

## Chief Reader Report on Student Responses: 2025 AP<sup>®</sup> Music Theory Free-Response Questions

• Number of Readers	98		
<b>Music Theory</b>			
• Number of Students Scored	17,799		
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At
	5	3,339	18.8
	4	3,211	18.0
	3	4,221	23.7
	2	4,405	24.7
	1	2,623	14.7
• Global Mean	3.01		
<b>Music Theory Aural Subscore</b>			
• Number of Students Scored	17,799		
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At
	5	3,352	18.8
	4	3,198	18.0
	3	4,195	23.6
	2	4,588	25.8
	1	2,466	13.9
Global Mean	3.02		
<b>Music Theory Nonaural Subscore</b>			
Number of Students Scored	17,799		
Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At
	5	3,184	17.9
	4	3,398	19.1
	3	4,074	22.9
	2	4,488	25.2
	1	2,655	14.9
Global Mean	3.00		

The following comments on the 2025 free-response questions for AP<sup>®</sup> Music Theory were written by the Chief Reader Melissa Hoag, Oakland University. 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:** Convert between performed and notated music.

**Topic:** Melodic Dictation in F major, treble clef, compound meter

**Max Score:** 9

**Mean Score:** 4.06

***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

Students were expected to transcribe a heard four-measure melody into correct musical notation. Skills included:

- Converting an aural melody in treble clef, compound meter, and a major key into music notation
- Notating rhythms in compound meter including beat and division patterns, and subdivision at the sixteenth-note level
- Hearing and notating a primarily stepwise melody, with leaps in the tonic triad
- Hearing and notating a melody within the interval range of an octave

***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?***

Student responses demonstrated:

- Moderate ability in converting a heard melody into correct music notation
- Understanding of the topics (major key, treble clef, compound meter)
- Moderate to poor correct notation skills
- Moderate understanding of rhythm patterns consisting of dotted quarter notes and eighth notes
- Limited difficulty with pitch and rhythm as demonstrated by common errors of notation
- Diatonic melody that highlighted the ability to understand conjunct and disjunct motion

***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"><li>• Difficulty distinguishing between steps and skips and in metrically aligning pitches using correct music notation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ability to hear and correctly notate both pitches and rhythms of a diatonic melody</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficulty sensing melodic pulse in order to correctly identify rhythmic patterns</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ability to notate pitches correctly in a major key and rhythms in a compound meter.</li></ul>

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

- Watch the AP review videos.
- Focus more on compound meter (e.g. how to notate it, division of a dotted quarter-note into 3).
  - Teach what combinations of rhythms are possible in a beat of compound meter (rhythmic “cells”). You can make flash cards with all of the possible rhythms in a beat of compound meter (for example, make a stack with meters that have 8 in the bottom), and have students draw

several and perform them at sight (depending on meter and desired length). For example, one measure of  $6/8=2$  flash cards.

- **TIP:** Split the class in half (depending on size, it could be more groups). Have each group compose a four-bar rhythm using these cells, and practice their rhythm as a group. Then each group performs their rhythm to the class, who dictates it. (Excellent incentive for clear performance—having the rest of the class take dictation based on your performance!) Each group performs their melody and everyone dictates a few rhythms. Put their dictations on the screen to critique notation as a group and correct any issues.
- Practice correct musical notation so that students learn how to write melodies.
  - Practice beaming common rhythmic groupings in compound meter, such as 3 eighth notes in a single beam, or 2 eighths and 2 sixteenths in a single beam, as well as larger divisions, such as the difference between a dotted quarter and quarter-eighth notes. Demonstrate the difference between 6 eighth notes in  $6/8$  and  $3/4$ , for instance.
  - Also practice short segments, such as 4-6 note melodies, and have students only write the rhythms.
  - Emphasize neatness. Teach students that mistakes need to be fully erased and to use a sharp pencil. Details such as dots and accidentals should be extremely clear and in the correct location.
- Expose students to multiple timbres in dictation, not just piano.
- Practice writing and listening to melodies using different clefs.
- Lower-scoring students leaned more toward identifying pitch over rhythm; this might signal a need for more focus on rhythm patterns.
  - **TIP:** To help students develop rhythmic proficiency, devote time to practicing protonotation above the staff, such as writing long dashes and dots to determine rhythms that become translated into standard notation once the melody is more fully memorized.
- Practice hearing the differences between conjunct and disjunct melodies, such as the difference between an ascending scalar segment (Do-Re-Mi), from an ascending arpeggio (Do-Mi-Sol).
  - **TIP:** Encourage the students to first sing back the opening segment on a neutral syllable, stopping on the last note. Then, from the last note, have them sing stepwise down to tonic, counting how many scale steps it takes. This will develop sensitivity to contour and scale steps away from tonic. For instance, if the melody opens with ascending arpeggio, Do-Mi-Sol, students will sing the arpeggio and count five steps down to tonic, as opposed to singing down three steps from a stepwise, Do-Re-Mi, melody.
- Work on short term musical memory to help students prepare for only three hearings of the melody with limited time between each hearing.
  - **TIP:** A helpful approach is to work on “chunking”: focusing hearings on either the beginning or the end of the phrase, before working on the harder middle part of the melody. For later hearings, you can guide them to listen to chunks, such as an ascending or descending stepwise segments, disjunct segments, or rhythms that employ similar patterns.
- Develop sensitivity to how the melody ends.
  - **TIP:** Ensure students understand tonic based on key signature and mode, and practice writing the last note as either the tonic or dominant in that key. Also, have them conduct while listening to the melody in order to determine if it ends on beat 1 or 2 of the last measure. After a couple of hearings, teachers can also play most of the melody, and have the students sing the ending on a neutral syllable, so students gain confidence in common phrase endings.

