

## Chief Reader Report on Student Responses: 2017 AP<sup>®</sup> Music Theory Free-Response Questions

Number of Readers	117			
<b>Music Theory</b>				
• Number of Students Scored	19,215			
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At	
	5	3,687	19.2	
	4	3,299	17.2	
	3	4,719	24.6	
	2	4,719	24.6	
	1	2,791	14.5	
• Global Mean	3.02			
<b>Music Theory Aural Subscore</b>				
• Number of Students Scored	19,213			
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At	
	5	3,589	18.7	
	4	3,516	18.3	
	3	4,553	23.7	
	2	4,726	24.6	
	1	2,829	14.7	
• Global Mean	3.02			
<b>Music Theory Nonaural Subscore</b>				
• Number of Students Scored	19,213			
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At	
	5	3,677	19.1	
	4	3,167	16.5	
	3	4,672	24.3	
	2	4,967	25.9	
	1	2,730	14.2	
• Global Mean	3.00			

The following comments about student responses to the 2017 free-response questions for AP<sup>®</sup> Music Theory were written by the Chief Reader, Rebecca Jemian. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including identification of 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:** Melodic Dictation**Topic:** Major/Bass/Simple meter**Max. Points:** 9**Mean Score:** 4.31***What understanding of course content and/or skills were students expected to demonstrate in response to this question?***

This question assessed students' ability to:

- hear a four-measure major-key melody in simple meter and notate the melody;
- hear and notate scalar patterns;
- hear and notate a descending arpeggiated tonic triad;
- hear and notate the dotted rhythm in the second measure of the melody;
- hear and notate melodic patterns containing stepwise motion and melodic skips;
- hear and notate an idiomatic melodic cadence; and
- hear and notate pitches correctly in bass clef.

***How effectively did student responses demonstrate understanding of course content related to this question? How effectively did student responses apply the skills required to answer this question?***

Student responses demonstrated:

- moderate ability of converting a heard melody into music notation;
- understanding of the topics (major scale, bass clef, simple meter) through moderately correct notation; and
- limited difficulty with pitch and rhythm as demonstrated by common errors of notation.

***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge and skills were demonstrated by responses to this question?***

<i>Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Knowledge and Skills</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding and Successful Skill Application</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing the dotted rhythm in measure 2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notating the second half of measure 2 as a dotted quarter note, to finish the first half of the melody, followed by an eighth note anacrusis to measure 3</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing the interval of an ascending fourth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notating scale degree 2 (<i>re</i>) as implying a dominant harmony at the end of measure 2, followed by scale degree 5 (<i>sol</i>) at the beginning of measure 3</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forgetting to notate the rhythm of the given starting note</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adding a stem and beam to the given starting note to show that it is the first part of a pair of eighth notes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing noteheads without stems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notating correctly the rhythms and pitches of the melody</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorrectly notating the rhythm of the final note</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notating the last note as a half note</li> </ul>

**Based on student responses evaluated at this year's AP® Reading, what advice do you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?**

- Practice aural skills daily.
- Teach students to listen to and remember the melody before notating on the page.
- Expose students to a wide variety of melodies in major and minor, various meters, and differing tempi.
- Do more sight singing. Focus on developing scale degree awareness, so that students are not measuring leaps as intervals devoid of a tonal context.
- Do not ignore rhythm: Teach students a vocabulary of typical rhythmic patterns in both simple and compound meters.
- Stress proper notation, including correct use of stems, beams, accidentals, dots, etc. Constantly reinforce this until clear notation is a habit. Students may lose points because of illegible notation.
- Discuss question strategy with students; tell them that they can expect straightforward rhythms, a range of approximately one octave, and a likely ending on tonic on a strong beat. Caution students that even if they are unsure about some of the durations, they should not leave noteheads without rhythmic values indicated.

