



Student Performance Q&A:

2005 AP® Latin Literature Free-Response Questions

The following comments on the 2005 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.

LL1 (Catullus 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 7–14 of Catullus 31.

How well did students perform on this question?

Readers used the full range of scores. Scores in the upper range (7–9) were not at all uncommon, but there were more scores in the lower range (1–3). Although most students seemed to recognize the passage, some gave the impression they were seeing it for the first time. The mean score was 3.43 out of a possible 9 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

The most difficult section for students was segments 9 (*hoc est . . . unum*), 10 (*quod . . . est*), and 11 (*pro laboribus tantis*), where they often conflated the two clauses in a dense construction. Readers found other common errors in the following segments.

- *Segment 12.* Surprisingly, many students mistranslated *salve* as “farewell” or the equivalent, despite the context of a homecoming.
- *Segment 14.* *Ero* caused confusion, with some students construing it as a first person singular verb (from *sum*) instead of as an ablative noun.

- *Segment 16.* Students frequently constructed *lacus* (in *O Lydiae lacus undae*) as singular vocative despite disagreement with the plural imperative *ridete*, and they frequently used *Lydiae* as a modifier of *lacus*. Some students, apparently relying on memory, rendered *Lydiae* as if it were *lucidae*, which does appear in some texts but not in the Oxford Classical Text or in the *apparatus criticus*.

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 against trying to rely on their memory of canned translations and call their students' attention to passages in which the text they are using differs from the Latin text specified in the *AP Latin: Vergil and Latin Literature Course Description* (in most cases, the Oxford Classical Text). Students should be encouraged to read over their translations in order to ensure that what they have written is intelligible. If students wrote their translations on every other line, they would have room to make legible corrections.

LL2 (Catullus Long Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question tested specifically students' understanding of Catullus 14.12–23 and Catullus 30 by asking them to discuss the ways in which the poet's response to the behavior of his friends Calvus (in 14) and Alfenus (in 30) indicates how he perceives that behavior. 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 performed adequately, especially considering that these poems are recent additions to the syllabus. Most saw the distinction between the gravity of the two situations, and many understood the joke in the first passage. Although Readers used the full range of scores, the familiar vocabulary and relatively clear syntax in the two passages enabled even weaker students to write at least limited essays. The mean score was 2.75 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Most students understood Catullus's perceptions, but a smaller number understood his responses. Weaker essays failed to identify the joke in the first passage. Perhaps because they did not remember the rest of the poem, students often assumed that Calvus was the author of the "horrible little book" (line 1) or the author of invective against Catullus. Students often misunderstood the last three lines of the first passage, frequently seeing Calvus as *pessimi poetae* (12). With the second passage students showed a similar misunderstanding of the referents for *sodalibus* (1) or *amiculi* (2). Reconstructions of a hypothetical relationship between Alfenus and Lesbia distracted some students from giving a complete answer to the question. Some students tended to rely on discussions of figures of speech instead of on citations from the Latin text.

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?

While a discussion of rhetorical and poetic devices can supplement an otherwise strong essay, it cannot carry the weight of the argument. Teachers should emphasize to students that nothing substitutes for a good understanding of a poem based on a good command of the Latin. They should also remind students to use the 15-minute reading period wisely to plan out well-organized, economical essays.

LL3 (Catullus Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question tested specifically students' understanding of lines 1–12 of Catullus 51 by asking them to discuss both the poet's reactions to the sight of Lesbia and another man at a social gathering and the contrasting images used to express these reactions. 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?

Although the scores tended to cluster at the lower end of the scale, a number of essays displayed a lucid writing style, insightful comments, and confident Latin. The mean score was 2.45 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Remarkably, many students did not seem to recognize this poem. Some seemed to assume that the poem concerned Catullus's anger and jealousy, but they could not present much textual support. Many students missed the gender of *ille* (line 1), asserting that the comparison to the gods involved Lesbia instead of "that man." Few students were able to translate *nihil est super mi* (7) correctly and therefore were unable to use it to make an effective point. Many students were only able to translate random words from the poem (e.g., *flamma* and *nocte* [10, 12]), and often even these were out of context. Many students wrote uneven essays, favoring the reactions of the poet over the contrasting images ("images" here could refer to feelings, sensations, or reactions). A number of students summarized more than they analyzed.

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 insist that their students cite Latin from throughout the entire passage. Students must be aware that, even for the short essay questions, they will often be asked to perform two different tasks. In this case, they had to discuss both Catullus's reactions *and* the contrasting images.

LL4 (Cicero Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

The question tested specifically the students' understanding of how Cicero in *Pro Caelio* 14.33 offers a choice to Clodia as to how he should proceed in his treatment of her, and of how he enlarges upon one of the choices. 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?

