



Student Performance Q&A:

2007 AP® Latin Literature Free-Response Questions

The following comments on the 2007 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?

This question assessed students' ability to translate as literally as possible a passage of Latin verse (Catullus 13. 6-14).

How well did students perform on this question?

Students performed very well on this question, although some, apparently relying on familiarity with the poem, began with lines that were *not* on the examination. The full range of scores was represented, with most falling in the ranges 0–2 and 6–9. The mean score was 4.85 out of a possible 9 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Among common student errors were the following: tense and mood (e.g., *accipies* as imperative rather than future indicative; *donarunt* as something other than perfect tense); number (e.g., *haec* [segment 1] and *Veneres Cupidinesque* [segment 14] as singular); omissions (e.g., *inquam* [segment 2], *nam* [segment 4], *tui* [segment 5]); vocabulary in context (*contra* [segment 7] as “against”; *seu* [segment 9] as “whether”; *cum* [segment 15] as “with”); other mistakes in vocabulary (e.g., *meros* [segment 8] as “true” or “wine”; *-ve* [segment 10] as “and”; *nam* [segment 11] as “now”).

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 become accustomed to *rereading* their answers when they have finished. Instructors should be sure to teach them to render the Latin into very literal translations that account for every Latin word *in the context of the passage*. Students should be taught to pay special attention to enclitics.

Question LL2 (Catullus Long Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

The intent of the question was for students to demonstrate their ability to analyze Latin passages (Catullus 64. 192-201 and 64. 228-237) by comparing and contrasting the requests of Ariadne and Aegeus concerning Theseus and by supporting their arguments with accurate Latin citations from throughout both passages.

How well did students perform on this question?

Most students were able to recognize and recount the myth and to discern the basic sequence of events in at least one of the passages. Fewer students had success with both passages. A full range of scores was represented, with the majority falling in the 2–4 range. The mean score was 2.41 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Some students failed to recognize that lines 1–3 of passage A directly address the Eumenides and/or, misconstruing the plural imperatives, treated them as if they were directed toward Theseus himself. In lines 9–10 of passage A, *quali . . . mente . . . tali mente* proved problematic. Many students thought that *me mente* (line 9) formed some kind of unit referring to Ariadne’s state of mind and that Ariadne was praying to forget Theseus rather than asking the Eumenides to wreak vengeance on him and his loved ones. Many students did not realize that the first two lines of passage B were referring to Athena, and some who did proceeded as if the entire passage were being addressed to her. Students who misconstrued *laeta gaudia mente* (line 9 of passage B), taking *gaudia* as a modifier of *mente* rather than the direct object of *agnoscam* (line 10), had difficulty providing an accurate citation from these lines. Scansion of the line could have resolved these difficulties. A number of students relied too heavily on rhetorical figures as the underpinning for the entire analysis instead of citing such literary devices as embellishments to add further support to critical analyses.

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 be sure to cover the whole AP syllabus. They should impress on their students the importance of proper citation and usage of Latin from throughout the passage(s). Instructors may want to devote more attention to easily confused vocabulary items, as misinterpretation of key words can often lead students in unproductive directions.

Question LL3 (Catullus Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question allowed students to demonstrate their ability to analyze a Latin passage (Catullus 22. 1-5, 9-17) by discussing the contrasting effects that Suffenus's poetry has on his audience and on himself and by supporting their arguments with accurate Latin citations from throughout the passage.

How well did students perform on this question?

Most students recognized the poem and were able to address the effect of Suffenus's poetry either on his readers or on himself. A full range of scores was represented, with most students earning either a 3 or a 4. The mean score was 2.74 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

A surprising number of students misconstrued *bellus* (line 6) as "war" and/or *urbanus* (line 6) as "city," and these lexical errors led their essays into fruitless areas. Many, perhaps relying on a general knowledge of the poem, did not make clear distinctions between descriptions of Suffenus and descriptions of his poetry or between the poet's assessment of Suffenus and Suffenus's opinion of himself. Additionally, at the start of the poem, students had trouble distinguishing between what Catullus says about Suffenus and what Suffenus thinks about himself; it is the narrator, not Suffenus himself, who says (line 2) that Suffenus *est venustus et dicax et urbanus*. A good number of students seemed to have sufficient knowledge to achieve higher scores but either did not touch on all aspects of the question or did not provide enough accurate Latin citation.