**Which AP® resources do you recommend to help teachers prepare students for demonstrating content knowledge and skill(s) required by free-response questions?**

Teachers can use released exam questions with audio prompts and scoring guidelines to practice melodic dictation with their students. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page on AP Central to access these resources.

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam?course=ap-music-theory>

Also see:

- *Sight-Singing: Your Key to Success in Melodic Dictation* <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/classroom-resources/sight-singing-your-key-success-melodic-dictation?course=ap-music-theory>

**Question #2****Task:** Melodic Dictation**Topic:** Minor/Treble/Compound meter**Max. Points:** 9**Mean Score:** 2.73***What understanding of course content and/or skills were students expected to demonstrate in response to this question?***

This question assessed students' ability to:

- hear a four-measure minor-key melody in compound meter and notate the melody;
- hear and notate ascending and descending scalar patterns in the minor mode;
- hear and notate an ascending arpeggiated tonic triad;
- hear and notate the dotted rhythms in the first, third, and fourth measures of the melody;
- hear and notate melodic patterns containing stepwise motion and melodic skips;
- hear and notate an idiomatic melodic cadence; and
- hear and notate pitches correctly in treble clef.

***How effectively did student responses demonstrate understanding of course content related to this question? How effectively did student responses apply the skills required to answer this question?***

Student responses demonstrated:

- limited ability of converting a heard melody into music notation;
- incomplete understanding of minor scale, treble clef, and compound meter, as indicated by problematic notation;
- marked difficulty with rhythm, as demonstrated by errors of notating common beat patterns used in compound meters; and
- limited proficiency with minor keys, shown by errors in notating melodic minor patterns.

***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge and skills were demonstrated by responses to this question?***

<i>Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Knowledge and Skills</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding and Successful Skill Application</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing the rhythm pattern of dotted eighth-sixteenth-eighth notes in measures 1, 3, and 4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly hearing and notating this rhythmic pattern commonly found in compound meters</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorrectly notating the leaps in measures 2 and 3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly hearing and notating the scale degrees involved in disjunct motion</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to notate the accidental to raise scale degree 4 in measure 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing and notating the altered scale degree 4 as a temporary leading tone that tonicizes scale degree 5</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forgetting to notate the rhythm of the given starting note</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adding a stem and beam to the given starting note to show that it is the first part of a pair of eighth notes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing noteheads without stems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly notating the rhythms and pitches of the melody</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorrectly notating the rhythm of the final note</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notating the last note as a dotted-quarter note</li> </ul>

**Based on student responses evaluated at this year's AP® Reading, what advice do you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?**

- Teach students to listen to and remember the melody before notating on the page.
- Expose students to a wide variety of melodies in major and minor, various meters, and differing tempi.
- Do more sight singing. Focus on developing scale degree awareness, so that students are not measuring leaps as intervals devoid of a tonal context.
- Do not ignore rhythm: Teach students a vocabulary of typical rhythmic patterns in the basic meters.
- Stress proper notation, including correct use of stems, beams, dots, accidentals, etc. Constantly reinforce this until clear notation is a habit. Students may lose points because of illegible notation.
- Discuss question strategy with students; tell them that they can expect straightforward rhythms, a range of approximately one octave, and a likely ending on tonic on a strong beat. Caution students that even if they are unsure about some of the durations, they should not leave noteheads without rhythmic values indicated.

**Which AP® resources do you recommend to help teachers prepare students for demonstrating content knowledge and skill(s) required by free-response questions?**

Teachers can use released exam questions with audio prompts and scoring guidelines to practice melodic dictation with their students. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page on AP Central to access these resources.

