



## Student Performance Q&A: 2014 AP<sup>®</sup> Latin Free-Response Questions

The following comments on the 2014 free-response questions for AP<sup>®</sup> Latin were written by the Chief Reader, Robert Cape of Austin College in Sherman, Texas. 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?*

The mean score was 7.77 out of 15 possible points, an increase from the mean of 4.35 last year. Part of this increase may be due to the fact that two words were glossed, although the segment *incute vim ventis* (line 5) was still difficult. Overall, the students seemed more confident about the passage.

#### *What were common student errors or omissions?*

- In line 1, *nam* was variously misconstrued.
- In line 1 *divum* was treated as an adjective.
- In line 2, *dedit* was often rendered in the present tense or as passive.
- In line 2, the first *et* was often unaccounted for.
- In line 2, *vento* was rendered as a direct object of *tollere*.
- In line 3, *Tyrrhenum* was not paired with *aequor*.
- In line 4, *Ilium* was rendered as a genitive with *Penates* or confused with the demonstrative *ille*.
- In line 4, *victos* and *submersas* were not recognized as passive.
- In line 5, *incute vim ventis* proved a very difficult phrase for students to render literally.
- Of the 15 segments, #7 (*tollere vento*), #11 (*Ilium victosque Penates*), and #12 (*incute vim*) proved most difficult to translate.

*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?*

- Remind students that they must account for every word in the Latin.
- Encourage students to proofread their translations.
- Understanding cultural (e.g., *Penates*) and geographical (e.g., *Tyrrhenum*, *Ilium*) references helps students translate correctly.
- It is imperative that students attend to precise rules of grammar and syntax (see page 10 in *Curriculum Framework*).

## **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?*

The mean score was 6.83 out of 15 possible points, up from 4.69 in 2013. The addition of a glossed word may have helped raise the mean score, but students generally seemed more comfortable with the Caesar material this year.

*What were common student errors or omissions?*

- Singular nouns were translated as plural and vice versa (e.g., *temporis* as "times," *noctium* as "night," and the second *dies* in line 3 as "days").
- Cases of nouns were misconstrued (e.g., *noctem* taken as nominative; *mensum* taken as accusative; *spatia*, *initia*, *dies*, and *omnes* taken as nominatives).
- Present tense verbs were translated as past, and active verbs were translated as passive (especially *finiunt* and *observant*).
- The words *dicunt* and *sic* were often omitted.
- Vocabulary issues included: *mensum* translated as "mind," "table," "dinner," and "death"; *Dite* translated as an adjective or thought to be a place; *sic* translated as "if"; *ut* translated as "as" or "when"; *praedicant* translated as "they think," "they believe," etc.
- Misunderstanding *prognatos* and *natales* as "nautical" terms led students to make erroneous references to sailors or sailing in their translations.
- The most challenging vocabulary item was *proditum*, which very few students recognized as part of an infinitive construction (sc. *esse*) in indirect statement.

*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?*

- Advise students to stick with basic meanings of words (e.g., *observant* as "they observe" and not "celebrate"; *dicunt* as "they say") and avoid unnecessarily elevated language that drifts from the correct contextual meaning.
- The translations should be as literal as possible, but students need not retain the exact order of the Latin words in their translations, as doing so may result in incomprehensible English.

### Question 3

#### *What was the intent of this question?*

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

#### *How well did students perform on this question?*

The mean score was 2.70 out of 5 possible points, up from a mean of 2.56 for the essay in 2013. The readers felt the students understood the Caesar passages very well.

#### *What were common student errors or omissions?*

In Passage A:

- In line 1, *impedimenta* was variously mistranslated as “impediments,” “hindrances,” “foot soldiers,” “obstacles,” or “weapons.”
- In line 1, *reprehendum* was mistranslated as “grab/take” or translated as “reprehended” in such a way that it was clear that the student did not know what the English word means.
- Students could often translate *Quod...accidit* (lines 1-2) literally but did not know what it meant in context
- In line 3, *alacriores* was mistranslated translated as “swiftly” or “sharply” and not recognized as a comparative adjective
- Some students ignored the *non* of *non sine* (lines 3-4), others overemphasized the litotes.
- Many students did not recognize the omission of *esse* with *factum* (line 4) and therefore did not recognize the indirect statement.
- Many students ignored *Quod...erat* (lines 4-5).
- In line 5 *vulgo* was mistranslated as “vulgar,” “crowd,” or “wounded.”
- In line 5, *signis* was mistranslated as “signals” or “signs,” and oftentimes students did not grasp the military significance of the standards.
- In line 5, *carissima* was mistranslated as “care” or “charisma” or incorrectly connected to *signis*.

In Passage B:

- In line 2, *torrentur* was mistranslated as “tormented,” “tortured,” or “frightened.”
- In line 2, *fortunas* was mistranslated as “fate” or “luck.”
- In line 3, *intellegerent* was mistranslated as “they were intelligent.”
- In line 3, *vallo* was mistranslated as “valley.”
- In line 4, *acerrime* was mistranslated as “swiftly”
- In line 5, *longe* was misconstrued as an adjective rather than an adverb
- In line 6, *vulneraretur* was mistranslated as “vulnerable” or misinterpreted as indicating that the Romans (rather than their enemies) were wounded in large numbers

Other errors of note:

- Some students thought both passages were about the same group of soldiers.
- Some students thought Julius Caesar was directly in charge of both groups of soldiers.
- Some students thought the question asked about leadership rather than about Caesar’s judgment of the soldiers’ actions.
- Some students overemphasized individual words, often considered out of context, or figures of speech (especially litotes and polysyndeton) in a way that did not clearly support their analyses.
- Impersonal verbs were frequently mischaracterized as passive verbs.

