

2017 VCE Latin written examination report

General comments

In 2017, most students performed well in the unseen translation section.

Specific information

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Section 1 – Translation of an unseen passage

Question 1

Fabius, when he saw that the enemy were nowhere being moved from their position, ordered the tribunes of the soldiers, with whom he had run forward to the front line, to go to the cavalry and to urge them to strive that day, if they remembered that the state had ever been helped by efforts of the cavalry, to show that the reputation of that rank was untarnished. He pointed out that in the infantry battle the enemy were holding their ground and that the only hope left lay in a charge by the cavalry. But, in case the strength of the cavalry did not help, he ordered the commander Scipio to withdraw the front line of the first legion from the battle line and to lead them around as secretly as possible to the nearby mountains; from there the soldiers were to proceed into the mountains by a climb hidden from sight and suddenly show themselves to the enemy from their rear.

This passage highlighted the weakness of many students when faced with indirect statement (accusative and infinitive). Generally, however, there were few students who made no sense of the passage.

Students are reminded that it can be useful to employ brackets, as shown below, when translating Latin, as it helps to divide the passage into main and dependent clauses. Many elementary mistakes of grammar and syntax may be avoided if students follow this advice. In the passage below, italics show clauses that are separated by other clauses, and square brackets are used to show prepositions and the words that they govern.

Fabius, (ubi [nulla ex parte] hostem loco moveri vidit,) *tribunos militum*, ([cum quibus] [ad primam aciem] procurrerat), *ire [ad equites] iubet et adhortari* (*ut*, (si quando equestri ope adiutam rem publicam meminerint), *illo die adnitantur*) (*ut ordinis eius gloriam invictam praestent*). (*peditum certamine immobilem hostem restare* (et omnem reliquam spem [in impetu] esse equitum) *demonstravit*). *ceterum*, (si nihil vires equitum iuarent), *Scipionem legatum hastatos primae legionis subtrahere [ex acie]* (et [ad montes proximos] quam occultissime circumducere) *iubet*, (*inde agmen* (ascensu abdito [a conspectu]) [*in montes*] *progredi hostique [ab tergo] repente se ostendere*).

- *Fabius ... adhortari*

This is the main clause of this long first sentence. *iubeo* is followed by an accusative (*tribunos militum*) and prolative (present) infinitive (*ire* and *adhortari*). Many students made the basic error of translating the plural *tribunos* by a singular.

- *ubi – vidit*

This was the first indirect statement. Students generally translated this one better than those later in the passage. Some did not accurately translate the present infinitive passive (*moveri*).

- *cum – procurrerat*

cum is a word very commonly used in Latin. As a conjunction it has four main meanings – ‘when’, ‘since’, ‘although’ and ‘whenever’. If students knew the rules for its use as a conjunction, they would know that the only possible meaning with a pluperfect indicative, as here, is ‘whenever’. Students should, however, always consider the possibility that it is being used as a preposition, as here, and means ‘with’. If there is an ablative next to *cum* as with *quibus* here, this is highly likely.

- *ut ... adnitantur*

This indirect command is dependent on *adhortari*, a deponent verb. *adhortari* is followed by a purpose clause (*ut ... praestent*).

- *si – meminert*

This clause proved very difficult for many students. *quando* after *si* has the meaning ‘ever’. *meminert* is followed by an indirect statement. The *esse* of the perfect passive infinitive *adiutam esse* has been suppressed, as it commonly is. The accusative of the indirect statement is *rem publicam*, written here as two words, but also found as one, and means ‘state’, its most common meaning. *equestri ope* is an instrumental ablative. If students had followed basic rules of grammar and syntax here, mistakes would have been fewer.

- *ut – praestent*

This purpose clause follows the indirect command introduced by *adhortari*. Many students found this clause very difficult to translate. The best meaning for *praestent* is ‘to show’ or ‘to display’. Its object is *gloriam invictam* – ‘their unconquerable glory/fame’. The genitive *eius* is demonstrative here and goes with *ordinis* – ‘of that rank’ – that is, the cavalry.