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 train their students to identify each thing that the question is asking them to address and then to address it with specific reference to the Latin. Many students who received a 3 could easily have earned a 4 or a 5 by completely addressing all aspects of the question, with specific reference to the Latin. Students should be encouraged to make it clear that they know when they are citing Latin that is not included in the prompt, as failure to do so may give the impression that they are relying on recollection of class discussions rather than on the Latin upon which the question is based.

Question LL4 (Cicero Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question evaluated students' ability to analyze a Latin passage by discussing the ways in which Cicero responds to the demands of the prosecution in *Pro Archia* 4. 8 and by supporting their arguments with accurate Latin citations from throughout the passage.

How well did students perform on this question?

On the whole, students understood the question and recognized the passage. The majority of responses concentrated on only the first four lines, resulting in uneven or incomplete discussions. Although a full range of scores was represented, there were not many scores of 2 or 6. The mean score was 2.64 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

A large number of students misunderstood *cum . . . fide[m]que* and encountered difficulties with the contextual sense of *religionem*, *municipi*, and *ius iurandum* (line 5). They often omitted discussion of the first or last couple of Latin phrases in the passage. Some, struggling with the vocabulary, attempted unsuccessfully to build discussions on derivative meanings of the Latin. Only the most skilled students correctly followed the important sequence of six infinitives dependent on *est ridiculum* (line 3) in the lengthy final sentence. A minority of students did not recognize the passage at all.

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 techniques of correct Latin citation, providing opportunities for students to practice them, and should stress the importance of drawing on Latin support from throughout the selection and explaining it by translation or accurate paraphrase. Students must understand that material drawn from outside the passage, although it may supplement a strong essay, is much less important than, and can never take the place of, analysis based on the Latin of the passage.

Question LL5 (Cicero Translation)

What was the intent of this question?

This question's purpose was to assess students' ability to translate as literally as possible a passage of Latin prose (*Pro Archia* 9. 20).

How well did students perform on this question?

On the whole, student performance was disappointing. Many students accurately paraphrased rather than translating literally. Although a full range of scores was represented, more scores were clustered in the low end (0–2) than in the middle or high range. The mean score was 2.66 out of a possible 9 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Many students did not clearly see the relationships between the clauses, switching the places of *patiatur* (segment 5) and *mandari* (segment 8). A significant number struggled with the vocabulary and resorted to educated guesses. Especially difficult for students was *eius a quo* (segment 16) which was often mistranslated, with the antecedent of *eius* misunderstood and *quo* misconstrued

as a thing (usually *voce*) rather than a person. Other common errors included omission (e.g., *enim* [segment 1] and *tam* [segment 3]); agreement problems (e.g., *facile* [segment 5] made to modify *mandari* rather than *patiatur*; *optime* [segment 18] made to modify *virtus* rather than *praedicaretur*); mistakes in vocabulary (e.g., *patiatur* [segment 5], *praeconium* [segment 6], and *mandari* [segment 8]).

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 the importance of mastering and reviewing the vocabulary of *Pro Archia* and of the sections of *De Amicitia* on the syllabus. They should provide students with opportunities to practice translating by learning to recognize the various types of clauses, especially subordinate constructions, and their articulation within the framework of a periodic Latin sentence.

Question LL6 (Cicero Short Answer)

What was the intent of this question?

The intent of the question was primarily to gauge students' comprehension (subquestions 1, 2, 3, 5) of a Latin text (Cicero *de Amicitia* 7. 23). The ability to translate or paraphrase (subquestion 1) and to identify a figure of speech (subquestion 4) was also evaluated.

How well did students perform on this question?

Most students were able to provide correct responses to at least one or two of the items. The full range of scores was represented, but there were more scores at the lower end than in the middle or high ranges. The mean score was 2.52 out of a possible 8 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Often, correct English answers to subquestion 1 could not be accepted because the Latin requested had not been provided. In identifying the figure of speech asked for in subquestion 4, students sometimes did not write out the *specific* Latin words, providing too much or too little Latin.

