

2021 VCE Latin written external assessment report

General comments

Most students performed well in the examination, but there was a small proportion who struggled to meet the demands of the examination paper. Many students scored highly in the last section, but there were also many who did not score well in the questions on scansion. Students are urged to learn the basic rules of scansion and ensure they understand them.

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

The following is one possible translation of the unseen passage, but other versions are acceptable, especially more literal ones, even if they lack fluency in English.

As usually happens when the time arrives for the final decision, Alexander's confidence turned to anxiety. He thought that the rewards were greater than the dangers and that, although there was doubt whether he would be victorious, one thing was certain: that he would die with great glory. And so, he ordered the soldiers to be drawn up at the third watch. He himself climbed to the ridge of a high hill and, while many torches were burning brightly, made a sacrifice to the gods. The soldiers, prepared both for the march and for battle, when they received the third signal, were ordered to advance vigorously and, as the sun was rising, reached the pass, which they had decided to seize. Terrified countryfolk announced the arrival of the enemy to Darius who could scarcely believe that those whom he was following as if they were in flight were coming to meet him. No small amount of fear was taking hold of the minds of all.

Students can benefit from the use of brackets to divide the passage into its component parts, as shown below. Square brackets [...] are used at the start and end of sentences. The round brackets (...) surround the clauses and phrases within those sentences.

The mean score for this section was 25. A small proportion of students scored 15 marks or less and this is a concern. Students are urged to study the grammar of Latin. Latin, as an inflected language, makes the task of seeing which words agree with each other easier. Students are encouraged to learn to use the dictionary effectively. In their approach to unseen translation, students must avoid looking up the meanings of the words and then putting those words into an English sentence that bears little resemblance to what is in the Latin passage.

*[(ut solet fieri,) (cum ultimi discriminis tempus adventat,) (in sollicitudinem fiducia Alexandri versa est.)]
[(maiora periculis praemia putabat) (et, (sicut dubium esset an vinceret,) ita illud certum esse,) (cum magna*

laude moriturum.)) [itaque milites iussit tertia vigilia instructos esse.] [(ipse in iugum editi montis escendit,) (multisque conluentibus facibus) (sacrificium dis fecit.)) [(milites, (tertio signo accepto,) itineri simul parati ac proelio,) (strenueque iussi procedere,) (oriente luce) (pervenerunt ad angustias,) (quas occupare decreverant.)) [(pavidi agrestes Dareo adventum hostium nuntiaverunt) (vix credenti eos sibi occurrere) (quos ut fugientes sequebatur.)) [non mediocris omnium animos invadebat formido.]

For the purpose of assessment, the unseen is divided into sections with marks for each section as shown.

ut solet fieri (2 marks)

A student who looked in the dictionary under *fio* would have found this short clause translated for them. Many students did not realise that *ut* with the indicative here means 'as'. Some students also had difficulty in finding the correct meaning for *solet*.

cum ... adventat (2 marks)

Many students did not understand the grammar or were unable to find an appropriate meaning for *discriminis*. The first two clauses are a statement of a general rule and should have their verbs translated in the present tense in English.

in ... versa est (2 marks)

Some responses did not take *sollicitudinem* with its governing preposition *in*. The genitive *Alexandri* goes with the subject *fiducia*. Some students were able to connect the nominative *fiducia* with the preposition *in* and make the accusative *sollicitudinem* subject of the verb, but the participle part of the verb (*versa*) has the same ending as *fiducia*.

maiora ... putabat (2 marks)

Periculis is an ablative of comparison after the comparative *maiora*.

et ... ita ... certum esse (2 marks)

Some responses treated the neuter *certum* as if it was masculine and made it agree with Alexander, although it agrees with *illud*.

sicut ... vinceret (2 marks)

An here means 'whether' and acts as the conjunction introducing the indirect question whose verb is *vinceret*.

cum ... moriturum (2 marks)

In this indirect statement the *esse* of the future infinitive has been suppressed as it frequently is. The preposition *cum* governs the ablative *magna laude*.