- *peditum ... demonstravit*

A large number of students did not realise that the main verb is *demonstravit*, which is followed by an indirect statement. Here, many errors could have been avoided by attention to word order and the use of cases. When translating an indirect statement, students should begin with the English conjunction ‘that’. The accusative becomes an English nominative as subject. The infinitive becomes an English indicative with the tense of the infinitive dictating the correct tense to use in English. Word order suggests that *peditum* goes with *certamine* (‘in the infantry battle’ – opposed here to the cavalry attack) rather than with *immobilem hostem*.

- *et – equitum*

The conjunction *et* joins the infinitives *restare* and *esse*. This is, therefore, a second indirect statement following *demonstravit*. The accusative subject is *omnem reliquam spem*. The genitive plural *equitum* goes with *impetu*. There were many mistranslations of this part of the sentence.

- *ceterum ... iubet*

‘Otherwise’ or simply ‘but’ is the best meaning for the adverb *ceterum*. *iubet* is the main verb and is followed by an accusative (of the person ordered), *Scipionem legatum*, and two prolative (present) infinitives (*subtrahere* and *circumducere*) joined by the conjunction *et*. Many students failed to take

the genitive *primae* with the genitive *legionis*. Obedience to the basic rules of grammar and syntax would have avoided many of the mistakes made here.

- *si – iuvarent*

Many students thought that *vires* came from *vir, viri* second masculine rather than seeing it as the plural of *vis* third feminine. The genitive plural *equitum* goes with *vires*. *nihil* could be seen as the object of *iuvarent*, but it is probably used adverbially here.

- *et – circumducere*

This is the second order that Fabius gives to Scipio. Some students had difficulty in finding an appropriate meaning for *circumducere*. If they had taken off the prefix, they would have been left with *ducere* – ‘to lead’. Some students ignored the sense of the preposition *ad*, which governs *montes proximos*. A large number of students was unaware of the use of *quam* with a superlative to mean ‘as ... as possible’.

- *inde ... ostendere*

The infinitives *progredi* and *ostendere* are governed by *iubet*, as they are a continuation of Fabius’ orders. They are joined by the conjunction *-que* on the end of *hosti*, which is in the dative. *agmen* is a common military word for ‘a column on the march’. Several students made a serious mistake when trying to find the meaning of *tergo*. By ignoring the fact that it follows the preposition *ab*, which is followed by the ablative, and somehow thinking that a first-person verb could be found where there is no direct speech, they translated this as, ‘I wipe off, I scour or I burnish’. Several students also did not translate *in* followed by the accusative *montes* correctly as ‘into the mountains’.

- *ascensu – conspectu*

This could be treated as an ablative absolute – ‘their ascent having been hidden from sight’ (literally) – or it could simply be treated as an ablative – ‘by an ascent’ with *abdito* acting as an adjective, ‘hidden’.

Section 2 – Comprehension, interpretation and analysis of the prescribed seen text

Part A – Comprehension and analysis of the prescribed seen text

Question 2

The speaker is the river god Tiber.

Almost all students answered this question correctly.

Question 3

Aeneas, who is being addressed, is the son of the goddess Venus.

Most students answered this question correctly. ‘Descended from Jupiter through Dardanus’ was also accepted.

Question 4

Revehis is significant because it means that Aeneas is bringing the remnants of Troy **back** to the land of his ancestor Dardanus, as Virgil had Dardanus move from Italy to Troy. So the arrival of the Trojans in Italy is a homecoming rather than an exile.

About one-quarter of the students could not answer this question correctly, but over one-third gave the correct answer.

Question 5

When Aeneas escapes from Troy he takes with him the household gods (*penates*), which are entrusted to him by the ghost of Hector (2.293–7). Aeneas is told to find a new home for them somewhere over the seas. Anchises holds them as Aeneas carries him out of Troy.

Few students picked up these ideas. They tended to make vague general statements about *penates*. These were given some credit, but only one-quarter of the students scored full marks.

Question 6a.

Father Tiber suggests that the angry opposition of the gods to Aeneas' settlement in Italy is over, meaning specifically the opposition of Juno.

A translation alone did not answer the question. Students had to explain what the anger was. Most students gave the correct answer.