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

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- The online AP Music Theory Teacher Community includes a library of resources with documents and handouts for several topics.
- The AP Music Theory Course and Exam Description provides suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing students' melodic dictation skills. Of particular use is the "Aural Skills Progression" outline on pp. 197-203.
- Within AP Classroom, view introductory videos to Melodic Dictation with your students:
  - "Practice Session 3: FRQ (Part A, Questions 1/2: Melodic Dictation)" - Contains some tips for approaching melodic dictation and covers the 2007 Practice Exam FR 1 & 2 from prompt to answer. (15 minutes)
  - "Practice Session 3: FRQ (Part A, Questions 1/2: Melodic Dictation)" - Contains some tips for approaching melodic dictation and covers the 2023 Practice Exam FR 1 & 2 from prompt to answer. (15 minutes)
  - "Review Session 4: Free-Response Questions 1 & 2 Guide: Melodic Dictation" - Contains strategies and ideas for tackling the first two FRQs. (49 minutes)
- AP Classroom contains several free-response melodic dictation questions with scoring guidelines that mimic those used on the AP Music Theory exam:
  - Formative free-response **major mode melodic dictation questions in treble clef, compound meter** (Topic Questions are searchable in Question Bank; Personal Progress Check questions are accessible from Unit tabs in the AP Classroom Course Guide):
    - Half-length Melodic Dictation Topic Questions:
      - Unit 1: Melodic dictation in D Major
    - Half-length Melodic Dictation Progress Check Questions:
      - Unit 2 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 1 (A Major)
- Summative free-response **major mode melodic dictation questions in treble clef, compound meter** (accessible using the Question Bank search function in AP Classroom):
  - To find all available melodic dictation questions in the Question Bank, search using the following filters:
    - Assessment Purpose and Source: Summative
    - Question Type: FRQ: Melodic Dictation
  - Question titles show key, clef, and meter type:
    - E major melodic dictation – treble, compound
    - E major melodic dictation – treble, compound, chromatic
    - E-flat major melodic dictation – treble, compound
    - F major melodic dictation – treble, compound meter
    - G major melodic dictation – treble, compound
    - G major melodic dictation – treble, six-eight time
  - Summative free-response **major mode melodic dictation questions in treble clef, compound meter** on the three full-length practice exams (accessible via the "Practice Exams" tab in the Course Guide):
    - 2016 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 1 (E major, treble clef, compound meter)

## Question 2

**Task:** Convert Between Performed and Notated Music

**Topic:** Melodic Dictation in C minor, bass clef, simple meter

**Max Score:** 9

**Mean Score:** 3.35

***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

Students were expected to transcribe a heard four-measure melody into correct musical notation. Skills included:

- Convert an aural melody that uses the harmonic minor key, simple meter, and light chromaticism to standard notation
- Notate rhythms in simple meter with division and subdivision elements
- Hear and notate the tonicized dominant
- Hear the raised seventh scale degree of the harmonic minor
- Hear and differentiate between conjunct and disjunct melodic movement

***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?***

Student responses demonstrated:

- Difficulty converting an aural melody into music notation
- Difficulty with the harmonic minor scale, chromatic tonicization, and simple meter notation
- Difficulty understanding common rhythmic patterns in simple meter

***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"><li>• Difficulty notating leading tones correctly.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Transcribing an aural melody into correct notation of pitch and rhythm</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficulty notating a harmonic minor melody correctly.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Transcribing a melody successfully in harmonic minor.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficulty differentiating whole and half steps, especially in identifying the raised fourth and seventh scale degrees.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Correct notation of the chromatic raised fourth as well as the harmonic minor raised seventh scale degrees.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficulty notating correct rhythms in simple meter</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Correct simple meter notation.</li></ul>

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

- Watch the AP review videos.