itaque ... instructos esse (3 marks)

Students had difficulty in finding the appropriate meaning for *vigilia* and *tertia*, which agrees with it. Many students had difficulty with the ordinal number *tertia* and produced various cardinal numbers.

ipse ... escendit (2 marks)

Some students made the genitive *editi* agree with the accusative *iugum* rather than with the genitive *montis*. Some did not translate the emphatic pronoun *ipse*.

multisque ... facibus (2 marks)

The word *fax*, *facis* (torch) appeared in this year's prescribed lines of Virgil. Many students could not find the correct meaning.

sacrificium ... fecit (2 marks)

Students are encouraged to read examination reports from previous years in their preparation for the examination. The word *dis* appeared in the 2020 examination and was discussed in the corresponding examination report.

milites ... itineri ... proelio (2 marks)

Most students understood the sense of this phrase, but many found it difficult to choose the appropriate meaning for *simul*, which means 'at the same time' here. It does not go with *ac* to mean 'as soon as'.

tertio ... accepto (2 marks)

Most students understood this short ablative absolute, but some made the singular a plural and could not give the correct meaning for *tertio*.

strenueque ... procedere (2 marks)

The past participle *iussi* agrees with the subject *milites* and is followed by a prolative infinitive, which is qualified by the adverb *strenue*.

oriente luce (1 mark)

This is a common expression involving a present ablative absolute.

pervenerunt ad angustias (2 marks)

Many students had difficulty in choosing the appropriate meaning for *angustias*. The words 'strait' and 'narrows' are used to denote a stretch of water between two pieces of land, such as Bass Strait. A 'defile' or 'pass' is a narrow passage on land between two pieces of higher ground.

quas occupare decreverant (2 marks)

Many responses did not translate the verb as pluperfect.

pavidi ... nuntiaverunt (3 marks)

Many responses did not make *pavidi agrestes* the subject of the verb and treated *agrestes* as an adjective rather than a noun, as it is here.

vix ... occurrere (3 marks)

The present participle *credenti* is in the dative and agrees with *Dareo*. It is qualified by *vix* (scarcely). The participle introduces an indirect statement (*eos sibi occurrere*), which means 'that those men were coming to meet him'. The pronoun *sibi* caused the most difficulty. In indirect statements, the pronoun *se* refers back to the subject of the verb introducing it. Here it is Darius.

quos ... sequebatur (2 marks)

The antecedent of *quos* is *eos*. It is the object of the deponent verb *sequebatur*, which some responses translated as passive. The participle *fugientes* is also its object connected to *eos* by the conjunction *ut*. Although there is indirect statement, Curtius uses the indicative *sequebatur* as Darius was actually following the enemy.

non ... formido (3 marks)

Many students did not see that *non mediocris ... formido* (an example of litotes) was the subject of the verb *invadebat*, for which many did not find the appropriate meaning.

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

Part A – Comprehension and analysis of the prescribed seen text

Most students performed well in this section.

Question 2a.

Aeneas is being addressed.

Almost all students answered this question correctly.

Question 2b.

Aeneas was contemplating killing Helen.

Most students answered this question correctly.

Question 3

Aeneas can see large structures torn apart, stone from stone, and dust and smoke rising into the air.

One mark was given for each of these separate ideas. The question directed students to lines 5 and 6. An answer that only went as far as *vides* ignored the second idea, which fills most of line 6, and scored only one mark.

Question 4

Pallas Athene had a gorgon on her armour. The gorgons were monsters that could turn humans into stone. The best-known gorgon was Medusa, who was killed by Perseus.

One mark was given for identifying the fact that Pallas Athene (Minerva) had the image of a gorgon on her breastplate, shield or *aegis*. One mark was given for explaining what gorgons were. Students did not have to make all the points in the suggested answer.

Question 5a.

It refers to Jupiter.

Most responses correctly identified Jupiter, the king of the gods.

Question 5b.

He is said to be giving strength and spirit to the Greeks and inciting the gods to fight the Trojans. One mark was given for each of these separate ideas given in lines 14 and 15.

