



Student Performance Q&A:

2014 AP[®] Spanish Literature and Culture Free-Response Questions

The following comments on the 2014 free-response questions for AP[®] Spanish Literature and Culture were written by the Chief Reader, Eduardo Cabrera of Millikin University in Decatur, Ill. 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 with which students frequently have the most problems 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?

This question required students to read an excerpt from a work on the required reading list, identify the author and period of the text, and explain the development of a particular theme within the work from which it was taken. On this year's exam, the textual fragment was taken from the story "...y no se lo tragó la tierra," which appears in Tomás Rivera's novelistic work of the same title. In addition to identifying the author and period of the text, students were required to explain the development of the theme of socioeconomic divisions (las divisiones socioeconómicas) in the text to which the cited fragment belongs.

How well did students perform on this question?

The mean score for content on Question 1 was 1.55 out of 3 possible points. The mean score for language on Question 1 was 2.39 out of 3 possible points.

The story "...y no se lo tragó la tierra," is included on the required reading list and students should be familiar with the text itself, as well as its context: it is a twentieth-century, Chicano or Mexican-American text in which we see a family of migrant (not immigrant) workers in the United States deal with the difficulties of their socio-economic, working and living conditions. The novel from which the story is excerpted, ... *y no se lo tragó la tierra*, is a semi-autobiographical, stream-of-consciousness tale of a young boy who lives the life of a migrant farm worker with his family. This lifestyle is extremely difficult on individuals and families, and death or permanent disability is a common fear. The landowners for whom they work are often greedy and demanding, as is evidenced in one of the very early chapters in which a farm owner refuses to allow the workers additional breaks for water, even when the temperatures are soaring and children are among the workers. Another feature of rural, Mexican-American life portrayed in the novel is this community's reliance on faith, a combination of Catholicism and other traditions, to help them endure and accept their fate, a reality the young protagonist increasingly grows to question.

The excerpted story upon which Question 1 is based reveals the vicissitudes the protagonist and his younger siblings must endure when they must work in extremely hot and dry conditions, because their father and other children are recovering from sunstroke due to having worked under the very same conditions. The protagonist assumes an adult role as he instructs and watches over his younger siblings, and cautions them about how to recognize the symptoms of sunstroke and what they should do if they

experience them. The sun, its excessive heat, and other aspects of the natural world around them, like the sky and clouds, are described as extremely inhospitable and even intentionally deadly, as if even they were against them for their lowly position in life.

To receive maximum credit for their responses, students needed to correctly identify both the author of the excerpt from *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* and also the period in which it appeared (“siglo XX”, “las décadas de los 40-60,” “la época del movimiento chicano,” or “la época de los braceros,” were all acceptable answers that appeared on students’ exams). The responses of the most capable students correctly made these identifications and used the passage cited on the exam as a point of reference for an effective explanation of the unfolding theme of socio-economic divisions. The majority of these responses focused on the migrant workers’ difficult working conditions and how they were treated by their employers. Other answers highlighted that the family had to sacrifice their children’s education so they could contribute to the family’s finances, or on how the children had to sacrifice themselves and endure difficult and dangerous work for this same purpose. In less capable responses, students correctly identified either the author or the period and explained the development of the specified theme, although their responses included description and/or a summary of the story or their use of textual evidence was not always clear. The weakest responses were unable to make the required identifications of the author and/or the period; any attempt to explain the development of the theme of socio-economic divisions, or the influence of power relations in them, was outweighed by their reliance on summarizing or paraphrasing of the story. In some instances, students demonstrated a lack of familiarity with the story or were unable to make the connection between it and its historical-cultural context.

What were common student errors or omissions?

- Failing to identify correctly both the author and the period of the text;
- Incorrectly identifying the protagonist and his family as immigrants;
- Paraphrasing or describing the story in lieu of explaining the development of the theme of socio-economic divisions;
- Discussing ideas that are mentioned in the cited excerpt (migrant workers, weather conditions, etc.), or offering personal opinions or generalities about these ideas, without focusing on the question and/or the story itself;
- Failing to address all elements of the question;
- Failing to include specific textual references to support the response; or including as textual evidence examples that are unclear or irrelevant;
- Demonstrating poor organization or a limited ability to write a focused response.

