

Chief Reader Report on Student Responses: 2018 AP[®] German Language and Culture Free-Response Questions

• Number of Readers	53			
Total Group				
• Number of Students Scored	5,053			
• Score Distribution		Exam Score	N	%At
		5	1,131	22.4
		4	1,146	22.7
		3	1,309	25.9
		2	1,091	21.6
		1	376	7.4
• Global Mean	3.31			
Standard Group*				
• Number of Students Scored	3,462			
• Score Distribution		Exam Score	N	%At
		5	323	9.3
		4	813	23.5
		3	1,063	30.7
		2	924	26.7
		1	339	9.8
• Global Mean	2.96			

* Standard students generally receive most of their foreign language training in U.S. schools. They did not indicate on their answer sheet that they regularly speak or hear the foreign language of the exam, or that they have lived for one month or more in a country where the language is spoken.

The following comments on the 2018 free-response questions for AP[®] German Language and Culture were written by the Chief Reader, Jennifer Redmann, Associate Professor of German, Franklin & Marshall College. 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:** Volunteering for a city beautification project**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.44**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.29***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This task assessed writing in the interpersonal communicative mode by having students write a reply to an e-mail message. Students were given 15 minutes to read the message and write their 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 had to address all the questions and requests raised in the message, as well as ask for more details about something mentioned in the message.

In this exam, within the theme of Beauty and Aesthetics (Schönheit und Ästhetik), students replied to an e-mail from Marissa Ballwein, director of the initiative "Young People Beautify Spaces" (Jugend verschönert Flächen). In the opening of her message, Ms. Ballwein thanks the recipient for showing interest in the organization and explains that it has been working since 2009 to give creative young people the opportunity to use their talents to beautify public spaces. She goes on to give examples of possible projects, ranging from planting flowers to painting gray concrete walls, but she also invites the students to submit their own ideas.

In order to gain a better idea of each student's potential participation in the initiative, she poses two questions in the e-mail: 1) What kind of ideas do you have for projects that would make our town more beautiful and more attractive? (Was für Ideen haben Sie für Projekte, die unsere Stadt schöner oder attraktiver machen würden?) and 2) As we have several different groups that meet either during the week or on weekends, we would like to know when you are able to participate (Da wir verschiedene Gruppen haben, die sich entweder unter der Woche oder an Wochenenden treffen, würden wir gern wissen, wann Sie mitmachen können.) Marissa Ballwein closes the e-mail by expressing her hope that the e-mail was helpful and by offering her assistance with any additional questions the e-mail recipient might have.

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?

In their responses, most students were able to maintain the interpersonal exchange in an appropriate manner by answering the two questions with some degree of elaboration and posing an additional question. Many AP German curricula incorporate the topics of nature and environmentalism, and for that reason, many students were able to relate to the idea of planting trees and flowers as a possible beautification project. Strong responses incorporated varied and appropriate vocabulary and idiomatic expressions for describing possible project ideas and explaining when and how the student would like to participate. Strong responses also featured culturally appropriate writing conventions and register, varied and appropriate vocabulary, and a range of simple, compound, and complex sentences.

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

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was clear in some responses that students had trouble comprehending the concept of the city beautification project as described in the e-mail and therefore offered inappropriate project ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses offered clearly appropriate project ideas, such as cleaning up a city park and planting flowers.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although most students opened and closed their e-mail replies in an appropriately formal manner, some responses struggled to maintain a formal register throughout the e-mail reply, addressing the recipient by her first name or shifting to informal pronouns in the body of the e-mail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses were able to maintain a formal register throughout their e-mail replies, not only by providing an appropriately formal greeting and closing, but also through consistent formal pronoun usage (<i>Sie/Ihr/Ihnen</i> vs. <i>du/dein/dir</i>) and word choice appropriate to the situation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some responses completed all task requirements by providing answers to questions and posing an additional question, but only in a minimal, unelaborated manner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses offered clearly appropriate replies with frequent elaboration, demonstrating ease and clarity of expression in the writer's use of German.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the vast majority of responses replied to the two questions posed in the e-mail, many failed to ask for more details about something in the message, as specified in the task directions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses addressed all task requirements, including asking for more details about something in the message.

