

## Chief Reader Report on Student Responses: 2019 AP<sup>®</sup> Italian Language and Culture Free-Response Questions

• Number of Readers	34			
<b>Total Group</b>				
• Number of Students Scored	2,658			
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At	
	5	362	13.6	
	4	480	18.1	
	3	915	34.4	
	2	654	24.6	
	1	247	9.3	
• Global Mean	3.02			
<b>Standard Group*</b>				
• Number of Students Scored	2,000			
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At	
	5	116	5.8	
	4	347	17.4	
	3	777	38.9	
	2	562	28.1	
	1	198	9.9	
• Global Mean	2.81			

The following comments on the 2019 free-response questions for AP<sup>®</sup> Italian Language & Culture were written by the Chief Reader, Paola Morgavi of Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student preparation 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****Task:** E-mail reply**Topic:** Famiglia e società**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.13**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.01**What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?**

This task assessed writing in the interpersonal communicative mode by having the student write a reply to an e-mail message. Students were allotted 15 minutes to read the message and write the reply. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. Students needed to be able first to comprehend the e-mail and then to write a reply using a formal form of address. The reply must address all the questions and requests raised in the message, as well as ask for more details about something mentioned in the message.

The question assessed the students' performance in Interpersonal Writing by engaging them in a series of exchanges on a familiar topic within the course theme *Famiglia e società*. Content and context were provided by the e-mail from Valerio Martini, a manager at *Festival Internazionale degli Artisti di Strada*, a street festival that takes place in Fidenza, Italy, in September. The e-mail offered information about the program and the organization of the fourth edition of the festival. It talked about the variety of shows and performances, the presence of a gourmet food stand selling sandwiches prepared with local products, and lodging options. Students were expected to answer using a variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary appropriate to the context. They had to give information about themselves by answering two questions: the first about the main reason for their interest in attending the festival; the second about their lodging preference and/or any needs (“*esigenza*”) they might have during their stay in Fidenza. In addition, students had to demonstrate the ability to ask questions by asking for further information about something mentioned in the message. In this question content and skills were closely interwoven, and the task ultimately assessed what students could do with the language in a specific context.

**How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?**

The mean score for the e-mail reply for the standard group was 3.01 out of a possible 5 points. The mean score for the total group was 3.13. 2019 student performance on this task for both the standard and total groups was statistically the highest of the four free-response questions.

**Content and skills**

- Many responses lacked elaboration.
- Responses that provided elaboration talked about personal and family experiences in similar contexts, appreciation for the arts in general, and expressed interest in performing or displaying their own art works.
- A few responses did not address the second question because they were not able to figure out the meaning of words such as “*esigenze*”; “*alloggio*”; “*permanenza*.”
- Few responses lacked a request for additional information.
- Some responses requested information already given in the stimulus.
- Some responses acknowledged details from the stimulus and commented on them. For instance, they expressed appreciation for the opportunity to experience first-hand the Italian culture and/or they explained why they did not need accommodation.

**Language**

- Some students used a variety of compound and complex sentences.
- Few responses included transitional words.
- The vocabulary used was generally appropriate, showing a certain level of familiarity with the topic.
- Many responses were able to deal with unfamiliar expressions (e.g., “*esigenze*”; “*alloggio*”; “*permanenza*”) by focusing on the general meaning and relevant details of the stimulus.

- Many responses lacked accuracy and control of grammar, syntax, and usage of the language even if all the required information were provided. Recurring problems were errors in subject–verb agreement, article–noun agreement, adjective–noun agreement, and verb tenses and conjugation. There was a frequent use of verbs in the infinitive mode or present tense. Also, frequent conjugation errors were noticeable in the use of past tense (“*passato prossimo*”) and future tense (e.g., “*abitare*”). Some of these errors occurred even in the best responses.
- Many responses contained appropriate and varied vocabulary, though with spelling errors (“*Egreggio*”, “*personi*”; “*spetacoli*”; “*viaggiare*”; “*festeggiare*”). Very often mandatory accents were missing.
- Some responses showed Spanish or English interference (“*necesito*”; “*lugare*”; “*ospedaje*”; “*invitazione*”; “*advertismo*”; “*informativo*”; “*confortabile*”; “*suggestion*”; “*audienza*”).
- There was a noticeable lack in the use of idiomatic language, even though the responses were fully understandable and contained frequent elaboration.
- At times, the closing salutation consisted of memorized phrases or expressions.
- Several responses used an inappropriate register, mostly in the body of the e-mail message, as well as in the opening and closing.

