



Student Performance Q&A:

2006 AP® Latin Literature Free-Response Questions

The following comments on the 2006 free-response questions for AP® Latin Literature were written by the Chief Reader, John Sarkissian of Youngstown State University in Ohio. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, 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 provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

Question LL1 (Catullus Translation)

What was the intent of this question?

The question measured students' ability to translate literally by asking them to translate as literally as possible lines 1–10 of Catullus 35.

How well did students perform on this question?

Responses spanned the full range of scores. Most students seemed to recognize the passage, although many did better on the second half than on the first. Scores in the midrange predominated. The mean score was 3.72 out of a possible 9 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Subjunctives in general caused difficulties. In segment 2, most students did not recognize *velim* as a subjunctive. Many also switched the order of *velim* and *dicas* (“you should say that I want . . .”). *Dicas* and *veniat* (segment 3) were often translated as hortatory subjunctives rather than as indirect commands. Common vocabulary errors included the following: *tenero* (segment 1) as “I hold” rather than as an adjective; *milies* (segment 13) as “miles” or “soldier(s)” rather than as “a thousand times”; and *morari* (segment 18) as “to die” rather than “to delay.” Other problematic vocabulary included *quasdam* (segment 8), *quare* (segment 11), and *quamvis* (segment 13). Many students treated *poetae* (segment 1) as something other than dative (nominative, genitive, or vocative) and did not always construe *Caecilio* (segment 1) in apposition to it. Others did not understand the relation between *sui* and *mei* (segment 9) or translated *sui* as “your.” Students had trouble with the

geographical references in segments 5 and 6, but a variety of renderings were accepted for the translation of these names. Translation of the subjunctives *revocet* (segment 13) and *roget* (segment 18) as present indicatives was acceptable, but quite a few students rendered them as the future tense. Many were generally too free in their translation of the last three lines, switching participles and finite verbs and mistranslating cases.

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

Teachers should place special emphasis on recognition and translation of subjunctives in context. Students should review their translations to catch careless mistakes and to see if the translation as a whole makes sense. They also need to pay close attention to conjunctions, with respect both to meaning and to what they are connecting.

Question LL2 (Catullus Long Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question tested students' understanding of Catullus 40 and 116 by asking them to discuss the ways in which the poet confronts his acquaintances, Ravidus and Gellius respectively, and to determine what these poems reveal about Catullus's relationship with each addressee. The question also tested their ability to analyze a Latin passage by requiring them to support their arguments with Latin citations from throughout the passage.

How well did students perform on this question?

Although the full range of scores was represented among the individual essays, as a group, students performed no more than adequately. Both poems are recent additions to the syllabus, and there were some indications that students were not familiar enough with them. Students did capture the overall tone of each poem, but more seemed to recognize 40 than 116. Many confused these poems with others from the syllabus. Often, whole essays were written about single words, such as *miselle* in 40 and *tela* in 116. The mean score was 2.65 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

In both poems, students often confused the addressees, not recognizing the vocative case. In 40, students had difficulty with the vocabulary of lines 3–5 (*advocatus*, *vecordem*, *excitare*, *rixam*, *vulgi*). *Eris* was often misinterpreted as the goddess of discord, probably because the initial letter was capitalized. Failure to discuss the last two lines or misinterpretation of *poena* often hampered students' efforts on this poem. The length of the first sentence of poem 116 gave students trouble. For example, many attributed *studioso animo* and *requirens* to Gellius rather than to Catullus. *Battiadae* proved particularly troublesome. Mistranslations of *lenirem* and *supplicium* could cause students to miss the point of the poem. Some students skipped over several consecutive lines, causing errors in interpretation. Many interpreted *tela* as literal weapons.

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

Most important, teachers should thoroughly cover all items on the syllabus, particularly the newer material. They should constantly remind students that the strength of an essay depends on how it deals with the content of the poems and proper citation of the Latin, and they might spend some time reviewing biographical details about figures who appear in the poetry.

Question LL3 (Catullus Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

The question tested specifically students' understanding of Catullus 69 in which Catullus uses striking imagery to offer grooming advice to Rufus. Students were asked to discuss both the advice that the poet gives and the ways he uses images to clarify his advice. The question also tested students' ability to analyze a Latin passage by requiring them to support their argument with Latin citations from throughout the passage.

How well did students perform on this question?