Some responses used the gender neutral 'they' in their answer. Students are reminded that Latin is very gender specific. Students had already identified Jupiter in Question 5a. and should identify him as 'he' in Question 5b.

Question 6a.

Venus tells Aeneas to flee and to end the struggle.

Venus's instructions contain two ideas. One mark was given provided that one idea was expressed.

Question 6b.

They resemble the instructions of Hector in lines 289–90.

One mark was given for identifying Hector. Giving the lines was not required.

Question 6c.

She promises that she will not abandon him and will bring him safe to his father's house.

One mark was given for a correct answer like this based on line 17. As in Question 6a., one mark was given for one of these two promises expressed correctly.

Question 7

Venus hides herself in the darkness of the night.

One mark was given for an answer that conveyed her disappearance.

Question 8

The simile likens the fall of Troy to an ancient mountain ash that is being felled by farmers. The tree resists and its foliage shakes in response to their blows, but it succumbs finally and crashes down the mountainside.

This question is not a question on a technique, but one on content and, particularly, context. The fact that the answer came just after a set of prescribed lines suggested that many students had not familiarised themselves with the content of those prescribed lines in the context of the rest of Book 2. Although students usually know the prescribed lines very well, they must also be able to locate those lines within the rest of the set book and discuss their content in relation to the rest of the book and the *Aeneid* as a whole.

Part B – Interpretation of the prescribed seen text

Questions on techniques can involve three separate ideas. First, students may be asked to identify the words in a line that are an example of the technique. Second, students may be asked to explain the technique. Such explanations should follow those in the study design and be clear. Third, students may be asked to comment on the effect or purpose of the technique.

For questions on scansion, students are expected to write out the line as it appears on the paper, to mark the length of all syllables, including the last syllable in the line, to show any elisions, to show the division of feet and to indicate where the main caesura will be placed. If a student produces a typewritten script book, they must either make use of a scribe to follow these instructions or have the ability to use the 'insert symbol' function to insert digital markings, as this report does.

Question 9

It is an example of metaphor as the word is not used in its literal sense (see Williams RD, *The Aeneid of Virgil Books 1–6*, 218). The wooden horse cannot have a womb, but Virgil wants to suggest that the horse will give birth to armed men. The assessors also allowed personification, but not synecdoche, nor metonymy. It cannot be hendiadys, as *uterum* is only one word and hendiadys requires more than one word.

One mark was given for identifying the metaphor or personification, and one mark for explaining why it is a metaphor or personification. About half the responses were correct.

Question 10

nōs āb|īssē rā|t(i) ēt // vēn|tō pēt|īssē Mŷ|cēnās.

This is the acceptable form for showing the scansion of a line. The caesura is in the strong position in the third foot, but was also accepted in the strong position in the fourth foot. The final syllable is long as accusative plurals in *-as* are long.

Students had to spot the elision in the third foot and remember that *y* has to be scanned. The double *i*'s needed to be scanned as separate syllables. Students were given two marks for scanning the line correctly, one mark if they made two mistakes (such as getting one foot wrong or failing to include a caesura) and no marks if they made more than two mistakes. Just under half the responses scanned the line correctly.

Question 11

The nominatives *omnis* and *Teucra* interlock with the ablatives *longo* and *luctu* in the format ABAB.

Synchysis or interlocking word order is when pairs of words that agree appear in the order ABAB. One mark was given for correctly identifying the words in line 9 that form the synchysis and one mark for explaining why it is an example. The question did not ask students to discuss the effect of the synchysis, which many students did.

Question 12

The technique is an example of alliteration with the repeated initial *p*.

One mark was given for identifying alliteration. Responses did not have to explain the alliteration or even which letter was repeated, although many did. The question only asks for identification. Most responses were correct.

Question 13

This is an example of chiasmus as we have adjective (*desertos*), noun (*locos*), noun (*litus*) and adjective (*relictum*) in the order ABBA.

One mark was given for identifying the chiasmus and one mark for explaining why it is chiasmus. Just under half the responses gained full marks. Many responses discussed the effect of the chiasmus, which is not what the question asked.