**What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?**

The directions of this task clearly indicated that the e-mail was in response to an inquiry about a festival. While most responses were appropriate, some students asked to participate as performers or to sell their own art works; some offered services or gave availability for volunteering at the event.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some responses asked for the possibility to perform, show or sell their art works at the Festival.</li> <li>• Some responses asked for the opportunity to offer services.</li> <li>• Some responses asked for the possibility to help as volunteers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful responses indicated interest in attending the Festival. They clearly stated the reason why they wanted to attend the Festival, expressed their lodging preference, and mentioned how long they wanted to stay.</li> </ul>

**Based on your experience at the AP<sup>®</sup> Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?**

Students are accustomed to responding to e-mails, but most of this kind of correspondence involves interpersonal writing with friends, which requires the familiar register. This task, instead, required the use of formal register.

Teachers should do the following to help students improve their performance in this section of the exam:

- Guide students through the task’s instructions and ensure that they know and understand all its requirements: use of proper greetings and closings; answers to all questions; request for more details about something mentioned in the stimulus; use of the formal register.
- Explain the scoring guidelines for the task to students to familiarize them with expectations for performance.
- Familiarize students with the task and build their skills and confidence in responding by having them write practice e-mails under actual exam conditions. Score the responses according to the AP World Language and Culture Scoring Guidelines.
- Develop practice e-mails for students to respond to within the six course themes of the AP Italian Language and Culture Curriculum.
- Use the sample e-mail tasks from 2012 to 2019 available online on AP Central for practice.

- Assist students who continue to struggle with the formal form of verbs and, consequently, with formal address. It could be helpful to focus and practice the formal–informal distinction in writing and speaking through role-plays; the practice of both reading and answering business correspondence; the creation of everyday life situations (for instance, conversations with one’s doctor, a professor, a store manager, or an adult stranger).
- Develop vocabulary activities to provide students with more vocabulary resources.
- Encourage control and accuracy in grammar and syntax by underlining the importance of gender and number agreement, subject–verb agreement, and verb conjugations.
- Stress the importance of spelling and proper accentuation of words.
- Create opportunities for students to develop the habit of giving their work a final proofreading so that they can identify common lexical, grammatical, and/or syntactic mistakes. Encourage peer reviews, reflection, and discussion on the mistakes to avoid them in the future.

**What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?**

- The 2019 Course and Exam Description (CED) contains suggestions in the unit guides for building students’ skills in writing successful e-mail replies. The e-mail reply task model is presented and practiced in Units 1, 3, and 5. The CED can be accessed here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-italian-language-and-culture-course-and-exam-description-0.pdf?course=ap-italian-language-and-culture>.
- Teachers should become familiar with the range of online tools available to help students develop and track their skills, which are described here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap/news-changes/ap-2019/support-students-new-online-tools>.
- Teacher will now be able to access the AP Question Bank through AP Classroom. This is a searchable collection of past AP Exam questions where teachers will be able to find and access e-mail replies from previous exams. Teachers will also be able to access a new practice exam aligned to the 2020 Exam in the AP Question Bank, which provides practice in the e-mail reply and can be scored using the provided scoring guidelines.
- Teachers can view the AP World Language and Culture online module on interpersonal writing, *Interpersonal Communication: Developing Writing Abilities* by Nyan-Ping Bi, to learn some strategies that focus on developing students’ interpersonal writing skills. Teachers can access this online module here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules>.
- Teachers can download the scoring guidelines for this task available on the AP Italian Language and Culture Exam page and use them to review expectations for student performance: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam>.
- Teachers can choose a sample e-mail reply prompt from the posted free-response questions from 2012–2019 and access the corresponding student sample responses of high, mid, and low performances to share with students so they can examine student work vis-à-vis the scoring guidelines. This will inform them further of expectations for performance on this task, as well as the evaluative criteria for each score point: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam>.
- Teachers can assign e-mail replies for students to complete under the same conditions and time constraints as on the exam and then score them using the scoring guidelines. Feedback to students should focus on what students should do to move their performance to the next higher level.

