Chief Reader Report on Student Responses:

2017 AP® Italian Language & Culture Free-Response Questions

- Number of Readers   29

Total Group
- Number of Students Scored   2,571
- Score Distribution

Exam Score	N	%At
5	474	18.4
4	490	19.1
3	875	34.0
2	576	22.4
1	156	6.1

- Global Mean   3.21

Standard Group*
- Number of Students Scored   1,922
- Score Distribution

Exam Score	N	%At
5	147	7.6
4	378	19.7
3	751	39.1
2	510	26.5
1	136	7.1

- Global Mean   2.94

* 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® Italian Language & Culture were written by the Chief Reader, Paola Morgavi of Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. 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 Replay   **Theme:** Famiglia e società

Max. Points: 5   **Total Group Mean Score:** 3.81

Standard Group Mean Score: 3.69

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 mean score for the Standard Group was 3.69 out of a possible 5 points. The mean score for the Total Group was 3.81. Both the Standard Group and the Total Group performance on this response were statistically the highest of all four free-response questions.

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?

The question assessed the students' performance in Interpersonal Writing by engaging them in a series of exchanges on a familiar topic within the course theme *Famiglia e società*. Content and context were provided by the e-mail from Danilo Varone, an employee at the Family Center in Turin. The e-mail offered students a summer internship where they could volunteer for both educational and recreational activities designed for children, youth, adults, and the elderly. Students were expected to produce language that used a variety of grammar structures and vocabulary appropriate to the context. They had to give information about themselves by answering questions that asked them to express opinions or preferences regarding the age of people they wanted to work with and the type of activities they were interested in. In addition, they had to demonstrate the ability to ask questions by asking for further information about something mentioned in the message.

In this question, content and skills were strictly interwoven, and the task ultimately assessed what students could do with the language in a specific context.

Content and skills
- Many responses provided elaboration (e.g., about previous volunteer or work experience in similar contexts and with similar or different age groups; about interest in art, theater, etc.; about knowledge of foreign languages and use of technology; about preference of sports).
- Some students did not respond to one of the questions.
- Many responses lacked a request for additional information.
- Some responses requested information not pertinent to the stimulus.

Language:
- Many students used a variety of compound and complex sentences.
- Some responses lacked accuracy and control of grammar, though they provided all the required information within the context of the task. In particular, recurring problems were errors in subject-verb agreement, adjective-noun agreement, and verb conjugation. Some of these problems occurred even in the best responses.
- Many responses contained appropriate and varied vocabulary, though with recurrent spelling errors (e.g., "*auito/auitare*", "*riposte*", "*gratzie*", "*educatzione*", "*phisica*", "*responsabilità*", "*espirienza*").
- Some responses showed Spanish or English interference (e.g., "*introducire*", "*previoso*", "*preferencia*", "*respondere*", "*relaxare*", "*reccommendo*", "*voluntare*").

- There was a noticeable lack of idiomatic language, although that did not detract anything from responses that were fully understandable and contained frequent elaboration. On occasion, when idiomatic language was used, it was not appropriate for formal correspondence and consisted of memorized phrases or expressions.
- Some students used an inappropriate register, mostly in the body and in the closing of the e-mail.

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

The directions indicated that the e-mail was in response to an inquiry about a summer internship. At the beginning of the e-mail, it was clearly stated that the internship was a volunteer opportunity, and therefore unpaid. In their response, students were expected to specify which age group they preferred to work with and why, as well as what kind of activities they were interested in and why.

While most responses were appropriate, some asked what the hourly compensation for the position would be. Also, a few responses misunderstood the word "*corso*," thinking the internship was a "*corso*" that the student could attend; those responses asked therefore about its cost and duration.

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	*Responses that Demonstrated Understanding*
• In some responses, there were requests for compensation, even though the e-mail indicated that the internship was a volunteer opportunity offered by a not-for-profit organization.	• Successful responses indicated interest and enthusiasm about the opportunity to volunteer. Also, they mentioned previous volunteer experiences to emphasize students' suitability as good candidates.
• In some responses, students erroneously expressed intentions to improve their knowledge of languages or their technology skills. They also requested information about course fees, course duration, etc., thinking that they would be attending a course instead of participating in an unpaid internship.	• Successful responses provided the students' availability and clearly expressed personal interests and previous knowledge or experience as valuable assets to the program.
• Some responses erroneously expressed the intention to bring the entire family to attend the courses offered.	• Successful responses suggested other possible activities to offer to the students' chosen age group or to different age groups.