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?

The Text Explanation question appears on the AP[®] Spanish Literature and Culture Exam every year, and always features a work that comes from the required reading list. The advantage for students is having an excerpt from the work in front of them while they consider, plan, and write their responses. Practicing ways to respond to the same type of prompt under the same conditions and constraints as those of the AP[®] Exam will help students refine their skills and become better equipped to write an effective and organized response to the question.

Aside from the errors and/or omissions offered above, teachers can further help by encouraging students to set aside time to read the question carefully and then read or skim the cited passage, keeping the question in mind. Teachers can suggest that students underline or circle important parts of the question — in this case, the identification of the author and the period, and the theme of socio-economic divisions. This type of exercise trains students to remember to fully address the question. Teaching them to take a few minutes to outline their response and to reserve some time for proofreading, editing and/or correcting elements of their response is another valuable practice.

Throughout the AP[®] Spanish Literature and Culture course, teachers can help their students by:

- Teaching students how to accurately identify the period;
- Involving the class in small-group work or, in a pre-writing phase, having students share their thoughts concerning a particular text's development of a specified theme;
- Focusing on the themes and subthemes that structure the course curriculum framework;
- Help students understand how to explain the development of the theme in a text;
- Bringing in relevant information on the historical and cultural context of texts on the reading list;
- Encouraging students to practice writing responses (as differentiated from essays);
- Making peer review among students part of the editing process.

Question 2

What was the intent of this question?

This question required students to read an excerpt from a work on the required reading list and study an image of a work of art (e.g., painting, photograph, sculpture, drawing) related by theme to the text. Students were asked to compare how a particular theme is represented in both the text and the image, and then to connect that theme to the genre, period, or movement of the text. On this year's exam, the text was Salmo XVII ("Miré los muros de la patria mía") by Francisco de Quevedo. The image reproduced on the exam was a photograph ("Ruinas del convento de Tecali") by Juan Rulfo. Students were required to compare the representation of the theme of time and space (*el tiempo y el espacio*) in both works in relation to the Baroque era.

How well did students perform on this question?

The mean content score on Question 2 was 1.55 out of 3 possible points. The mean language score was 2.04 out of 3 possible points.

The theme of time and space is the central concern of both the written text and the artwork in this question. In Quevedo's sonnet, Salmo XVII, the poetic voice expresses a pessimistic, existential view of life as it moves inward, reflecting upon the state of its nation, surrounding estate, home and personal strength, touching upon many of the common themes of the Baroque era in which Quevedo lived: the passing of time, the brevity of life, the inevitable presence of death, and the deceitful nature of earthly belongings. A nobleman and member of the Spanish court, Quevedo witnessed the decadence of the Spanish Empire in the 17th century. Like the walls in the poem's opening lines, Spain continued to oversee a vast empire, but its foundations were crumbling. The nation was bankrupt and had suffered military challenges and defeats. In "Ruinas del convento de Tecali," the viewer is confronted with the physical ruins of the exterior structures and walls of a convent whose previous glory and strength are visible in the thickness and extension of the outer walls, and in the bell tower that rises up in the center of the photograph, a still standing but solitary figure amid the ruins, comparable to the observations the poetic voice makes in Quevedo's poem. The connection of both the poem and the art work to the Baroque era and its focus on the physical and emotional impact of time is explicit. Quevedo and Rulfo emphasize human mortality and the destructive nature of time on human possessions, undertakings, and physical strength. The former does so through the development of the common Baroque theme of *momento mori* and the negative impact of time on the human spirit and physical landscape evident in the poem's pessimistic and solitary tone and visual imagery of physical decay; the latter accomplishes this by presenting a black and white image of an abandoned, solitary structure whose lifeless, crumbling walls are being overrun by dry grass and cacti. Both artists juxtapose the evanescent, temporal nature of human life and structures with the cyclical, enduring and, at times, aggressive power of nature.

