

2019 VCE Latin written examination report

General comments

In 2019 many students were well prepared and scored well, but some seemed ill prepared or lacked certain skills.

Specific information

This report provides 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

The guards, who had taken up position at the entry to the grove, when they learnt of the murder, the reason for which they were ignorant about, came to the camp and stirred up the soldiers with their alarming message. They armed themselves and gathered at the grove in which the murder had been committed; they declared that, unless Polydamas and the rest who participated in the same crime were handed over, they would destroy the wall that surrounded the grove and avenge their leader by shedding the blood of all of them. Cleander ordered their leaders to be allowed to enter and read to the soldiers the letter written by the king, in which were contained details of Parmenion's plot against the king and his prayers that they should avenge him. When, therefore, they discovered the king's wishes, the mutiny was quelled, even if not their indignation. When most had dispersed, a few remained, who prayed that they might be permitted at least to bury his body.

Previous examination reports have stressed the value of using brackets to divide up the passage. This year's unseen passage again pointed to the value of such a practice, but many students did not make use of it. Square brackets have been used to surround clauses and phrases, and round brackets to surround prepositions and the words that they govern. Words underlined are those that agree and bracket other words.

[custodes, [qui (ad aditum) nemoris adstiterant,] [cognita caede,] [cuius causa ignorabatur], (in castra) perveniunt et tumultuoso nuntio milites concitant.] [illi armati ad nemus, [(in quo) perpetrata caedes erat,] coeunt;] [et, [nisi Polydamas ceterique eiusdem noxae participes dedantur,] se murum nemori circumdatum eversuros denuntiant,] [omniumque sanguine duci parentaturos.] [Cleander primores eorum intromitti iubet,] [litterasque regis scriptas (ad milites) recitat,][quibus insidiae Parmenionis (in regem) precesque, [ut ipsum vindicarent,] continebantur.] [igitur [cognita regis voluntate,] seditio, sed non indignatio compressa est.] [dilapsis pluribus], [pauci remanserunt, qui, [ut sibi corpus saltem sepelire permetteretur,] precabantur.]

The passage included some relatively easy sections and some complex sections where students needed to be very careful in applying their knowledge of grammar and syntax. Three issues continue to cause major problems for many students – indirect statements, ablative absolutes and

the use of pronouns. Many students began their translations well, but did less well once indirect statement began (*et – denuntiant*). It is clear that referring to the dictionary is a hindrance rather than a help to many students: there were several examples of incorrect use of the dictionary. Some students left the main verb until the end of the sentence, as it occurs in Latin, rather than including it where it occurs in fluent English (one of the criteria for assessment).

For the purpose of assessment, the unseen passage is divided into sections.

- *custodes ... in castra – concitant*

Most students found this opening sentence straightforward. Responses indicated that some did not understand that *tumultuoso nuntio* was an ablative that should be translated as ‘with alarming news’. The Latin present tenses should be translated by the English narrative past.

- *qui – adstiterant*

Some students had difficulty in choosing a suitable meaning for *nemus*. ‘Wood’ or ‘grove of trees’ (the meanings given in the small dictionary) are more appropriate than ‘forest’, which is given in the commonly used text for *Aeneid* XII. It would not be practical to surround a forest with a wall, as described later in the passage. A few responses indicated incorrectly that *nemoris* came from *nemo, neminis*.

- *cognita caede*

Generally, this ablative absolute was translated correctly, but responses needed to choose the appropriate meaning for *caede*. The introduction makes clear that only Parmenion has been killed. ‘Massacre’ and ‘slaughter’ are not appropriate meanings.

- *cuius causa ignorabatur*

This relative clause was generally translated well. Again, choosing an appropriate meaning was important. ‘Disregarded’ is not an appropriate meaning for *ignorabatur*.

- *illi – nemus ... coeunt*

It is not appropriate to leave the translation of *coeunt* until the very end of the sentence. Most responses got the sense of this clause.

- *in quo – erat*

Most translated this relative clause well, but, again, ‘massacre’ or ‘slaughter’ are inappropriate meanings for *caede*.