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam?course=ap-music-theory>

Also see:

- *Sight-Singing: Your Key to Success in Melodic Dictation* <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/classroom-resources/sight-singing-your-key-success-melodic-dictation?course=ap-music-theory>

**Question #3****Task:** Harmonic Dictation**Topic:** Major mode/Cadential 6/4**Max. Points:** 24**Mean Score:** 15.3***What understanding of course content and/or skills were students expected to demonstrate in response to this question?***

This question assessed students' ability to:

- hear a four-part progression in a major key and notate the outer voices;
- provide the correct Roman numeral analysis of the chords;
- demonstrate a knowledge of common chord progressions;
- hear, notate, and analyze an authentic cadence;
- hear and notate triads and seventh chords in root position and in inversions; and
- hear and notate the cadential six-four chord and provide an appropriate Roman numeral analysis.

***How effectively did student responses demonstrate understanding of course content related to this question? How effectively did student responses apply the skills required to answer this question?***

Student responses demonstrated:

- moderate understanding of diatonic major mode, the cadential six-four chord, and notating the soprano and bass voices, as demonstrated by use of music notation; and
- some difficulties in precisely identifying diatonic chords, as shown in the Roman and Arabic numerals below the staff in the student responses.

***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge and skills were demonstrated by responses to this question?***

<i>Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Knowledge and Skills</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding and Successful Skill Application</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to correctly notate the leap of a fifth in the bass line</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly hearing and notating the final leap in the bass</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to recognize the difference between a triad and a seventh chord</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly distinguishing and notating the chord qualities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to hear the harmonies created by the inner voices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly hearing the chord qualities and indicating them correctly in the Roman numeral analysis</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to recognize and notate the cadential six-four chord</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly hearing and notating the third chord from the end as a cadential six-four chord</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to recognize the authentic cadence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly hearing and notating the authentic cadence</li> </ul>

**Based on student responses evaluated at this year's AP® Reading, what advice do you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?**

- Teach students to identify cadence types and to work backwards from the ends of phrases.
- Encourage students to check that their bass and soprano lines match their Roman numeral analysis.
- Emphasize the distinctive sounds of triads versus seventh chords.
- Practice hearing and notating inverted chords.
- Practice two-part dictation when given a four-part aural prompt.
- Teach common chord progressions and inversions.

**Which AP® resources do you recommend to help teachers prepare students for demonstrating content knowledge and skill(s) required by free-response questions?**

Teachers can use released exam questions with audio prompts and scoring guidelines to practice harmonic dictation with their students. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page on AP Central to access these resources.

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam?course=ap-music-theory>

Also see:

- *Techniques for Teaching Harmonic Dictation* (p. 20) <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-curricmodmusictheory.pdf?course=ap-music-theory>

**Question #4****Task:** Harmonic Dictation**Topic:** Minor mode/secondary chord**Max. Points:** 24**Mean Score:** 12.14***What understanding of course content and/or skills were students expected to demonstrate in response to this question?***

This question assessed students' ability to:

- hear a four-part progression in a minor key and notate the outer voices;
- alter scale degree seven in a minor key;
- provide the correct Roman numeral analysis of the chords;
- demonstrate a knowledge of common chord progressions;
- hear, notate, and analyze a deceptive progression;
- hear, notate, and analyze an imperfect authentic cadence;
- hear and notate triads in root position and first inversion as well as seventh chords in root position;
- distinguish between iv and ii<sup>o6</sup> when the subdominant is in both outer voices and the supertonic is in an inner voice;
- hear and notate the chordal seventh in the soprano voice; and
- hear and notate the secondary leading-tone chord and provide an appropriate Roman numeral analysis.

***How effectively did student responses demonstrate understanding of course content related to this question? How effectively did student responses apply the skills required to answer this question?***

Student responses demonstrated:

- limited understanding of minor mode progressions including one secondary chord, as revealed by pitch notation and chord identification;
- fair understanding of outer voice motion, as demonstrated by use of music notation; and
- limited understanding of chord progressions presented in performed music, as reflected in notation of Roman and Arabic numerals below the staff.