Most of the students who recognized the poem performed adequately. Many relied more on the striking image of the *trux caper* than on Latin drawn from the entire poem. A small number wrote more detailed, nuanced, well-organized, and focused answers to the question. Many students, relying on individual words in isolation or perhaps on a general knowledge of Catullan poetry, stated that the poem represented Catullus' disillusion with love and women or his anger with Rufus. The mean score was 2.79 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

The most common error was the misunderstanding of what constitutes an "image." Some students confused image with rhetorical/literary device, while others failed to zero in on the image itself and wrote around it. Some students, rather than offering analysis, simply translated the passage. Others offered analysis but left whole couplets out of the discussion. Many students confused specific, key vocabulary words within the poem. The crucial words most frequently misinterpreted were *caper*, *alarum*, *lapidis*, *quare*, *admirari*, and *noli*.

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

Teachers should offer as many opportunities as possible for students to incorporate poetic analysis into their work, specifically in the form of practice essays. In evaluating student essays, teachers should emphasize contrasts and comparisons, better organization, avoidance of repetition, specific citation of relevant Latin words and phrases from the entire passage, and limitation of biographical and historical details to those that are relevant to the question.

Question LL4 (Cicero Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

The question asked students to describe in a short essay the characters of Caelius and Clodia, as developed in the imaginary conversation in *Pro Caelio* 15.36, and to discuss the effect this presentation is intended to have on the jury. The question tested their ability to analyze a Latin passage by instructing them to support their arguments with Latin citations from throughout the passage.

How well did students perform on this question?

By far the majority of essays fell in the middle to low range, and only a few students did extremely well. Students generally had some idea of what Cicero was saying about the two characters and what the intended effect on the audience was, but they had difficulty constructing essays that used the Latin to support their analysis. The mean score was 2.11 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Many students did not use the entire passage to support their points. They were weaker on the characterization of Caelius than that of Clodia, and some even wrote about Clodius instead of Caelius. Students also had trouble with the vocabulary and grammar in several sections in the passage, especially the important words *parco*, *devinctum*, and *vicinum*. Many seemed to have had difficulty translating and therefore interpreting the two long clauses (*vis nobilis ... devinctum* and *habes hortos ... venit*).

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

Students must learn to read the questions carefully and complete all tasks required of them. They should make sure the Latin references are correctly cited. Teachers should give students as much practice as possible with analyzing and translating long clauses.

Question LL5 (Cicero Translation)

What was the intent of this question?

The question measured students' ability to translate literally by asking them to translate as literally as possible *Pro Caelio* 31.75.

How well did students perform on this question?

Overall, students did very poorly. Scores were in the lower range of the scale. The mean score was 1.70 out of a possible 9 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Students had problems with vocabulary in general and/or vocabulary in context (for example, translating *fama* in segment 5 as "rumor"). Many did not know what *insolentiā voluptatum*

(segment 11) meant. Students also failed to recognize that *diutius* (segment 13) is a comparative. Verb tenses were frequently misidentified: *haesit* (segment 6) as present rather than perfect, and *profundunt* (segment 16) and *eciunt* (segment 18) as past rather than present. They also had difficulty translating *universae* (segment 18) and identifying it as nominative (many tried to make it dative). Many students failed to recognize that Cicero is employing a racing metaphor.

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

Students need more practice parsing and translating complex sentences. Teachers must find ways to train students to break up long Ciceronian sentences into shorter, more manageable sense units.

Question LL6 (Cicero Short Answer)

What was the intent of this question?

The question tested students' ability to understand a Latin text by asking them to answer certain content and stylistic questions about *Pro Caelio* 25.61.

How well did students perform on this question?

More students scored in the middle to high range than on the other Cicero questions. There were fewer blank or off-topic answers. Most students seemed to recognize the passage and to know that poison was involved. Students did well with the indirect statements. The mean score was 3.95 out of a possible 8 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Identification of a figure of speech (question 3) proved difficult, as many students answered with grammatical constructions. There was also a problem with the meaning of *prudenti* (line 2), which many students read as *prudenti*. Students did not always read the questions carefully.

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

Teachers of Cicero are encouraged to place as much emphasis on those rhetorical/literary devices that are common in prose as they do on those that are common in poetry.

Question LL7 (Horace Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

The intent of this question was to have students demonstrate their ability to analyze a Latin passage by discussing the interaction between the poet and his friend Aristius Fuscus in Horace *Satire* I.9, lines 60–68, and by supporting their arguments with accurate Latin citations from throughout the passage.

How well did students perform on this question?

Most students were able to identify the context of this passage and to write essays that fell in the score range of at least 4 to 5. The full range of scores was nevertheless represented. The mean score was 3.79 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

A major problem for students was determining the referents of various words and phrases; errors of attribution often resulted in misinterpretation as well. Students who construed *prensare . . . brachia* (line 5) as Horace and Fuscus embracing or who made the “boor” the subject of *eriperet* (line 6) could not connect these lines with Horace’s efforts to get Fuscus to rescue him. Failure to cite evidence that Fuscus was fully aware of Horace’s predicament weakened many essays. For example, *illum qui pulchre nosset* (lines 2–3) was often misinterpreted or omitted as was *dissimulare* (line 7). A significant number of students failed to cite the Latin, give line numbers, or otherwise indicate to the Reader from where in the passage they were drawing their responses. Many students did not cite Latin from throughout the passage. Some essays began with the end of line 4, and others dealt with no material after line 7. Many students introduced extraneous material from other parts of the satire, which did nothing to strengthen their essays.