Question 14

pārs stŭpēt| īnnŭp|tāē // dō|n(um) exī|ālē Mīn|ērvāē

The caesura will come in the strong position in the third foot.

Students had to recognise the elision in the fourth foot. Marks were given as in Question 10. Just over half the responses gained full marks.

Question 15

prāēcīpīt|ārē iŭ|bēnt // sŭb|iēctīs|v(e) ūrērē| flāmmīs,

The caesura is in the strong position in the third foot. Neither the *i* at the beginning of *iubent* nor the first *i* in *subiectis* is scanned, as they are both equivalent to *j* (consonantal *i*). The final syllable is long because it is an ablative plural.

Responses were awarded marks as in Question 10. Just under one-third of responses scored full marks.

The three questions on scansion did no more than test the students' knowledge of the basic rules. There was an elision in each line. Students should remember that *y* counts as a syllable in Latin and has to be marked. They also should be aware of the fact that the letter *i* is often the equivalent of a consonant. Great care needs to be taken when copying out the lines. The words *abiisse*, *petiisse* and *exitiale* were copied out incorrectly by some students with a consequence that their lines were then a syllable or two short. Students must make sure that they know all the basic rules.

Question 16a.

The narrator (Aeneas) suggests that the advice of Thymoetes may be treachery (*dolo*) or because Troy's fate was sealed (*iam ... ferebant*). On the other hand, the advice of Capys and those whose opinions were better (*melior sententia menti*) is because they think that it is a Greek trap (*insidias*) and a suspicious gift (*suspectaque dona*). He is, of course, saying this with hindsight. There is also a contrast between the use of 'urged' (*hortatur*) for Thymoetes and 'ordered' (*iubent*) for Capys and those agreeing with him.

One mark was given for each valid point made up to a maximum of three. The question clearly directed students to begin at *primusque* in line 15. Discussion of *molem mirantur* was, therefore, irrelevant. Students were expected to quote in brackets the Latin words on which they relied.

Question 16b.

The ordinary people (*vulgus*) do not know which advice to follow (*incertum*) and they are split apart (*scinditur*) in their enthusiasm for the opposing views (*studia in contraria*), just as they are split from the verb by their positions at either end of the line. The emphatic placement of the verb at the beginning of the line adds to its importance. The uncertain mob (*incertum ... vulgus*) enclose the opposing views (*studia in contraria*), the cause of their split decision. Responses could also discuss the chiasmic order of *incertum studia in contraria vulgus*.

One mark was given for each valid point from these up to a maximum of four. Responses had to address both vocabulary and word order. This did not have to be two of each, but could be three of one and one of the other, as long as both were discussed.

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

Responses must show where each part of their answer begins. Question 17a. does not require an introduction; Question 17b. needs only a short introduction. The mean score for Question 17 was very encouraging.

Question 17a.

When Aeneas finally reaches his home, Anchises refuses to leave Troy with him, as he considers that he is too old and crippled and will hinder the family's escape. He considers himself to be hated by the gods and useless to men. In response, Aeneas makes ready to put his armour back on and to rush back into battle in spite of Creusa's pleas to stay. At this moment the first portent occurs with the fire around Ascanius's head. This persuades Anchises to pray to Jupiter for a confirmation of what he sees as a favourable divine portent. The passage highlights Anchises's attitude to the gods and his reactions to events (which reflect current beliefs about the importance of the gods and divine signs in Virgil's day). They help him to change his mind at this critical moment.

The following are some of the points that students could make to answer this question.

Anchises is happy (*laetus*) because of the portent and lifts his eyes to the heavens (*oculos ad sidera ... extulit*) and raises his hands to the sky/heavens (*caelo palmas ... tetendit*) (a sign of prayer) as he prays to Jupiter for a confirming sign, relying upon his *pietas* (*Iuppiter omnipotens, precibus ... da deinde augurium ... haec omina firma*). His request for the confirming sign is not a sign of his stubbornness, but his belief in and respect for the gods.