***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge and skills were demonstrated by responses to this question?***

<i>Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Knowledge and Skills</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding and Successful Skill Application</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to correctly notate the bass line with its chromaticism and mixture of steps and leaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly hearing and notating the bass line, including its use of chromaticism and motion, both conjunct and disjunct</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to recognize the difference between a triad and a seventh chord</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly distinguishing and notating the chord qualities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to recognize the secondary leading tone chord</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly hearing, notating, and identifying the vii<sup>o7</sup>/<u>V</u> chord</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to recognize the authentic cadence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly hearing and notating the imperfect authentic cadence</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to hear the harmonies created by the inner voices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly hearing the chord qualities and indicating them correctly in the Roman numeral analysis</li> </ul>



**Based on student responses evaluated at this year's AP® Reading, what advice do you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?**

- Teach students to identify cadence types and to work backwards from the ends of phrases.
- Encourage students to check that their bass and soprano lines match their Roman numeral analysis.
- Emphasize the distinctive sounds of triads versus seventh chords.
- Practice hearing and notating inverted chords.
- Practice two-part dictation when given a four-part aural prompt.
- Teach common chord progressions and inversions.

**Which AP® resources do you recommend to help teachers prepare students for demonstrating content knowledge and skill(s) required by free-response questions?**

Teachers can use released exam questions with audio prompts and scoring guidelines to practice harmonic dictation with their students. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page on AP Central to access these resources.

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam?course=ap-music-theory>

Also see:

- *Techniques for Teaching Harmonic Dictation* (p. 20) <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-curricmodmusictheory.pdf?course=ap-music-theory>

**Question #5****Task:** Part writing**Topic:** Figured Bass**Max. Points:** 25**Mean Score:** 15.77***What understanding of course content and/or skills were students expected to demonstrate in response to this question?***

This question assessed students' ability to:

- realize a figured bass progression in Common Practice style in four voices;
- employ smooth voice-leading procedures;
- demonstrate understanding of diatonic harmony, including chord spelling, spacing, doubling, and voice leading in a four-part texture;
- analyze chords using Roman numerals;
- spell chords in a minor key, including raising the leading tone in the dominant chord;
- notate a Phrygian (iv<sup>6</sup>-V) half cadence;
- correctly prepare and resolve a 4–3 suspension;
- correctly realize inverted triads and seventh chords utilizing all chord members; and
- correctly employ a voice exchange between *i* and *i*<sup>6</sup> (use of the voice exchange is optional).

***How effectively did student responses demonstrate understanding of course content related to this question? How effectively did student responses apply the skills required to answer this question?***

Student responses demonstrated:

- moderate understanding of figured bass realization, as shown by the number of correctly spelled chords and correct Roman numeral analyses;
- moderate abilities in employing smooth voice leading procedures, as shown throughout the progression; and
- fair abilities to write a Phrygian half cadence with a 4–3 suspension, as demonstrated in the last measure.

***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge and skills were demonstrated by responses to this question?***

<i>Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Knowledge and Skills</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding and Successful Skill Application</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty with interpreting the figures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly realizing the pitches specified by the bass line and the figures below it</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to spelling the V chord in minor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising scale degree 7 in order to notate a major V triad</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using improper voice leading procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following 18<sup>th</sup>-century practices of chord spelling, doubling and spacing, as well as correctly connecting successive chords to achieve independent lines that contribute to a homogeneous sound</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to write a correct 4–3 suspension</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrating understanding of the figures, doubling, and the approach and resolution of the suspended note</li> </ul>

**Based on student responses evaluated at this year's AP® Reading, what advice do you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?**

- Coach students on how to avoid over-complicating the required tasks.
- Practice writing clear, unambiguous music notation by hand.
- Encourage students to think about voice leading before working on vertical realization.
- Teach students to use stepwise motion and to keep the common tone whenever possible. (Think like a singer.)
- Review the meanings of the figures, giving special attention to identification of chordal roots.
- Emphasize that figured bass is not the same thing as inversion symbols.
- Drill chord spelling and remind students that chord spelling errors result in a 5-point deduction.
- Practice writing iv–V progressions in minor keys, especially the Phrygian cadence (iv<sup>6</sup>–V).

