

Student Performance Q&A: 2004 AP[®] Latin Literature Free-Response Questions

The following comments on the 2004 free-response questions for AP[®] Latin Literature were written by the Chief Reader, John Sarkissian of Youngstown State University in Youngstown, 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.

LL1 (Catullus)

What was the intent of this question?

This question measured students' ability to translate literally by asking them to translate as literally as possible two short poems, Catullus 70 and 87.

How well did students perform on this question?

The Readers used the full range of scores. In general, students were well prepared and many scored in the high range (7 to 9). Nonetheless, scores in the low range (0 to 2) were not uncommon. The mean score was 4.5 out of a possible nine points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

- *Segment 2:* Students confused *malle* with *velle* or *nolle*.
- *Segment 4:* Students frequently ignored the subjunctive force of *petat*.
- *Segment 8:* Students often translated *oportet* personally or translated *scribere* in the passive voice.
- *Segment 16:* Students experienced the most difficulty in this segment; they either did not know the meaning of *reperta est* or they translated the verb in the present tense.
- *Segments 17 and 18:* Contrary to the Readers' expectations, these two segments proved to be problematic. Students confused the possessives *tuo* and *mea*, with the result that *mea* was made to modify *amore* and *tuo* was made to modify *parte*; or they ignored the prepositions *in* and *ex*, with the result being that one or the other of the prepositional phrases was rendered as a nominative.

There were also problems with vocabulary, demonstrated by the many students who did not know the meanings of *ullo* (Segment 15), *foedere* (Segment 15), or *nubere* (Segment 3).

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 pay particular attention to the tense, voice, and mood of verbs, as well as to the number of nouns. In addition, teachers should reinforce the difference between comparative (*quam*) and correlative (*tantum . . . quantum*) expressions. Mastery of vocabulary is crucial, and students should beware of false cognates. Finally, students must be careful to account for every Latin word in their translations.

LL2 (Catullus Long Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question specifically tested students' understanding of Catullus's comments on authors' works in c. 1 and c. 95 and what these comments reveal about his literary values. The question also tested their ability, in general, 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?

Students generally answered the question well, and a significant number had sophisticated answers that demonstrated both a clear knowledge of the Latin and an ability to see the relationship between the two passages. The mean score was 3.4 out of a possible six points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Several students failed to discuss Lines 1–2 and Lines 8–9 of c. 1, although these lines are crucial to Catullus's evaluation of his own poetry; there was a similar problem with the last two lines of c. 95. Also, Zmyrna and Satrachus were sometimes taken as authors, and Hortensius and Antimachus were not mentioned or were understood as other names for Volusius. Outside references (such as Volusius's *cacata carta* from c. 36) were introduced not to supplement a discussion of what is said in c. 95 but as a substitute for that discussion.

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 must be emphasized that, while an essay can be improved by references to other poems in the Catullan corpus, a good score is dependent upon analysis of the passage(s) on which the question is based and upon accurate reference to the Latin from the passage(s). As a general rule, teachers should devote some time to class discussion of Catullus's literary values. They should also pay attention to distinguishing the poets Catullus names (some of whom appear in more than one poem) and to classifying them in terms of Catullus's evaluation of them.

LL3 (Catullus Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question specifically tested students' understanding of Catullus's varied emotions and mental processes as given in c. 72.5–8 and c. 85 and how he expresses these. The question also tested their ability, in general, 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?

The Readers used the full range of scores. Because c. 85 is so famous, most students were able to say something meaningful about *odi et amo*. Therefore, it was difficult (but not impossible) to get a score of less than 2. Many scores were in the 3 to 4 range. Those who discussed rhetorical devices did so for the most part knowledgeably. Students were quite effective in citing Latin to support their claims. The mean score was 3.4 out of a possible six points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Some students offered a description of feelings without analyzing how Catullus communicates them; some translated or paraphrased the feelings but provided no analysis of how Catullus expresses them. Many students with strong Latin did a good job of describing Catullus's feelings but overlooked the second part of the question, which asked about the ways in which he expresses them. A number of essays dealt only with the familiar c. 85, while many weaker essays tried to address both poems but were unable to say anything meaningful about c. 72. Others failed to discuss all three couplets. Some essays could have received a higher score if students had only taken the essential step of providing accurate Latin citations or had supplemented their discussion with the use of language (e.g., rhetorical devices, word choice, etc.) to show how Catullus expresses his feelings.