The sudden crash of thunder is on the left (*subitoque fragore intonuit laevum*), the favourable side for Romans, and a shooting star crashes into Mount Ida (*de caelo lapsa ... stella ... Idaea claram se condere silva ... signantemque vias*), showing them the way to go.

Anchises is persuaded by these signs – the strong *victus* shows that his opposition to leaving is overcome. He lifts himself up (*se tollit ad auras*), addresses the gods (*adfaturque deos*) and worships the sacred star (*sanctum sidus adorat*). He says that there is no more need for delay (*nulla mora est*) as he will go where the native gods lead the way (*sequor et qua ducite adsum, di patrii*). He prays for them to save the family and his grandson, acknowledging the sign is heaven-sent and that the future of Troy is in divine hands (*servate domum, servate nepotem, vestrum hoc augurium, vestroque in numine Troia est*). He emphatically gives in (*cedo equidem*) and tells Aeneas that he no longer refuses to come with him (*nec, nate, tibi comes ire recuso*). His joy at the clear, favourable signs and the support of the gods is very obvious.

One mark was given for each valid point made from the above. It is pleasing that about three-quarters of responses scored half marks or more. There were many very good answers.

Some responses did not quote the passage in brackets. The maximum these could score was four marks, even if the response was perfect in other respects. If they only quoted one or two words, the maximum would be five.

Some students quoted words that did not match the points they were making in English. Answers that were written half in English and half in Latin did not receive full marks. For example, something like ‘he prays to (Iuppiter) to give (omina firma)’ is unacceptable, as is ‘Anchises is willing (tibi comes ire recuso)’. Students must write in English and show that they know which words in the Latin passage support their points by quoting the Latin in brackets. It was acceptable to quote a line or lines as a whole, by reference to the line numbers rather than by copying out the whole line. Some responses concentrated far too much on techniques. It may be relevant to mention a technique, but such mention should not be overdone. For example, there is repetition in lines 16 and 17, but that is secondary to the important point that the words make about Anchises’s prayer to the gods.

Question 17b.

These are some of the points that students might use to answer this question. This is a summary of the events of Book 2 on which discussion may be based.

When Hector’s ghost appears to Aeneas, the ghost tells him to save himself (*te eripe* 289) and gives him the sacred part of his mission: to save the sacred images and penates of Troy and find them a new home somewhere over the seas (293–5). There is no mention of the family at this stage.

In lines 314–17 Virgil uses significant vocabulary to describe Aeneas as he decides to go out to fight for the city. He is out of his mind (*amens*) and there is no reasoning behind his decision to fight (*nec sat rationis* 314); his mind is on fire with a desire to fight (*ardent animi* 316); anger and the destructive *furor* (316) are rushing him to take the wrong action.

It is not until line 559 that Aeneas’ thoughts turn to his family, after he has witnessed the killing of Polites and Priam by Pyrrhus.

at me tum primum saevus circumstetit horror.

obstipui; subiit cari genitoris imago,

ut regem aequaeuum crudeli vulnere vidi

vitam exhalentem; subiit deserta Creusa

et direpta domus et parvi casus Iuli.

He realises that he is the only survivor of the group of Trojans he gathered and decides to make his way to his home. On his way he sees Helen and contemplates killing her for all the death and devastation she has caused. Virgil describes how Aeneas is being carried along by frenzied feelings (*furiata mente* 588). When Venus confronts Aeneas (594–600), she too asks him why he is angry and in a state of *furor* (*nate, quis indomitas tantus dolor excitat iras? / quid furis aut quonam nostri tibi cura recessit?* 594–5). She asks him why he is not thinking of his family first. She explains that they would probably be dead already, if she was not protecting them.

non prius aspicias ubi fessum aetate parentem

liqueris Anchisen, superet coniunxne Creusa

Ascaniusque puer? quos omnes Graiae

circum errant acies et, ni mea cura resistat,

iam flammae tulerint inimicus et hauserit ensis.