**Which AP® resources do you recommend to help teachers prepare students for demonstrating content knowledge and skill(s) required by free-response questions?**

Teachers can use released exam questions and scoring guidelines to help their students practice realizing a figured bass. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page on AP Central to access these resources.

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam?course=ap-music-theory>

Also see:

- *Thinking Horizontally: Learning Part Writing and Figured Bass Through Analysis* (p. 140) [https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/ap07\\_musictheory\\_teachersguide\\_2.pdf](https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/ap07_musictheory_teachersguide_2.pdf)

**Question #6****Task:** Part writing**Topic:** Roman numerals**Max. Points:** 18**Mean Score:** 7.81***What understanding of course content and/or skills were students expected to demonstrate in response to this question?***

This question assessed students' ability to:

- write a four-part chord progression from Roman numerals;
- demonstrate an understanding of chord inversions;
- demonstrate command of voice-leading procedures;
- demonstrate knowledge of secondary dominant chords;
- demonstrate an understanding of tendency tones and their resolutions; and
- demonstrate knowledge of how to approach chordal dissonances.

***How effectively did student responses demonstrate understanding of course content related to this question? How effectively did student responses apply the skills required to answer this question?***

Student responses demonstrated:

- proficient understanding of diatonic Roman numerals, as demonstrated by the spelling of chords;
- limited abilities at spelling secondary dominant seventh chords, as shown by the frequent errors in the spelling of this chord; and
- insufficient understanding of voice leading procedures, as demonstrated by the limited number of proficient responses.

***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge and skills were demonstrated by responses to this question?***

<i>Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Knowledge and Skills</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding and Successful Skill Application</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using improper voice leading procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following 18<sup>th</sup>-century practices of chord spelling, doubling and spacing, as well as correctly connecting successive chords to achieve independent lines that contribute to a homogeneous sound</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to spell chords correctly based on the Roman numeral analysis provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correctly understanding the Roman numerals and using that knowledge to spell the chords accurately</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to resolve the chordal sevenths correctly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolving chordal sevenths down by step</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to properly spell a <math>\overset{6}{V} 5/ IV</math></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choosing the correct pitches to spell a secondary dominant seventh chord in inversion</li> </ul>

**Based on student responses evaluated at this year's AP® Reading, what advice do you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?**

- Encourage students to use smooth voice leading, and especially to avoid large leaps.
- Encourage students to use contrary motion in the outer voices.
- Encourage students to write the outer voices first and to fill in the inner voices as a pair, after the outer voices have been carefully checked.
- Avoid overemphasis of doubling the root, because this is not always appropriate (especially when chords are inverted).
- Think carefully about the key signature, about whether a chord should need any accidentals, and, if so, which specific accidentals are needed.
- Be careful not to confuse the leading tone (scale degree seven) with the chordal seventh.
- Drill inversions and their figures, carefully distinguishing triads from seventh chords. Students should be aware that they will not receive any points for a chord if the inversion is incorrect or if a seventh is added or omitted (i.e., does not match the analysis provided).
- Focus on proper treatment of dissonance, especially the approach to and resolution of the chordal seventh. Students should be aware that the seventh must resolve in the same voice (not just the same register).
- Emphasize the importance of resolving leading tones, particularly in outer voices.
- Consider identifying tendency tones with a special symbol (e.g., circling them or writing arrows from them) to highlight their importance and their resolutions.
- Advise students not to add embellishing tones unless specifically required by the figures.
- Address the strategic use of incomplete chords: Often voice leading is substantially improved when the fifth is omitted from a root-position chord.
- Discuss the appropriate use of charts, diagrams, and other memory aids. Writing charts and diagrams often seems unhelpful for this particular question: it takes time, the information is not always relevant to the question, and the layout sometimes seems to cause mistakes because the student confuses the layout of the diagram with the actual music notation.
- Address issues of notation, particularly the proper way to write noteheads and accidentals (including the placement of accidentals on the left side of the notehead rather than the right), and how to portray doubling.
- When discussing the use of accidentals, use the terms “raise” and “lower” rather than “sharp” and “flat” because sometimes a natural (rather than a sharp or flat) is needed.
- Practice writing common cadences, so that typical voice-leading combinations become familiar.
- Students who can't answer the entire question should be encouraged to skip unfamiliar portions and fill in the chords that they know.