**Question #2****Task:** Persuasive essay**Theme:** Identità privata e pubblica**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.08**Standard Group Mean Score:** 2.98***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This task assessed writing in the presentational communicative mode by having the student write a persuasive essay on a given topic while referencing three sources of information about the topic. Students were first allotted 6 minutes to read the essay topic and the two printed sources. Then they listened to the one audio source twice. Afterward they had 40 minutes to write the essay. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. Students needed to be able first to comprehend the three sources and then to present their different viewpoints. They also had to present their own viewpoint and defend it thoroughly, using information from all of the sources to support the essay. As they referred to the sources, they had to identify them appropriately. Furthermore the essay had to be organized into clear paragraphs.

The course theme for the persuasive essay task was *Identità privata e pubblica*, and the prompt asked students to express their own opinions on how the elderly can play an active role in society and everyday life. The response needed to be based on three different sources:

- A written article about the use of social media by the elderly, where the journalist praises the user-friendliness of Facebook and argues that it has improved the elderly's lives by allowing them to preserve and share memories, to share recipes, and to feel part of grandchildren's lives; thus, defeating loneliness.
- A chart (based on data collected in 2008–2009) showing typical activities performed by Italian students, workers, and the elderly in a typical day.
- An audio source where two grandparents talk with a journalist about their “work” as babysitters of their grandchildren and how this engagement is emotionally rewarding but physically demanding.

The prompt was in the form of a question and did not require previous knowledge of the topic. The three sources provided students with the contextual and content support to develop their essays. However, students were expected to understand the main idea(s) and supporting details of the three sources; understand unfamiliar and idiomatic vocabulary by inferring its meaning from the context; and comprehend paragraph-length discourse and structures. Students were expected to demonstrate critical reading skills by distinguishing facts from opinions, understanding the intent of the text, and using all that information to develop and defend their argument.

***How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?***

The main score for the standard group was 2.98 out of a possible 5 points. The mean score for the total group was 3.08. For both the standard and total groups, performance on this task was the second highest of the four free-response questions.

**Content and Skills**

The level of achievement of students on the task varied:

- Most responses were able to identify the main idea(s) of each source, some supporting details, and the intent of the text.
- Some responses did not address the prompt and talked about technology, cyberspace, and cyberbullying, or how to spend free time in general. Nevertheless, they were still able to demonstrate a certain degree of comprehension of the sources.
- Many responses did not integrate content from all three sources to support their viewpoints, but they often cited or identified at least two sources.
- A few responses did not provide effective treatment of the topic within the context of the task because students were not able to fully understand the third source while offering their own viewpoint.

- A few responses wrote summaries of the sources without effectively using the information in support of their argument.
- Some responses reflected a misinterpretation of the chart (Source #2) and/or of the audio (Source #3).
- Some responses demonstrated a moderate/low degree of comprehension of the sources.
- A few responses stated their own viewpoint but were not able to develop and defend it.
- Most responses were able to identify products and practices related to the topic and discern the perspectives behind them.

### **Language**

- There was a lack of accuracy and variety in grammar, syntax, and usage of the language.
- There were frequent errors in subject–verb and noun–adjective agreements.
- There were frequent errors in the use of possessive adjectives and their agreement with the noun.
- There was frequent use of verbs in the infinitive indicating that many students struggle with tense recognition and conjugation.
- There was low variety in the use of verbal modes. Very few responses used subjunctive and conditional modes and if-clause structure.
- There were frequent spelling mistakes.
- Most responses developed paragraph-length discourse with a variety of simple, compound, and complex sentences. The majority used simple and compound sentences to construct their paragraphs.
- Most responses included strings of sentences rather than paragraph-length discourse.
- The vocabulary used was generally appropriate indicating that students were familiar with the topic; some responses included idiomatic expressions.