- Focus on simple meter (e.g. how to notate it; division of beat into 2 or subdivision into 4).
  - Teach what combinations of rhythms are possible in a beat of simple meter (rhythmic “cells”). You can make flash cards of various possible rhythms in a beat of simple meter (for example, make a stack with meters that have 4 in the bottom), and have students draw several and perform at sight (depending on meter and desired length).
  - **TIP:** Split the class in half (depending on size, it could be more groups). Have each group compose a four-bar rhythm using these cells and practice their rhythm as a group. Then each group performs their rhythm to the class, who dictates it. (Excellent incentive for clear performance—having the rest of the class take dictation based on your performance!) Each group performs their melody and everyone dictates a few rhythms. Put their dictations on the screen to critique notation as a group and correct any issues.
- Practice correct musical notation so that students learn how to write melodies.
  - Practice beaming common rhythmic groupings in simple meter, such as 2 eighth notes or 4 sixteenth notes in a single beam, or 1 eighth and 2 sixteenths in a single beam, as well as larger divisions. It may also be helpful to demonstrate the difference between 6 eighth notes in 6/8 and 3/4, for instance.
  - Also, practice short segments, such as 4-6 note melodies, and have students only write the rhythms.
  - Emphasize neatness. Mistakes need to be fully erased, and they need to use a sharp pencil. Details such as dots and accidentals should be extremely clear and in the correct location.
- Expose students to multiple timbres in dictation, not just piano.
- Practice writing and listening to melodies using different clefs.
- Lower-scoring students leaned more toward identifying pitch over rhythm; this might signal a need for more focus on rhythm patterns.
  - **TIP:** To help students develop rhythmic proficiency, devote time to practicing protonotation above the staff, such as writing long dashes and dots to determine rhythms that become translated into standard notation once the melody is more fully memorized.
- Practice hearing the differences between conjunct and disjunct melodies, such as the difference between an ascending scalar segment (Do-Re-Me), from an ascending arpeggio (Do-Me-Sol).
  - **TIP:** Encourage the students to first sing back the opening segment on a neutral syllable, stopping on the last note. Then, from the last note, have them sing stepwise down to tonic, counting how many scale steps it takes. This will develop sensitivity to contour and scale steps away from tonic. For instance, if the melody opens with ascending arpeggio, Do-Me-Sol, they will sing the arpeggio and count five steps down to tonic, as opposed to singing down three steps from a stepwise, Do-Re-Me, melody.
- Work on short term musical memory to help students prepare for only three hearings of the melody with limited time between each hearing.
  - **TIP:** A helpful approach is to work on “chunking”: focusing hearings on either the beginning or the end of the phrase, before working on the harder middle part of the melody. For later hearings, you can guide them to listen to chunks, such as an ascending or descending stepwise segments, disjunct segments, or rhythms that employ similar patterns.
- Develop sensitivity to how the melody ends.
  - **TIP:** Ensure students understand tonic based on key signature and mode, and practice writing the last note as either the tonic or dominant in that key. Also, have them conduct while listening to the melody in order to determine if it ends on beat 1 or 3 of the last measure. After a couple of hearings, teachers can also play most of the melody, and have the students sing the ending on a neutral syllable, so students gain confidence in common phrase endings.

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

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- The online AP Music Theory Teacher Community includes a library of resources with documents and handouts for several topics.
- The AP Music Theory Course and Exam Description provides suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing students' melodic dictation skills. Of particular use is the "Aural Skills Progression" outline on pp. 197-203.
- Within AP Classroom, view introductory videos to Melodic Dictation with your students:
  - "Practice Session 3: FRQ (Part A, Questions 1/2: Melodic Dictation)" - Contains some tips for approaching melodic dictation and covers the 2007 Practice Exam FR 1 & 2 from prompt to answer. (15 minutes)
  - "Practice Session 3: FRQ (Part A, Questions 1 /2: Melodic Dictation)" - Contains some tips for approaching melodic dictation and covers the 2023 Practice Exam FR 1 & 2 from prompt to answer. (15 minutes)
  - "Review Session 4: Free-Response Questions 1 & 2 Guide: Melodic Dictation" - Contains strategies and ideas for tackling the first two FRQs. (49 minutes)
- AP Classroom contains several free-response melodic dictation questions with scoring guidelines that mimic those used on the AP Music Theory exam:
  - Formative free-response **minor mode melodic dictation questions in bass clef, simple meter** (Topic Questions are searchable in Question Bank; Personal Progress Check questions are accessible from Unit tabs in the AP Classroom Course Guide):
    - Full-length Melodic Dictation Progress Check Question:
      - Unit 1 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 1 (D minor)
- Summative free-response **minor mode melodic dictation questions in bass clef, simple meter** (accessible using the Question Bank search function in AP Classroom):
  - To find all available melodic dictation questions in the Question Bank, search using the following filters:
    - Assessment Purpose and Source: Summative
    - Question Type: FRQ: Melodic Dictation
  - Question titles show key, clef, and meter type:
    - A minor melodic dictation – bass, simple meter
    - A minor melodic dictation – bass, four-four time
    - B minor melodic dictation – bass, simple meter
    - C minor melodic dictation – bass, simple meter
    - G minor melodic dictation – bass, simple meter
  - Summative free-response **minor mode melodic dictation questions in bass clef, simple meter** on the three full-length practice exams (accessible via the "Practice Exams" tab in the Course Guide):
    - 2016 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 2 (C minor, bass clef, simple meter)