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?

- The e-mail reply is primarily an interpersonal writing task, but it also requires skill in interpretive reading. Teachers should provide students with frequent opportunities to read and analyze e-mails before writing replies, drawing students' attention in particular to the functions and referents of personal pronouns.
- Since students have only 15 minutes to read and respond to the e-mail on the exam, it is helpful for teachers to set time limits for students to write practice e-mails.
- Students should imagine that the e-mail is addressed to them personally and not be confused by impersonal salutations like "Dear Student." Students should keep in mind that they as writers will always use "ich" and will always be addressed as "Sie."
- It is imperative that students adhere to the task directions, answering all of the questions posed in the e-mail *and* asking for more details. Teachers could suggest that students make a list of the task requirements and check them off as they complete them.
- Students should work on maintaining a formal register throughout their e-mail replies and pay close attention to how register is reflected in pronouns and word choice, as well as in salutations and closings.
- Overuse of memorized phrases should be avoided, since it may hamper student production of meaningful content in their e-mail replies.

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

- Use and apply the [Scoring Guidelines](#) throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored
- Use examples of student performance found on AP Central to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can improve their performance
- Refer to the [exam information](#) page for additional e-mail tasks from previous years
- Meet with educators who teach AP French, Italian, and Spanish language and culture classes to determine what common shared issues there are across languages and to share strategies that will improve student performance.
- Have students respond to e-mails early in their language learning experience so they become familiar with the task and begin to integrate more sophisticated language well before the beginning of the AP experience.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures [online module](#) on interpersonal writing

Question #2**Task:** Persuasive Essay**Topic:** Environmental impact of travel**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.50**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.33***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This task assessed writing in the presentational communicative mode by having students 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 individual viewpoint and defend it thoroughly, using information from all the sources to support the essay. As they referred to the sources, they needed to identify them appropriately. Furthermore the essay had to be organized into clear paragraphs.

In this exam, within the theme of Global Challenges (*Globalisierung*), students wrote essays in response to the question of whether one should reduce travel and flying for environmental reasons (*Sollte man aus Umweltgründen weniger reisen und fliegen?*)

The first print source (*Quellenmaterial 1*) offers a variety of reasons why travel is important. The opening paragraph points out the benefit of creating physical distance to one's home by traveling and breaking out of the everyday routine of one's life. Travel is presented as a means of self-discovery and personal growth through an experience of one's own challenges, limitations, and fears. Simultaneously, travel helps us develop our own identity by forcing us to switch the perspective from which we view ourselves. The article concludes by stating that traveling broadens our horizons and provides us with new inspiration for our lives.

The second print source (*Quellenmaterial 2*), a table entitled "Touristic Climate-Footprint" (*Touristischer Klima-Fußabdruck*), offers six examples of journeys to different destinations, using different means of transportation and stays in various classes of accommodations; for contrastive purposes, it also provides details for just staying at home. The last column lists the overall ecological footprint in kilograms of carbon dioxide emissions for each option. A footnote to the table states that international climate experts have recommended an annual CO₂ emissions goal of 2,500 kg per individual, the equivalent of a single plane trip from Germany to New York City.

Quellenmaterial 3, the 3-minute audio which students are able to hear twice, presents an interview between the moderator, Stefan Siller, and the economist and growth critic, Professor Niko Paech. The interview begins with Paech narrating the circumstances of the only flight in his life, when he went to visit his doctoral adviser in Washington, D.C. Apart from that flight, he has decided to not use planes for transportation because of their adverse environmental impact. The conversation broadens into a wider discussion of the luxuries that we think we can allow ourselves, despite their environmental ramifications. Paech observes that if everyone were to travel to South Africa to see the wildlife there, it would lead to dark times for the planet. People may have the right to travel, but they should consider the competing rights of other people and future generations before making use of this right.