Readers used the full range of scores. Most students correctly identified the choice offered to Clodia (lines 1–2), and most understood that Cicero followed the more severe of the choices (2–6). Most also recognized the reference to Appius Claudius Caecus in line 7 and the idea of prosopopoeia. Many students conveyed the distinction between Clodia's wildly bearded ancestors and the neatly trimmed beards of the contemporary young men who appealed to Clodia. A number of students pointed out that Cicero was “performing a play” for the jurors, making comic reference to the blind Appius Claudius being least pained since he could not see Clodia. The mean score was 2.32 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Some students failed to cite *prisce* and *remisse* (line 2) and so had difficulty making clear the nature of the options Cicero was presenting to Clodia. Similarly, their misunderstanding of *barbatus* (“barbarian” instead of “bearded” [3]) and *qui . . . suscenseat* (5–6) caused them to take their essays in unproductive directions. While mention of Cicero's attempt at humor in line 7 was not required in order for students to receive a high score, most of the stronger essays did take note of it and many of the weaker essays did not.

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 to practice careful paraphrasing and translation to make clear their understanding of the passage. Students also need practice at identifying short passages within the context of the entire work. Moreover, they should be aware that a concise introductory sentence (not a paragraph) for a short essay question will help them move directly to their first point and be a more productive use of the limited time they have to respond to the question.

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* 25.61.

How well did students perform on this question?

Readers used the full range of scores, but a very low percentage of students received the full 9 points. Most scores were in the 2–4 range, but a significant number were in the 5–6 range. The mean score was 3.52 out of a possible 9 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

A lack of attention to basic grammar structures appeared to account for the majority of student errors. Vocabulary recall was not as prominent an issue as it has been in the past. Readers found other common errors in the following segments.

- *Segment 2.* Most students understood *illud* to be a direct object, but they frequently mistranslated *requiro* as future instead of present tense.
- *Segment 3.* A number of translations omitted the clause *quid attinuerit*.
- *Segment 8.* Many students failed to identify *venerint* as perfect subjunctive in an indirect question and rendered it as a future perfect indicative.
- *Segment 11.* Although most students recognized the correlative *tanta . . . tanta*, the majority had difficulty associating it with the nominatives *consuetudo* (segment 12) and *familiaritas* (13).
- *Segment 15.* Many students missed the subjunctive *esset*, which needed to be rendered either as a potential subjunctive or in a present contrary to fact conditional construction.
- *Segment 16.* Similarly, a high percentage of students treated *visus esset* as an imperfect instead of a pluperfect subjunctive (past contrary to fact).
- *Segment 18.* While *apud* is given in some elementary Latin texts as “among,” that translation could not work in this context.

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 always be held accountable for literal translations. Such items as verb tense, mood, number, noun case and number, and basic syntax should be given special emphasis.

LL6 (Cicero Short Answer)

What was the intent of this question?

This question assessed students’ control of a Latin text by asking a series of short-answer questions about a passage from *Pro Caelio* 18.43. The questions concerned the intent, content, and implications of Cicero’s argument and also the identification of a figure of speech.

How well did students perform on this question?

Readers used the full range of scores. A good number of students scored in the highest range (7–8) and even more in the midrange. Most students were familiar with the general argument, but the

most successful students demonstrated good comprehension of the Latin passage and how it fits into Cicero’s rhetorical strategy for defending Caelius. The mean score was 3.97 out of a possible 8 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

The most frequent error was a failure to identify the figure of speech (asyndeton or tricolon) in lines 3–4, as requested in question 4. Many students cited the anaphora of *partim . . . partim* (3), but these words were not in the section of text on which the question was based. Some students, ignoring *cuiusquam* in line 1, mistook *viri* for Caelius and so did not receive credit for question 2. Two common problems with question 3 were that students often misunderstood *aeris alieni*, “debt” (4), as “foreign air” (i.e., love of travel) or disdain for foreign pretense, and they often failed to translate *nimia*, which had to be construed with *libertas* in line 3 to receive full credit. For question 5(a), many students suggested that youthful extravagance was acceptable if the young person was rich, connected to a good family, or a nice person, but missed Cicero’s point that virtue comes later, in maturity, after the youthful urges have simmered down.

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 advised to be more careful about following instructions, especially when the question requires them to write out the Latin and accurately translate or paraphrase. Also, students must be aware that most of the questions indicate specific lines or parts of lines on which the answer is to be based; accurate answers (as were seen, for example, on the figure of speech question [4]) that have been drawn from other parts of the passage are not acceptable.

LL7 (Horace Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question tested specifically students’ understanding of the political philosophy espoused by Horace in *Odes* 3.1.5–16 by asking them to discuss that philosophy and the images used to present it. 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?