### Question 3

**Task:** Convert Between Performed and Notated Music

**Topic:** Harmonic Dictation in E minor

**Max Score:** 24

**Mean Score:** 10.15

***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

Students were expected to demonstrate the ability to notate the outer voices of a four-measure four-voice harmonic progression and to correctly transcribe the harmonies as Roman numerals. Skills included:

- Hearing and notating outer voices
- Identifying chord function and qualities in a four-part chorale texture
- Aurally distinguishing the bass and soprano lines of a four-voice harmonic progression
- Recognizing common diatonic chord progressions
- Demonstrating accurate notation skills
- Hearing and notating correct cadences
- Hearing chord qualities (triads and seventh chords) and inversions

***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?***

Students demonstrated:

- Outstanding recognition of tonic chords
- Average recognition of subdominant (predominant) chords
- Below average ability to raise leading tones in the dominant chord in a minor key
- Above average recognition of a deceptive motion (V-vi) in a progression
- Above average recognition of a half cadence

***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"><li>• When the leading tone is in the bass, a root position vii triad is unlikely to appear</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students chose a V6/5 chord when the leading tone appeared in the bass</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Notation problems that made the intended note unclear</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Legible notation on lines and spaces that were clear</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of knowledge of common chord progressions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Roman numerals that follow common harmonic progressions</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficulty hearing predominant chords</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Correctly labeling iv and ii<sup>o6</sup> chords</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficulty hearing seventh chords correctly</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Labeling ii half-diminished 6/5 and V6/5 chords where appropriate</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Omitting the sharp in the V chord (in a minor key)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Placing the sharp on the left side of the notehead</li></ul>



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

- Have students engage in aural skill activities every class period.
  - **TIP:** Play short progressions that are common phrase beginnings and endings, such as i-i<sup>6</sup>-iv or i-V<sup>6</sup>/5-i; ii<sup>o6</sup>-V-i or iv-V-i.
  - **TIP:** Play various cadences, asking students to assess which cadence they heard (e.g. Is this an Authentic Cadence or a Half Cadence? In other words, does it sound finalized, or does it sound like there should be more?)
- Teach proper case and notation of Roman numerals in major and minor keys.
  - **TIP:** Do quick assessments where students show their understanding of the Roman numerals, both aurally and on paper/white board. Complete a chart with scale degrees 1-7 on top, filling in the Roman numerals below each scale degree in a major and/or minor key. Include seventh chords as well.
- Practice differentiating between V and V<sup>7</sup> chords, as well as ii<sup>o</sup> and ii<sup>o7</sup>.
  - **TIP:** Play triads and Seventh chords, asking students to identify which one is being played. Consider also forming a cadence with V<sup>(7)</sup> leading to I and ii<sup>(7)</sup> leading to V.
- Practice differentiating between iv and ii<sup>o6</sup> chords.
  - **TIP:** Play examples of each of these triads, asking students to listen for the chord quality (major vs minor) while listening to the root.
- Have students arpeggiate common chord progressions on solfege or numbers (whatever you use). For example, I-ii-V-I (do mi sol mi do, re fa la fa re, sol ti re ti sol, do mi sol mi do).
- Encourage students to listen to the bass line.
  - **TIP:** Practice singing the bass line in class while a progression is being played. When performing dictations, emphasize the bass line at first, easing into equal weight with all voices.
- Drill music notation in general, preferably on AP-sized staff paper. There should be a point where computer notation is put on hold to gain practice with notation on manuscript paper.:
  - Be attentive to the size of noteheads; discourage using slashes as the notehead, as ambiguity may be a concern.
  - Align the notation with the provided blanks.
  - Emphasize neatness: use a sharp pencil, erase mistakes fully, write Roman numerals legibly, and ensure that accidentals and dots are placed on the correct line or space.
- Emphasize daily that a V chord in a minor key will have a raised scale-degree 7, placing the accidental on the left side of the notehead.
- Encourage students to leave nothing blank in Questions 3 and 4, including both pitches and Roman numerals.
- Remind students that there are no Secondary Dominants in Question 3

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

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- The online AP Music Theory Teacher Community includes a library of resources with documents and handouts for several topics. For Harmonic dictation, view:
  - “Activity-Breaking down harmonic dictation”
  - “Pre-Dictation Activity: Targeting Specific Features in a Harmonic Progression.”