The strongest student responses on Question 2 effectively and explicitly compared the theme of time and space in both works and related them to the Baroque era. They discussed the movement and passage of time that takes place within the poem between each stanza, as well as the passage of time and its impact on the artistic rendering of physical setting and the physical and human landscape depicted in both the

poem and the artwork. They inevitably compared the dilapidated walls and visual imagery of physical decay described in the poem and those captured in the photograph. For example, they examined the sadness and melancholy evoked by the theme of *momento mori*, the focus on death, the solitude and/or the anguished tone in the poem in relation to the dark, pessimistic and solitary landscape depicted in the black and white photographic image. They supported their commentary with specific textual/visual references to the Baroque era, for example, they related the pessimistic view of time and space in both works to the pessimism surrounding key historical events of the Baroque era—Spain’s military defeats, its dependency on loans from foreign bankers, its religious conflicts with Protestant populations, political decadence etc. They also highlighted the focus on the ephemeral nature of human products and life found in both works and the Baroque preoccupation with the passing of time and the ineludible presence of death. Their answers were well developed and presented their ideas in a cohesive and logical manner. Less capable responses were organized but, in comparing the theme of time and space, relied heavily on the description of the elements of both works. The weakest responses to this question attempted to compare the highlighted theme in both works and to relate it to the Baroque era, but were incomplete and/or lacked sufficient textual evidence to support the students’ arguments. They may have addressed the theme in only one of the two works and/or failed to relate the theme to the Baroque era, and their responses showed a lack of organization.

What were common student errors or omissions?

- Inability to deal with the theme of time and space in each work;
- Paraphrasing or summarizing Quevedo’s poem and/or describing Rulfo’s photograph in lieu of comparing the theme;
- Failing to make an explicit comparison of the theme in both works;
- Providing insufficient examples from the two works to support the required comparison;
- Failing to relate the theme in both works to the Baroque era;
- General or vague responses that suggested students were not familiar with the Baroque era;
- Superfluous and/or erroneous statements;
- Poor organization or limited ability to write a focused response.

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?

As with all questions on the AP[®] Spanish Literature and Culture Exam, a successful response to the Text and Art Comparison question begins with a careful reading of the question itself and continues with an answer that fully treats the specified theme — in this case, time and space — and its relation to a particular period, genre, technique, or movement — here, the Baroque era — with supporting textual and visual references. The best responses contain specific examples to support the students’ ideas, and the ideas are presented in a coherent, logical progression.

In addition to keeping in mind the errors and/or omission mentioned above, teachers need to remind students of the importance of reading all the works on the required reading list, since the textual passage reproduced on the exam for Question 2 is invariably taken from one of these works. In addition, teachers can help their students achieve good scores on their responses by:

- Viewing a wide variety of additional visual images—paintings, photographs, drawings, sculptures—with students and giving them in-class practice in writing responses that compare these art works to written texts chosen from the required reading list;
- Familiarizing and reviewing with students the features of periods—in this case, the Baroque era—genres, movements, and techniques that are included in the curricular framework of the AP[®] Spanish Literature and Culture course;

- Helping students learn to stay focused on the topic by routinely pointing out content in their responses that is superfluous or irrelevant to the question;
- Teaching students to distinguish comparison from mere description or paraphrasing;
- Teaching students how to develop and properly support their ideas, and to do so in an organized fashion.

Question 3

What was the intent of this question?

This question required students to read a work on the required reading list and then analyze how the text represents the characteristics of a particular genre, as well as a particular historical, cultural, or social context, commenting on relevant literary devices in the text and citing examples from the text that support their analysis. On this year's exam, the work was Rubén Darío's poem "A Roosevelt." Students were asked to analyze how the poem represents the characteristics of Modernism and the historical context of twentieth-century Latin America.

How well did students perform on this question?

On this year's exam, the mean score for content on Question 3 was 2.39 out of 5 possible points. The mean score for language on Question 3 was 3.42 out of 5 possible points.