### ***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?***

The task required students to write a persuasive essay to submit to an Italian writing contest. The essay topic was based on three sources offering different information and data on the topic. Students understood well Source #1 and referred to it appropriately. Most students understood Source #2 while some misunderstood Source #3. However, students somehow managed to extrapolate and pull information from these last two sources and use them in support of their argument.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The chart in Source #2 indicated the amount of time students, workers, and the elderly spend in daily activities during a typical day. Some responses concluded that:</li> <li>• The elderly already work in society, interpreting <i>lavoro familiare</i> (family work) as a real and remunerated job.</li> <li>• The elderly have a lot of free time therefore they are inactive and do nothing to contribute to society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful responses correctly understood the source’s information and used it to support their argument—how the elderly’s time spent with “family work” helps them feel useful and an active part of society.</li> <li>• Successful responses used information from Source #2 to support their argument on how free time allows the elderly to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. be useful and help their families;</li> <li>2. engage and connect with family, friends, and society in general through social media;</li> <li>3. volunteer, go back to school to learn new things, travel the world, and enjoy life.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The audio in Source #3 reported how two grandparents help their kids by taking care of their grandchildren, even if they live 80 kilometers away and travel back and forth. Some responses concluded that:</li> <li>• The elderly spend their time traveling.</li> <li>• The elderly work as babysitters for money.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful responses correctly understood Source #3 and used it to support their argument on how <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• grandparents/elderly feel useful when they take care of their grandchildren.</li> <li>• grandparents/elderly feel engaged and active when they take their grandchildren to the park or play with them.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?**

Teachers should do the following to help students improve their performance in this part of the exam:

- Make sure students understand the nature and characteristics of a persuasive essay.
- Develop strategies and activities that help students recognize the sources' viewpoints.
- Remind students that the sources do not necessarily express viewpoints in favor of or against the topic.
- Provide students with strategies on how to express their own viewpoint on a topic and build their argument in a clear and organized manner with supporting evidence from the three sources.
- Stress the importance of clear handwriting, spelling, proper accentuation of words, gender- and number-agreement, subject-verb agreement, and verb conjugations. Create opportunities for students to develop the habit of giving their essays a final proofreading so that they can identify common lexical, grammatical, and/or syntactic mistakes. Encourage peer reviews, class analysis, reflection, and discussion of common errors to help students avoid them in the future.
- Review with the students the most common vocabulary mistakes, especially those that derive from English interference (e.g., “*connettare*” for “connect”; “*finalmente*” for “finally”; “*involvere*” for “involve”; “*assumere*” for “assume”).

- Contextualize familiar and high-frequency verbs that have more than one meaning to help recognition. Most responses showed problems with the following verbs: “to live” (*vivere* vs. *abitare*); “to say” (*dire* vs. *parlare*); “to know” (*sapere* vs. *conoscere*).
- Remind students to carefully read the prompt and emphasize the fact that the essay is above all a response to it, while the information from the three sources serves to support students’ argument on the topic raised by the prompt.
- Remind students to read carefully the introduction accompanying the sources.
- Constantly expose students to authentic materials in instruction and assessment.
- Work on the comprehension and interpretation of authentic written and oral materials.
- Practice listening comprehension and provide note-taking strategies such as listing key words, key ideas and relevant details.
- Encourage students to take notes about the sources and use them to design an outline before writing the essay.
- Develop activities to identify examples of summary versus integration of sources and provide strategies on how to incorporate information from sources to support an argument.
- Remind students that quantity does not necessarily means quality. Invite them to be more concise; many low scoring responses were two-three page-long but lacked a coherent argument.
- Familiarize students with the scoring guidelines and essay samples posted on AP Central; read, analyze, and discuss the samples in class with them to understand how the scoring guidelines are applied.
- Train students to use common transitional elements and cohesive devices (e.g., *prima di tutto*; *inoltre*; *poi*; *quindi*; *infine*; *da ultimo*; *per finire*; *in conclusione*) while avoiding false cognates such as *finalmente* for “finally.”
- Assign the sample tasks from 2012 to 2019 available online on AP Central for the purpose of practice. Score them using the scoring guidelines, and provide feedback that will help students get to the next higher level of performance on future essays.
- Remind students to use larger handwriting so that responses are more legible.

