AP®

Student Performance Q&A:
2015 AP® Latin Free-Response Questions

The following comments on the 2015 free-response questions for AP® Latin were written by the Chief Reader, Robert Cape of Austin College. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student performance in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

Question 1

What was the intent of this question?

The question assessed students' ability to translate a passage from Vergil's *Aeneid* into English as literally as possible.

How well did students perform on this question?

Students averaged a score of 3.81 out of 15 points for this task. Overall, the students who recognized the passage and its position within the text did well. However, a large number of students confused the passage in Question 1 with other passages involving speeches from deities, especially where Mercury speaks directly to Aeneas, or else confused Jupiter and Juno. Out of the 15 segments, segments #1, 9, 11, 15 were most commonly correct, even in responses where nearly every other segment was incorrect.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Common grammatical errors:
- *interpres*: often translated as a verb ("you interpret") rather than a noun, or as direct object rather than as subject
- *divum*: syncopated form not recognized
- *missus*: translated as a finite verb rather than a participle
- *ipso*: translated independently from *Iove*
- *detulit*: translated as present tense or as a passive verb
- *ipse*: translated as modifying *deum* ("himself") rather than as subject of *vidi* ("I myself")
- *vidi*: translated as present tense or as third person
- *deum*: translated as subject or as genitive plural

- *manifesto*: translated as a verb or participle, as a noun ("manifestation," "manifesto") or as modifying the wrong noun (usually *deum*)
- *intrantem*: translated as other than a participle (often as a preposition) or as modifying the wrong noun
- *hausi*: translated as present tense
- *his auribus*: translated as dative ("to these ears") rather than as ablative
- *Desine*: translated as a preposition rather than as a verb
- *incendere*: translated as a finite verb or imperative
- *meque teque*: first correlative *–que* ("both") often left untranslated
- *tuis*: translated in wrong case or as pronoun rather than adjective modifying *querelis*
- *querelis*: translated as a verb parallel to *incendere* or *desine*
- sequor: translated as passive or as third person

Common errors of vocabulary: (Note that this list is not exhaustive.)
- *etiam*: as "although," "however," "finally" or as synonym for *nunc*
- *divum*: as "divine" (adjective) or "riches"
- *Iove*: as "Juno"
- *ipso*: as "herself" or "that"
- *testor*: the most frequently missed word in this question, often omitted
- *utrumque*: the *–que* was often mistranslated as "and"
- *caput*: as "father," "chief," or "important person"
- *auras*: as "ears," "gold," "aura," or "bronze"
- *mandata*: as "something given," or "messages"; also frequently singular or as a verb
- *detulit*: as "send (down)"
- *deum*: as "divine" or "day"
- *manifesto*: as "manifesting" or "manifesto"
- *lumine*: as "eyes" or "threshold"
- *intrantem*: as "inside," "between," or "crossing"
- *muros*: as "murals," "ramparts," or "fortifications"
- *hausi*: as "stick," "cling," or "hear"
- *his*: as "my," "his," or omitted
- *auribus*: as "breezes," "gold," or "bronze"
- *Desine*: as "from without" or "do not"
- *-que…-que*: first *–que* as "and" or omitted
- *querelis*: as "questions," "inquiries," "worries," or "attacks"
- *sponte*: as "by lot," "fate," "chance," "bridge," "boat," "sea," "seafoam," "responsibility," "delay"
- *sequor*: as "continue" or "travel"

Based on your experience of student responses at the AP® Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that might help them to improve the performance of their students on the exam?

We recommend in particular practice forming and/or translating sense units (segments), particularly for agreement and for meaning. Also, we recommend that students annotate the Latin passage, marking agreement, labeling tenses, etc., before beginning to translate. Students should also use the book and line numbers provided in the question to recall the context of the lines. Teachers should review commonly confused words and verb tenses. Students should account for every word in their finished translation, and also translate as literally as possible.

Question 2

What was the intent of this question?

The question assessed students' ability to translate a passage from Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* into English as literally as possible.

How well did students perform on this question?