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?

In their responses, students were able to offer an effective or suitable treatment of the topic of whether one should avoid travel for environmental reasons. Most students understood the question, although a small number did not understand the word *Umweltgründen* and therefore did not discuss environmental concerns related to travel in their essays. Most students were able to relate their own personal experiences and opinions related to travel to the information about the environmental impact of tourism presented in the second and third sources. The three sources offered an array of perspectives and information on travel and its resulting carbon footprint, and in the strongest essays, responses were able to compare and contrast information from the sources and use it to support their own viewpoints. Strong essays

were marked by a clear organization that was facilitated by effective use of transitional words and cohesive devices, as well as varied and appropriate vocabulary and a variety of simple, compound and complex sentences.

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

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	Responses that Demonstrate Understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses neglected to state a clear viewpoint on the question from the outset of the essay, thus hampering the ability to build a persuasive argument. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong essays opened with a clear statement on the question of whether one should avoid travel for environmental reasons.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses summarized source material instead of integrating it into personal arguments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong essays were characterized by an integration of source material into the argument; in doing so, responses tended to draw on information from the sources most relevant to the student’s own point of view. Strong essays were frequently able to refute information from the sources by presenting a counter-argument, drawn either from the student’s own experiences or from the source material.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There seemed to be a misunderstanding of the source material, as shown by inaccurate paraphrases or by a failure to address one or more of the sources in their essays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong essays integrated key information and relevant details from the source material, thereby demonstrating a high degree of comprehension of the sources.

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 encourage students to read the overview to each of the three sources (*Übersicht*) carefully before diving into the source itself, since the overview will often preview key terms and points of view found in the source.
- Students should learn to develop clear outlines for their essays before they begin writing. Although working on an outline during the exam may take time away from writing, a short essay that is well organized and concisely argued will receive a higher score than a longer essay that is repetitive or rambling.
- Students should be encouraged to state their thesis (i.e. their answer to the question) early and draw on the source material to support that thesis, rather than begin with a summary of the sources.
- Students should take advantage of words and phrases from the source material in building their arguments, but they should be reminded to use quotation marks if they are citing the sources verbatim. In general, students should use direct quotes sparingly, since paraphrasing source material is a better way to demonstrate their comprehension of the material than direct citations. It is critical that students cite the sources as they draw on them, and students should feel free to use a short parenthetical citation form (e.g. Q1 for *Quellenmaterial 1*) to save time.
- If students do not know the German translation for a particular English word, they should do their best to circumlocute rather than simply insert an English word.
- While it is helpful for students to learn phrases typically found in academic essays (such as *laut des Textes* or *meiner Meinung nach*), they can detract from the persuasiveness of the student’s argument when used too frequently or inappropriately.

- Teachers should remind students that legible handwriting and correct punctuation, especially commas, contribute enormously to the readability of their essays. Students should practice producing legible handwritten essays, in pen and under a time limit.

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

- Use and apply the [Scoring Guidelines](#) throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored
- Use examples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can improve their performance. Have them pay particular attention to how the content from the sources is cited and integrated.
- Refer to the [exam information](#) page for additional essay tasks from previous years.
- Meet with educators who teach AP French, Italian, and Spanish language and culture classes to determine what common shared issues there are across languages and to share strategies that will improve student performance.
- Have students write essays based on sources early in their language learning experience so they become familiar with the task and begin to integrate more sophisticated language well before the beginning of the AP experience. For example, have students respond first to one source (article, chart or audio) and then gradually build up to having students integrate two and three sources.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures [online module](#) on presentational writing, as well as the module called *Building Students' Skills in Developing Effective Written Arguments*.

Question #3**Task:** Conversation**Topic:** Thomas' stolen bicycle**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.38**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.07***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This task assessed speaking in the interpersonal communicative mode by having students 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.