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 are accustomed to responding to e-mails, but most of this kind of correspondence involves interpersonal writing with friends, which requires the familiar register. This task, instead, required the use of the formal register.

Teachers should do the following to help students improve their performance on this part of the exam:

- Guide students through the task's instructions and ensure that they know and understand all its requirements: use of proper greetings and closings; answers to all questions; requests for more details about something mentioned in the stimulus; use of the formal register.
- Explain the Scoring Guidelines for the task.
- Familiarize students with the task by having them write e-mail replies for regular practice under actual exam conditions, and score the responses according to the AP Scoring Guidelines.
- Develop practice e-mails for students to respond to within the six course themes of the AP Italian Language and Culture Curriculum.
- Assist students who continue to struggle with the formal form of verbs and, consequently, with formal address. It could be helpful to focus on and practice the formal-informal distinction in writing and speaking through role-plays; the practice of both reading and answering business correspondence; the creation of everyday-life situations (for instance, conversations with one's doctor, a store manager, a professor, or an adult stranger).
- Remember that the skills required for successful completion of an AP language exam should be cultivated from the beginning levels of language study. In the case of the E-mail Reply, practice can begin as early as the first year of Italian through easy tasks (e.g., messages to friends/pen-pals, where students provide some personal information, describe people and basic objects, state some activities they like, answer and ask simple questions, etc.). In this way, students' e-mails can gradually, over the course of several years, reach the level of complexity necessary to succeed on this AP task.
- Use the six sample e-mail tasks (from 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017) available online on AP Central for the purpose of practice.

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

- Teachers should view the AP World Languages and Cultures Online Module on Interpersonal Writing: *Interpersonal Communication: Developing Writing Abilities* by Nyan-Ping Bi for ideas on building their students' skills in Interpersonal Writing: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules
- Teachers should download the Scoring Guidelines for this task available on the AP Italian Language and Culture Exam page and use them to review expectations for student performance: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-italian-language-and-culture
- Teachers should choose a sample E-mail Reply prompt from 2012-2017 and access the corresponding student samples of high-, mid- and low-performance to share with students so that they can examine student work vis-à-vis the Scoring Guidelines. This will inform them further of expectations for performance on this task: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-italian-language-and-culture
- Teachers should assign the other E-mail Reply prompts from 2012-2017 under the same conditions and time constraints as on the exam and then score them using the Scoring Guidelines. Feedback to students should focus on what students should do to move their performance to the next higher level.

Question #2

Task: Persuasive Essay **Topic:** Identità privata e pubblica
Max. Points: 5 **Total Group Mean Score:** 3.16
 Standard Group Mean Score: 2.91

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 mean score for the Standard Group was 2.91 out of a possible 5 points. The mean score for the Total Group was 3.16. Both the Standard Group and the Total Group performance on this response were statistically lower than the other writing task but higher compared to the presentational speaking task.

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?

The course theme for the persuasive essay was *Identità privata e pubblica,* and the prompt asked students to express their own opinions on the practice of getting tattoos and body piercing. The response needed to be based on three different sources:
- a written article beginning with a brief historical discussion of the practices of getting one's body tattooed and pierced. The article maintained that these practices and ancient rituals — once symbols of belonging to specific ethnic, religious and political groups — have now become a modality of expression of personal history, emotions, and feelings.
- a table showing the percentages of university and high school students in the area of Naples who had tattoos and/or piercings and were aware of hygiene and health risks associated with those practices.
- an audio file presenting the point of view of an expert who spoke about the difficulty — in terms of time, money, and pain — of removing tattoos.

The prompt was in the form of a question and did not require previous knowledge of the topic. The three sources provided students with the contextual and content support to develop their essays. However, students were expected to understand the main idea(s) and supporting details of the three sources, understand unfamiliar vocabulary by inferring its meaning from the context, and comprehend paragraph length discourse, vocabulary, and structures. They were expected to demonstrate critical reading skills by distinguishing facts from opinions, understanding the intent of the text, and using all that information to develop and defend their arguments.