In "A Roosevelt," a poetic epigraph, Rubén Darío is directly reacting to the United States' intervention in the separation of Panama from Colombia, so it could take control of the Panama Canal project. Roosevelt represented the epitome of U.S. intervention in Latin America, and despite the fact that Darío was initially in awe of the United States for its strength, wealth and democracy he was also frightened of its power. The poet was concerned about the Anglo-Saxon country's continued, forceful meddling in Latin American affairs. In the poem, Darío juxtaposes the magnificence of the U.S.'s strength and its limitless desire to use its physical might with Latin America's rich history, tradition, Catholic faith and moral rectitude. In the poem's first four stanzas, Darío acknowledges the U.S.'s overwhelming power by suggesting that it would require any other country to have an equal amount of strength — a Biblical voice or a Whitman verse — to reach the U.S.'s height and might, a power akin to that of Orion the Hunter, from Greek mythology. He goes on to enumerate some of the country's contradictory characteristics, e.g., primitivism and modernity, simplicity and complexity, and hints that Theodore Roosevelt possesses some of the qualities of the country's founding father, Washington, but many more of the Biblical Nimrod, the mighty hunter who challenged God. Darío eventually declares that Roosevelt is the personification of the United States; that he *is* the U.S., the future invader of the naïve America to the south that has indigenous roots, prays to Jesus Christ, and still speaks Spanish. The insinuation is that the U.S. is white, godless, and speaks English, and that it sees itself as superior, given its apparent God-given right and might, an allusion to Manifest Destiny, the Monroe Doctrine and Roosevelt Corollary.

Before he finishes the first half of this poem, Darío continues elaborating upon violent, anti-intellectual and anti-democratic traits that, for him, clearly define Roosevelt (i.e., the U.S.) as the essence of brute, unthinking, arrogant, agile force, an archetypical example of an American who preferred hunting, bellicosity and conquest over promoting the U.S.'s beloved, democratic ideals and practices elsewhere. He finally declares him to be a combination of Alexander the Great and Nebuchadnezzar, both historical conquerors of men and lands, and both inveterate and unstoppable military men and rulers. In a mood shift that serves to announce the poem's second, 'Latin American' half (a literary and even graphic division of stanzas that suggests the two Americas, North and South, joined at the middle by one, small word), Darío declares to Roosevelt that while he may think that progress and change are his to achieve through fiery, violent, even volcanic actions, and that he has the power to determine the future of others by always being able to hit whatever target he sets his sites on, he should think twice about the other America, the America to the south. After his thorough juxtaposition of the U.S.'s seemingly laudable yet actually reprehensible traits, Darío ends the first half of his poem with a denial of Roosevelt's power, with a single,

solitary, emphatic “No.” Thus begins his panegyric on the virtues of Latin America, all while favorably contrasting its noble antiquity and divine guidance with the U.S.’s physical and financial might.

In this second half, Darío once again alludes to the strength of the United States, suggesting that any tumult in the north causes shaking throughout the South American Andes, comparing the action to the reaction caused by a tremor along one, long spine that connects the two continents, and South America’s sensitivity and vulnerability to North American political action. He acknowledges that the U.S. can roar like a lion and that French writer Victor Hugo acquiesced to Grant that the stars belonged to the United States (such as those on its flag). Yet, he also goes on to remind Roosevelt, in an aside, that the Southern Cone, too, has not only its own stars, but also its very own sun (on its flags). Darío acknowledges the U.S.’s wealth but goes on to criticize the country for embracing it like a religion that combines prideful strength with love of money. Additionally, the poet ironically remarks that the Lady Liberty in New York harbor whose torch supposedly lights the way for the poor, immigrant masses actually serves to light the country’s way to easy conquest, a direct accusation of imperialism. However, as an antidote to all that strength and sense of righteousness, Darío offers his readers a litany of Latin America’s historical, cultural and moral virtues, promoting its venerable antiquity over the U.S.’s money, power and imperialist verve. His inventory combines a celebration of Latin America’s roots in Old and New World antiquity, praising the verse of Aztec poet Netzahualcoyotl and the wisdom of Plato; the great power of the fifth Aztec ruler Moctezuma and the traces of the Roman god Bacchus, and his love of life; an America that forcefully learned the European alphabet but also consulted the skies and knew of Atlantis. Darío emphasizes that Latin America — the other America — was the discovery of Christopher Columbus, has the faith of Spain, trembles with hurricanes, and thrives on light, fire, fragrance and love. It is this America — he tells the barbarous, blue-eyed, Anglo-Saxon America — that loves, dreams and is the child of the Sun. Darío cautions the U.S. to be careful because Spanish America is alive and well, and thousands of the Spanish lion’s cubs are on the loose. In the end, Darío remarks to Roosevelt that he would need for God himself to turn him into the terrible Rifleman and the Divine Hunter to be able to hold Latin America in his fearsome grip. Why? Because though the U.S. seems to have everything, it is lacking in the most important thing, God.