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

- Discourage students from relying on figures of speech for analysis of text.
- Encourage students to make clear in their responses that they understand the basic narrative of both passages.
- Emphasize that students must read the prompt carefully and keep their responses focused on the assigned task, avoiding digressions into tangential topics.
- Remind students to elucidate passages with context. Contextual references should be brief, concise, and used to support analysis. For example:
  - Passage A: Students should identify the generals and briefly explain the situation in which the soldiers find themselves (i.e., they have departed from their winter quarters and have been ambushed after being tricked by Ambiorix).
  - Passage B: students should explain that Cicero obeyed Caesar (unlike Sabinus and Cotta) and is under siege in his winter quarters.
- Setting up the essay as a comparison or contrast between the passages is not wrong but may lead students to neglect nonparallel portions of either passage.
- Encourage students to use ellipsis or line numbers when citing Latin.
- Remind students that the meanings of some words vary with context. (e.g., "signa")

#### **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?*

The mean score was 3.25 out of 7 possible points, which is a little lower than last year's mean of 4.77 out of 8 possible points.

*What were common student errors or omissions?*

- Sub-question 1: Students often mistranslated *caeci*, confusing it with *caeli* or misconstruing it as genitive singular. Students often failed to recognize that *-que* was linking two words in the same case. Although *furere* was identified as ablative in the question, it was often not translated as an ablative. Many students misconstrued it as an ablative absolute, ablative of manner, or ablative of respect.
- Sub-question 2: Students who recognized the passage usually understood that *monstrum infelix* referred to the Trojan Horse. However, students who could not place the passage confused it with the serpents who killed Laocoon, the Cyclops, Helen, Cassandra, *Fama*, or a "monster cat." Some students gave a literal translation of *monstrum infelix* rather than answering the question.
- Sub-question 3: Many students failed to read the question carefully and do exactly what it asked them to do. Some students translated or wrote out grammatical information instead of scanning. Some simply wrote out the scansion without writing out the Latin or wrote out only the first four feet rather than all six. The most common mistake was missing the elision in foot 2 and therefore having an extra dactyl in the line. Many students marked vowels as short even though they were clearly followed by two consonants.

- Sub-question 4: Students who recognized the passage tended to answer this question correctly. Although both correct grammatical and referential answers were accepted, some students still misidentified the referent or antecedent. The most common mistake was not recognizing the number of *quibus* and misconstruing it as referring to something singular. Many students misidentified *deum* as its antecedent.
- Sub-question 5: Although students generally recognized that the passage depicted a public event, they often confused the decoration of the temple with activities that took place elsewhere in Book 2 (e.g., the procession of the wooden horse or the Greek invasion) or misunderstood it as a wedding or funeral.
- Sub-question 6: Some students misidentified Juno as the divinity who had sent Cupid to Carthage, claiming she did so in order to keep Aeneas from founding Rome. Others referred to events outside of Book 1, such as the cave scene in Book 4.

***Based on your experience of student responses at the AP<sup>®</sup> 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 emphasize to students that *-que* joins two parallel expressions.
- Teachers should ask students to identify the different kinds of ablative (genitive, dative, accusative) that occur in the readings.
- Teachers may want to give students short passages and ask them to identify the context
- Teachers should emphasize that students need to follow directions carefully and write out and scan the whole line when asked to do so; the rules for elisions should be reviewed often.
- Teachers should encourage students to give very brief responses to the short answer questions. Many students spoiled otherwise correct answers by providing extraneous, incorrect information.

## **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?***

The mean score was 5.13 out of 8 possible points, slightly higher than last year's mean of 3.62 out of 7 possible points

***What were common student errors or omissions?***

- Sub-question 1: Students often misconstrued *moribus* as referring to delays or deaths rather than customs.
- Sub-question 2: Almost all students answered correctly.
- Sub-question 3: Some students answered in Latin (writing, e.g., *clientes* or *familiam*) rather than in English as instructed.
- Sub-question 4: Students frequently misidentified the type of clause. Some who recognized it as a purpose clause failed to account for the temporal aspect of the clause relative to the main clause (e.g., translating the imperfect subjunctive as an indicative past tense). Some students neglected to make the clause negative. Others omitted the subordinating conjunction *ne*.

- Sub-questions 5a and 5b: A common error for 5a was claiming that Orgetorix faked his death or the Helvetians murdered him. Common errors for 5b were quoting the whole line and even adding *mortuus est* from outside the prompt. Many students did not quote enough Latin, giving only *sibi mortem* without the verb.
- Sub-question 6. The most common correct response was the breaking of the bridge at Geneva. Common errors were being too general or confusing information from other parts of the work.

*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 give students more classroom practice with short answer questions.
- Teachers should emphasize that students must answer in English unless directed otherwise in a particular sub-question.
- Teachers should help students determine exactly how much Latin supports a given English paraphrase of the text.