

Chief Reader Report on Student Responses: 2017 AP[®] French Language and Culture Free-Response Questions

• Number of Readers	209			
Total Group				
• Number of Students Scored	22,621			
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At	
	5	3,845	17.0	
	4	5,643	24.9	
	3	7,562	33.4	
	2	4,429	19.6	
	1	1,142	5.0	
• Global Mean	3.29			
Standard Group*				
• Number of Students Scored	17,486			
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At	
	5	1,919	11.0	
	4	4,155	23.8	
	3	6,486	37.1	
	2	3,939	22.5	
	1	987	5.6	
• Global Mean	3.12			

* Standard students generally receive most of their foreign language training in U.S. schools. They did not indicate on their answer sheet that they regularly speak or hear the foreign language of the exam, or that they have lived for one month or more in a country where the language is spoken.

The following comments on the 2017 free-response questions for AP[®] French Language and Culture were written by the Chief Reader, Brian Kennelly of California Polytechnic State University. 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 preparation 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 #1**Task:** E-mail Reply**Topic:** Organizing an International Week Celebration**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.18**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.09***What were responses expected to demonstrate in their response to this question?***

This task assessed writing in the interpersonal communicative mode by having the student write a reply to an e-mail message. Students were allotted 15 minutes to read the message and write the reply. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. Students needed to be able, first, to comprehend the e-mail, and then to write a reply using a formal form of address. The reply must address all the questions and requests raised in the message, as well as ask for more details about something mentioned in the message.

The course theme for the e-mail reply was Beauty and Aesthetics. The task required the student to respond to the geography teacher in charge of organizing an international week celebration at the student's school. In the teacher's introduction, she thanks the student for proposing an event centered around Francophone cultures, while also explaining its potential impact on both the school and the community at large. The teacher asks the student what types of performances or exhibits are planned and how the student will publicize the week-long celebration to as many people as possible.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Students were generally able to understand the task, the requirements, and the e-mail to which they were asked to respond. They answered both questions—although with differing degrees of elaboration. Not all students requested further information about international week, however.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglecting to read the instructions, the introduction to the e-mail, or the e-mail prompt thoroughly • Missing some essential component of the task or content; many students overlooked the context established in the introduction that they were to talk about Francophone culture, not just culture, broadly defined, for example • Replying with questions or requests that did not pertain to something mentioned in the e-mail prompt • Not understanding the fairly long introductory paragraph that contained some abstract language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide required information (responses to questions, request for details) with frequent elaboration • Maintain the exchange with a response that is appropriate within the context of the task
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composing e-mails consisting solely or principally of language lifted from the prompt and often revealing a misunderstanding thereof 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are fully understandable, with ease and clarity of expression • Contain varied and appropriate vocabulary and idiomatic language

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using exclamation marks, inappropriate for a formal written exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate mostly consistent use of register appropriate for the situation; control of cultural conventions appropriate for formal correspondence, despite occasional errors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not realizing that the e-mail had been sent by a woman (Yasmina Beglaoui) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the exchange with a response that is clearly appropriate within the context of the task

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- A very long and formal closing is not necessary. “*Bien à vous*” or “*Bien cordialement*,” for example, is fine. Long formulaic closings are more appropriate for traditional written correspondence.
- Teachers should ask their students to avoid recycling language from the stimulus. Students should directly answer the questions asked in the e-mail and should strive to incorporate words and expressions beyond those included in the stimulus.
- Some student responses read more like essays than e-mails. Students should remember that this is a written interpersonal exchange rather than a written presentation. However it is imperative that the formal register be maintained throughout.
- There is no need to incorporate a certain number of “advanced structures” (subjunctive, for example), especially if to do so will be at the expense of grammatical accuracy. Students should focus on making the grammar serve the purpose of the message and not the other way around.
- Teachers should encourage their students to integrate transitional words into their responses and to answer the questions asked with full sentences rather than lists.
- Students should strive to structure their responses on the page so as to facilitate understanding for the reader. Use of paragraph structure and transitional elements to organize the response, as well as writing legibly, can all aid in achieving this aim.
- Students should remember that the e-mail task is not an opportunity to talk about their real-life interests but rather an exercise in which they *play the role* of a student responding to a specific e-mail. Students should therefore embrace their role in order to complete the task within the context provided in the prompt. Students who try to negate the premise of the task (“Oh, I am actually not interested in the international week,” or “You must be mistaken,” for example) do not maintain the exchange with an appropriate response.
- Start practicing interpersonal writing at as early a level as possible, ideally at levels prior to the AP class. Students can practice by reading and responding to a wide variety of e-mails and letters, which will also give them the opportunity to analyze and discuss notions of register as they apply to vocabulary choice, openings, and closings.
- Teachers should remind their students that they must complete all the elements of the task (respond to both questions/requests in the e-mail and then ask for more details about something mentioned in the message) in order for their response to be considered clearly appropriate.
- Teachers should expose students to e-mails of various types and lengths so that they can better analyze the message and determine what information is important to incorporate in their replies.
- Students should be exposed to common first names in a variety of Francophone cultures so that in their responses they do not address women as men, or vice versa.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Use and apply the Scoring Guidelines throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-french-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-french-language-and-culture>
- Use samples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can understand how to improve their performance.
- Refer to the exam information page for additional e-mail tasks from previous years.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-french-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-french-language-and-culture>
- Meet with educators who teach German, Italian, and Spanish Language and Culture to determine what common issues there are across languages and to share strategies that will improve student performance.
- Begin having students respond to e-mails early in their language learning experience so they become familiar with the task and begin to integrate more sophisticated language well before the beginning of the AP experience.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures online module on interpersonal writing.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules?course=ap-french-language-and-culture>