Darío’s poem contains a number of characteristics specific to *Modernismo*, among them experimentation with metrics, asymmetrical stanzas and inner rhyme. In addition, it makes references to mythology and employs learned language, borrowings from Latin and other ancient languages, and expresses clearly anti-imperialist, pro- (Latin) American, nationalistic and regional sentiments. “A Roosevelt” also contains rhetorical devices not specific to *Modernismo*, that create meaning by association, e.g., metaphors [“*y es la hija del Sol* (44)], similes [“*Es con voz de la Biblia... (1)*], personification [“*de los Andes: que pasa por las vértebras enormes de los Andes*” (21)], irony [“*Juntáis al culto de Hércules el culto de Mammón*” 26], and synecdoque [“*Leon Español*” (46)], to persuade its readers of its perspective. In addition, the poet employs a number of grammatical devices, e.g., ellipsis [“*Creas que la vida es incendio/que el progreso es erupción*” (9-10)], polysyndeton [“*Primitivo y moderno, sencillo y complicado*” (3)], asyndeton [“*eres culto, eres hábil*” (10)], anaphora [“*la América del gran Moctezuma [...] la América fragante de Cristobal Colón [...] la América católica, la América española*” (37-40)], and apostrophe [“*Tened cuidado*” (45)], to highlight Darío’s love and respect for Latin America’s legacy, speed up or slow down the poem’s rhythm, and emphasize or warn about something, respectively.

In the strongest responses to Question 3, students thoroughly analyzed how Darío’s “A Roosevelt” represents the characteristics of *Modernismo* and the historical context of early 20th-century Latin America. They included textual examples of historical and/or culturally contextual references, and commented on rhetorical devices from all categories of persuasion — irony and metaphor, sonic devices, altered significations, and others that the poet used to appeal to his readers, to their emotions, and to convincingly characterize Latin America’s ethos. Among the rhetorical and poetic devices and language they analyzed in the excerpt are apostrophes, personifications, internal rhyme, asyndetons, polysyndetons, metaphors, to name some. They clearly analyzed the poet’s use of comparison to illustrate the actual (historical, cultural, racial, linguistic, religious, military and financial) and affective difference between the U.S., with its imperial attitudes and record, and Latin America, with its wealth of Trans-Atlantic history,

tradition, morality, all of which contribute to its moral superiority and potential strength. Some of the most insightful essays discussed the narrator’s conflicted position vis-à-vis the United States, acknowledging that he both admired and feared the nation, and understood his somewhat compromised, ‘Hispanist’ attitude, his celebration of Spain and glorification of Latin America’s glorious, indigenous past. They also commented on how the rhetorical devices they analyzed served Darío in his effort to issue a cautionary apostrophe to Theodore Roosevelt and the United States, and concomitantly celebrate the varied wealth and potential strength of Latin America. These students produced essays characterized by an explicit thesis statement, a coherent structure, and a cohesive and logical progression of ideas. Their analyses were well developed and supported by appropriate and integrated textual examples. The responses of less capable students offered attempted analyses of the poem and its given historical or cultural context, and *Modernismo*, but description of the poem’s context or rhetorical devices outweighed analysis. Furthermore, the examples they supplied were not always clear or relevant. The least successful responses tended toward incompleteness and/or inaccuracy. Students identified some rhetorical, stylistic, or structural features of “A Roosevelt” but were unable to explain their relevance to either *Modernismo* or the historical-cultural context; alternatively, they may have demonstrated an inadequate understanding of the text and/or its context. Often, their answers contained errors of interpretation that detracted from the overall quality of the response, and their ability to produce an analytical essay was compromised by an overwhelming reliance on textual paraphrase or summary, an absence of supporting textual examples, a lack of organization, and/or the absence of a thesis statement.