Readers used the full range of scores, but the number of outstanding essays was low, reflecting the difficulty of the question and the students’ problems with focusing on how the passage brought out a political philosophy. There were a number of very short essays that showed only a minimal acquaintance with the poem. The mean score was 2.7 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Students often failed to support their points with Latin references, or they used so little Latin that it was difficult to know if they were familiar with the poem or simply recognized *reges* and *Iovis* (line 2). Many students did not use the word “images,” thus leaving it to the Readers to infer that their

discussion was based on images. A significant number of students ignored even such obvious images as Jupiter moving all with his eyebrow (4) or the urn shaking out the low and the high (11–12). Many had difficulty following their argument through to a satisfactory conclusion, particularly in their handling of lines 5–10, where they ignored the farmer or thought that only one man was being described. Students also transposed current political ideas to Rome and linked Horace’s philosophy with the divine right of kings and/or the principle of equality under the law.

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 give equal coverage to all parts of the syllabus. Although most students had some familiarity with the poem, many did not give evidence of having discussed it in any significant way. Teachers should caution students that broad, general statements must be supported by Latin citations (i.e., “make clear in your discussion that you understand the Latin”).

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 1–9 of *Odes* 1.9.

How well did students perform on this question?

Scores covered the entire range and were very evenly distributed. Despite the difficulty of the passage, a relatively large percentage of students earned scores of 7 or higher. The mean score was 4.17 out of a possible 9 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Problems with noun forms included rendering *silvae* (segment 6) as genitive singular instead of nominative plural and *flumina* (9) as singular. Vocabulary problems involved confusion of *onus* (7) with *opus* and confusion of *permitte* (17) with *promitte*, or rendering it as the cognate “permit” instead of as “leave” or the like. The subjunctives *sustineant* (7) and *constiterint* (9) caused difficulty; many students inserted “can” or “are able” with *sustineant* and rendered *constiterint* as a future perfect indicative. Readers found other common errors in the following segments.

- *Segment 2.* A significant number of students did not know how to translate *ut*, presenting a purpose of result clause instead of an indirect question.
- *Segments 3 and 4.* Noun/adjective agreement caused students difficulty because of the gender of *Soracte* (neuter) and Horace’s reversal of expectations (i.e., the mountain is white [*candidum*], not tall, and the snow is deep [*alta*] not white).
- *Segment 5.* Many students failed to translate *nec iam* correctly.
- *Segment 11.* Some students failed to recognize *reponens* as a vocative participle.
- *Segment 13.* Some students did not recognize *benignius* as a comparative.
- *Segment 16.* Some students failed to recognize *deprome* as an imperative.

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?

Particularly with Horace, attention must be paid to a poet's peculiar vocabulary. Students must get into the habit of accounting for every word, including those seemingly unimportant connectives like *nec*, *-que*, and *atque*. Teachers should place special emphasis on subjunctives, particularly on the perfect subjunctive, which students often confuse with the future perfect, and on subjunctive constructions other than purpose and result clauses.

LL9 (Horace Short Answer)

What was the intent of this question?

This question assessed students' control of a Latin text by asking a series of short-answer questions about *Odes* 1.23. The questions concerned the content of the poem and also identification of a figure of speech.

How well did students perform on this question?

Readers used the full range of scores. A very large number of students earned scores of 7 or 8. Students seemed to know the poem or, at the very least, to be able to figure out some of the answers from the Latin. In particular, questions 2, 4, and 5(a) posed few problems. The mean score was 5.41 out of a possible 8 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

The most common error in question 1 was failure to give the correct Latin or any Latin at all. Also, some students mistranslated or did not accurately paraphrase the Latin they had given. Question 3 seemed to cause the most difficulty; although several correct answers were possible for lines 5–7, students did not know the vocabulary and some even tried to find correct answers in line 8, where there were none. Many students misunderstood *tempestiva* (12) in question 5(b) or sometimes relied on the entire poem to construct their answers instead of confining themselves to lines 11–12.

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 read carefully the instructions for each item in the short answer question; some require Latin citations and others do not. Students should practice writing out the *specific* Latin words that are needed to answer the questions and correctly translating or accurately paraphrasing *only* these words, confining their answers to the specified lines and avoiding digressions that are beyond the scope of the question. Teachers are encouraged to use this type of question in their classrooms frequently, since it helps students gain a thorough understanding of the poem based on a close reading of the text and can serve them well even if the poem appears on the exam in an essay or translation question.

LL10 (Ovid Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question tested specifically students' understanding of *Metamorphoses* 8.203–213 by asking them to evaluate the appropriateness of both Daedalus's words and his actions throughout the passage. 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?