Students averaged a score of 5.03 out of 15 points for this task. Very few of the students did not at least attempt the passage and most offered an attempt at a complete translation. Students demonstrated a fairly high recognition of the context and content of the passage.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Common grammatical errors:
- *omnium*: translated in the wrong case and/or number, agreeing with *Natio* rather than *Gallorum*
- *Gallorum*: translated as singular
- *dedita*: translated as modifying *religionibus*
- *religionibus*: translated as other than dative
- gravioribus: translated as other than a comparative adjective, often as an adverb
- *morbis*: translated as singular
- *quique*: either the *qui* or the *–que* omitted
- *periculis*: translated as singular or as an adjective (treating *proelis periculisque* as hendiadys)
- *aut … aut*: the first *aut* ("either") often left untranslated
- *homines:* translated as other than the object of *immolant*, either as subject or as an adjective modifying *victimis*
- *immolaturos*: translated as future passive or unrecognized as verb of indirect statement
- *administris*: not recognized as appositive to *Druidibus*, translated as a verb or adjective
- *Druidibus*: not recognized as the object of *utuntur*
- *sacrificia*: not recognized as the object of preposition *ad*
- *utuntur*: translated as passive

Common errors of vocabulary:
- *Natio*: translated as "son," "ship," "birth," or "announce"
- *causam*: translated as "case" or "misfortune"
- *morbis*: translated as "deaths" or "injuries"
- *versantur*: translated as "are versed"
- *proeliis*: translated as "wars"
- *pro*: translated as "in front of" or "before"
- *immolant / immolaturos*: translated as "immortal," "immoral," or "immovable"
- *vovent*: translated as "turn," "wish," "say," "fly," "roll," or "cherish"

Based on your experience of student responses at the AP® Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that might help them to improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Teachers should remind students to translate each word even if doing so seems redundant. Students should not use English idioms or stock expressions when doing so does not preserve the literal, grammatical structure of the Latin. Encourage students to follow the grammar and syntax of the passage rather than rely

only on word meanings or a general recall of the passage. Let students know that when a word or phrase is translated in more than way, only the first written translation will be scored: they should carefully cross out any alternative translation that they do not want scored. Remind students that Latin words often have more than one meaning and that they must choose a meaning that makes sense in the context of the passage.

Question 3

What was the intent of this question?

The question assessed students' ability to comprehend, analyze, and contextualize two thematically related passages, one from Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* and one from Vergil's *Aeneid.*

How well did students perform on this question?

Students achieved a mean score of 2.72 out of 5 points.

What were common student errors or omissions?

Many students neglected to cite material from the beginning of each passage. In addition, many students neglected to use Latin from throughout each passage. While some sophisticated analysis could take place without copious citation, in general, students were hampered by not following this key part of the directions. Some students hindered themselves by relying on explorations of diction, stylistic devices, or logos vs. pathos and ethos. While these approaches are not without merit, they are not sufficient when the student does not translate the Latin cited in the discussion and relies upon them as the entire argument.

Students often did not pick up on the hypothetical nature of Sabinus' argument (i.e., what *might* happen due to the anger of the Germans and Gauls towards the Romans). As a result, the need for speed emphasized by Sabinus in his speech was not often noted by students (*brevem. . .occasionem*, *in celeritate*). Many students also misconstrued *fames* (hunger) as *fama* (fame, report, or rumor), which then hampered their arguments. In addition, many of the students misconstrued the middle section of the Caesar passage and thus interpreted Sabinus' speech as bolstering his men for a battle with the Germans as opposed to his intent of striking fear into his men while being overheard from an officers' meeting. This often led to a misperception that he was shouting at or belittling his men to make them fight harder for the Roman Empire. Context was much more often misconstrued in the Caesar passage than the Vergil passage, where students generally did understand that Aeneas was bolstering his men after the storm which landed them near Carthage. While some students in the *Aeneid* passage did pick up on Aeneas' use of the words *deus*, *fata*, and *fas*, many more students could have strengthened their essays by noting this usage in his speech. Students, in general, showed more facility with the Vergil passage in their analyses.

Based on your experience of student responses at the AP® Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that might help them to improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Readers ask that teachers please encourage their students to cite and translate/paraphrase copiously from throughout the passages provided — from the beginning to the end of the Latin — in supporting their arguments, remembering to cite line numbers or write out the specific Latin words they are discussing. In addition, students should be reminded to present analysis AND conclusions for the Latin cited. Contextual knowledge is another important way to strengthen their arguments, but students should not feel compelled to describe the entire plot of the *Aeneid* or *Bellum Gallicum* in order to start their essay. In general, a short introduction is all that is necessary, leaving a student more time to deal with the Latin passages provided and thus make better use of their time in developing their argument and making inferences based on the Latin they have chosen to discuss. Finally, the content of the passages should not be forced into a comparison/contrast essay just because two passages are provided for discussion.