Question 6b.

This assertion is not borne out by what follows, as Juno's opposition does not end until the very close of the epic in Book 12.

Merely saying 'false' or 'true', without an explanation, did not score a mark. An answer that said that it was true because the opposition ended in the last book but continued until that point was also accepted.

Question 7a.

Father Tiber tells Aeneas to look for a white sow with 30 suckling piglets beside the river.

Nearly all students gave the right answer.

Question 7b.

This sign means that this is where Aeneas will found his new city (Lavinium) and after 30 years Ascanius will found the renowned city of Alba.

Many students claimed incorrectly that the place where the sow and piglets were found was where Ascanius would found Alba Longa. It was the site where Aeneas would found Lavinium.

Question 8

Father Tiber tells Aeneas to seek an alliance with Evander, who lives upstream at Pallanteum. He also tells Aeneas to pray to Juno and to give Father Tiber honour in due course when he is victorious.

Tiber's instructions to Aeneas to follow the Tiber upstream were also accepted. He does not instruct Aeneas to sacrifice the sow to Juno, although Aeneas does this in due course. Over 40% of students scored full marks.

Part B – Interpretation of the prescribed seen text

Question 9a.

This is an example of tricolon.

Students were asked to identify so no explanation was needed. The assessors also accepted 'alliteration' and 'asyndeton'. Over one-quarter of the students could not identify one of these three possibilities.

Question 9b.

The way in which Vulcan breaks off what he is saying after 'valent' and changes tack shows that he is impatient to make love to Venus, as is shown in lines 6–7. The three stopped lines beginning with question words illustrate the insistent nature of what he is saying.

Some answers to this question were not supported by evidence in the text, or were inappropriate. Such answers were given no credit. Only one-quarter of the students scored full marks and over one-quarter scored no marks. Marks were given for those who wrote of Vulcan's desire to use all his skill to carry out the task.

Question 10

Īnd(e) ūbī| prīmā quiēs // mēdīō iām| nōctīs āblāctāē ae is a diphthong, one long syllable.

This line tested the basic rules of scansion. Some students missed the elision in the first foot. Some mistakenly scanned the u after q. *Medio* does not elide before *iam* because it is 'i' consonant. Just over one-third of the students scanned the line correctly, but nearly half scored no marks.

Question 11

It is an example of enclosing word order, as *noctis abactae* is enclosed by *medio ... curriculo*, which in turn is enclosed by *prima quies ... expulerat somnum*.

Less than one-quarter of the students identified the enclosing word order. Some credit was given to students who suggested that *medio* ('middle') was suitably positioned in the middle of the line. 'Chiasmus' was also accepted as an answer.

Question 12a.

Vulcan is likened to a hardworking woman who rises early to support her family.

Nearly half the students scored full marks. Vulcan is not likened to Minerva, as some suggested.

Question 12b.

The woman can be likened to an ideal Roman woman, an *univira*, who devotes her life to her home and family. The children may be symbolic of the future of Rome. Virgil may be supporting Augustus' moral and matrimonial legislation.

Students found the second part of Question 12 more difficult, especially providing a valid reason for Virgil making the comparison. Discussion of specific Roman values with reference to these lines was rewarded.

Question 13

Minerva is an example of metonymy, as the name of the goddess of skills is used instead of spinning/weaving. There is also hendiadys (one idea expressed in two) in *colo tenuique Minerva* (by her humble skill with the distaff/spindle, rather than by her distaff/spindle and her humble skill).

Students needed to identify each technique and explain each technique clearly. Many students ignored the instruction in the question that limited them to *impositum* in line 11 and discussed techniques that they identified in the rest of line 11. The assessors also accepted 'alliteration', 'assonance' and 'enjambment' as possible answers.

Question 14a.

Virgil's aim here is to create a sound-picture, with the words he uses reflecting the noises of a foundry.

Nearly half the students did not correctly identify the sound-picture used by Virgil in these lines.

Question 14b.