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 should be reminded of the importance of dealing equally well with all of the passages given in a question and of drawing references from throughout each passage.

LL4 (Cicero Spot)

What was the intent of this question?

This question asked students to answer a series of short questions about a passage from *Pro Caelio* (28.66–67). These questions tested their ability to identify a figure of speech, to demonstrate comprehension of the Latin, and to formulate an interpretation of a portion of the passage.

How well did students perform on this question?

The Readers used the full range of scores. Students who were able to translate the passage experienced greater success. Those who clearly did not understand the Latin were less able to demonstrate proof of comprehension. The mean score was 3.8 out of a possible eight points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

The most common error occurred in the explanation in Question 2. Students often did not recognize the function of the prepositional phrases in Line 2 or did not understand the vocabulary. Question 5a proved to be challenging as well. Many students did not realize that the question referred to a single group of men. Students also had difficulty clearly identifying the contrasting terms, either because they did not understand the oppositions or because they did not recognize the operative words (e.g., *laudos, familiares*).

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 impress upon students the importance of mastering the legal vocabulary used by Cicero in this speech. It is difficult to interpret Cicero's logic if the vocabulary is missing. Also, although the ability to translate is crucial, the ability both to demonstrate comprehension and to analyze are equally important. Finally, teachers should remind students to read the directions, especially when a question specifies "write out the Latin."

LL5 (Cicero Translation)

What was the intent of this question?

This question measured students' ability to translate literally by asking them to translate as literally as possible a passage from *Pro Caelio* (27.53).

How well did students perform on this question?

Students' performance on this question ran to the extremes, with few students scoring the full nine points. Many scored in the six- to eight-point range, but a much larger number of students scored in the zero- to three-point range. The Readers recognized that the idiomatic expression in Segment 11 was going to cause difficulties for students, so they chose to make the entire statement a single segment, thereby precluding the possibility of losing multiple points. The mean score was 3.0 out of a possible nine points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Vocabulary recall and lack of attention to the full impact of each word caused students to veer off from better translations.

- *Segment 2*: Students failed to recognize *tam* as marking a result clause.
- *Segment 3*: Students rendered *certe* as an adjective modifying *ingenium*.
- *Segments 4 and 5*: Students translated *tribuitis* and *detrahitis* as past tense.
- *Segment 5*: Students mistranslated *cetera* and sometimes rendered it with *inimica oratione*.
- *Segment 9*: Students often translated *alienis* as "foreign," "other," or "strange," rather than "another's" or "belonging to another"; *servis* was often construed as the noun "service" or as the second person singular verb "you serve."
- *Segment 11*: Students often rendered *ipsum* as a reflexive rather than an intensive.
- *Segment 14*: Some students had difficulty rendering the deponent infinitive *uti* actively in the indirect statement.
- *Segment 15*: Some students failed to construe *condicione* with *uti*.

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 should be encouraged to translate each and every word as literally as possible, paying special attention to the tenses of verbs.

LL6 (Cicero Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question specifically tested students' understanding of the tactics Cicero uses to win the jury's support in the peroration of the *Pro Caelio* (32.79–80). The question also tested their ability, in general, 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?

Most students produced coherent essays. There were relatively few off-task answers, and most students remained focused on the passage for the entire essay. Most students understood the importance of the father-son tie in the peroration. A number of students also observed the pity and guilt Cicero tries to rouse in the jury by referring to Caelius's father. Students grasped the importance of the metaphors of natural growth and flowering for Cicero's portrayal of Caelius as a young man now on the right track. Many students also understood Cicero's appeal to the jury's self-interest and patriotism in the last sentence. Few students, however, were able to cite Latin from all three sentences, although some showed good comprehension by paraphrase. The mean score was 2.8 out of a possible six points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Many students did not understand that the first *hunc* (Line 1) refers to Caelius's father, while the second *hunc* (Line 2) refers to Caelius himself. Thus they failed fully to understand the role of Caelius's father in the passage. A number of students misunderstood *rei publicae conservatis* (Line 6), translating it as "save the state" rather than "save him for the state," but many understood the general benefit Cicero promises if Caelius is spared.