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

Teachers must be sure to cover the entire Horace syllabus. They should impress upon students the importance of proper Latin citation from throughout the passage. Teachers also need to emphasize vocabulary, as failure to recognize key words can have as deleterious an effect on essays as on translation questions.

Question LL8 (Horace Translation)

What was the intent of this question?

The question measured students’ ability to translate literally by asking them to translate as literally as possible lines 37–46 of *Odes* 3.1.

How well did students perform on this question?

Although Readers applied the entire range of scores, on the whole the performances were not strong. Only a relatively small number of translations earned scores above 7. A substantial number of attempts fell into the midrange (4–6), but a disproportionately large number of responses earned scores ranging from 0 to 3. The mean score was 2.76 out of a possible 9 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

The meanings of *Timor* and especially *Minae* (segment 1) eluded many. A large number of students left them in their Latin forms on the assumption that they were personal names. Many failed to realize that *atra Cura* (segment 4) was the subject of both *decedit* (segment 3) and *sedet* (segment 6). A substantial number misunderstood the meaning of *decedit*; most errors derived it from *decidere*. The modifier *aerata* (segment 5) was often translated as “airy,” and *triremi* (segment 5) was often associated with the number three, though not necessarily in connection with a ship.

Quodsi (segment 7) baffled more than half of the students, who usually translated it as a form of the relative pronoun. The participle *dolentem* (segment 12) was often translated as the abstract noun “sorrow” or “grief.” Many misconstrued the case function and/or meaning of *sidere* (segment 11). In addition, noun–adjective agreement caused problems in the clause *cur invidendis postibus . . . moliar atrium* (segments 15–18), as many responses had *sublime* modifying *ritu* and *novo* modifying *atrium*. Many students did not recognize the meaning or the mood of the deliberative subjunctive *moliar* (segment 15); although students were given credit for rendering it as a future indicative (which form is identical to that of the present subjunctive), neither present indicative nor any past tense was accepted. Finally, a considerable number of students left out the connective *et* in the final segment (segment 18).

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

Teachers should carefully explain all the semantic connections in a sentence, as in the case of *atra Cura* (segment 4), which functions as the subject of *decedit* (segment 3) despite the fact that the noun appears at the end of the following line. They should also take care to clarify Horace’s historical, mythological, and geographical allusions, as in *Achaemeniumque costum* (segment 14). They should constantly review the subjunctive mood in context, emphasizing the variety of constructions in which it is used in Latin. Finally, teachers should impress upon their students that a *literal* translation must account for every single Latin word, including seemingly unimportant connectives like *et*, *atque*, and the enclitic *-que*.

Question LL9 (Horace Short Answer)

What was the intent of this question?

This question tested students’ control of a Latin text by asking a series of short-answer questions about lines 3–10 of *Odes* 1.1.

How well did students perform on this question?

The question elicited a full range of scores, with a good number at the higher end (5–8 points). Students were familiar with the general theme of the poem, possibly because it is the first in the corpus of Horace’s *Odes*, even when they did not know details. The mean score was 4.03 out of a possible 8 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Students were often too literal in answering question 1(a) with “collecting Olympic dust” instead of the expected “chariot racing.” A serious problem in question 1(b) was failure either to cite Latin or to translate or paraphrase Latin that was cited. Similarly, many students did not cite Latin to illustrate the figure of speech requested in question 2. In response to question 3, some students considered that Horace was judging *hunc* (a politician), which in the larger context of the poem demonstrates a very sophisticated reading but draws on material from outside of the lines referenced in the question. Students who missed question 3(a) almost always missed question 3(b). Many students, perhaps forgetting that short-answer questions may include general background material, looked for an explanation of *tergeminis honoribus* within the Latin passage rather than identifying it with political offices (the *cursum honorum*).

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

Teachers should remind students to cite the Latin appropriately and to translate only what is cited. Also, they should emphasize that short-answer questions can require some background knowledge not directly expressed in the poem and that these questions can also require comprehension and synthesis (for example, “chariot racing” in question 1 rather than “collecting Olympic dust”).

Question LL10 (Ovid Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

The question tested specifically students’ understanding of *Metamorphoses* 4.147–157 by asking them to discuss Thisbe’s reaction to her discovery of Pyramus as he is dying. Control of the Latin was tested by requesting that students support their analysis with Latin citations from throughout the passage.