Question #2**Task:** Persuasive Essay**Topic:** Adult Children Living with Parents**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.16**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.04***What were responses expected to demonstrate in their response to this question?***

This task assessed writing in the presentational communicative mode by having the student write a persuasive essay on a given topic while referencing three sources of information about the topic. Students were first allotted 6 minutes to read the essay topic and the two printed sources. Then they listened to the one audio source twice. Afterward they had 40 minutes to write the essay. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. Students needed to be able first to comprehend the three sources and then to present their different viewpoints. They also had to present their own viewpoint and defend it thoroughly, using information from all of the sources to support the essay. As they referred to the sources, they had to identify them appropriately. Furthermore the essay had to be organized into clear paragraphs.

The course theme for the persuasive essay task was Families and Communities. Students had to write a persuasive essay on whether it is necessary to move out from the home of one’s parents once one has reached adulthood. The first source was an article entitled, “They are 35 years of age and older and still live with their parents.” While the author believes the reasons for this phenomenon to be multiple, he posits that it is largely a consequence of parents who continue to allow their children to be too dependent on them beyond their teenage years. The second source was a chart showing the percentage of young adults (20- to 24-year olds and 25- to 29-year olds) living with their parents, between 1981 and 2011. The third source was an interview broadcast of a journalist, a family therapist, and a psychiatrist in which each expert provided his point of view regarding so-called “boomerang” children, who — after leaving home — find themselves forced to return for various reasons.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Students by and large completed the task: answering the question of whether it is necessary to move out from the home of one’s parents once one has reached adulthood—and defending their opinion by utilizing the three sources provided.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not recognizing the need to <i>persuade</i> while answering the question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present and defend the student’s own viewpoint on the topic with a high degree of clarity: develop a persuasive argument with coherence and detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neglecting to cite and integrate the three sources appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate content from all three sources in support of the essay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrating limited cultural competency in responses (the claim that staying at home with one’s parents in Morocco is “strange,” for example) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate a high degree of comprehension of the sources’ viewpoints, with very few minor inaccuracies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving evidence of insufficient knowledge of the French language and of grammar to present ideas in a satisfactory manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use varied and appropriate vocabulary and idiomatic language • Maintain accuracy and variety in grammar, syntax and usage, with few errors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglecting to organize the essay to support the point of view being presented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present an organized essay; effectively use transitional elements and cohesive devices • Develop paragraph-length discourse

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Teachers should remind students to proofread their work for accuracy to avoid misquoting the sources. It is also important for students to cite the sources appropriately.
- Teachers should encourage students to write legibly.
- Teachers should help students understand how to integrate information from all three sources into their essays rather than just summarize them.
- Teachers should review with students the difference between possessive adjectives (*son, sa, ses*) and demonstrative adjectives (*ce, cette, ces*) and remind them that in addition to task completion, accuracy and variety in grammar, syntax, and usage is important.
- Teachers should ensure students' familiarity with vocabulary from each of the course's themes.
- Teachers should give students ample opportunities to practice developing their own points of view in writing using authentic sources in the target language: reading selections (articles); charts and graphs (many students continue to struggle with how best to interpret and integrate them); and audio selections.
- Teach students the *process* of writing (prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing).
- Teachers should remind their students that the content and structure of their response is more important than the length thereof. They need a clear introductory and closing paragraph; body paragraphs should be for building their argument and supporting their ideas with evidence from the sources; and transitional words or phrases are key to linking their paragraphs.
- Teachers should remind students to avoid restating the stereotypes or opinions in the source materials and instead to articulate their own opinion while integrating ideas from the source materials (whether for support or to be refuted).