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 advise students who include introductory paragraphs to make them short and concise so as to move at once to an analysis of the passage. Generalizations about Cicero's greatness as an orator are seldom helpful in advancing the discussion. Students also need to practice careful paraphrasing and translation to make clear their understanding of the Latin. Finally, they should be taught to refer to figures of speech only to advance their argument, not as the argument itself.

LL7 (Horace Spot)

What was the intent of this question?

Students were asked to answer a series of short questions about Lines 1–12 of *Odes* 2.7. These questions tested their ability to place the passage in its historical context, to scan a line of verse, to

demonstrate comprehension of the Latin, and to formulate an interpretation of a portion of the passage.

How well did students perform on this question?

The Readers used the full range of scores. Students seemed either to know the passage well or to find it challenging. The mean score was 5.0 out of a possible eight points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Question 2 presented the most difficulty. Many students simply could not scan the line. Answers to Question 1 were sometimes too general or inaccurate (e.g., instead of The Battle of Philippi, students offered such suggestions as The Battle of Actium, The Trojan War, The Gallic War, etc.). On Questions 5 and 6 the biggest problem was that many students either did not write out the Latin (as the questions required) or they did not translate or paraphrase accurately.

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 the distinction between the two wars referred to in *Odes* 1.37 (Actium) and 2.7 (Philippi). Teachers should spend more time on scansion. One approach is to have students memorize and recite a poem in each of the required meters over the course of the year. Teachers need to help their students understand that they have to follow specific directions (e.g., “write out and translate or accurately paraphrase the Latin” represents two tasks).

LL8 (Horace Translation)

What was the intent of this question?

This question measured students’ ability to translate literally by asking them to translate as literally as possible Lines 1–8 of *Odes* 1.13.

How well did students perform on this question?

The Readers used the full range of scores, and students performed well. The mean score was 5.0 out of a possible nine points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

- *Segment 1*: Students frequently translated *cum* as “with” rather than “when.”
- *Segment 4 (or 5)*: Students often omitted *vae*.
- *Segment 6*: Students frequently mistranslated *tumet*.
- *Segment 11*: Students often applied *certa* to the wrong noun or treated it as an adverb.
- *Segments 13–18*: Vocabulary was a serious problem in these segments, and students often misconstrued verb tenses throughout the passage.

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 are encouraged to emphasize vocabulary, particularly for Horace.

LL9 (Horace Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question specifically tested students' understanding of how the conversation about Maecenas between the poet and his unwanted companion in *Satires* 9.48–60 reflects their personalities. The question also tested their ability, in general, 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?

The Readers used the full range of scores. Although there were many fine essays, the preponderance of scores was lower than anticipated. Since the passage begins by making reference to material in the previous five to six lines, weaker students had trouble finding the thread of the argument. The mean score was 2.6 out of a possible six points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Many students failed to refer to the Latin throughout the passage, avoiding in particular the more difficult middle section. They also had trouble assigning the various parts of the dialogue to the correct character. This difficulty led some students to misuse the Latin in supporting their analyses of the characters. Often the only Latin recognized was the maxim cited by the “boor” at the end.

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 recommended that teachers be sure to cover the entire Horace syllabus, spend more time on difficult passages with complicated dialogue like this one, and leave time for review. Teachers should closely monitor students who have a very loose understanding of the directions regarding Latin citations, in particular the third option: “make clear in your discussion that you understand the Latin.” Some students seem to see this as an opportunity to write in very general terms about the Latin, often only citing the occasional line number or including untranslated Latin word(s) in an English sentence. Teachers need to help their students develop a clear understanding of the distinctions among the different methods for handling Latin references in an essay.

LL10 (Ovid Spot)

What was the intent of this question?

Students were asked to answer a series of short questions about Lines 481–489 of Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses*. These questions tested students' ability to identify a figure of speech, to demonstrate comprehension of the Latin, and to formulate an interpretation of a portion of the passage.