What were common student errors or omissions?

- Paraphrasing or summarizing the cited excerpt instead of textual analysis;
- Failing to refer specifically to the cited excerpt;
- Failing to discuss the cultural context of the early 20th century; or merely restating the context without identifying any of its features;
- Incorrectly associating the text’s historical and/or cultural context with the age of conquest or our current time in history;
- Failing to discuss the characteristics of *Modernismo* or other rhetorical language; or merely citing examples of rhetorical language or listing/defining literary devices in Darío’s poetry without explaining why or how these literary devices are relevant to the poem’s content or intention.
- Demonstrating an inadequate understanding of the cited excerpt or the poem, or both;
- Providing insufficient examples from the cited excerpt to support the analysis;
- Offering general or vague responses that suggested an unfamiliarity with Darío’s poem and/or its context;
- Incorrectly identifying or alluding to Darío as José Martí and/or Cuban;
- Making superfluous and/or erroneous statements;
- Relying on a prepared overview of “A Roosevelt” with limited connection to the question;
- Poor organization or limited ability to write a well-developed essay.

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?

In addition to keeping in mind the errors and/or omission mentioned above, to help students better prepare for and perform on the Single Text Analysis question, teachers might also:

- Give students questions based on a number of texts on the required reading list, in order to provide them with the experience of doing this type of analysis; and at some point or points during the year, have students answer this type of question under conditions and time constraints that are similar to those of the AP® Spanish Literature and Culture Exam;

- Give students other readings (not necessarily the same genre) or show them relevant films—documentary or feature length, to further familiarize them with the historical, cultural and political context of the work on the required reading list;
- Work regularly with students on literary vocabulary and the features associated with different genres and subgenres that are listed in the curricular framework (remembering that this list is not exhaustive);
- Emphasize the connection of texts to their specific historical and cultural contexts;
- Encourage students to highlight or circle important words or concepts in the questions;
- Teach students how to write effective thesis statements and conclusions;
- Teach students how to develop and properly support their ideas when analyzing;
- Help students develop and practice a list of vocabulary, expressions, and transitional phrases so that they will learn how to link sentences and paragraphs while integrating comments of an analytical nature, as opposed to writing anecdotal commentaries;
- Encourage students to write more than one draft of an essay;
- Give students in-class writing practice with all aspects of essay composition: prewriting, outlining, writing, editing, and proofreading;
- Ask students to act as editors of their *own* essays, an exercise that can help them recognize problems in their work and refine their essay-writing skills.

Because the Single Text Analysis question can be based on any work from the reading list, it is essential that students read each work completely. Teachers can further assist students by showing them how to do a close reading of all the works, including consideration of vocabulary and linguistic and stylistic features, regardless of the genre.

Question 4

What was the intent of this question?

This essay question required students to read two excerpts related by theme: one from a work on the required reading list, the other from a work not on the list. Students were asked to analyze the effect of literary devices that the authors use in the texts to develop a particular theme. In the essay, students were required to compare the presentation of the theme in the two texts and to cite examples from both texts that support their analysis. On this year's exam, the two texts included a fragment of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's novel *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, Primera parte, Capítulo III, which appears on the required reading list, and a fragment of Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo's *Amadís de Gaula*, which is not on the list. Students were asked to analyze the effect of the literary devices used by the authors of both texts to develop the theme of the construction of reality (*la construcción de la realidad*) and to compare the presentation of the theme in both texts.

How well did students perform on this question?

The mean score for content on Question 4 was 2.55 out of 5 possible points. The mean score for language on Question 4 was 2.99 out of 5 possible points.