How well did students perform on this question?

The full range of scores was represented. The vast majority of students recognized the passage and could discuss Thisbe’s reaction in at least a vague or limited fashion. However, there were a significant number of scores at the lower end and not a large number of highest-possible scores. The mean score was 2.95 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Students were generally stronger analyzing the first half of the excerpt than the second. Lines 6–8 presented the most difficulty, either being omitted entirely in the discussion or being misinterpreted. Readers felt that some students ran out of time whereas others simply did not understand the Latin. Frequently, the lines cited and/or paraphrased forced the Reader to wonder whether the student understood the Latin or was simply remembering the story. Far too many students wrote a summary or description of the myth with a complete omission of analysis. Some mistook the passage for an earlier one that describes Thisbe filling Pyramus’s wounds with tears. One particularly problematic word was *miseri* (line 9), which many students took to be a curse upon the parents or a description of Thisbe herself.

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

Teachers should give students frequent practice in writing thoughtful and organized essays addressing only the question before them and supporting their answer with liberal use of Latin from the passage. Students should be instructed to include references to diction, figures of speech, and meter only to the degree that they are relevant to the argument being presented. Pertinent elements of the myth that are not in the passage may be mentioned to support the argument, but it is neither necessary nor beneficial to summarize the entire myth before beginning the discussion. Although literal translation is not required, students should be encouraged to pay close attention to voice, person, and tense in order to strengthen their interpretation of the passage.

Question LL11 (Ovid Translation)

What was the intent of this question?

The question measured students' ability to translate literally by asking them to translate as literally as possible lines 25–32 of *Amores* 1.9.

How well did students perform on this question?

The full range of scores was represented, with more scores in the low to middle range. A significant number of students seemed unfamiliar with the passage or, if they had in fact encountered it, did not remember it. Many seemed acquainted with the topic of the poem in general (the comparison of a soldier and a lover) but were unable to translate the text accurately. The mean score was 2.47 out of a possible 9 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

There were a number of specific words with which students had difficulty: *nempe* (segment 1) was omitted or misinterpreted as *saepe*; *utuntur* (segment 1) was not recognized as deponent; *maritorum* (segment 2) was confused with *mare* or related in some way to sailors; *movent* (segment 3) was construed as an intransitive verb; and *cadunt* (segment 14) was confused with *cedunt*, *caedunt*, and even *canunt*. Apart from these specific difficulties, there was widespread failure to accurately translate plurals as plurals and, very important, to translate connectives.

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

It is imperative that teachers finish the syllabus, paying appropriate attention to the *Amores*. Also, teachers should explain and enforce literal translation, which accounts for all Latin words, even seemingly unimportant connectives.

Question LL12 (Ovid Short Answer)

What was the intent of this question?

This question assessed students' recognition of a Latin text by asking a series of short-answer questions about lines 1–7 of *Amores* 1.12.

How well did students perform on this question?

Readers assigned the full range of scores, although a majority of students earned 6–8 points, and a significant number earned 3–5 points. Most students were able to answer questions 1(a), 3(a), and 3(c) correctly. The mean score was 5.03 out of a possible 8 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Many students received only 1 out of 2 possible points for question 1(b), either because they mistranslated one of the appropriate words from line 1 or because they misread the directions and used words from line 2 or elsewhere. Within question 1(b), some of the common errors were translating *flete* as “flee,” confusing *casus* with either *causa* or *casa*, and translating *tristes* as “tears.” Several students did not receive credit for question 2 because they limited their response

to *omina sunt aliquid* without mentioning Nape's stumbling on the threshold. While students did a good job with most of question 3, they encountered some difficulty in answering 3(b). The most common problem was answering "why" instead of "when." Some students had difficulty making the inference from Ovid's words that Nape was the opposite of *sobria* and so were unable to answer question 3(c) correctly. They did quite well identifying the figure of speech required in question 4. The most common errors were treating grammatical constructions (e.g., ablative absolute) as figures of speech; misnaming the figures of speech (e.g., "synchesis" for "chiasmus"); and writing out the entire Latin line to illustrate a figure of speech that involved only some of the words in the line.

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

This passage contained several words that students easily confused (e.g., *casus* and *causa*; *tristes* and *tres*; *limen*, *litus*, and *lumen*; *ligna* and *lingua*). Teachers should help students develop strategies for distinguishing these types of words from one another and also for keeping straight in their minds the names of the various figures of speech. Students should be coached to make their responses to the short-answer questions as economical as possible, so as not to take time away from other parts of the exam. Most of these questions can be answered in one sentence or less, and not every question requires Latin citation.