**Which AP® resources do you recommend to help teachers prepare students for demonstrating content knowledge and skill(s) required by free-response questions?**

Teachers can use released exam questions and scoring guidelines to help their students practice writing a four-part harmonic progression from Roman numerals. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page on AP Central to access these resources. <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam?course=ap-music-theory>

Also see:

- *Thinking Horizontally: Learning Part Writing and Figured Bass Through Analysis* (p. 140) [https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/ap07\\_musictheory\\_teachersguide\\_2.pdf](https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/ap07_musictheory_teachersguide_2.pdf)

**Question #7****Task:** Harmonization of a Melody**Topic:** Bass line/Roman numerals**Max. Points:** 9**Mean Score:** 4.84***What understanding of course content and/or skills were students expected to demonstrate in response to this question?***

This question assessed students' ability to:

- compose a bass line following the rules of eighteenth-century counterpoint;
- write standard cadences;
- harmonize a melody with an appropriate chord progression;
- use conventional harmonic patterns;
- recognize and correctly use a secondary dominant chord;
- correctly harmonize scale degree 4 in an ascending step-wise melody;
- treat the leading tone correctly, concerning both chord voicing and voice leading; and
- use embellishments correctly in a two-part framework.

***How effectively did student responses demonstrate understanding of course content related to this question? How effectively did student responses apply the skills required to answer this question?***

Student responses demonstrated:

- moderate understanding of adding a bass line and Roman numeral analysis to a melody, as shown by the number of responses that earned a middle score; and
- fair understanding of cadences, as demonstrated by proper use of harmonic patterns and bass lines at the ends of phrase.

***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge and skills were demonstrated by responses to this question?***

<i>Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Knowledge and Skills</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding and Successful Skill Application</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly executed cadences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full understanding of cadences was shown by using appropriate chord progressions, mostly in root position</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to recognize an appropriate place for a secondary dominant chord</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of chromatic harmony was shown by recognizing raised scale degree 4 as the location for a secondary dominant harmony</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate chord choices to harmonize the melody</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehension of harmonic progressions was shown by selecting appropriate chords to match the notes of the melody</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak bass line in the context of two-part counterpoint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of the relationship between soprano and bass lines was shown by writing a bass line that balanced the melody appropriately</li> </ul>

**Based on student responses evaluated at this year's AP® Reading, what advice do you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?**

- Discourage overuse of six-four chords, except for the cadential six-four if appropriate at a cadence. Remind students that passing and pedal six-four chords must occur on weak beats.
- Encourage the use of root position chords at cadences.
- Discourage the use of the root position vii<sup>o6</sup> chord.
- Teach students to prepare and resolve chordal sevenths properly.
- Teach students that ii<sup>#</sup> is not proper notation for a secondary dominant chord.
- Remind students that unaccented passing tones are the only appropriate embellishments for this exercise, and that the given melody will not include accented non-harmonic tones.
- Encourage students to use the first phrase as a guide for consistency throughout the question.

**Which AP® resources do you recommend to help teachers prepare students for demonstrating content knowledge and skill(s) required by free-response questions?**

Teachers can use released exam questions and scoring guidelines to help their students practice composing a bass line. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page on AP Central to access these resources.