**What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?**

- The 2019 Course and Exam Description (CED) contains suggestions in the unit guides for building students’ skills in writing successful essays. The essay’s name is changing in 2019 to “argumentative essay” and the argumentative essay task model is presented and practiced in Units 2, 4, and 6. This task is scaffolded to build students’ skills and confidence. The first time it appears in Unit 2, students write an argumentative essay responding to a prompt using only two sources, and subsequently in Units 4 and 6, write essays using three sources. The CED can be accessed here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-italian-language-and-culture-course-and-exam-description-0.pdf?course=ap-italian-language-and-culture>.
- Teachers should become familiar with the range of online tools available to help students develop and track their skills that are described here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap/news-changes/ap-2019/support-students-new-online-tools>.
- Teachers will now be able to access the AP Question Bank through AP Classroom. This is a searchable collection of past AP Exam questions where teachers will be able to find and access persuasive essay tasks from previous exams.
- Teachers will also be able to access a new practice exam in the AP Question Bank that will provide practice with the essay task and can be scored using the scoring guidelines provided.
- Teachers should view the two AP World Language and Culture online modules on Presentational Writing; the first: *Presentational Communication, A Focus on Writing*, by Federica Santini, and the second: *Building Students’ Skills in Developing Effective Arguments*, by Ann Mar to learn some strategies that focus on developing students’ presentational writing skills. Teachers can access these two online modules here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules>.
- Teachers should download the scoring guidelines for this task available on the AP Italian Language and Culture Exam page and use them to review expectations for student performance as well as the evaluative criteria for each score point: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam>.



- Teachers should choose a sample persuasive essay prompt and its sources from the posted free-response questions from AP Central: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam> and access the corresponding student sample responses of high, mid, and low performances to share with students, so that they can examine student work vis-à-vis the scoring guidelines. This will inform them further of expectations for performance on this task.
- Teachers should assign other persuasive (argumentative) essay prompts from under the same conditions and time constraints as on the exam and then score them using the scoring guidelines. Feedback to students should focus on what students should do to move their performance to the next higher level.

**Question #3****Task:** Conversation**Topic:** Vita contemporanea**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 2.80**Standard Group Mean Score:** 2.57***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This task assessed speaking in the interpersonal communicative mode by having the student respond as part of a simulated oral conversation. Students were first allotted 1 minute to read a preview of the conversation, including an outline of each turn in the conversation. Then the conversation proceeded, including 20 seconds for students to speak at each of five turns in the conversation. The series of five responses received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. The responses had to appropriately address each turn in the conversation, according to the outline, as well as the simulated interlocutor's utterance.

The course theme for the conversation task was *Vita contemporanea*. For this task students needed to respond to five audio prompts spoken by Antonio, an Italian cousin who went with the student to the stadium for a football game.

The question assessed the students' performance in interpersonal speaking by engaging them in a series of exchanges on a familiar topic—violence and dangers involved in sports like football, rugby, and hockey; sport preferences—generated by Antonio's inquiries. The students had to interact with the interlocutor to produce language that appropriately responded to Antonio's questions. They were expected to understand Antonio's utterances by relying on familiar vocabulary or by using the context to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words. They needed to maintain the conversation in a culturally appropriate fashion consistent with the informal register. Moreover, the conversation required students to perform a series of language functions—answer questions; make suggestions; express preferences and opinions and justify them; give reassurance and suggest an alternative plan—through simple, compound, and complex sentences and through the use of different time frames.

1. Antonio goes to a football game for the first time with the student, who is his cousin. Antonio is very excited about the new experience and the atmosphere at the stadium. During an intermission he proposes buying something to eat and asks the student what would be good to try. The student had to make suggestions and express a preference.
2. Antonio shares his opinion about how dangerous sports like football can be for adolescents and asks for the student's opinion. The student had to express an opinion and explain the reasons behind it.
3. Antonio claims that rugby is probably the most violent sport in Italy, as football and hockey are in America. Then he asks the student why such violent sports are so popular. The student had to give a detailed answer.
4. Antonio tells the student that he prefers outdoor sports like biking. Then he asks for the student's preference. The student had to express a preference and provide an explanation for it.
5. Antonio informs the student about an upcoming hockey game. He is not interested in hockey and asks if, by chance, the student intends to take him to that game too. The student had to reassure him and propose an alternate plan.

***How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?***

The mean score for the standard group was 2.57 out of a possible 5 points. The mean score for the total group was 2.80. Both the standard group and the total group performance on this response were statistically lower than the two writing tasks, but it was higher than performance by both groups on free-response question 4, the Cultural Comparison.