Content and skills

The level of achievement of students on the task was varied:
- Most students were able to identify the main idea(s) of each source, some supporting details, and the intent of the text.
- A few students did not demonstrate critical reading skills: they could not identify the main idea, so they could not distinguish it from relevant and irrelevant details.
- Some students did not integrate content from all three sources to support their thesis: they often cited or identified only one or two sources, with few specific details.
- Some students did not provide effective treatment of the topic within the context of the task, because they were not able to address the three sources while offering their own viewpoint.
- Some students wrote summaries of the sources without effectively using the information in support of their argument.
- Some students mixed information coming from different sources (especially from Source 1 and Source 2).

- Some students misinterpreted one or more sources.
- Some students stated their own viewpoint but were not able to develop and defend it.
- Some students could demonstrate only a moderate/low degree of comprehension of the sources.
- Many students were able to identify products and practices related to the topic but were not able to discern the perspectives behind them.

Language
- There was a lack of accuracy and variety in grammar, syntax, and usage of the language.
- There were frequent errors in subject-verb and noun-adjective agreement.
- Some students developed paragraph-length discourse with a variety of simple, compound and complex sentences, but the majority of students used exclusively simple sentences to construct their paragraphs.
- Some students had problems with the use of transitional elements and cohesive devices.
- Many responses were composed of strings of sentences, rather than paragraph-length discourse.
- The vocabulary used was generally appropriate, but basic; few responses included idiomatic expressions.
- A few students employed memorized stock sentences in the wrong context.

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

The task required students to write a persuasive essay to submit to an Italian writing context. The essay topic was based on three sources presenting different viewpoints on the topic. Most students understood Source 1 despite its length and therefore quoted it several times throughout the essay. Many students, however, did not notice that the results showed in Source 2 were limited to the "*provincia di Napoli*" and discussed them as if they referred to the entire Italian peninsula. As for Source 3, some students thought that the interviewee Doctor Onder was talking about abolishing tattoos and not about removing them.

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	Responses that Demonstrated Understanding
• Table 2 reported the results of a survey including questions that university and high school students from Naples were asked, but some responses erroneously concluded that the survey represented students from all parts of Italy.	• Successful responses correctly identified the data represented in Table 2 as corresponding to the province of Naples.
• Some responses erroneously concluded that the audio source discussed abolishing tattoos in Italy.	• Successful responses demonstrated understanding that the audio source presented information about removing tattoos from the body.

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 do the following to help students improve their performance in this part of the exam:

- Have students write essays in which they have to engage with and then refer to three different sources that present different perspectives on a specific topic; express their own opinion on the topic; and support their opinion by integrating evidence from the sources.
- Create oral activities (e.g., debates) that require students to state and defend their own opinion on specific topics.
- Remind students to carefully read the prompt and emphasize the fact that the essay is above all a response to the prompt, while the information from the three sources serves to support students' answer to the prompt.
- Encourage students to jot down an outline of their argument prior to writing the essay.
- Remind students to carefully read the introduction that accompanies each source.
- Show students the difference between summarizing and synthetizing sources through examples.
- Instruct students to be more concise; many low scoring responses were 3–4 pages long but lacked a coherent argument.
- Constantly expose students to authentic materials in instruction and assessment.
- Have students practice listening comprehension by using audio files similar to the Source 3 audio file, and encourage them to take notes while listening. Provide them with note-taking strategies, such as listing key words, key ideas, or listing main ideas and then significant details.
- Show students the persuasive essay samples and Scoring Guidelines posted on AP Central from 2012 to 2017, and discuss the samples in class so that students can get a clear idea of how the Scoring Guidelines are applied.
- Provide opportunities for students to develop the habit of giving their essays a final proofreading so that they can catch common grammatical mistakes such as errors in subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective agreement, and spelling. Teachers may wish to begin this process by having students conduct peer reviews and discussions of some essays early in the year.
- Teach students common transitional elements and cohesive devices (e.g., *prima di tutto; secondariamente; inoltre; poi; quindi; infine; da ultimo*) to help them avoid the use of false cognates (as in *finalmente* for "finally," *in addizione* for "in addition").