- The AP Music Theory Course and Exam Description provides suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing students' melodic dictation skills. Of particular use is the "Aural Skills Progression" outline on pp. 197-203.
- Within AP Classroom, view introductory videos to Harmonic Dictation with your students:
  - "Practice Session 4: FRQ (Part A, Question 3/4: Harmonic Dictation)" - Contains some tips for approaching harmonic dictation and covers the 2023 Practice Exam FR 3 & 4 from prompt to answer. (15 minutes)
  - "Practice Session 5: Free Response Questions 3 & 4 Guide: Harmonic Dictation" - Contains strategies for approaching harmonic dictation and practice for FR 3 & 4. (55 minutes)
- AP Classroom contains several free-response harmonic dictation questions with scoring guidelines that mimic those used on the AP Music Theory exam:
  - Formative free-response **minor mode harmonic dictation questions** (Topic Questions searchable in Question Bank; Personal Progress Check questions accessible from Unit tabs):
    - Harmonic Dictation Topic Questions:
      - Unit 3: Harmonic Dictation in A Minor
      - Unit 5: Harmonic Dictation in C Minor
    - Harmonic Dictation Progress Check Questions:
      - Unit 3 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 2 (A Minor)
      - Unit 7 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 2 (G Minor)
  - Summative free-response **minor mode harmonic dictation questions** (accessible using the Question Bank search function in AP Classroom):
    - To find all available harmonic dictation questions in the Question Bank, search using the following filters:
      - Assessment Purpose and Source: Summative
      - Question Type: FRQ: Harmonic Dictation
    - Question titles list key, most advanced content found in each question (i.e., secondary [or applied] dominant, cadential six-four, passing six-four, etc.), and occasionally additional content information like cadence type:
      - A minor harmonic dictation – secondary dominant
      - B minor harmonic dictation – secondary dominant
      - F minor harmonic dictation – secondary dominant, HC
  - Summative free-response **minor mode harmonic dictation questions** on the three full-length practice exams (accessible via the "Practice Exams" tab in the Course Guide):
    - 2008 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 4 (B minor, secondary dominant)
    - 2016 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 4 (E minor, secondary dominant, DC)
    - 2020 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 3 (G minor, cadential six-four)

## Question 4

**Task:** Convert Between Performed and Notated Music

**Topic:** Harmonic Dictation in E major

**Max Score:** 24

**Mean Score:** 9.90

***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

Students were expected to demonstrate the ability to notate the outer voices of a four-measure four-voice harmonic progression and to correctly transcribe the harmonies as Roman numerals. Skills included:

- Hearing and notating the outer voices and Roman numeral analysis of a chord progression.
- Notating soprano and bass lines
- Recognizing common chord progressions and inversions
- Notating soprano and bass melodic lines
- Writing correct cadences
- Notating secondary dominants

***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?***

Students showed:

- A strong understanding of the melodic line in soprano and bass
- Moderate understanding of common chord progressions
- Strong understanding of common cadences
- Above average understanding of secondary chords

***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"><li>• Lack of understanding of secondary harmonies: incorrect placement of secondary chord in the progression, incorrect chord choice, incorrect inversion symbol</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Correctly notated secondary chord; chord notated in the appropriate place in the progression</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inability to correctly notate the soprano and bass lines; difficulty notating the differences between stepwise and nonstepwise movement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Correct notation of soprano and bass lines; ability to hear the stepwise movement and the places in which the line does not have stepwise motion</li></ul>

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

- Have students engage in aural skill activities every class period.
  - **TIP:** Play short progressions that are common phrase beginnings and endings, such as i-i<sup>6</sup>-iv or i-V6/5-i; ii<sup>o6</sup>-V-i or iv-V-i.