- *et ... se – denuntiant*

Many who had begun the translation well appeared to have difficulties at this point. The indirect statement introduced by *denuntiant* is in two parts with *se* as the accusative subject and two future infinitives (both with *esse* suppressed) *eversuros* and *parentaturos*. It also contains a conditional clause. The first part of the statement contains *murum* and *circumdatum* (a past participle), which bracket *nemori*. Literally, this translates as ‘the wall to the grove having been surrounded’. This sounds very clumsy, but it should not be difficult to change this to ‘the wall built around the grove’.

- *nisi – dedantur*

The conditional clause proved too difficult for most students. Latin commonly uses words that agree to bracket other words, which must be taken with them. In the conditional clause the nominatives *ceteri ... participes* surround the genitives *eiusdem noxae*. *Polydamas* and *ceteri ... participes* are the subjects of the passive verb *dedantur*. This translates as ‘unless Polydamas and the rest of the participants were surrendered’ (the correct meaning for *dedo* here). The genitives then have to be included with the participants. They mean ‘of the same offence/crime’. Some students thought that *noxae* came from *nox, noctis* (night) rather than *noxa*.

- *omniumque – parentaturos*

In the second part of the statement the dative *duci* comes after *parentaturos* – ‘they would avenge their leader’. The ablative *sanguine* should be taken with the genitive *omnium* and should be translated as ‘with the blood of all’. Many responses translated this incorrectly with insufficient attention to grammar basics.

- *Cleander – iubet*

This part of the sentence was generally translated well. Some had difficulty in recognising the present passive infinitive *intromitti*.

- *litterasque – recitat*

The plural ‘letters’ was accepted because of the introduction. The plural *litterae* usually means one letter. In fact, Curtius used *epistulae* for the plural ‘letters’ before this passage. Here, again, *litteras* and *scriptas* bracket the genitive *regis*.

- *quibus – precesque ... continebantur*

This relative clause was generally translated incorrectly, with insufficient attention to grammar basics. The clause contains two things joined by *-que*. As the verb is passive, they are both in the nominative. *Insidiae* is linked to *Parmenionis in regem* and means ‘the plot of Parmenion (genitive) against (*in* + accusative) the king’. *Preces* governs an indirect command introduced by *ut*.

- *ut – vindicarent*

The meaning of this short indirect command would have been clear for those who understood the sense of the passage. Many students struggled to recognise the use of *ut*, mistaking it as a purpose clause and, therefore, mistranslating it as ‘so that’. The emphatic pronoun clearly refers to the king. He wants to be avenged for Parmenion’s plot.

- *igitur ... non – compressa est*

This clause was incorrectly translated by many students. Some did not understand that both *seditio* and *indignatio* are nominative subjects of *compressa est*, but thought that they were ablatives. Some incorrectly translated *seditio* by words such as ‘sitting’.

- *cognita regis voluntate*

This ablative absolute was generally well translated. ‘Goodwill’ was not a good choice of meaning for *voluntate*.

- *dilapsis pluribus*

Many responses included the wrong meanings for both words. ‘Dissolve’ is not a good choice for *dilapsis*. It appeared that many students did not recognise the declined comparative form of *plures* meaning ‘most’ or ‘the majority’.

- *pauci – qui ... precabantur*

It is inappropriate to delay the translation of *precabantur* until the last word of the sentence, as many did, since it introduces the indirect command beginning with *ut*. Once again, it is important not to be led astray by Latin word order, which differs from that used in English.

- *ut – permetteretur*

The sense of this indirect command should have been clear, but many responses did not translate it well. *Saltem* was mistranslated as ‘narrow passage’, ‘ravine’, ‘safely’ or ‘pasture’. This was another example of incorrect use of the dictionary in this translation task.

Section 2

Part A – Comprehension and analysis of the prescribed seen text

Question 2

The sister is Juturna.

Almost all responses to this question were correct.

Question 3

The speaker (Turnus) claims that he recognised her when she first began to interfere (*dudum – dedisti*), and that she does not fool him now into mistaking her divinity (*et nunc ... dea*).

There is a clear contrast between *dudum* and *nunc*. Most responses made this distinction.

Question 4

quis refers to Juno.

Most responses were correct.

Question 5

He suggests that she is present to observe his (Turnus') cruel death.