How well did students perform on this question?

On the whole, students did well. Although there was a full range of scores, the scores tended to cluster in the middle range (4 to 6). Many students earned a score of 7 or 8, while off-task and low scores (0 to 3) were at a minimum. Many of the middle-range scores were based more on general knowledge of mythology than on a close reading of the Latin. The mean score was 5.3 out of a possible eight points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

- *Question 2 (Figures of Speech):* Students did not appear to recognize the difference between *synchysis* and *chiasmus*, or between *metonymy* and *synecdoche*.
- *Questions 2 and 3a:* Students did not always cite the Latin to support their answer, and some students cited or referred to Latin in lines other than those asked for in the question.
- *Question 3:* Some students did not give a complete answer (e.g., giving only one action when two were called for or failing to cite the Latin for the two actions).

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 instruct students to read and follow carefully the directions and questions and to base their answers on the Latin referred to by the question, rather than on knowledge of the passage as a whole. It must be made clear to students which figures of speech are syllabus-related; grammatical constructions and sound devices are not counted as figures of speech. Students should be reminded that it is not necessary to treat the spot as an essay; short, concise answers are sufficient.

LL11 (Ovid Translation)

What was the intent of this question?

This question measured students' ability to translate literally by asking them to translate as literally as possible Lines 11–15 of *Amores* 1.11.

How well did students perform on this question?

Overall, students did not do well. Although Readers used the full range of scores from 0 to 9, the vast majority fell within the one- to four-point range. It seems likely that many students had not seen the passage before and were translating it at sight. The mean score was 3.3 out of a possible nine points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Many who were clearly familiar with the passage lost points from such careless mistakes as mixing up singular and plural, past and present, active and passive, and present subjunctive and future indicative. Some of the errors arose from unusual forms or meanings.

- *Segment 1:* Students translated *credibile* as “believed” rather than “believable.”
- *Segment 2:* Students translated *et* as “and,” but the context required “even” or “also.”
- *Segment 4:* Students often treated *tuere* as an infinitive rather than a second person imperative or indicative.
- *Segment 8:* Students often translated *agam* by “would . . .”
- *Segments 2 and 10:* Students often mistranslated the infinitives of indirect statement (Lines 1 and 3) as English infinitives.
- *Segments 12, 13, and 14:* Students did not work out the quantities of the final *-a* in *cera*, *cetera*, and *blanda*, and consequently *blanda* was translated as a nominative or accusative neuter plural and *cera* and *cetera* were translated as ablative.

- *Segment 18*: Students translated *vacuae* as “empty,” which was inappropriate in this context, instead of “unoccupied.”

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 instruct students to be very literal (to avoid problems such as those in Segment 1). On the other hand, students need to pay attention to context in their translation (to avoid problems such as those in Segment 18).

LL12 (Ovid Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question specifically tested students’ understanding of how a passage from the end of the Baucis and Philemon story (*Metamorphoses* 8.712–720) reinforced the characterization of Baucis and Philemon presented in an earlier passage (*Metamorphoses* 8.631–636). The question also tested their ability, in general, 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?

Most students recognized the two passages and were able to identify and discuss one or more facets of the characterization of Baucis and Philemon. The full range of scores from 0 to 6 was used, but scores of 3 and 4 predominated. The mean score was 3.4 out of a possible six points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

The primary difference between adequate and strong essays was often the students’ ability to discuss more than one aspect of the characterization of Baucis and Philemon. Many students focused on the equality of the relationship to the exclusion of other possible points of comparison like age, religious devotion, and acceptance of external circumstances. Students often dwelt upon other parts of the story that were not directly relevant to the question. Even students with good command of the Latin often relied upon description or translation rather than analysis.

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 suggested that teachers help students learn to plan their essays before they begin to write. A few minutes spent in choosing points of comparison and deciding upon a structure can make the difference between an adequate essay and a strong one. Students ought to cite the Latin in complete sense units, such as clauses or phrases, to support their points, rather than slipping to the extremes of citing individual stray words or, on the other hand, lengthy passages that are at best partially relevant.