- **TIP:** Play various cadences, asking students to assess which cadence they heard (e.g. Is this an Authentic Cadence or a Half Cadence. In other words, does it sound finalized, or does it sound like there should be more?)
- Begin class with a quick example—pop songs, musical theatre songs, ad jingles, TV/movie themes always work well—that has some connection to what you’re talking about that day. It’s especially good if you can dictate part of the melody or sound out the harmonic progression.
- Teach proper case and notation of Roman numerals in major and minor keys.
  - **TIP:** Do quick assessments where students show their understanding of the Roman numerals, both aurally and on paper/white board. Complete a chart with scale degrees 1-7 on top, filling in the Roman numerals below each scale degree in a major and/or minor key. Include seventh chords as well.
- Practice differentiating between similar chords (e.g. V and V<sup>7</sup> chords, IV and ii<sup>6</sup>, and ii<sup>o</sup> and ii<sup>7</sup>).
  - **TIP:** Play triads and seventh chords, asking students to identify chord qualities. Consider also forming a cadence with V<sup>(7)</sup> leading to I and ii<sup>(7)</sup> leading to V.
  - **TIP:** Play examples of each of these triads, asking students to listen for the chord quality (major vs minor) while listening to the root.
- Emphasize common chord progressions and the Basic Phrase.
  - Have students arpeggiate common chord progressions on solfege or numbers (whatever you use). For example, I-ii-V-I (do mi sol mi do, re fa la fa re, sol ti re ti sol, do mi sol mi do).
  - Focus on the cadential six-four.
- Encourage students to listen to the bass line.
  - **TIP:** Practice singing the bass line in class while a progression is being played. When performing dictations, emphasize the bass line at first, easing into equal weight with all voices.
- Drill music notation in general, preferably on AP-sized staff paper. There should be a point where computer notation is put on hold to gain practice with notation manuscript:
  - Be attentive to the size of noteheads; discourage using slashes as the notehead, as ambiguity may be a concern.
  - Align the notation with the provided blanks.
  - Emphasize neatness: use a sharp pencil, erase mistakes fully, write Roman numerals legibly, and ensure that accidentals and dots are placed on the correct line or space.
- Emphasize daily that a V chord in a minor key will have a raised scale-degree 7, placing the accidental on the left side of the notehead.
- Encourage students to leave nothing blank in Questions 3 and 4, including both pitches and Roman numerals.
- Remind students that there may be Secondary Dominants in Question 4

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

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- The online AP Music Theory Teacher Community includes a library of resources with documents and handouts for several topics. For Harmonic dictation, view:
  - “Activity-Breaking Down Harmonic Dictation”

- “Pre-Dictation Activity: Targeting Specific Features in a Harmonic Progression.”
- The AP Music Theory Course and Exam Description provides suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing students’ melodic dictation skills. Of particular use is the “Aural Skills Progression” outline on pp. 197-203.
- Within AP Classroom, view introductory videos to Harmonic Dictation with your students:
  - “Practice Session 4: FRQ (Part A, Question 3/4: Harmonic Dictation)” - Contains some tips for approaching harmonic dictation and covers the 2023 Practice Exam FR 3 & 4 from prompt to answer. (15 minutes)
  - “Practice Session 5: Free Response Questions 3 & 4 Guide: Harmonic Dictation” - Contains strategies for approaching harmonic dictation and practice for FR 3 & 4. (55 minutes)
- AP Classroom contains several free-response harmonic dictation questions with scoring guidelines that mimic those used on the AP Music Theory exam:
  - Formative free-response **major mode harmonic dictation questions** (Topic Questions searchable in Question Bank; Personal Progress Check questions accessible from Unit tabs):
    - Harmonic Dictation Topic Question:
      - Unit 3: Harmonic Dictation in B-flat Major
    - Half-length Harmonic Dictation Progress Check Question:
      - Unit 3 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 1 (B-flat Major)
    - Full-length Harmonic Dictation Progress Check Question:
      - Unit 5 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 1 (A Major)
  - Summative free-response **major mode harmonic dictation questions** (accessible using the Question Bank search function in AP Classroom):
    - To find all available harmonic dictation questions in the Question Bank, search using the following filters:
      - Assessment Purpose and Source: Summative
      - Question Type: FRQ: Harmonic Dictation
    - Question titles list key, most advanced content found in each question (i.e., secondary [or applied] dominant, cadential six-four, passing six-four, etc.), and occasionally additional content information like cadence type:
      - A major harmonic dictation – authentic cadence
      - B-flat major harmonic dictation – passing six-four
      - E major harmonic dictation – authentic cadence
  - Summative free-response **major mode harmonic dictation questions** on the three full-length practice exams (accessible via the “Practice Exams” tab in the Course Guide):
    - 2008 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 3 (E-flat major, deceptive progression)
    - 2016 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 3 (A major, predominant 7th)
    - 2020 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 4 (A major, secondary dominant)

## Question 5

**Task:** Part Writing from Figured Bass (G minor)

**Topic:** Music Theory

**Max Score:** 25

**Mean Score:** 14.48

***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

Students were expected to demonstrate proficiency with eighteenth-century chorale-style voice-leading. Skills included:

- Writing correct voice leading (including the effectiveness of using contrary motion), including:
  - Proper approach to and resolution of chordal 7ths
  - Proper doubling and resolution of a cadential 6/4 chord, based on the figured bass
  - Raising and proper handling the leading tone in minor keys
  - Chord spelling
  - Doubling and spacing
- Understanding and interpreting figured bass symbols: the ability to identify roots of chords and spell out chords of variable difficulty based on figures and bass line
  - In other words, understanding of simultaneously realizing vertical and horizontal notation