Most responses to this question were correct. It was incorrect to respond that she caused Turnus's downfall or watched with cruelty.

Question 6

He suggests that Ufens died so that he could avoid seeing his (Turnus') dishonour.

The reason is given in the purpose clause *ne ... aspiceret*.

Question 7

Earlier, in Book 11, Drances had violently opposed Turnus, because he hated Turnus, considered him to be the sole reason for the war and thought that it was time to negotiate peace.

Correct responses recognised the two distinct ideas: that Drances is violently opposed to Turnus in earlier books and for an example of the way in which he expressed that opposition.

Question 8a.

Manes refer to the spirits of the departed or the gods of the underworld.

Most responses to this part of the question were correct.

Question 8b.

Turnus is asking these spirits to be favourable towards him.

Some responses indicated that this part of the question was more difficult. The appeal is expressed by the imperative *este*.

Question 8c.

Turnus is relying on the fact that the Manes will listen to his prayer, since the gods above are no longer listening to him. He asks for their help as he feels that the gods above have deserted him and, when he does die, he wants to enter the underworld without shaming his ancestors. Any of these points were correct.

Some found this part of the question more challenging.

Question 9a.

Saces has been wounded in the face by an arrow.

Most answered this part of the question correctly.

Question 9b.

The three key ideas contained in Saces' speech are: Saces tells Turnus that (i) the city is being besieged and is on fire, (ii) Amata has killed herself, and (iii) he is needed in the battle, not driving his chariot far from the battle, as king Latinus does not know what to do.

Most responses provided these three ideas.

Part B – Interpretation of the prescribed seen text

Question 10

mucrone is an example of synecdoche, where a part of a thing is used for the whole thing – 'sword point' for 'sword' here.

Synecdoche is different from metonymy. In the latter, a word takes its meaning from something it is associated with (e.g. the god Mars can be used to signify 'war'). One mark was awarded for correctly identifying synecdoche, another for a correct explanation of the technique.

Question 11

dūm trēpī|dāt //fērr|(um) āūrī|gāē rāpū|īssē Mē|tīscī

au and *ae* are both diphthongs (one long syllable). The caesura could also be in foot 4, but the punctuation suggests that the sense pause and the main caesura should be in the second. The sixth foot is a spondee since final *-i* is long.

A common mistake was to miss the elision.

Question 12

The repetition of the letters d and t (dentals).

Most responses to this question were correct.

Question 13

glacies ceu futtilis ictu / dissiluit

The answer given must refer to a sound effect. It was acceptable to state that the words produced a brittle sound. Responses suggested alliteration of c, t or s. This was an acceptable answer. One mark was awarded for identifying a technique, a second for a correct explanation. This explanation needed to refer to specific words producing this sound.

Question 14

dīssīlū|īt // fūl|vā rēs|plēndēt| frāgmīn(a) hāl|rēnā

The final foot should be a spondee as *harena* is in the ablative and therefore long. The caesura could be in the third foot, but again the punctuation suggests that the sense pause is in the second foot.

A common mistake was to miss the elision in the fifth foot.

Question 15

Turnus is out of his mind (*amens*). He seeks any method of escape (*diversa fuga*). He tries this way then that, as he weaves his random path (line 9). He feels enclosed on all sides by the enemy and the nature of the land (lines 10–11). All these facts point to the state of mind of a man in panic, as he tries to avoid the inevitable.

One mark was awarded for each valid point supported by evidence from the passage. Responses had to show how the physical position of Turnus reflected a mental state.

Question 16a.

īnsēquī|tūr // trēpī|dīquē pēd|ēm pēdē| fērvīdūs| ūrgēt

The last foot should be a trochee as the *–et* of *urget* is short by nature.

Almost all students scanned this line correctly.

Question 16b.

The dactylic line reflects the speed with which the hound (Aeneas) presses on in pursuit of the panicked stag (Turnus).

Almost all students answered this part of the question correctly.

Question 17

Lines 15–21 contain a simile.

Most responses were correct. It is important for students to understand the difference between a simile and a metaphor.

Question 18

Students had to make points about both choice of words and word order, but this did not mean that there had to be two points for each; there could be three of one and one of the other, but they had to address each idea. One mark was given for each correct point made. Some of the following points could have been used.