## Content and Skills

The most problematic questions were 2 and 3, in this order. It was hard for many students to accomplish the following tasks: understand the question (Question 2 and 3), express their opinion (Question 2 and 3), and support it. The responses to these questions were only generally appropriate, mainly due to misinterpretation/misunderstanding of vocabulary.

Below are the details:

- **Question 2** → Antonio says that watching the football game made him wonder whether football, along with similar sports, may be too dangerous for adolescents (“*Ora che vedo il football da vicino, mi chiedo se certi sport non siano troppo pericolosi per i ragazzi della nostra età*”), and then he solicits the student’s opinion (“*Sei d’accordo?*”). Few students expressed and justified their opinion about the dangers involved in sports like football while the majority talked about what they like or dislike about football in general.
- **Question 3** → Antonio claims that violent sports are popular in both Italy and America (“*In Italia lo sport più violento è probabilmente il rugby. In America, forse, il football e l’hockey*”). Then he asks the student why such a violent sport can be so popular (“*Perché pensi che sport come questi siano così popolari?*”). Students struggled either to think critically in order to answer the question or lacked the lexical resources and syntactical structures to respond appropriately.

## Language

- Most responses demonstrated basic vocabulary and limited use of idiomatic language. Lack of vocabulary resources affected the quality of the responses, especially for questions 2 and 3 that required higher order of thinking.
- Accuracy and variety in grammar, syntax, and usage was not always present.

## What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Students had to participate in an informal conversation on a familiar topic related to sports within the course theme *Vita contemporanea*. They had to maintain mostly uncomplicated communicative exchanges, express opinions and preferences, and provide supporting facts. However, some students did not understand some questions—mainly questions 2 and 3—posed by Antonio. Consequently, their responses were only generally appropriate.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some responses simply expressed likes and dislikes in the second turn of the conversation, such as “<i>I like American football and I know many players playing in Italian teams. My favorite player is ...</i>”</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Successful responses included elaboration such as “<i>Yes, I think that football is very dangerous because it can cause damage to the brain and other parts of the body. So, young people must be cautious and vigilant when playing those sports.</i>”</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In response to the question about the student’s opinion regarding the popularity in Italy and in America of sports that may be violent, often the answers were such as “<i>I think that these sports are popular because many Americans watch them on TV and many young people play them</i>” omitting to discuss the reasons behind their popularity.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Successful responses presented the student’s opinion supported by details like: “<i>I think that people are attracted by violent sports because it can be interesting and entertaining to see players engaged in a game that resembles a battle.</i>”</li></ul>

**Based on your experience at the AP<sup>®</sup> Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?**

Teachers should do the following to help students improve their performance in this part of the exam:

- Make students aware that sometimes they need to produce more than one language function in response to an audio prompt. Provide practice conversations that have students engage with two language functions in at least some of their responses.
- Make students aware that they may be asked to deal with some complicated situations or less familiar language functions, as described in the outline of the conversation. Suggest an alternative, pose a problem, express doubts, express an opinion and justify it.
- Have students practice informal, spontaneous conversations in class by providing them with topics and outlines that require them to greet, answer and ask questions, provide details, make a counterproposal, give advice, raise a doubt, etc.
- Encourage students to read and listen very carefully to the instructions about how to respond to the task, making sure that they make connections between what they hear and what is written in the conversation outline.
- Provide opportunities for students to respond to five prompts, including those that require them to initiate an exchange, such as asking a question.
- Have students develop a sense of how to respond in 20 seconds. Encourage them to provide elaboration and details and to try to fully use their response time. This sort of practice needs to occur throughout the school year.
- Have students listen carefully to the prompt and say something relevant in response, even if what they say is brief.
- Provide students with some strategies to use if they do not understand one of the prompts or get off-track.
- Offer students opportunities to listen to a wide variety of female and male voices. Appropriate audio clips from various media would be useful for students both in and outside the classroom. Many of these materials are easily accessible on the Internet.
- As the speaking component in the classroom should not be solely focused on the conversation task, a variety of activities should be introduced into the curriculum, such as interviews and debates. Consequently, teachers should also:
  - Provide opportunities for students to respond spontaneously in a variety of situations and contexts. This will improve students' fluency and confidence in their speaking abilities.
  - Encourage students to pay attention to verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, and other language structures that may impede effective communication when incorrect. Encourage students to self-correct when they hear themselves making a mistake, as successful self-correction is always viewed favorably.
- Help students expand vocabulary by exploring many of the recommended contexts/subthemes of the six required course themes. Work with students to develop their skills in circumlocution so that they will be able to continue speaking even if they do not have the most appropriate word for the context.
- Assign the sample conversations from 2012 to 2019 available online on AP Central under the same conditions and time constraints as on the exam, and then score them using the exam scoring guidelines. Feedback to students should focus on what students should do to move their performance to the next higher level.

