



## Student Performance Q&A:

### 2004 AP<sup>®</sup> Latin: Vergil Free-Response Questions

The following comments on the 2004 free-response questions for AP<sup>®</sup> Latin: Vergil 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.

#### V1 (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 10–16 of Book 2 of the *Aeneid*.

##### ***How well did students perform on this question?***

The Readers used the full range of scores, evenly distributed, for this question. In general, students demonstrated good appreciation of content even where there were inaccuracies in translating. Most students received points for Segments 1, 3, 5, 6, and 10. The mean score was 4.4 out of a possible nine points.

##### ***What were common student errors or omissions?***

The most common errors were in Segment 9, where students translated *luctuque* as “light” and *refugit* as present tense.

- *Segment 2*: Students translated *tantus* as “such” rather than “such great” or “so great.”
- *Segment 4*: Students translated *casus* as “cause(s)” instead of “misfortunes, etc.”
- *Segment 6*: Students translated *Troiae* as “Trojan” instead of “Troy’s” or “of Troy.”
- *Segments 11 and 12*: Students mistranslated the perfect passive participles—*fracti bello* was mistranslated as “I broke war” or “with the war broken” and *repulsi fatis* as “I pushed fates” or “with the fates repulsed.”
- *Segments 14 and 15*: Students rendered *tot annis* and *iam labentibus* as accusative rather than ablative.

- *Segments 16 and 17*: Students conflated *equum aedificant* and *instar montis* as “in the likeness of a huge horse.”

**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 urged to double-check the close details required of a literal translation (e.g., singular and plural, tense and agreement of participles, and the forms of the commonest proper names). Teachers are encouraged to point out the way passages are divided into segments to help students recognize patterns of agreement and word order.

## V2 (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 893–899 of Book 6 of the *Aeneid*.

**How well did students perform on this question?**

Students received scores along the full range but did surprisingly poorly, given that this is a very memorable passage. Most students received at least one point for the correct translation of the two small segments, *ad caelum* and *ad naves*. The mean score was 3.4 out of a possible nine points.

**What were common student errors or omissions?**

The most common error was made in Segment 3, where *fertur*, instead of being translated as “is said” or “is called,” was often translated as “is made.” In the same segment the word *cornea* became mostly “eye,” “vision,” “sight,” and the like.

- *Segment 7*: Students often omitted or misidentified *nitens*, and they often mistranslated *perfecta*.
- *Segment 13*: Students often omitted or mistranslated *ibi* and *tum*, and they often took *prosequitur* as a passive verb, rather than a deponent.
- *Segment 14*: Students often treated *natum* as the subject of the sentence and *Anchises* (Segment 13) as a genitive; also, they often omitted or mistranslated *unaque*.
- *Segment 16*: Students often did not translate *secat* literally.

In general, vocabulary recognition was still the biggest problem, but grammar was also a problem in this particular passage as noun/adjective agreement was often ignored and adjectives were rendered as adverbs.

**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 stress vocabulary and insist on a “literal” translation where singular nouns are kept as singular and noun cases are respected and rendered appropriately. Extra attention should be given to common deponent verbs. These always seem to be a source of difficulty for students, who try to translate them as passive voice.

### **V3 (Long Essay)**

#### ***What was the intent of this question?***

This question specifically tested students' understanding of what Neptune's behavior, as shown in *Aeneid* 1.124–141, and Dido's behavior, as shown in *Aeneid* 4.74–89, reveal about their character as rulers (a comparison of the two rulers was not required, although many students did compare and contrast the two). The question also tested students' 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?***

Students who recognized both passages were generally able to write good essays. The majority of the students recognized Passage A (Neptune calming the waves), but many failed to recognize Dido as the focus of Passage B. Most of these students took *Aeneas* (Line 1 of Passage B) as nominative and wrote about some aspect of Aeneas as ruler. The mean score was 3.2 out of a possible six points.

#### ***What were common student errors or omissions?***

Failure to recognize Passage B, as happened in about one-third of the essays, was the most common problem. Students who did not recognize the passage often tried to build an essay around one or two familiar words (e.g., *ducit*, *labores*, or *bello*). Some students confused this passage with other well-known ones, such as Aeneas's first view of Carthage, his escape from Troy, or Cupid disguised as Ascanius on Dido's lap.