- The emphatic position of *inclusum* in line 15.
- The idea of enclosure is repeated in line 16 (*saeptum*), but this time not by a river but by the fear engendered by the purple feathers.
- The reversal of the idea from line 15 to that in line 18 helps emphasise the state of the stag.
- *instat* (line 17) conveys the imminent threat of the hunting dog and is highlighted by its emphatic position at the end of the line.
- The stag is terrified (*territus*) by the trap (*insidiis*) and the high bank of the river and rushes around seeking to escape.
- *mille* is exaggeration but adds to the vivid picture.
- The repetition of *fugit refugitque* adds to the picture of panic as the stag doubles back.
- The hound is full of life (*vividus*) as he sticks close (*haeret*) to the stag with gaping jaws (*hians*).
- The repetition of *iam* emphasises how close the hound is to catching the stag.
- The hound's jaws snap as if they had caught the stag (*similisque tenenti increpuit malis*), but his bite misses the mark.
- *inani* is emphasised at the end of the sentence and the line.
- The emphasis has been on the imminent capture of the stag by the hound, but at the last moment the stag escapes.

Students are reminded to make specific points in their answers.

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

Question 19a.

Responses were expected to quote in brackets from the Latin passage to support their argument for the descriptive powers of Virgil. The picture of the arrival of the Dira and her effect on Turnus and Juturna is one of the most striking in the whole book. The lines are not just creating a visual picture, but also suggesting the sounds created by the scene. Some points are as follows:

- The swiftness of the Dira's arrival is conveyed by the simile of the arrow fired by a Parthian (lines 1–4).
- Like the arrow, the Dira is poisonous (*felle veneni*) and the effect of her intervention cannot be cured (*immedicabile*).
- The sound of her arrival (*stridens*) and the fact that her swift arrival, like that of the arrow, cannot be foreseen (*incognita*) add to the frightening nature of her arrival.
- She is the offspring of night (*sata Nocte*).
- Her power is shown by her sudden transformation into a small bird, the behaviour of which is frightening (lines 9–10) with words such as *bustis ... desertis, nocte, importuna, umbras*.
- The description of her attack on Turnus (lines 11–12) is vivid with words such as *versa in faciem Turni, sonans, everberat alis, pestis, fertque refertque*.
- His reaction is very strong as fear grips him (lines 13–14), conveyed with words such as *membra novus solvit formidine torpor, arreataeque horrore comae, vox faucibus haesit*.
- When Juturna recognises the beating of her wings from far off, she mourns (lines 15–17), as shown by words such as *crinis scindit ... solutos, ungibus ora ... foedans et pectora pugnīs*.
- She realises that she is powerless in the face of this monster (*monstro*) (line 20). There is a sense of hopelessness in her rhetorical questions.

These are some of the ways in which Virgil displays his descriptive powers, both visually and aurally. Responses were not expected to include all these points and they did not have to be perfect to earn full marks. Responses were assessed on their quality and their use of the text to support their points. They were expected to discuss the simile – the Dira's transformation into a bird – and her effect on both Turnus and Juturna.

Responses that did not quote the passage (in brackets) could not score full marks, even if the answer was of the highest quality in other respects. Students must write in English and give the Latin in brackets. If they were quoting a line or lines as a whole, it was acceptable to give the line references, as shown above. Students should simply make the points that they consider answer the question and address the passage. Relevance is important. Discussion of Books 2 and 4 was not relevant to this passage.

Question 19b.

This vivid passage comes immediately after the confrontation between Jupiter and Juno, in which Jupiter had persuaded Juno that her opposition to the Trojans and their destiny must come to an end. He did so by making concessions to Juno, although these concessions only recognised what happened historically, if the myth of Aeneas reflects events of pre-history. The Dira was sent by Jupiter to attack and terrify Turnus, but really to bring to an end the intervention of Juturna, his sister, who had been helping Turnus since Book 10 and had, on the instructions of Juno, been trying to save him from the inevitability of fate. Juturna had guided Turnus' chariot away from the battle in order to save him from a duel with Aeneas, until Saces arrived to warn Turnus of the dire situation of the Latins and Rutulians. This brought Turnus to his senses and persuaded him to face the inevitable. When the duel began, Juturna continued to support her brother. When the sword, which he mistakenly picked up, broke, Juturna brought him his real sword, while Venus helped

Aeneas. Juturna finally abandoned her brother and returned to her watery home. During the duel, Jupiter weighed their fates in the balance.