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam?course=ap-music-theory>

Also see:

- *Interpreting and Harmonizing Melodies: Some Formulas for Success* (p. 32)  
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-curricmodmusictheory.pdf?course=ap-music-theory>

**Question #S1****Task:** Sight Singing**Topic:** Major/Bass/Compound meter**Max. Points:** 9**Mean Score:** 4.91***What understanding of course content and/or skills were students expected to demonstrate in response to this question?***

This question assessed students' ability to:

- sight read and sing a melody in major mode;
- sing in compound meter;
- perform common rhythmic patterns;
- perform dotted rhythms;
- sing skips and stepwise motion in both ascending and descending directions;
- sing a melody with a vocal range of an octave;
- perform chordal skips within the tonic triad;
- establish and maintain a steady tempo;
- establish and retain a sense of tonic; and
- read in bass clef.

***How effectively did student responses demonstrate understanding of course content related to this question? How effectively did student responses apply the skills required to answer this question?***

Student responses demonstrated:

- moderate effectiveness at converting notated music to performed music by singing a major mode melody in the bass clef using compound meter; and
- lack of proficiency of performing common rhythmic patterns, demonstrated by limited success singing the two dotted-eighth-sixteenth-eighth note patterns.

***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge and skills were demonstrated by responses to this question?***

<i>Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Knowledge and Skills</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding and Successful Skill Application</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not holding the last note for its full duration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustaining the last note for a full three eighth notes demonstrated understanding of that rhythmic notation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing the skip from scale degree 4 to scale degree 2 in measure 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singing from <i>fa</i> down to <i>re</i> showed mastery of non-tonic triad skips</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to sing a descending tonic triad in measure 3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singing <i>do-sol-mi</i> demonstrated understanding of descending tonic triads</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorrectly performing the dotted-eighth-sixteenth-eighth note pattern in measures 2 and 4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing and performing this common rhythmic pattern correctly reflect an understanding of compound meter</li> </ul>



**Based on student responses evaluated at this year's AP<sup>®</sup> Reading, what advice do you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?**

- Sight sing regularly in class.
- Practice reading and performing in different clefs.
- Encourage students not to hum, but to sing with an initial consonant sound; humming obscures accurate pitch.
- Encourage students to sing strongly so they can be heard.
- Encourage students to sing the tonic triad to establish the key/tonic.
- Encourage students to select a starting pitch that is comfortable for their individual range.
- Encourage students to ghost-finger along, as if playing their instruments, while singing.
- Encourage students to sing using contour — not just rhythm on the tonic pitch — if they struggle greatly with pitch.
- Encourage students to keep going even if they make a mistake.
- Teach students how to regain their place in a melody, such as finding the high *do* in measure 3.
- Practice common rhythmic patterns in various meters.
- Emphasize holding notes for their full value.
- Allow students to use a neutral syllable if, by March, they are struggling with solfège or numbers.
- Encourage students to analyze the mode of the melody they are performing.
- Encourage students to sing aloud during the 75-second practice time.
- Encourage students to practice rhythm first during the 75-second practice time.
- Let students know that it is acceptable to write on the test during the practice period.
- Let students know that it is acceptable to conduct while they practice so that they establish a steady tempo.
- Give practice AP<sup>®</sup> Music Theory Exams, including the free examples posted on AP Central.
- Simulate the recording scenario for students.
- AP<sup>®</sup> Music Theory teachers need to work with their administrations to establish an appropriate testing environment for the sight singing questions. Students need to be sonically isolated from each other, so that they do not hear each other's practice and performance.
- Train proctors prior to the day of the exam.

**Which AP<sup>®</sup> resources do you recommend to help teachers prepare students for demonstrating content knowledge and skill(s) required by free-response questions?**

Teachers can use released exam questions and scoring guidelines to help their students practice sight-singing. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page on AP Central to access these resources.