In this exam, within the theme of Everyday Life (*Alltag*), the interlocutor (Thomas) opens the conversation by expressing to the student that he has had a really bad day stating, "You won't believe what happened to me today." (*Du wirst nicht glauben, was mir gerade passiert ist.*) The directions contained in the outline of the conversation tell the student to respond by expressing sympathy and asking Thomas for details about his situation. In the second turn, Thomas tells the student that his bicycle was stolen and asks what he should do about it. The student is directed to react to the situation Thomas has described. In the third turn, Thomas provides additional details and asks for advice; he is very upset because only last week he received the expensive bicycle as a present from his parents. He asks what he should tell his parents. The student is directed to react and give advice. In the fourth turn, Thomas describes some options for what he could do, and he asks for the student's opinion about one option: He has been planning a trip to Italy, but he is now considering cancelling the trip in order to save the money to buy a new bicycle. What would the student do in his place? (*Was würdest du an meiner Stelle tun?*) The student is supposed to both state an opinion and back it up with a rationale. In the final turn, Thomas asks for input into another problem: How will he get home now without a bicycle? The directions tell the student to make a suggestion.

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?

In general, responses to the task showed that students understood the situation and related to Thomas' problem. In strong responses, students were able to maintain the conversation across all five turns in a clearly appropriate and fully comprehensible manner, drawing on varied vocabulary and demonstrating accuracy in grammar, syntax, and usage. Some students missed or misunderstood Thomas' statement that his bicycle had been stolen, and mistakenly believed that it was malfunctioning, an assumption that detracted from the overall appropriateness of their responses.

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

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses did not adhere to the conversation overview and responded inappropriately or only partially to the interlocutor's statements and questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses followed the conversation overview and demonstrated knowledge of idiomatic language for various kinds of speech acts (stating opinions, giving advice, etc.).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some responses, students clearly did not understand some of the words and phrases used by the interlocutor and gave inappropriate responses as a result. For example, in the second turn, some students misunderstood the word <i>gestohlen</i> and offered responses regarding how Thomas might get his bike repaired. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses were characterized by clearly appropriate statements in every turn of the conversation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses offered only brief, if still fully appropriate, replies to the interlocutor's questions and statements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses featured frequent elaboration, allowing the student to clearly demonstrate ease and clarity of expression.

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?

- Students should be reminded to read the task overview, since it may contain words and phrases that are relevant to the task itself, but they should avoid anticipating the topic presented in the overview (for example, by assuming that a problem with Thomas' bicycle means that it is broken). Instead they should listen carefully and follow the lead of the interlocutor.
- Students should actively learn the vocabulary items typically used in the conversation overview – both the meanings of the words (such as *begründen* or *Rat geben*), and the phrases that one would use to support an opinion, offer advice, and so on.
- In practicing the conversation, teachers should remind students to adhere to the overview and to avoid taking the conversation in a different direction, since that would undercut their ability to maintain the exchange with appropriate responses.
- Although students are not required to fill the 20 seconds in which they respond to each turn, they should be encouraged to elaborate within their responses and say as much as they can (while still maintaining the appropriateness of their responses). Unelaborated responses offer only limited information about students' vocabulary usage, grammatical accuracy, and ease and clarity of expression.
- The improvisational nature of the conversation lends itself to all kinds of role-playing in the classroom. From the earliest stages of the curriculum, teachers should provide students with opportunities to take on a role and practice responding appropriately in an unfamiliar situation. Within this context, students should learn words and phrases for opening and closing conversations, responding to questions, giving opinions, and dealing with complications.

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

- Use and apply the [Scoring Guidelines](#) throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored
- Use examples of student performance found on AP Central to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can improve their performance.
- Refer to the [exam information](#) page for additional conversation tasks from previous years.
- Meet with educators who teach AP French, Italian, and Spanish language and culture classes to determine what common shared issues there are across languages and to share strategies that will assist student performance.
- Work with students so they become familiar with how long 20 seconds last so they can become more comfortable responding within the timeframe.
- Teach students how to use the conversation outline to their advantage. Examine trends from year-to-year so that students can anticipate types of responses.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures [online module](#) on interpersonal speaking.