Earlier in Book 12, when the duel with Aeneas had been arranged, Juturna, following Juno's instructions, caused the truce to be broken and general fighting to break out again. During the fighting Aeneas was wounded by an arrow and had to withdraw from the fighting. His withdrawal allowed Turnus to wreak havoc among the Trojans. Incensed by this, Venus brought dittany to help Aeneas recover from the wound, which the doctor Iapyx had been unable to heal. When the duel began and Aeneas' spear became stuck in a tree sacred to Faunus, Venus pulled it out and returned it to her son. When Turnus' sword shattered, Juturna brought him his divine one. There are many instances of the way in which divine will (in the form of interference/intervention in human affairs) has dictated the actions of humans in the earlier books of the *Aeneid*, although not all necessarily resulted in the actions of humans. Here are some examples:

Book 1: Juno bribed Aeolus to create a storm in an attempt to prevent the Trojans reaching Italy. Neptune stilled the storm. Venus complained to Jupiter about the treatment of the Trojans. He replied by outlining what destiny had in store for the Aeneas and his descendants. Jupiter sent Mercury to Carthage to ensure that Aeneas was made welcome. Venus helped Aeneas by telling him about Dido and Carthage and enclosing him in a mist so that he could enter Carthage unseen. When Aeneas was finally revealed, Venus had added to his beauty. When a celebratory feast was arranged, Venus, in an attempt to thwart Juno, arranged for Cupid to take the place of Ascanius so that Dido would fall in love with Aeneas and forget her husband Sychaeus.

Book 2: Pallas sent snakes to kill Laocoon and his sons and thereby persuaded the Trojans to take the horse into the city. Venus persuaded Aeneas to ignore Helen and to go home to protect his family instead.

Book 4: Juno suggested to Venus the marriage of Dido and Aeneas. Venus consented in order to protect Aeneas, provided that Jupiter gave his consent. This led to the encounter in the cave. Jupiter sent Mercury to remind Aeneas of his duty towards his mission to found a new nation in Italy. Aeneas prepared to depart at once. Mercury brought another message to warn Aeneas that Dido might destroy his fleet. Aeneas set sail at once. Juno sent Iris to release Dido from her death throes.

Book 5: Juno sent Iris down to persuade the Trojan women to set fire to the ships. Jupiter sent rain to put the fires out in response to Aeneas' desperate plea.

Book 7: Juno sent Allecto to stir up war in Italy. First Allecto infected Amata. She then stirred up Turnus, in spite of his initial rejection of her. She caused Ascanius to kill the pet stag of Silvia and this made the Latins take up arms, seeking revenge. She then widened her call to arms. The Latins called upon Latinus to declare war. When he refused, Juno herself opened the gates of war. The Italian forces gathered for war.

Book 8: Tiberinus urged Aeneas to seek help from Evander. Venus begged Vulcan to make new armour for Aeneas. Venus gave Aeneas his new armour.

Book 10: Jupiter told the gods to keep out of the war. Both Venus and Juno complained to Jupiter of the unfair treatment of their respective heroes. Jupiter replied that he would take no sides. Juno delayed the inevitable fate of Turnus by luring him to board a ship, which carried him away.

The question required the student to use the passage, Book 12 and the rest of the *Aeneid* in their answer. Responses needed to state to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the prompt and to explain the reasons for their evaluation.

Responses needed to state what they understood by 'divine will' and 'fate'. It was expected that students would agree with the prompt and write a general essay on the role of divine will or fate in the *Aeneid*. Many responses argued that not all actions of humans are dictated by divine will.

Regardless of the approach taken, responses were assessed on how they addressed the question and used supporting evidence.

Responses were not expected to cover all the ground suggested above, but this is an indication of the points they could have made. Students were not expected to agree with the points made. Each response was assessed on the validity of the argument, its cohesiveness and the quality of the evidence used to support the case.