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Use and apply the Scoring Guidelines throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-french-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-french-language-and-culture>
- Use samples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can understand how to improve their performance. Have them pay particular attention to how the content from the sources is cited and integrated.
- Refer to the exam information page for additional e-mail tasks from previous years.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-french-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-french-language-and-culture>
- Meet with educators who teach German, Italian, and Spanish Language and Culture to determine what common issues there are across languages and to share strategies that will assist student performance.
- Begin having students write essays based on sources early in their language learning experience so they become familiar with the task and begin to integrate more sophisticated language well before the beginning of the AP experience. For example, have students respond first to one source (article, chart or audio) and then gradually build up to having students integrate two and three sources.

- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures online module on presentational writing as well as the module called *Building Students' Skills in Developing Effective Written Arguments*.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules?course=ap-french-language-and-culture>

Question #3**Task:** Conversation**Topic:** Planning a Camping Trip**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.03**Standard Group Mean Score:** 2.76***What were responses expected to demonstrate in their response to this question?***

This task assessed speaking in the interpersonal communicative mode by having the student respond as part of a simulated oral conversation. Students were first allotted 1 minute to read a preview of the conversation, including an outline of each turn in the conversation. Then the conversation proceeded, including 20 seconds for students to speak at each of five turns in the conversation. The series of five responses received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. The responses had to appropriately address each turn in the conversation, according to the outline as well as the simulated interlocutor's utterance.

The course theme for the conversation task was Contemporary Life. In this task the student had a conversation with Jérôme, a classmate, about a camping trip that is being planned. Jérôme asks the student for ideas and suggestions. The student needed to respond to the following five audio prompts:

1. Jérôme greets the student and explains that he is going on a weekend camping trip with friends. Because it is their first camping trip, and since the student regularly goes camping, Jérôme asks the student whether the student would like to join him and his friends and whether the student would be interested in helping plan the trip. The student needed to respond affirmatively and enthusiastically.
2. Jérôme reacts positively then asks the student where the group might go, given that the weather is predicted to be nice. The student needed to respond and give details.
3. Jérôme reacts positively and asks the student what the group might bring for meals, given that the trip will last two days. The student needed to give specific recommendations.
4. Jérôme reacts positively then asks the student for ideas of activities the group might do during the day, while on the camping trip. The student needed to respond with elaboration.
5. Jérôme responds enthusiastically then asks the student whether the group should leave on Friday evening or on Saturday morning for the trip. The student needed to respond and end the conversation.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Students were, for the most part, able to engage in the simulated conversation with Jérôme, as guided by the outline of the conversation and after listening to each of the five recorded turns in the conversation.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misunderstanding the terms “<i>genre d’endroit</i>” (in second turn) “<i>prévoir</i>” (in third turn) and “<i>repas</i>” (also in third turn) • Neglecting to respond to both parts of the question “<i>ça t’intéresse de nous aider et de nous accompagner?</i>” (in first turn) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide required information (responses to questions) with frequent elaboration

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding with anglicisms (“hiking,” “fishing,” “hot dogs”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use varied and appropriate vocabulary and idiomatic language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not following the outline of the conversation • Having difficulty ending the conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the exchange with a series of responses that is clearly appropriate within the context of the task
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being inconsistent in the use of the informal register (use of both “tu” and “vous,” for example) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contain a mostly consistent use of register appropriate for the conversation

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Students should have a good idea of how long twenty seconds last. It is important that students participate as fully as possible in the conversation, elaborating and not just giving brief responses.
- Teachers should instruct students how to use transitions effectively (“*quant à mes amis*,” and “*cependant*,” for example)
- Teachers should encourage students not to use rote answers such as “*bonne idée*,” “*je suis excité/e*” but rather to respond with phrases appropriate to the specific context of the conversation.
- Students should practice writing interpersonal questions (flipped classroom) then incorporate them in simulated conversations with partners.
- Teachers should emphasize to students that they are receiving a holistic score for the task and should train students not to get flustered if they misunderstand a question or answer a question poorly. Students need to recover quickly and be able to anticipate, understand, and respond well to the following prompt/s.
- Students should read the instructions and the outline carefully and underline key words. They should listen to the prompts carefully and respond following the outline provided.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Use and apply the Scoring Guidelines throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-french-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-french-language-and-culture>
- Use samples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can understand how to improve their performance.
- Refer to the exam information page for additional e-mail tasks from previous years.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-french-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-french-language-and-culture>
- Meet with educators who teach German, Italian, and Spanish Language and Culture to determine what common issues there are across languages and to share strategies that will improve student performance.
- Work with students so they become familiar with how long 20 seconds is so they can become more comfortable practicing and producing responses to fill the allotted response time.
- Teach students how to use the conversation outline to their advantage. Look at commonalities from year-to-year so that students can anticipate types of responses, while reminding them of the importance of producing responses appropriate within the context.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures online module on interpersonal speaking.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules?course=ap-french-language-and-culture>

