



**AP® ITALIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE  
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTION TRYOUT SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Culture: Composition**

**Sample: M**

**Score Category (Content): High**

**Score Category (Language): Medium**

**Content:** This composition received a high content rating because it completely answers the questions in the prompt. It is well organized, with an introduction, appropriate supporting examples, and an effective ending. The student conveys a clear understanding that Florence was the center of the Italian Renaissance and makes specific references to artists and their works—Michelangelo and his “*Davide*,” Brunelleschi and his “*duomo*.” The composition alludes to the construction of the “*duomo*” by noting that “*era il primo di essere costruito con materiali che sono attaccati fuori del duomo per sopportare la struttura con il peso di se stesso*.” In this instance, there is a specific and detailed reference to Brunelleschi’s use of an egg to prove a point about the *duomo*. Additionally, there is a brief discussion of Brunelleschi’s competition with Ghiberti. These and other examples demonstrate a sound knowledge of the city and its historical significance. An occasional lapse occurs, for example, the location of the statue of David that is mentioned is inaccurate. Nevertheless, the knowledge of Florence and the Renaissance is not a simple memorized list. We see this in the allusion to David’s hair (“*sembrano veri e lucenti e morbidi benchè siano solo parte di una statua*”). This composition reflects a detailed knowledge of the subject that goes well beyond the superficial.

**Language:** The student uses the appropriate register. The composition presents some advanced structures, like the use of “*benchè*” with the subjunctive, the imperfect subjunctive “*funzionasse*,” and the correct usage of the relative pronoun “*cui*.” Moreover, the student handles well possessive adjectives and related articles as in “*del suo corpo*,” “*i suoi capelli*,” and “*la sua storia*.” The response also demonstrates appropriate use of different tenses and irregular past participle forms, together with the usage of direct object pronouns attached to the infinitive. Some of the vocabulary is at the high level (“*trasformato*,” “*verticalmente*,” “*lucenti*”). While there is an attempt to adopt vocabulary related to architecture and art, the student does not show specific competence in these fields. The response could have been better if it had utilized more precise vocabulary—the student uses the wrong word “*fresche*” instead of *affreschi*. There are some spelling mistakes. Perhaps the most obvious is “*renascimento*,” which could be easily avoided with more attention to culture-related vocabulary, as in the case of *affreschi* mentioned above. The adjective *ricca* is spelled “*rica*,” but this substitution of a single consonant for a double consonant is one of the most common spelling mistakes, even for students at this level. The mistaken use of “*ho entrato*” is common in first-year college students’ work but should not be present in writing at this intermediate level. The majority of the errors are in the use of prepositions, and there is one unclear sentence (the student tries to explain Brunelleschi’s experiment with the egg). Overall, however, the composition is clear, the writing demonstrates ease of expression and fluency, and the errors do not impede comprehension.



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**Culture: Composition (continued)**

**Sample: B**

**Score Category (Content): Low**

**Score Category (Language): Low**

**Content:** This composition received a low content rating because it fails to answer the questions in the prompt completely, i.e., it does not describe two elements in a clear and obvious manner. While the composition purports to describe Taormina, its description (“*i mercati, i ristoranti, gelaterie, pasticcerie*”) of the city is generic. The majority of these allusions might apply to any city in Italy. Only rarely are there express references to the locale (“*Munta Etna*”), though the student does not provide specific information. This reference could have been an opportunity to discuss the historical significance of Mt. Etna and its various eruptions from ancient times through the twentieth century. There is also a reference to the “*la spiaggia*,” but no mention is made of its location with respect to the city of Taormina.

Although the composition mentions that “*Il centro della città è piccolo*,” there is no reference to its name (Corso Umberto), or other features such as the Torre dell’Orologio and Porta Messina. Likewise, there is no additional discussion of specific details of the town of Taormina that would indicate a familiarity with the place (events, people, monuments, customs, and so forth). Possible examples include Taormina’s monuments such as Mola Castle, its location with regard to the rest of Sicily, and its Greek theater, dating from the third century B.C.E. The theater was remodeled by the Romans and is the site of contemporary productions. Specific details such as these would have resulted in a higher rating. Furthermore, there are no references to readings, film, or classroom discussions. It is possible to surmise that this answer is based on personal experience, but due to its extremely general nature, it is difficult to discern with certainty if this is the case. The composition does demonstrate a general knowledge of the form of an Italian city.

**Language:** This composition demonstrates adequate command of the language to convey its message, but there are numerous basic grammatical errors, and structures are limited to the more elementary ones typically taught in first-year college courses. The vocabulary is simplistic, lacking expressions at a higher level and remaining related mostly to personal terms from daily life. Errors include using the wrong tenses, such as the present “*sente*” with the imperfect “*sedevo*” and the wrong subject such as “*lui amavano*.” There are other incorrect verb forms like “*viverano*” and “*piaccioni*.” There are also instances of incorrect adjective agreements, “*Le persone ... simpatico e allegra*,” which can be expected in a composition by a beginning student but should be avoided by a student in a class equivalent to a fourth-semester college course. Accents are left off in many places, and some spelling mistakes, such as “*plazzo per visitare*,” impede comprehension and interfere with readability.