First he tries to suggest the sound of hammering (*antra Aetnaea tonant, validique incudibus ictus/ auditi referent gemitus*, lines 20–21), then the hissing of hot metal in water (the alliterative 's' and the onomatopoeic *strident*, lines 21–22) and finally the roar of the furnace (the expressive *anhelat*, line 22).

Students needed to identify any two of the three ideas above. Although many students failed to identify the sound-picture in Question 14a. they were more successful in showing how Virgil used sounds in these lines.

Question 15

strīctū|rāē Chāly|b (um) ēt // fōr|nācībŭs| īgnīs ān|hēlāt ae is a diphthong, one long syllable. y is a short syllable.

Students were expected to decide whether the last syllable in the line was short or long. Many students forgot that y has to be scanned and many missed the elision of -um before the vowel of *et*. Students were much better at scanning this line than they were at scanning the line in Question 10.

Part C – Analysis of themes and ideas from the prescribed seen text

Question 16a.

In lines 4–5 (*atque ... canebat*) the sacred geese save the Capitoline. This suggests that Rome's care for the geese and respect for Juno, to whom the geese were sacred, are rewarded by the action of the geese in raising the alarm. Some students discussed the bravery and loyalty to Rome of Manlius here, qualities to be admired. The Gauls are given away by the moonlight reflecting on the golden torques (lines 8–10 *aurea ... innectuntur*, especially *lactea colla auro innectuntur*). Gold is often a destructive symbol in the *Aeneid*. Virgil then stresses (lines 12–15, *hic ... mollibus*) the importance of religious ceremonies that reflect back to Rome's beginnings, such as the *Salii* and the *Luperci*. Note *castae ... matres*, lines 14–15. The right for matrons to ride in such carriages as a reward for their patriotism was one of long standing. Virgil finishes these lines with a view of the underworld (lines 15–19, *hinc ... Catonem*), where Catiline suffers punishment for his wickedness while Cato is rewarded for his moral uprightness. These are the moral lessons that Virgil points to in the passage. He does so to highlight the importance of *religio* (religious observance and practice) to the Romans and to the successful development of Rome. There is implied reference to Augustus' restoration of Roman temples and shrines as well as his moral crusade to restore traditional Roman values. A new peace (*pax*) has come about. Catiline is a prime recent example of those who, especially in the disturbed years of the first century BC, had threatened the *pax Romana*.

If a student made no reference to the Latin of the passage to support their argument, they could also not achieve a high score, no matter how good the answer was. Students were expected to show what Latin in the passage supports the point they are making. For longer sentences, students can quote the first and last words rather than the whole sentence.

Students had to address both the moral lessons and the question of why Virgil may have included them. Students were generally better at the former than the latter.

Question 16b.

Book 8 highlights Rome and its topography. It is here that Virgil presents his clearest picture of Rome from its earliest beginning in the age of Saturn to the coming of Augustus in his own time.

Students were expected to concentrate on two passages: Evander's tour of the future site of Rome with Aeneas (lines 306–368) and the ecphrasis of the shield (lines 608–731). There is plenty of evidence of praise of Rome and Rome's achievements in both passages. The overt praise of Augustus in the depiction of his victory at Actium and his triple triumphs in the centre of the shield are a key point. It is not just Augustus' victory over Antony and Cleopatra, but also Rome's over the danger threatened by the East. At last the Civil Wars have come to an end and the hope is expressed for a new period of peace and perhaps a return to the golden age of Saturn, which exemplified early Rome. There are comparisons to be drawn between the simplicity of the life of Evander and simplicity of Augustus' life in his comparatively modest house on the Palatine.

Students had to address the words 'to what extent' in their answers. They also had to address both Augustus and Rome, not just one. They were entitled to reach different conclusions about the extent for each or the same.

There were many ways in which a student might approach this question. Student responses were assessed for whether they answered the question, and produced a cogent argument and backed it up with sound evidence from within Book 8. Many of these essays did not address the question that had been set, and some students regurgitated essays that they had written during the year. The question confined students to Book 8, and any evidence produced from elsewhere in the *Aeneid* was ignored. For example, the question did not ask the students to consider the much-discussed question of whether the *Aeneid* is composed to honour Augustus and his regime.