely upon isolated words and rarely reached the level of analysis. Students in the middle range distinguished themselves by their ability to deal with more of the Latin and to cite it appropriately throughout the passage. The top range of students easily recognized the passage and dealt confidently with all aspects of the Latin and its interpretation. The depth of their analysis and

their appropriate use of the Latin separated the highest two grades; students who understood the entire first line usually demonstrated an understanding of the entire passage because they comprehended the significance of *mitescens* and *positis bellis*.

*What were common errors or omissions?*

The first line of the passage seemed most often omitted or mistranslated. The misconstruing of *positis* or *mitescens* led many to assert that Jupiter was predicting the continuation of wars rather than the end of them. Students who took this position found apparent support in the words *super arma* (misinterpreted as a reference to Rome's military superiority), *centum victus* (mistranslated as "one hundred victories") or *centum aenis* (mistranslated as "one hundred years"). This in turn led many to conclude that Jupiter's description of Furor contained only dire predictions for the future of Rome, including, according to some, the eventual fall of the Roman Empire. In addition, some mistranslated *cana*, an attribute of *Fides*, as "dog" or "wolf" (leading to a discussion of the myth of Romulus and Remus) or as a form of the verb *cano* ("I sing") with *Fides* and *Vesta* as some sort of divine choir. In addition, some, discussing the *Belli portae* (4), translated *claudentur* ("will be closed") as if it were *aperientur* ("will be opened") and cited the expression to support their observations about all the wars that Rome would fight. Some confused the adjective *artis* (3) with the genitive of the noun *ars* and wrote about Roman art and architecture.

*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 make their students aware of what writing a well-organized essay based on a specific passage means. Students need to write practice essays on a regular basis. They need to learn how to base their discussion on the meaning of the entire passage (as in "throughout the passage") and not on single words or phrases that are taken out of context and can often distort the essential meaning of the passage. Many students seemed unable to deal with more vocabulary than they would have learned in their first year of Latin; they seemed intimidated by four simple clauses and a few participial phrases. Teachers should encourage their students to ensure that their argument covers the beginning, the middle, and the end of a passage. The students need to understand that translation or paraphrase does not constitute analysis; they must explain carefully how the Latin supports the argument or thesis they are developing, not simply state that it does do so.

## V5

*What was intended by the question?*

Students were asked to discuss two stories in terms of fairness or unfairness from the non-Latin portions of the *Aeneid* using a specific list.

*How well did students perform?*

Compared to other years in which there was no list from which to choose, students were able to write more focused and detailed discussions. Although the scores fell across the full range, the majority were in the mid-range.

*What were common errors or omissions?*

Students confused characters (Lausus as Laocoon or Pallas; Camilla as Creusa or Cassandra; Palinurus as Misenuus or Polydorus). Many students relied on detailed narration rather than analysis of how or why particular events were fair or unfair. Many students simply told two stories rather than composing a coherent essay.

*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?*

It is important for students to read the entire *Aeneid* with a view to understanding major episodes and characters. Students need to learn how to support an argument using details rather than simply recounting the details. Students need to think about the question and organize their ideas before writing. While a good essay needs a beginning, middle, and end, students should avoid excessively long introductions and conclusions at the expense of solid and substantive discussion of the topic.