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

- Teachers should view the two AP Online Modules on Presentational Writing – the first, *Presentational Communication: A Focus on Writing,* by Federica Santini; and the second, *Building Students' Skills in Developing Effective Written Arguments*, by Ann Mar – for strategies to build their students' skills in Presentational Writing: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules
- Teachers should download the Scoring Guidelines for this task available on the AP Italian Language and Culture Exam page and use them to review expectations for student performance: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-italian-language-and-culture
- Teachers should choose a sample Persuasive Essay prompt from 2012-2017 and access the corresponding student samples of high-, mid- and low-performance to share with students, so that they can examine student work vis-à-vis the Scoring Guidelines. This will inform them further of expectations for performance on this task: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-italian-language-and-culture
- Teachers should assign the other Persuasive Essay prompts from 2012-2017 during the course of the year under the same conditions and time constraints as on the exam and then score them using the Scoring Guidelines. Feedback to students should focus on what students should do to possibly move their performance to the next higher level.

Question #3

Task: Conversation   **Topic:** Vita contemporanea

Max. Points: 5

Total Group Mean Score: 3.32
Standard Group Mean Score: 3.04

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 mean score for the Standard Group was 3.04 out of a possible 5 points. The mean score for the Total Group was 3.32. Both the Standard Group and the Total Group performance on this response were statistically lower than on the interpersonal writing task but higher than on the other speaking task.

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?

The course theme for the conversation task was *Vita contemporanea*. For this task students needed to respond to five audio prompts spoken by Carolina, an Italian exchange student who would spend a semester at the student's school.

The question assessed the students' performance in Interpersonal Speaking by engaging them in a series of exchanges on a familiar topic — school life — generated by Carolina's inquiries. The students had to interact with the interlocutor to produce language that appropriately responded to Carolina's questions. They were expected to understand Carolina's utterances by relying on familiar vocabulary or by using the context to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words. They needed to maintain the conversation in a culturally appropriate fashion consistent with the informal register. Moreover the conversation required students to perform a series of language functions — describe, give advice, state an opinion, express doubts — through simple, compound, and complex sentences and through the use of different time frames.

1. Carolina introduces herself and asks about the student's availability to assist her. The student had to respond by indicating availability.

2. Carolina asks the student about a typical school day. The student had to describe in detail a typical school day.

3. Carolina asks for details about the school's dress code. The student had to address the question by offering clarifications.

4. Carolina asks for advice on clubs and/or sports to participate in at school. The student had to offer suggestions on this subject.

5. Carolina asks about the possibility of her learning to drive during her stay. The student had to respond and express doubts.

Content/Skills

The most problematic questions were 5, 4, 3, and 1, in this order. It was hardest for many students to accomplish the following tasks: raise doubt (Question 5) and give advice (Question 4). By contrast, only some responses to Question 3 and Question 1 were somewhat inappropriate, mainly for vocabulary (Q3) and grammar (Q1) reasons.

Below are the details:
- **Question 1** → The student had to respond in a culturally appropriate manner and indicate availability to assist Carolina ("*Avrei alcune domande, hai un po' di tempo?*"), but instead, some students understood

Carolina to be saying "*avrai alcune domande*" ("you may have some questions [for me]"), and they therefore asked Carolina questions. "*Avrei*," the 1ˢᵗ person present conditional, was interpreted as "*avrai*," the 2ⁿᵈ person simple future.

- **Question 3** → The student had to answer Carolina's question about the school's dress code ("*regole sul modo di vestire*"). Some students confused the word "*modo*" with the word "*moda*" and thus talked about what is fashionable among the students, or spoke about the school's rules ("*regole*") in general.
- **Question 4** → Carolina asked for advice on clubs to join or sports to participate in once at school. Some students, instead of making suggestions, talked about themselves, the sports that they play, or the extracurricular activities in which they are involved.
- **Question 5** → Carolina asked about the possibility of her being able to learn to drive during her stay, and the students had to respond and express doubts. Many students did not raise any doubts about whether Carolina could do this.

Language
- Some responses demonstrated basic vocabulary and limited use of idiomatic language.
- Accuracy and variety in grammar, syntax, and usage was not always present. There were errors with agreement (subject-verb, noun-adjective), misuse of articles, errors in word order, and limited use of dependent clauses.

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

Students had to participate in an informal conversation on a familiar topic related to school within the course theme *Vita contemporanea.* They had to maintain mostly uncomplicated communicative exchanges, except for the doubts they were instructed to raise at the end. However, some students did not understand or missed some key words in Carolina's utterances. Consequently, their responses were either inappropriate or only partially appropriate.