Readers used the full range of scores. The vast majority of students recognized the passage and could discuss, in at least a vague or limited fashion, Daedalus's interaction with his son, and so there were very few scores at the lower end. There were not, however, a large number of scores at the upper end. The mean score was 3.16 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Too many students tried to answer the question as if it were about foreshadowing (i.e., they stated that Daedalus's words were appropriate because Icarus would disregard them and die). These students usually did not address the appropriateness of Daedalus's words and actions with his son in sufficient detail. Students were generally stronger analyzing Daedalus's words, especially his warning not to fly too high or too low, than they were analyzing his actions. Although lines 7–11 contain several verbs of action, students often jumped to the final word of the excerpt (*timet* [11]) to focus exclusively on Daedalus's underlying emotional state instead of on his performance of 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 guide students in both writing thoughtful and coherent essays that address only the question before them and basing their answers on the Latin passage. Students should be discouraged from bringing in too many extraneous elements that pertain to the larger story, because such digressions do not improve their scores and take up writing time that could be better spent in other ways. Students should bear in mind that essays based on "because," "since," or "therefore" are superior to those based on "next," "then," or "and."

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 55–62 of Book 4 of the *Metamorphoses*.

How well did students perform on this question?

Readers used the full range of scores, with more scores falling in the middle and low ranges. Familiarity with the story seemed to have helped some students perform a bit better, but, as described in the next section, this same familiarity caused problems for others. The mean score was 3.01 out of a possible 9 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Many students, relying on their memory of the story instead of on the words of the text, wrote about the crack in the wall between the two houses and subsequent events related to that wall. The wall mentioned in this passage, of course, was the wall around the city of Babylon. Readers found other common errors in the following segments.

- *Segments 3 and 4.* Several students failed to treat *puellis* as the antecedent of *quas* or to recognize *puellis* as dative.
- *Segment 6.* Many students did not recognize *Semiramis* as the subject of *dicitur*.
- *Segment 13.* Students often failed to translate *taedae . . . coissent* as a contrary to fact apodosis, or render *taedae* as a genitive dependent on *iure*. They often simply omitted *quoque*.
- *Segment 15.* Students had an especially hard time recognizing that the antecedent of *quod* is the clause that follows.
- *Segment 16.* Students often mistranslated *ex aequo*.
- *Segment 17.* Students often failed to treat *ambo* as the subject of *ardebant*.

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 be sure to translate the passage accurately and with careful attention to the Latin of the text instead of presenting a loose paraphrase or summary based on their knowledge of the story. They should pay particular attention to the voice and tense of verbs and participles and to the case and number of nouns and adjectives. Students should also be on their guard against words that superficially resemble other words.

LL12 (Ovid Short Answer)

What was the intent of this question?

This question assessed students' control of a Latin text by asking a series of short-answer questions about lines 1–7 of *Amores* 3.15. The questions concerned students' understanding of the Latin text, of allusions, and of a figure of speech contained in the passage.

How well did students perform on this question?

Relatively few students earned scores in the highest range (7–8), with most earning scores between 2 and 5. The majority of students were able to answer questions 1 and 4(b) correctly. The mean score was 3.58 out of a possible 8 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Many students received no credit for question 2(a), either because they gave Latin without an accurate translation or paraphrase, or they provided an accurate translation without the Latin. Also, many students did not know the meanings of *meta* or *raditur* (line 2) and therefore were not able to answer the question. Students who missed question 3 made two kinds of errors: some did not know the meaning of *deliciae* or *dedecuerere* (4) and guessed that Ovid considered his poems to be “delicacies,” “delicious,” “delicate,” or “delectable,” or that he was dedicating them to someone; others took the introductory word *nec* with *deliciae* and thought that Ovid considered his works “not delightful.”

When answering question 4(a) some students failed to mention both elements of the family’s longstanding equestrian rank or, due to a misunderstanding of the word *eques*, linked Ovid and his family to horses as horse breeders, and so on. Question 5 proved problematic. Students were expected to link Vergil and Catullus to their respective literary genres or to identify them as the pride of their hometowns of Mantua and Verona and indicate the relevance of this information to Ovid’s own work or to his own hometown. Many students did not make the link to Ovid in either scenario. Additionally, many responses were based entirely on the statement in the prompt that Vergil and Catullus were great poets, resulting in vague statements that Ovid wanted to be a great poet like Vergil and Catullus or that the three poets were contemporaries.

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 emphasize control of vocabulary. It is difficult for students to explain what a word refers to if they do not understand the meaning of the word. Students should be reminded that writing out Latin and translating or paraphrasing it are two separate acts. Teachers should expose students to the cultural, economic, social, literary, and political background that is relevant to a passage; usually the introductions and notes in students’ textbooks provide enough information.