***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?***

Students who performed well could:

- Realize correct pitches for chord spelling
- Use contrary motion between chords with adjacent roots

***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"><li>• Not raising the leading tone</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raising the leading tone, based on the figured bass, and resolving it correctly</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not avoiding parallel octaves, especially coming from the <math>i^6</math> to the <math>ii^{o6}</math> and back to the cadential 6/4</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using appropriate contrary motion between the soprano and bass voices to avoid parallel motion</li></ul>

*Other frequent (though perhaps less common) student misconceptions/gaps in knowledge observed in the responses included*

- Difficulty writing complete inverted chords
- Difficulty resolving chordal seventh

- Difficulty with spacing issues between adjacent voices
- Difficulty correctly notating the leading tone
- Difficulty correctly resolving the chordal seventh
- Difficulty placing accidental from the figures on the correct pitch
- Frequent confusion between treble and bass clef
- Frequent difficulty determining correct Roman numerals for inverted chords
- Frequent omitted notes from inverted chords
- Frequent incorrectly realized cadential six-four chords

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

Advice offered includes:

- Emphasize examples in the minor mode, particularly realizing the leading note symbol in the figures.
- Have a solid knowledge of bass and treble clef.
- Remind students to resolve the chordal seventh down by step.
- Frequently remind students that figured bass literally means “figures above the bass” and is not necessarily equivalent with chord inversion.
- Emphasize proper Roman numeral notation of the cadential six-four.
  - **TIP:** Make students declare what type of six-four chord it is (passing, cadential, etc.)
- Drill music notation in general, preferably on AP-sized staff paper. There should be a point where computer notation is put on hold to gain practice with notation manuscript:
  - Be attentive to the size of noteheads; discourage using slashes as the notehead, as ambiguity may be a concern.
  - Align the notation with the provided blanks.
  - Emphasize neatness: use a sharp pencil, erase mistakes fully, write Roman numerals legibly, and ensure that accidentals and dots are placed on the correct line or space.

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

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- The online AP Music Theory Teacher Community includes a library of resources with documents and handouts for several topics. For part writing from figured bass, view:
  - “A Good Resource for Learning and Understanding Figured Bass”
  - “Formative Figured Bass Questions”
  - “Activity: Figured Bass in the Minor Mode”
- The AP Music Theory Course and Exam Description provides suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing part writing and figured bass realization skills. Also see “Instructional Approaches” found at the end of the CED, specifically: Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 4, pp. 194-195.
- Within AP Classroom, view introductory videos to part writing from figured bass with your students:
  - “Practice Session 5: FRQ (Part A, Question 5: Part-Writing from Figured Bass)” - Contains some tips for approaching figured bass and guides the viewer through a practice prompt in a major key. (16 minutes)
  - “Practice Session 5: FRQ (Part A, Question 5: Part-Writing from Figured Bass)” - Guides the viewer through a practice prompt in a minor key. (13 minutes)

- “Review Session 6: Question 5 Guide: Part Writing from Figured Bass” - Reviews part writing guidelines and contains strategies for approaching figured bass and part writing. (48 minutes)
- AP Classroom contains several free-response figured bass questions with scoring guidelines that mimic those used on the AP Music Theory exam:
  - Formative free response **minor mode figured bass questions** (Topic Questions searchable in Question Bank; Personal Progress Check questions accessible from Unit tabs in AP Classroom):
    - Topic Questions:
      - Unit 4: Figured Bass in B Major
      - Unit 7: PW from Figured Bass in G
    - Progress Check Questions:
      - Unit 4 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 1 (D Minor)
      - Unit 7 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 1 (B Minor)
  - Summative free-response **minor mode figured bass questions** (accessible using the Question Bank search function in AP Classroom):
    - To find all available questions in the Question Bank, search using the following filters:
      - Assessment Purpose and Source: Summative
      - Question Type: FRQ: Part Writing from Figured Bass
    - Question titles list key, most advanced content found in each question (i.e., inverted 7th, cadential six-four, 4–3 suspension, etc.), and occasionally additional content information like cadence type.
      - B minor figured bass – 4–3 suspension
      - C minor figured bass – 4–3 suspension, cadential six-four
      - F-sharp minor figured bass – cadential six-four
  - Summative free-response **minor mode figured bass questions** on the three full-length practice exams (accessible via the “Practice Exam” tab in Course Guide):
    - 2008 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 5 (A minor, 3rd inversion 7th chord)
    - 2016 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 5 (A minor, 2nd inversion vii<sup>o7</sup>)
    - 2020 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 5 (D minor, predominant 7th, vii<sup>o7</sup>)