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	*Responses that Demonstrated Understanding*
• Some responses provided incorrect information for the first turn in the conversation, such as *What's your name? How are you?*	• Successful responses included information such as: *It will be my pleasure to help/assist you/answer your questions.*
• In response to the question about the school's dress code, some responses provided details about *fashion, such as jeans, shirts, etc.*	• Successful responses included information such as: what the *school's dress code requires all students to wear; our school does not have a dress code.*
• In reponse to the prompt about what activities are available at school, some students provided details about what courses they take or which activities they personally participate in*: I am taking English, math, science; I am part of the Italian club.*	• Successful responses included information such as: *You can join the Italian club, the chess club, the book club or join the soccer team, etc.; it depends on your interests, tell me more about what you like.*

• In response to prompt #5, some students provided some information but did not express doubt, such as: *Yes, it is easy to learn to drive at our school. You can take lessons with an instructor* …	• Successful responses included information such as: *I don't know what the requirements are to obtain a driver license when you are from another country*.

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 do the following to help students improve their performance in this part of the exam:
- Make students aware that sometimes they need to produce more than one language function in response to an audio prompt. Provide practice conversations that have students engage with two language functions in at least some of their responses.
- Make students aware that they may be asked to deal with some complicated situations or less familiar language functions, as described in the outline of the conversation (suggest an alternative, pose a problem, express doubts, express an opinion and justify it).
- Have students practice informal, spontaneous conversations in class by providing them with topics and outlines that require them to greet, answer and ask questions, provide details, make a counter proposal, give advice, raise a doubt, etc.
- Encourage students to read and listen very carefully to the instructions about how to respond to the task, making sure that they make connections between what they hear and what is written in the conversation outline.
- Provide opportunities for students to respond to five prompts, including those that require them to initiate an exchange, such as asking a question.
- Have students develop a sense of how to respond in 20 seconds. Encourage them to provide elaboration and details and to try to fully use their response time. This sort of practice needs to occur throughout the school year.
- Have students listen carefully to the prompt and say something relevant in response, even if what they say is brief.
- Provide students with some strategies to use if they do not understand one of the prompts or get off-track.
- Offer students opportunities to listen to a wide variety of female and male voices. Appropriate audio clips from various media would be useful for students both in and outside the classroom. Many of these materials are easily accessible on the Internet, and AP Central has a list of links to audio materials.

As the speaking component in the classroom should not be solely focused on the conversation task, a variety of activities should be introduced into the curriculum, such as interviews and debates. Consequently, teachers should also:
- Provide opportunities for students to respond spontaneously in a variety of situations and contexts. This will improve their fluency and confidence in their speaking abilities.
- Encourage students to pay attention to verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, and other language structures that may impede effective communication when incorrect. Encourage students to self-correct when they hear themselves making a mistake, as successful self-correction is always viewed favorably.
- Help students increase vocabulary by developing their skills in circumlocution.

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

- Teachers should view the AP World Languages and Cultures Online Module on Interpersonal Speaking *Interpersonal Communication, Developing Speaking Abilities* by Clarissa Adams-Fletcher for strategies on building their students' skills in Interpersonal Speaking: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules
- Teachers should download the Scoring Guidelines for this task available on the AP Italian Language and Culture Exam page and use them to review expectations for student performance: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-italian-language-and-culture
- Teachers should choose a sample Conversation from 2012-2017 and access the corresponding student samples of high-, mid- and low-performance to share with students so that they can examine student work that will inform them further of expectations for performance on this task. https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-italian-language-and-culture
- Teachers should assign the other Conversations from 2012-2017 under the same conditions and time constraints as on the exam and then score them using the Scoring Guidelines. Feedback to students should focus on what students should do to move their performance to the next higher level.

Question #4

Task: Cultural Comparison **Topic:** Scienza e tecnologia
Max. Points: 5 **Total Group Mean Score:** 2.68
Standard Group Mean Score: 2.42

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 Italian-speaking world, demonstrating understanding of cultural features of the Italian-speaking world. Furthermore the presentation had to be organized clearly.

The mean score for the Standard Group was 2.42 out of a possible 5 points. The mean score for the Total Group was 2.68. Both the Standard Group and the Total Group performance on this response were statistically the lowest of all four free-response questions.