Question #4**Task:** Cultural Comparison**Topic:** School systems**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.61**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.45***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This task assessed speaking in the presentational communicative mode by having students 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 needed to compare the student's own community to an area of the German-speaking world, demonstrating understanding of cultural features of the German-speaking world. Furthermore the presentation had to be organized clearly.

In this exam, within the theme of Everyday Life (*Alltag*), students were asked about how the school system influences the life of people in their social environment. (*Wie beeinflusst das Schulsystem das Leben der Menschen in Ihrem sozialen Umfeld?*) In their oral presentations, students compared perspectives on this question in their home communities with those in a German-speaking region and were also invited to describe their own observations, experiences, or what they had learned in school.

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?

In general, students were able to make a presentation about school systems in their own communities and in the German-speaking world. The accessibility of the topic and its importance in the AP curriculum was demonstrated by the many and varied aspects of school life that students addressed in their presentations, including different types of schools, the structure of the school day, the role of clubs and sports in schools, social groups in schools, modes of transportation to and from school, and the relative importance of different school subjects. Although most students could describe some differences and similarities between schools in the two cultures, not all of these were able to effectively analyze how school systems influence communities, whether that was in the students' own area or in a German-speaking region.

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

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses failed to address the <i>influence</i> of school systems on their own community and German-speaking communities, offering instead only facts about schools, often in the form of a list and divorced of context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses provided not only information about school systems but also explained the <i>influence</i> of school systems on their home communities and in target-language cultures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses offered a list of similarities and differences related to schools, but did not offer further explanation or detail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses frequently focused on a limited number of similarities and differences, which allowed students to develop their examples with depth and detail within the two-minute time frame.

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?

- When preparing for the Cultural Comparison, teachers should remind students that they must both address the topic *and* compare the two cultures. The prompt for the Cultural Comparison always takes the form of a question, and students must make an effort to answer that question in their presentations. The question may require students to address the **meaning** of a particular cultural phenomenon, the **role** that it plays in German-speaking and American societies, or its **influence** on those societies. It is therefore important that students not only **describe** cultural phenomena, but also **explain** their importance or impact. Students should know that they may focus on a single cultural phenomenon in their presentations, as long as they address both cultures and answer the question with depth and detail.
- Students may want to consider beginning their presentations by addressing the German-speaking culture in order to maximize their opportunities to demonstrate knowledge of the target culture. Since they will naturally have more to say about their own communities, discussing their own culture later in the presentation may help them avoid running out of time before they are able to make an effective comparison. Alternatively, students may want to alternate between the two cultures in making points related to the topic of the presentation.
- In their presentations, students should avoid vague generalities by giving concrete examples from a specific region or city in the German-speaking world with which they are familiar. Mentioning the source of their information (a literary text or news article, an exchange student, or their teacher) makes their statements more convincing and adds to the overall effectiveness of the presentation. Use of phrases such as "the Germans" can lead to overly broad generalizations, and teachers should encourage students to use qualifiers such as "*some* Germans" or "*many* Germans" instead.
- Students can develop strategies for organizing their presentations by learning appropriate phrases for opening and closing the presentation and for transitioning between topics. At the same time, it is important that students keep their organizational statements brief in order to maximize the amount of time they have to communicate information.

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

- Use and apply the [Scoring Guidelines](#) throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored
- Use examples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can improve their performance.
- Refer to the [exam information](#) page for additional cultural comparison tasks from previous years.
- Meet with educators who teach AP French, Italian, and Spanish language and culture classes to determine what common shared issues there are across languages and to share strategies that will assist student performance.
- Begin having students develop cultural presentations early in their language learning experience so they become familiar with the task and begin to integrate more sophisticated language well before the beginning of the AP experience.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures [online module](#) on presentational speaking.