When Venus has shown Aeneas the gods destroying Troy, she protects him as he makes his way home (604–31). There Anchises refuses to leave with them, as he believes that they will have a better chance to escape, if they are not slowed down by him (635–49). Aeneas asks whether his mother brought him home safely to watch Ascanius, his father and Creusa butchered by the Greeks in the way in which he had witnessed the butchery in Priam's palace (664–7).

Aeneas arms himself and prepares to return to the fight in spite of Creusa's plea to take them with him. She tells him that, if he thinks that the fight is hopeless, his first duty (*primum* 677) is to protect his home, Iulus, Anchises and her, as she holds out Iulus to him (671–8). The miracle of the burning hair and the following portents persuade Anchises to leave. He prays to the gods to save his household and his grandson. He says that he is now willing to leave (680–704).

Aeneas gives instructions to all the household about how to escape and to rendezvous at the temple of Ceres outside the city (705–29). There is panic when Anchises says that he can see soldiers approaching. They run along less familiar streets and do not stop until they reach the temple of Ceres. There they find that one person, Creusa, is missing. Aeneas decides to return to find her (730–51). He searches Troy in vain, finds their house in flames and sees the Greeks gathering booty, women and children (752–67). He is confronted by Creusa's ghost. The ghost tells him that she is not destined to leave Troy, as Cybele is keeping her there. She outlines what lies ahead for Aeneas and the Trojans. She farewells Aeneas and tells him to keep on loving their son Iulus (768–95). Aeneas returns to the temple and finds a surprising number of survivors ready for him to lead them wherever he must. As there is no hope of help, he concedes and makes for the hills with his father on his shoulders (786–804).

Their evidence from the narrative will help students to explore the two questions posed.

Aeneas learns the importance of his family when he sees the slaughter in Priam's palace, needs to be reminded of their importance by Venus and finally is prepared to leave the burning city, when signs from the gods convince his father to leave. He will not leave unless the whole family is with him. When he finds that Creusa is missing, his concern for the family forces him to re-enter Troy to try to find her. Her ghost persuades him to forget about her and to escape with the family and the other survivors. Each of these events help him to learn the importance of his family. They help him to change from the Homeric hero obsessed with glory or death in the early part of the book to the new Roman hero guided by *pietas*.

It is vital that Aeneas learns the importance of the family at this point in the narrative, as he now knows that he has to find a new Troy for his family and followers somewhere across the seas. During that search (Book 3) he is constantly advised and helped by his father, who, in Roman terms, is still the *paterfamilias*, as he learns to be the leader and father figure for those who escape Troy with him. We, the audience, already

know that Ilioneus, while addressing Dido, has described Aeneas as the excellent father of the Trojans (*pater optime Teucrum*). Aeneas' concern during the epic is to establish a safe, new Troy for his followers and especially his son Iulus, for whom this new city represents the future.

Students were not expected to cover all the ground suggested above, but it shows the possible points they could make. Some made other valid points.

Responses were assessed on knowledge and understanding of the prescribed set text and its relevance to the *Aeneid* as a whole, as appropriate. They were assessed on focus on the question, the validity of argument, cohesiveness and the quality of the supporting evidence used to argue the case. This evidence could come from the passage given, the prescribed book and, where appropriate, from the *Aeneid* as a whole. Relevance was a key requirement. Responses had to address the question; no marks could be awarded for irrelevance.

Students were required to identify the ways in which Aeneas learns about the importance of family and explain why it was important for him to learn these lessons at this stage in the epic. Responses had to address both parts. Answers to each part did not have to be equal in length. Most students spent more time discussing the first part of the question, but they had to make sure that they addressed both parts. They had to state why it is critical for Aeneas to learn about the importance of family at this early stage of the epic. The openness of the question allowed for a wide range of possible responses. Many were able to link their answer to the change of Aeneas from a Homeric to a Roman hero, but such discussion needed to focus on the events in Book 2 rather than on generalities. Many students were able to answer the question very well within the confines of Book 2; others produced evidence from other books, although there were some who wrongly used this as an opportunity to summarise a variety of events from other books to the detriment of concentrating on the events of Book 2.