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 alerted that some spot questions require Latin citation and others do not.

Question LL7 (Horace Short Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question measured students' ability to analyze a Latin passage (Horace *Odes* 1. 37. 21-32) by discussing whether the characterization of Cleopatra as *fatale monstrum* is or is not confirmed in

the rest of the selection and by supporting their arguments with accurate Latin citations from throughout the excerpt.

How well did students perform on this question?

Most students were able to identify the context of the passage and to write adequate essays, but nonetheless a full range of scores was represented. The mean score was 2.81 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Although many students employed the whole passage in defense of their thesis, some treated only one or two stanzas, with the final stanza often being omitted or glossed over quickly. One significant problem was determining the referents or contexts of various words and phrases, and these errors resulted in misinterpretation. Some students simply picked out individual words, often indiscriminately, to support their argument, whereas others advanced arguments based solely or primarily on rhetorical devices. Extended discussion of the historical context and material from the first 20 lines of the poem did little to strengthen their essays; occasionally stronger essays did benefit from the inclusion of small amounts of relevant external material.

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 impress on students the importance of the context of the Latin words; words used in isolation are rarely cogent argumentation. Students should be advised that discussion of stylistic devices should be used as auxiliary support for a more substantial argument, not as a primary argument, and that no amount of historical information can compensate for failure to supply accurate Latin citations.

Question LL8 (Horace Translation)

What was the intent of this question?

The purpose of the question was to assess students' ability to translate as literally as possible a passage of Latin verse (Horace *Odes* 1. 25. 1-8).

How well did students perform on this question?

On the whole, students recognized the passage and translated well. The full range of scores was represented, with scores in the middle range (4–6) only slightly more frequent than those in the higher and lower ranges. The mean score was 4.62 out of a possible 9 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Perhaps because literal translation into English was awkward, a number of students mistranslated *tuo* (segment 15) as a personal pronoun rather than as a possessive adjective modifying *me*. Other common errors included mistranslation (e.g., *protervi* [segment 1], *parcius* [segment 2], and *adimunt* [segment 5]); singular for plural (*longas noctes* [segment 17]); omission (e.g., *protervi*

[segment 1], *parcius* [segment 2], *nec* [segment 5], and *-que* [segment 7]; accusative as ablative (*cardines* [segment 12] and *noctes* [segment 17]).

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 taught to heed the direction “translate as literally as possible,” not to present a paraphrase or description of the passage. In striving for accuracy, students should consider such elementary matters as verb tenses, the number of nouns, and the use of cases. Special emphasis should be placed on conjunctions such as *nec* and *-que* and on making sure that they are always accounted for.

Question LL9 (Horace Short Answer)

What was the intent of this question?

The intent of the question was primarily to measure students’ comprehension (subquestions 1, 3, 4) of a Latin text (Horace *Odes* 1. 11). The ability to translate or paraphrase (subquestion 3) and to identify a figure of speech (subquestion 2) was also assessed.

How well did students perform on this question?

Students were very familiar with the meaning and translation of the poem. Student performance was particularly strong on subquestion 1(a) (worth 2 points) and nearly perfect on 4(b). Nearly a full range of scores was represented (no responses received a 0), but scores at the higher end (6–8) predominated. The mean score was 5.32 out of a possible 8 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

In answering subquestion 1(b), students frequently looked beyond the target Latin and presented material from line 3 (*ut melius . . . pati*). For subquestion 2, they offered a variety of figures of speech that could not be supported by the text. Some students neglected to write out the Latin requested in subquestion 3 and therefore could not receive credit.

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 the entire question carefully, not to look for answers outside the lines cited in the question, and to be sure to provide Latin where it is required.

Question LL10 (Ovid Essay)

What was the intent of this question?

This question allowed students to display their ability to analyze a Latin passage (Ovid *Amores* 1.3. 5-16) by identifying the tactics employed by the poet in his attempt to persuade the object of his affection “to give him a chance” and by supporting their arguments with accurate Latin citations from throughout the passage.