Both *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, Primera parte, Capítulo III, and *Amadís de Gaula*, deal with the general theme of chivalry (*caballería*) or the chivalric code, the conduct of medieval knights that extolled honor, courtly love, and courtesy above actual martial combat. Specifically, both of the fragments used in this year's exam center on the ceremony and ritual whereby an ordinary gentleman or *hidalgo* becomes a knight (Doncel del Mar, in *Amadís de Gaula*, and don Quijote, in *Don Quijote de la Mancha*), respectively. In *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, Primera parte, Capítulo III, given don Quijote's literary insanity, which has been caused by his excessive reading of chivalric novels (among them *Amadís de Gaula*) already outdated during don Quijote's time, the novel's ceremony is but a parody of the one described in the fragment from *Amadís de Gaula*, which reveals a directly intertextual relationship on the part of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. In *Amadís de Gaula*, the ceremony has as its principal goal to bestow on Doncel del Mar the title of knight. In accordance

with the chivalric code, the ceremony is performed in a chapel, by the king, and in the name of God (“*En nombre de Dios [...] espero en Dios que vuestra fama será tal que dará testimonio de lo que con más honra se debía hacer*” (30-41)). By contrast, in *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, the ceremony is performed by an innkeeper (“*el ventero*” (1)), using the innkeeper’s account book as a prop for a Bible (“*un libro donde asentaba la paja y cebada que daba a los arrieros*” (18-19)), in the middle of a field (“*en mitad de un campo*” (6-7)), and by means of a slap in the neck and shoulder (“*pescozada y en el espaldarazo*” (4-5)). Furthermore, the ceremony is not sanctioned by the grace of God embodied by the King, nor performed in accordance to a code of honor, but for the amusement of the innkeeper and his friends. The innkeeper and other witnesses know that this ritual is but a pantomime or a simulation of a reality found only in chivalry books of fiction (*Amadís de Gaula*). However, don Quijote believes it to be real and behaves as if in fact, has become a knight (*caballero*). In this way, *Don Quijote de la Mancha* makes an explicit distinction between one knowing when something is real versus believing something to be “real”; it demonstrates the difference between constructions of reality and its simulation (meta-fiction). Each text makes use of a rich array of literary devices associated with narrative prose to develop the theme of the construction of reality (becoming a knight). These include narrative voice or narrator, setting, atmosphere, description, tone, dialogue, theme, symbols or motifs, hyperbole, polysyndeton, and situational irony, or the discrepancy between appearance and reality, or between expectation and fulfillment, as is the case with *Don Quijote de la Mancha*.

The best responses to Question 4 clearly analyzed the effect of literary devices in both texts in relation to the development of the specified theme. In their essays, the students discussed the effect of narrative tone (jocular), hyperbole (“*espaldarazo*”; “*pescozada*”), polysyndeton (“*enumeración*”), and dialogue in *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, to underscore the different perception of reality between don Quijote and other characters (“*el ventero*”; “*las damas*”). Regarding a *Amadís de Gaula*, they commented on narrative tone (“*realista*”), the use of description and dialogue, analyzing how these devices placed emphasis on the act of becoming a knight, thus making Doncel del Mar’s reality the same for witnesses and readers alike (“*hace que la realidad del personaje sea también lo de nosotros*”). In their essays, the students were able to accurately identify the same theme in both texts, discuss and illustrate differences between them based on the effect the use of literary devices had in the theme’s presentation and treatment through well-chosen textual examples. Some of the most insightful responses began by identifying common elements in both texts (“*armarse caballero*”) and provided important background information about don Quijote (“*que sufre de locura*”), in order to account for the different perceptions of reality. Other superior responses were able to draw attention to the fact that *Amadís de Gaula* served, in fact, as an inspiration for don Quijote’s desire to become a knight at a time when knights no longer prevailed, making *Don Quijote de la Mancha* a comedic (“*comedia*”), or farcical representation of events in *Amadís de Gaula*. These students constructed well-developed and well-organized essays with an explicit statement of purpose, a coherent structure, a cohesive and logical progression of ideas, and a conclusion based on their comparative analysis. In the responses of less capable students, the analytical component was outweighed by an overreliance on summary or paraphrase. In such responses, the development of the theme was described rather than analyzed; similarly, rhetorical devices were accurately identified or mentioned, but the students were less successful in analyzing how such features affect the theme’s presentation. While their answers included textual examples, these were not always clear or relevant to their discussion. They included a stated topic, an introduction, and a conclusion, but their essays were not well developed. The weakest responses to Question 4 were multiply flawed: some students focused mostly or solely on one of the two texts and may have omitted all references to structural or rhetorical devices; description and summary predominated, at the expense of textual evidence; their answers either contained significant errors of interpretation or demonstrated a lack of understanding of one or both texts, especially evidenced by inclusion of irrelevant comments. Such responses were also characterized by an inability to structure ideas in an appropriate essay format; often there was no statement of purpose and the students’ ideas were presented in random fashion rather than in a coherent and logical progression.