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?

The course theme for the cultural comparison task was *Scienza e tecnologia*. The task consisted of a question that asked students about the opinion of people in their own community and in the target language community regarding the importance of using small-sized cars. Students had to plan and produce a spoken presentation, comparing their own community to an area of the Italian-speaking world in relation to the given topic.

Content
In order to demonstrate an understanding of different features of the target culture, students could rely on their personal knowledge, first-hand experience, or recombine information from material that they saw in class when covering the six themes of the AP Italian Language and Culture curriculum. This year the theme was *Scienza e tecnologia*. Responses, however, could make use of other disciplines and other themes and sub-themes within the AP curriculum (the environment, economics, the family, free time, etc.).

Skills and language
Students were expected to accomplish the comparison task by organizing their presentation in paragraph-length discourse. It was expected that students use a variety of simple and compound sentences in major time frames. Vocabulary had to be appropriate for the context and make the presentation understandable. Also, pronunciation, intonation, and pacing played a role in making the presentation comprehensible.

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

Common misconceptions included the following:
- A few students (though fewer than in the past) did not respond to the prompt and talked instead about subjects irrelevant to the topic.
- Some students talked about small cars in general terms with no reference to any community or culture.
- Some students did not address the specific topic, the importance of the use of small-sized cars, and talked instead about cars or transportation in general.
- Some students did not provide an organized presentation with a clear comparison of the two communities.
- A few students did not demonstrate a complete understanding of the Italian cultural context to which they compared their own community.
- A few students focused on the "*Tema del corso*" instead of developing a response to the "*Argomento della relazione*". In their presentations, in fact, a few students talked about the importance of *Scienza e tecnologia* (for instance, some of them talked about the use of technology or of cell phones in the two cultures). Students should be trained to carefully read the task instructions from beginning to end.

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	Responses that Demonstrated Understanding
• Some responses included discussions about cars and transportation in general in the two cultures.	• Successful responses discussed the use of small cars in the two cultures.
• Some responses discussed the use of small cars without any reference to any culture.	• Successful responses discussed the importance of using small cars in both cultures.

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 do the following to help students improve their performance in this part of the exam:
- Remind students that they must address all aspects of this task by making clear comparisons between their own community and a community belonging to the target culture, and by including relevant examples.
- Point out that the linguistic aspects of the task are also important (pronunciation, intonation, pacing, syntax, and vocabulary). Because Task 4 is an oral presentation, good organization is very important.
- Build students' repertoire of cohesive expressions and transitional devices for use in comparisons.
- Provide students with templates for this task to use from early in the year to build their skills in organizing and comparing information.
- Have students pay attention to grammar and syntax. Even if AP students are instructed not to focus on grammar, it does not help the student's performance when they say *"cammo"* instead of *"cammino"* or *"sappo"* instead of *"so"*.
- Suggest that students start their presentation by talking about the topic in the Italian culture first. Due to anxiety that students might experience while taking the exam, it could be difficult for them to manage their time, and they might run out of time before stating what they know about the topic in the Italian culture, which is a major purpose of this task.
- In class, present and discuss cultural material in the target language. In this way, teachers will help their students build vocabulary. Sometimes it seems that students have good ideas about the topic, but they are not able to develop them because they lack the appropriate vocabulary.
- When presenting information about the Italian culture, provide immediate opportunities for students to make comparisons between the Italian culture and their own.

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

- Teachers should view the AP Online Module on Presentational Speaking *Presentational Communication: A Focus on Speaking* by Angelika Becker for ideas on how to develop their students' skills in Presentational Speaking: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules
- Teachers should download the Scoring Guidelines for this task available on the AP Italian Language and Culture Exam page and use them to review expectations for student performance: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-italian-language-and-culture
- Teachers should choose a sample Cultural Comparison prompt from 2012-2017 and access the corresponding student samples of high-, mid- and low-performance to share with students, so that they can examine other students' work which might further inform them of expectations for performance on this task: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-italian-language-and-culture

- Teachers should assign the other Cultural Comparison prompts from 2012-2017 over the course of the year under the same conditions and time constraints as on the exam, and then score them using the Scoring Guidelines. Feedback to students should focus on what students should do to possibly move their performance to the next higher level.