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam?course=ap-music-theory>

Also see:

- *Teaching Sight Singing* <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/music-teaching-sight-singing-sf.pdf?course=ap-music-theory>
- *Sight Singing: A Strategy for the Non-Singer and the Underprepared Student* (p. 16) <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-currmodmusictheory.pdf?course=ap-music-theory>

**Question #S2****Task:** Sight Singing**Topic:** Minor/Treble/Simple meter**Max. Points:** 9**Mean Score:** 3.56***What understanding of course content and/or skills were students expected to demonstrate in response to this question?***

This question assessed students' ability to:

- sight read and sing a melody in minor mode;
- sing in simple meter;
- perform common rhythmic patterns;
- perform dotted rhythms;
- sing a melody with a vocal range of a ninth;
- sing skips and stepwise motion in both ascending and descending directions;
- sing a chromatic passing tone;
- establish and maintain a steady tempo;
- establish and retain a sense of tonic; and
- read treble clef.

***How effectively did student responses demonstrate understanding of course content related to this question? How effectively did student responses apply the skills required to answer this question?***

Student responses demonstrated:

- limited understanding of minor mode, treble clef, and simple meter, as demonstrated by the number of mediocre responses;
- moderate success at singing with stepwise motion and recognizing common rhythm patterns in simple meter; and
- deficient understanding of advanced tonality, shown by incorrect performance of the chromatic embellishing tones.

***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge and skills were demonstrated by responses to this question?***

<i>Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Knowledge and Skills</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding and Successful Skill Application</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to sing in minor mode</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singing correct pitches throughout demonstrated an understanding of the melodic minor scale</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to sing the G-sharp in measure 2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of chromatic passing tones was demonstrated by singing the G-sharp correctly</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty singing the descending leap in measure 4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singing the <i>sol</i> down to <i>ti</i> in measure 4 demonstrates an understanding of scale degree relationships</li> </ul>

**Based on student responses evaluated at this year's AP® Reading, what advice do you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?**

- Train aural skills daily.
- Start singing early in the year; sing often in major and minor modes, in simple and compound meters, using various clefs and ranges.
- Coach students on where to place a melody in a range of the voice that is both comfortable and executable.
- Teach and use a system of singing, such as solfège, numbers, etc. Emphasize the relationship of scale degrees in the system.
- Emphasize the difference between major and minor scales and triads.
- Practice singing in all forms of minor, including descending scalar and intervallic patterns.
- Look at a melody as being centered on a tonic triad.
- If you teach a student a vocalization pattern to establish tonic, make sure the student understands its relation to tonality.
- Practice melodies that contain altered tones.
- Encourage students to articulate each note (e.g., “ta ta” instead of a slurred response).
- Singing letter names, scale degree numbers, or solfège, without correct pitch and rhythm doesn’t earn credit.
- Practice executing rhythm patterns, including dotted rhythms.
- Emphasize rhythmic integrity; the duration of the final note is important.
- Teach students to choose an appropriate tempo for singing. The tempo of this exercise was marked *Moderato*. Although points were not deducted for an incorrect tempo set at the start of the exercise, students tended to fare worse if they chose to perform at a painstakingly slow tempo OR at a very fast tempo.
- Offer strategies for the sight singing process: use of the practice time; identification of clef, key signature, range, and time signature; identification of tricky spots; recognition of basic rhythm and melodic patterns.
- Simulate the testing experience. Let students practice with the recording technology in a situation that replicates where the proctor and equipment will be during testing.
- Encourage students to sing freely with full voice during the practice and performance portions of the exam.

**Which AP® resources do you recommend to help teachers prepare students for demonstrating content knowledge and skill(s) required by free-response questions?**

Teachers can use released exam questions and scoring guidelines to help their students practice sight-singing. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page on AP Central to access these resources.

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Also see:

- *Teaching Sight Singing* <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/music-teaching-sight-singing-sf.pdf?course=ap-music-theory>
- *Sight Singing: A Strategy for the Non-Singer and the Underprepared Student* (p. 16) <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-curricmodmusictheory.pdf?course=ap-music-theory>