Question 4

What was the intent of this question?

The question assessed students' ability to explain various semantic, grammatical, stylistic, and cultural features of a passage from Vergil's *Aeneid* and to relate the passage to other passages from their Latin or English readings for the course.

How well did students perform on this question?

Students averaged a score of 4.69 out of 8 points for this task. There was a full range of scores across the spectrum. Most students could answer subquestions 1 and 7. A surprising number of students, even those with otherwise strong scores, experienced difficulty with the scansion task in subquestion 3.

What were common student errors or omissions?

- Subquestion 1: Some students named Vergil as the speaker, sometimes referring to him as the narrator. Others named Venus or Juno.
- Subquestion 2: A large number of students thought *divum* was accusative, despite the intransitive verb.
- Subquestion 3: Some students translated the line instead of scanning it, suggesting that they did not know the meaning of the term "scan." Many were confused by the elisions, either misinterpreting them or not recognizing them. A surprising number ended up with seven feet in the hexameter line. A number of students lost a point because they didn't write out the line as requested. A number of students wrote correct scansion on the left-hand page, where it could not be scored, failing to reproduce their work on the right-hand answer page.
- Subquestion 4: More recognized the case of *fletus* than could translate it. It was variously mistranslated as "flood," "fleet," "flee(ing)," "arrows," "winds," or "rivers."
- Subquestion 5: Students seemed to struggle with the meaning of the word "aspect" in the prompt. They sometimes responded by simply writing "feet," which was too vague to credit as a correct answer. Many cited aspects that are not described in the text: e.g., matted hair, or a bloody beard. The word *cruento* was frequently misunderstood as meaning 'cruel.'
- Subquestion 6: Many students gave responses that were too vague or too general to be credited: e.g., the Trojan horse, the Trojan War, the attack of the Greeks. Other responses were simply wrong: e.g., the tempest, Aeneas' refusal to leave Troy. A number of students confused Hector's visit with Mercury's visit and, therefore, cited events from Book 4 rather than from Book 2.
- Subquestion 7: This question elicited the widest range of incorrect responses. A surprising number named members of Hector's family, and some named characters from Roman history.

Based on your experience of student responses at the AP® Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that might help them to improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Teachers are advised to incorporate spot question practice throughout the year so that students are familiar with the format. Because scansion questions appear on both the multiple-choice and the free-response sections of the exam, teachers should give students regular practice in scanning hexameter lines, particularly those that feature elision. Students had difficulty keeping the order of events and characters straight and lost points as a result. Teachers should encourage students to retain in memory an outline of the story told in the *Aeneid*.

Question 5

What was the intent of this question?

The question assessed students' ability to explain various semantic, grammatical, stylistic, and cultural features of a passage from Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* and to relate the passage to other passages from their Latin or English readings for the course.

How well did students perform on this question?

Students averaged a score of 3.33 out of 7 points for this task. The scores ranged the full spectrum from 1 to 7, but few students achieved a score above 5.

What were common student errors or omissions?

- Subquestion 1: Many students mistranslated *ditissimus* as "distinguished." Some misunderstood the adjective as a first person plural verb.
- Subquestion 2: Incorrect answers ranged from 6 months to 40 years and life.
- Subquestion 3: Some students incorrectly translated and/or identified the expression as a result clause. Some vaguely identified the clause as subjunctive, simply repeating information given in the prompt.
- Subquestion 4: Most students correctly identified the dative case, although many, apparently misled by the proximity of *cum*, misconstrued *omnibus* as ablative.
- Subquestion 6: Many students missed this question, incorrectly guessing the names of such prominent figures as Vercingetorix, Ambiorix, and Ariovistus.

Based on your experience of student responses at the AP® Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that might help them to improve the performance of their students on the exam?

Teachers should remind students to review vocabulary in context. Teachers should ensure that students understand the grammatical structures of Latin, as listed on p. 28 of the *Course and Exam Description*, and are able to identify them correctly using standard terminology, e.g., "indirect command," "purpose clause." Teachers should ensure that students have a good working knowledge of Roman culture and politics, providing detailed explanations of cultural and political practices mentioned in the syllabus readings.