Question #4**Task:** Cultural Comparison**Max. Points:** 5**Topic:** Access to Medical Care**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.17**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.02***What were responses expected to demonstrate in their response to this question?***

This task assessed speaking in the presentational communicative mode by having the student make a comparative oral presentation on a cultural topic. Students were allotted 4 minutes to read the topic and prepare the presentation and then 2 minutes to deliver the presentation. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. The presentation had to compare the student's own community to an area of the French-speaking world, demonstrating understanding of cultural features of the French-speaking world. Furthermore the presentation had to be organized clearly.

The course theme for the cultural comparison task was Global Challenges. The student had to respond to the following question: How has access to medical care (hospitals, insurance, medications, etc.) affected the lives of people in your community? The student had to compare their observations of their own community to those of a Francophone country or region. The student could make reference to what they had studied, observed, and/or experienced as support for their claims.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Students were typically able to discuss medical care in their own communities. But not all students had much of substance to say about a Francophone community. Of those who compared medical care in both their own communities and the target-language communities with which they chose to compare their own, some did not recognize that their response needed, moreover, to address the question of how "access" to medical care "affected" people's lives.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparing student's own community to a non-Francophone community Neglecting to address the question of access in the prompt ("<i>Comment est-ce que l'accès aux soins médicaux a affecté la vie des gens de votre communauté?</i>") Providing unbalanced responses (unequal treatment given to the communities discussed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively treat the topic within the context of the task
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing lists of cultural differences, rather than comparing cultures based on the specific topic contained in prompt Not comparing their community with another Francophone community (if already living in a Francophone community) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly compare the student's own community with the target culture, including supporting details and relevant examples

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not clearly identifying their own community (just saying “<i>ici</i>” or “<i>chez moi</i>”), or not identifying the target community 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including geographical inaccuracies (i.e. stating that Haiti is in Africa or that Africa is a country) • Not presenting information beyond stereotypes and superficial information about the Francophone communities discussed (everybody is poor or there is little medical care available, for example) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate understanding of the target culture, including supporting details and relevant examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequately organizing the presentation 	Provide an organized presentation; effectively use transitional elements and cohesive devices

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Teachers should collaborate with colleagues teaching economics, geography, history, as well as speech and forensics, for example, to help students address gaps in content knowledge and hone their rhetorical skills.
- Students should be explicit (not implicit) in their presentations: they should clearly state what two communities are being compared (and which one is the community of the student)
- Teachers should present various Francophone cultures in as much depth as possible, using current authentic (audio and print) materials so as to ensure that students have a clear understanding of those cultures that goes beyond stereotypes and clichés.
- Teachers should encourage students to make good use of the four minutes they are allotted for planning and organizing their presentations. Using topics from past World Languages and Cultures’ exams (available on AP Central), teachers should have students practice the task with the technology to be used during the exam.
- Teachers should provide students effective strategies for comparing cultures: methods for introducing transitional phrases and structures needed to compare and contrast; the vocabulary to present one’s opinion. When introducing these strategies, teachers should emphasize how these tools can help students go beyond listing and elevate the quality of their responses.
- Teachers should emphasize that an effective cultural comparison requires students to discuss both their own community and a Francophone community and to explicitly articulate both the similarities and differences between them.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Use and apply the Scoring Guidelines throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-french-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-french-language-and-culture>
- Use samples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can understand how to improve their performance.
- Refer to the exam information page for additional e-mail tasks from previous years.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-french-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-french-language-and-culture>
- Meet with educators who teach German, Italian, and Spanish Language and Culture to determine what common issues there are across languages and to share strategies that will improve student performance.

- Begin having students develop cultural presentations early in their language learning experience so they become familiar with the task and begin to integrate more sophisticated language well before the beginning of the AP experience.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures online module on presentational speaking.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules?course=ap-french-language-and-culture>