What were common student errors or omissions?

- Confusion between themes in the course and themes in the question;
- Relying on prepared overview of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*;
- Summary or paraphrasing of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, exclusively;
- Summary or paraphrasing of both fragments with no attempt to analyze;
- Focused exclusively on a single text;
- Inability to analyze literary devices; lack of knowledge of what this means or entails;
- Inability to analyze use of literary devices in connection with thematic intent;
- Listing literary devices without explaining them or connecting them to the theme;
- Genre confusion (reading prose fragment as poem; unfamiliarity with rhetorical devices associated with prose as opposed to poetry);
- Mentioning poetic devices (metaphor, simile, polysyndeton, etc.) rather than understanding and knowing the more common narrative devices;
- Frequent errors regarding literary device terminology;
- Inability to make connections between literary devices and theme;
- Lack of comparison of theme;
- Inability to compare two texts;
- Misinterpretation of theme;
- Not understanding the relationship between the two texts and thus missing their thematic connection;
- Errors of historical era or literary movement; confusing don Quijote's imaginative take on reality with magical realism or surrealism;
- Placing both texts either under the Baroque or medieval period;
- Not knowing that the fragments belong to different eras;
- Not knowing that *Amadís de Gaula* was one of the books don Quijote had read and admired;
- Digression; inability to organize thoughts in the form of an essay;
- Inability to construct a comparative essay and follow a logical progression of ideas;
- Inability to use rhetorical transition words in Spanish to organize ideas;
- Inability to express oneself well in Spanish (errors in syntax, grammar), even if they understood the question.

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?

In addition to keeping in mind the errors and/or omission mentioned above, to help students better prepare for and perform on the Text Comparison question, teachers might also:

- Expose students to the literary devices relevant to narrative prose and focus on literary analysis of these devices in given texts;
- Give students the opportunity to do a comparative analysis of two fragments while mapping out three levels of content: informative (what happens? who speaks?); literary (what rhetorical devices are used and to what effects, outcomes?); thematic (what is it that is being conveyed and why?). This way of comparative mapping could help students understand the connection between literary techniques and a message/theme;
- Read assigned texts not just for content but also paying attention to the use of literary devices, supplying examples that illustrate and foreground their themes;

- Assign writing assignments that ask students to do a comparative analysis similar to the one required in the question with a sample from the reading list and a sample that is not known to the student; ask the student to include topic sentences for each paragraph to support their argument, and provide students with the opportunity to do this type of comparative analysis at some point during the semester, under similar constraints, and before the exam;
- Provide students with unfamiliar but thematically related texts and ask them to identify, comment, and analyze the use of literary devices in them; ask them to identify the theme and explain its connection to the literary devices used;
- Teach them that literary devices are an integral part of everyday language (verbal or written) and not something only used in literature; show them how we use them in real life and then show them how they are deployed in a text (tone, dialogue, narration, hyperbole, etc);
- Teach students how to effectively compare a theme in two texts;
- Teach students how to present analysis in writing;
- Teach students how to break down complex essay questions in order to identify tasks and better organize ideas (effects of literary devices, comparative analysis of the presentation of the theme supported by well-chosen textual examples);
- Encourage students to write longer essays while paying attention to structure and organization; show them how to use rhetorical transition words to organize ideas and make points;
- Teach students not just how to do literary analysis, but also provide them with the historical, social, politic or linguistic context in which the work was written (chivalry novels as the historical antecedent of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, for example);
- Students should have the opportunity to read and deconstruct well-written, exemplary essays, so they can see what needs to be done.