How well did students perform on this question?

Most students were familiar with the poem from which this selection was drawn and were able to produce adequate essays. A full range of scores was represented, with the middle range (3–4) predominating. The mean score was 2.67 out of a possible 6 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Too many students merely described, paraphrased, translated, or summarized instead of providing analysis of the passage. Some omitted or misconstrued significant portions. The most common omissions were the couplets concerning Apollo, Bacchus, and Amor (7–8) and the lover’s virtues (9–10). Many essays omitted discussion of lines 1–2, beginning only with lines 3–4. Mistranslation of individual words sometimes led to misinterpretation. For example, misunderstanding *campus* (line 5) as a military term led many to read a military context into the excerpt. Students only very rarely caught the strongly adversative meaning of *at* (“but, on the other hand”) in line 7. Recognition of the force of *at* could have helped students to clarify the shift of the subject matter of lines 1–6 (wealth and pedigree) to that of lines 7ff. (the gifts of the gods and other positive qualities).

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 alert students that translation alone without analysis is not sufficient for a score above 4. Although a large number of students demonstrated a sound knowledge of literary devices and understood the content of the passage, they too often limited their answers simply to discussion of these devices and restatement of the content. Instructors are encouraged to teach their students techniques of literary analysis as opposed to mere citation of literary devices and paraphrase of the text.

Question LL11 (Ovid Translation)

What was the intent of this question?

The intent of the question was to gauge students’ ability to translate as literally as possible a passage of Latin verse (Ovid *Metamorphoses* 8. 616-621).

How well did students perform on this question?

Many students seemed to recognize the selection, and even those who may not have been familiar with it were able to translate the first part with a fair degree of success. A full range of scores was represented, although there were relatively few high scores. The mean score was 3.49 out of a possible 9 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Many students failed to recognize that *quoque* (segment 13) introduces a purpose clause. Also very problematic were the alternate (and syncopated) perfect tense forms (*obstipuere* [segment 1], *probarunt* [segment 2], and *voluere* [segment 12]). Particularly difficult were the modifiers of the feminine noun *quercus* (*contermina* [segment 14] and *circumdata* [segment 18]). Incorrect placement of adjectives also caused trouble: students frequently made *maturus* (segment 5) modify *animo et aevo* and construed *immensa* (segment 8) as modifying *caeli* (segment 9) or *finem* (segment 10).

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 syncopated forms of the perfect tense and on the alternate perfect ending *-ere*, reminding students that scansion can often help distinguish this latter form from the infinitive. Students need to be more careful of details in their translations, particularly in regard to adjective–noun agreement.

Question LL12 (Ovid Short Answer)

What was the intent of this question?

This question was designed primarily to determine students' comprehension (subquestions 1, 2, 3, 5) of a Latin text (Ovid *Metamorphoses* 10. 270-279). The ability to translate or paraphrase (subquestion 2) and to identify a figure of speech (subquestion 4) was also judged.

How well did students perform on this question?

The vast majority of students were familiar with the story and were able to answer several of the subquestions. The full range of scores was represented, with the majority falling in the 4–6 range. Surprisingly few students received full credit, mainly because of difficulty in fully answering subquestion 2. The mean score was 3.92 out of a possible 8 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

The most common error made in answering subquestion 2 was failure to notice the parameters of the Latin (*cum . . . timide*); students often cited *turaque fumabant*, which came before *cum . . . timide*. *Munere functus* ("having performed his duty") was difficult for students to translate, and *constitit* was often left out or translated as "decided." In subquestion 3 students frequently said

that Pygmalion was requesting a girlfriend instead of a wife (*coniunx*). In response to subquestion 4, many correctly stated that line 8 contains an example of chiasmus or synchysis but did not make clear the specific words that illustrate the figure of speech.

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 be very specific in their choice of Latin and its translation (that is, students should not cite the entire line of Latin when their translation refers to only one or two words). Likewise, in questions concerning figures of speech, students must learn to be very clear about which specific Latin words constitute the figure.