**What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?**

- The 2019 Course and Exam Description (CED) contains suggestions in the unit guides for building students' skills for engaging in the conversation task model. This task model is specifically presented and practiced in Units 1, 3, and 5. The CED can be accessed here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-italian-language-and-culture-course-and-exam-description-0.pdf?course=ap-italian-language-and-culture>.
- Teachers will now be able to access the AP Question Bank through AP Classroom. This is a searchable collection of past AP Exam questions where teachers will be able to find and access conversation tasks from previous exams.
- Teachers will also be able to access a new practice exam in the AP Question Bank that provides practice with the conversation task and can be scored using the scoring guidelines provided.

- Teachers should become familiar with the range of online tools available to help students develop and track their skills, which are described here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap/news-changes/ap-2019/support-students-new-online-tools>.
- Teachers should go to AP central and view the AP World Language and Culture online module by Clarissa Adams-Fletcher in order to learn about strategies, resources, and activities that focus on developing interpersonal speaking skills. Teachers can access this online module here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules>.
- Teachers should download a copy of the scoring guidelines for the conversation task available on the AP Italian Language and Culture Exam page and use them to review expectations for student performance. They should have students listen to the sample student responses available on AP Central and use the scoring guidelines to understand how performance is assessed on the exam: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam>.

**Question #4****Task:** Cultural Comparison**Max. Points:** 5**Theme:** Vita contemporanea**Total Group Mean Score:** 2.53**Standard Group Mean Score:** 2.37***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This task assessed speaking in the presentational communicative mode by having the student make a comparative oral presentation on a cultural topic. Students were allotted 4 minutes to read the topic and prepare the presentation and then 2 minutes to deliver the presentation. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. The presentation had to compare the student's own community to an area of the Italian-speaking world, demonstrating understanding of cultural features of the Italian-speaking world. Furthermore the presentation had to be organized clearly.

The course theme for the cultural comparison task was *Vita contemporanea*. The task consisted of a question that asked students about the role of women in the working world in both their own community and in a target language community they know well. Students had to plan and produce a spoken presentation in relation to the given topic that compares their own community to an area of the Italian-speaking world.

***How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?***

The mean score for the standard group was 2.37 out of a possible 5 points. The mean score for the total group was 2.53. Both the standard group and the total group performance on this response were statistically the lowest of all four free-response questions.

**Content**

In order to demonstrate an understanding of different features of the target culture, students could rely on their previous and personal knowledge, first-hand experience, or recombine information from material they saw, analyzed, and discussed in class when covering the six themes of the AP Italian Language and Culture curriculum. This year the theme was *Vita contemporanea*. Responses, however, could make use of other disciplines and other themes and subthemes inherent to the topic within the AP Curriculum (e.g., Family and Society and Personal and Public Identities).

**Skills and language**

Responses were expected to accomplish the comparison task by organizing their presentation in paragraph-length discourse. It was expected that students use a variety of simple and compound sentences in major time frames. Vocabulary needed to be varied and appropriate for the context and make the presentation understandable. Also, pronunciation, intonation, and pacing contributed to the accomplishment of the task by making the presentation comprehensible.

***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?***

Common misconceptions included the following:

- A few responses did not answer the prompt and talked instead about subjects irrelevant to the topic (e.g., tourism, food, culture, traveling).
- Some responses talked about the general topic of women, without relating it to the field of work and/or professional world.
- Some responses discussed the topic only within the target culture or their own culture.
- Some responses focused on the “*Tema del corso*” (*Vita contemporanea*) instead of developing a response to the “*Argomento della relazione*.” Therefore, in their presentation some students talked about contemporary culture instead of developing a response to the specific task topic.