#### ***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 continue to caution students not to try to compensate for ignorance of the passage by listing figures of speech, commenting on metrics, or retelling the plot of the epic. Teachers should also emphasize that citations must be either translated or accurately paraphrased with Latin text quoted or line numbers given. Students should be encouraged to cite line numbers rather than spending time writing out lengthy Latin passages. Conversely, vague citations (e.g., "in lines 1–10") are not convincing and should be avoided. Students should be encouraged not only to read the question carefully but also to refer back to it at intervals while writing to make sure their essays are focused and relevant. Practice in writing this kind of analytical essay, where arguments are supported by Latin citations drawn from throughout the passages, is helpful preparation for this type of question.

### **V4 (Short Essay)**

#### ***What was the intent of this question?***

This question specifically tested students' understanding of the contrast between Pallas's hopes and the reality of his situation. 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?***

The full range of scores was used, but there were few in the upper range. Most scores fell in the 2 to 4 range, with a predominance of scores of 3. Unexpectedly, a very large number fell short of the

basic answer that would qualify for a score of 4. Lines 8 and 9 were the most widely understood and consistently applied lines of the whole passage. The mean score was 2.7 out of a possible six points.

***What were common student errors or omissions?***

Very few students could construe the first two-and-a-half lines, which state that, when Pallas determined that Turnus was in range, he decided to throw his spear first on the chance that luck would favor daring when skills were mismatched. Therefore, many students were missing a key piece of information for determining Pallas's motives. Many students could identify neither *patris* as Evander nor the reference to his hospitality, or they misidentified *Alcides* (Hercules). As a result, some did not see this passage as a prayer that recalls a past favor to a god. There was pronoun and sentence subject confusion in general, both in construing the Latin and in constructing an English paraphrase; especially problematic were *hunc* in Line 1 and the subject of *cernat* in Line 6.

When students could understand and cite Latin phrases, they did not necessarily grasp their significance for explaining Pallas's hopes or the nature of the reality of his situation. For example, most stated that Pallas addressed a prayer to heaven but did not relate it to his need for divine support. Another common student error was to argue exclusively from information outside the passage at the expense of information that could be derived from 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 should encourage students to use their preparation time to focus on the pivotal point of each question. Teachers should also stress answering the question completely (e.g., in this essay, by discussing *both* hopes *and* reality and doing so by drawing on Latin support from throughout the passage). Students must realize that meter and figures of speech alone cannot sustain the argument of the essay but should be used to reinforce points already made on the basis of textual support. It must be impressed upon students that they need to base their discussion on the Latin text and not on commonsense guesses, platitudes, or general knowledge of the epic. Teachers must make every effort to complete the entire syllabus in a timely manner, giving sufficient attention to the relatively few lines from Books 10 and 12.

**V5 (Short Essay [English Syllabus])**

***What was the intent of this question?***

This question assessed students' control of the portions of the *Aeneid* they were to have read in English by asking them to discuss the tension between the reasonable and rash behavior in two episodes from the poem. Students were allowed to choose one episode from each of two lists of three.

***How well did students perform on this question?***

The vast majority wrote adequate essays, but there were fewer scores at the upper range. A significant number of students were not adequately prepared to provide more than a limited and/or faulty discussion. There often was a lack of balance between the two episodes that were treated. The mean score was 3.3 out of a possible six points.

***What were common student errors or omissions?***

Students often failed to provide specific or accurate details in support of their analysis of the episodes. Many students did not appear to have a clear and detailed recall of the passages. There was a tendency to comment on one aspect of the episodes without taking note of or appreciating the complex interplay of rational and rash choices. Students who chose to write about Dares/Entellus or Hercules/Cacus had difficulty framing the issues raised by the question. A less serious problem was that students frequently interchanged the names (e.g., Nisus/Euryalus, Dares/Entellus, Iris/Allecto).

***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 find ways to hold students accountable for the parts of the *Aeneid* read in English so that they know major characters, themes, and passages throughout the *Aeneid*.