- Many responses showed stereotypical representations of women in the target culture and/or presented outdated content that does not reflect the role of women in contemporary Italian culture, such as references to Italian families being particularly large (“*famiglie numerose*”); references to the idea that most Italian women do not work, that Italian women have no access to most professional fields, or that all Italian women are engaged in child-rearing.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few responses did not address the prompt and talked instead about subjects irrelevant to the topic (e.g., tourism, food culture, traveling).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responses clearly addressed the role of women in the working/professional world in both the target culture and the student’s own culture.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some responses focused on the course theme (“<i>Vita contemporanea</i>”); thus, addressed contemporary culture in general instead of talking about the specific task topic (“<i>Argomento della relazione</i>”).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responses developed an effective presentation by focusing on women in the working/professional world within the general theme of Contemporary Life.</li> </ul>

**Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?**

Teachers should do the following to help students improve their performance in this part of the exam:

- Advise students to read the directions carefully and make sure that in their response they address "*Argomento della relazione*" and not "*Tema del corso*".
- Remind students that they must address all aspects of this task by making clear comparisons between their own community and a community belonging to the target culture and by including relevant examples.
- Remind students that the target culture has to be mentioned explicitly by referring to Italy, Italian culture, Italians, or such.
- Discuss and clarify the term “community” with students as defined in the “Clarification Notes” at the beginning of the World Language and Culture Scoring Guidelines for Task 4.
- Have students practice making connections among different topics, so that they are prepared to address all elements of the task. This year, for instance, students should have been ready to discuss not only women, but women in relation to work.
- Select updated, current materials to discuss the target culture and guide students toward moving from stereotypes and generalizations to a deeper understanding of the Italian culture.
- Use current data on equity, family structures, labor issues, etc.
- When discussing historical aspects of the Italian culture, highlight changes in societal structures and current trends and guide students to analyze and compare the past and the present realities in Italy.
- When using materials from pop culture (e. g., songs, scenes from TV shows, etc.) make sure to strengthen students’ cultural competence by also including hard data and news reports. Compare and contrast the two sets of materials to help students move away from common generalizations that may be present in pop culture.
- Provide students with a list of conjunctions, adverbs, and transitional elements for making comparisons.
- Provide graphic organizers or templates as models to build students’ skills in organizing, comparing, and presenting information while preparing a cultural comparison.
- Continue to review cohesive devices and transitional elements so that students can deliver an organized presentation.
- Have students pay attention to grammar and syntax. Even though the AP exam is not focused on grammar, students cannot effectively communicate and perform well when they have a limited control of grammar and syntax.
- Use the prompts from 2012 to 2019 available online on AP Central for the purpose of practice.

**What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?**

- The 2019 Course and Exam Description (CED) contains suggestions in the unit guides for building students' skills in the cultural comparison task model. This task model is specifically presented and practiced in all six units and is scaffolded to build students' skills and confidence over time. For example, in Unit 1, students give a one-minute cultural presentation about an aspect of culture learned in that unit; in Unit 2, they do a one-minute cultural comparison; in Unit 3, a full two-minute cultural comparison, and subsequent full comparisons on topics of increasing difficulty in units 4, 5, and 6. The CED can be accessed here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-italian-language-and-culture-course-and-exam-description-0.pdf?course=ap-italian-language-and-culture>
- Teachers will now be able to access the AP Question Bank through AP Classroom. This is a searchable collection of past AP Exam questions where teachers will be able to find and access cultural comparison tasks from previous exams.
- Teachers will also be able to access a new Practice Exam in the AP Question Bank that will provide practice with the cultural comparison task and can be scored using the scoring guidelines provided.
- Teachers should become familiar with the range of online tools available to help students develop and track their skills, which are described here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap/news-changes/ap-2019/support-students-new-online-tools>
- Teachers should go to AP central and view the AP World Language and Culture online module on presentational speaking by Angelika Becker in order to learn strategies, resources, and activities that focus on developing presentational speaking skills. Teachers can access this online module here: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules>.
- Teachers should download a copy of the scoring guidelines for this task available on the AP Italian Language and Culture Exam page and use them to review expectations for student performance: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-italian-language-and-culture/exam>.
- Teachers should have students apply the scoring guidelines to student samples of cultural comparison responses posted on the exam page on AP Central to help them understand how the scoring guidelines are applied to student work.