## Question 6

**Task:** Writing a progression from Roman numerals and figures (A-flat major)

**Topic:** Music Theory

**Max Score:** 18

**Mean Score:** 8.66

***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

Students were expected to demonstrate proficiency with eighteenth-century chorale-style voice-leading. Skills included:

- Correctly interpreting Roman numerals and figures
- Writing and resolving secondary dominants
- Resolving tendency tones
- Triads vs. seventh chords
- Correct chord spelling
- Understanding inverted chords
- Knowledge of ideal spacing and doubling

***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?***

There was a wide range of responses, appropriately reflecting a wide range of knowledge. Students who performed well could:

- Recognize and accurately spell chords required by the Roman numerals, which included:
  - The symbol for a secondary dominant chord
  - The symbols for triads and sevenths chords
  - The symbols for root position and inverted triads
- Write the four voices with smooth voice leading, minimizing leaps and progressing mostly in stepwise motion
- Resolve tendency tones correctly

***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"><li>• Secondary dominant with no accidentals, or with incorrect accidentals (often C-sharp)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Secondary dominant with the correct accidental (G-flat)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing a flat to the right of the G in the secondary dominant</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing a flat to the left of the G in the secondary dominant</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing a G in the bass for chord two</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing a B-flat in the bass for chord two</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Doubling either G or E-flat on chord two</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Doubling the bass on chord two</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including leaps in the opening three chords</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing smooth counterpoint in the opening three chords</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing I<sup>6</sup> with A-flat in the bass</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing I<sup>6</sup> with C in the bass</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing ii<sup>6</sup>/5 with B-flat in the bass</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing ii<sup>6</sup>/5 with D-flat in the bass</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not resolving chordal sevenths (either leaping away or moving up by step)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolving chordal sevenths down by step</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaping away from the leading tone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolving the leading tone up by step to the tonic</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doubling the leading tone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doubling the root of V (chord seven) and the bass of the passing 6/4 (chord 2)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exceeding an octave between the tenor and alto</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping adjacent upper voices within an octave of one another</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Omitting notes from inverted chords</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including all chord members in inverted chords</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including incorrect accidentals (most notably C-sharp, F-sharp, G-sharp, D-natural, and A-natural)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing chords that are diatonic within the given key, with the sole exception of the secondary chord</li> </ul>

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

- Teach multi-chord part-writing formulas rather than employing a chord-by-chord approach (gestures rather than individual items, analogous to reading words rather than letters).
- Focus on common opening and closing gestures.
- Practice resolving dominant seventh chords, both in root-position and in inversion.
- Clarify when incomplete chords are typical, what is likely to be doubled under those circumstances, and why.
- Advise students not to notate a chordal seventh when a symbol indicates a triad.
- Emphasize tendency-tone resolution and be clear about situations in which exceptions are acceptable and where they are not.
- Prioritize correct chord spelling.
- Stress the importance of good musical notation. Emphasize the importance of using a sharp pencil, a good eraser (and erasing mistakes completely), and placing accidentals correctly. Discourage the use of slashes as noteheads.
- Practice with a wide variety of keys (both sharp keys and flat keys), and correct students when they say “B” rather than “B-flat,” for instance.

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

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- The online AP Music Theory Teacher Community includes a library of resources with documents and handouts for several topics. For a handout related to part writing with Roman Numerals, view:
  - “Summary of Triad Doubling Practices”
  - “Composition Project: Composition of a Multiple-Phrase Chorale”
  - “Composition Assignment: Chorale Phrase”
- The AP Music Theory Course and Exam Description provides suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing part writing skills. Also see “Instructional Approaches” found at the end of the CED, specifically: Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 4, pp. 194-195.
- Within AP Classroom, view introductory videos to part writing with Roman Numerals with your students:
  - “Review Session 5: Part Writing: An Aural Approach” - How to approach part writing exercises with a guided example. (44 minutes)
  - “Review Session 6: Part Writing: Secondary Leading Tone Chords” - How to approach part writing that includes a secondary dominant chord through a guided example. (46 minutes)
  - “Review Session 7: Question 6 Guide: Part Writing from Roman Numerals” - Covers a prompt from 2018’s FR 6 with a secondary dominant chord while laying out a method for approaching part writing exercises. (57 minutes)
- AP Classroom contains several free-response Roman numeral realization questions with scoring guidelines that mimic those used on the AP Music Theory exam:
  - Formative free-response **part writing from Roman numerals questions** (Topic Questions searchable in Question Bank; Personal Progress Check questions accessible from Unit tabs in AP Classroom):
    - Topic Questions:
      - Unit 4: Part writing Roman numeral in F Minor
      - Unit 6: Part writing from Roman numerals in G Major
    - Progress Check Questions:
      - Unit 4 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 2 (B-flat Major)
      - Unit 6 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 2 (E Minor)
  - Summative free-response **part writing from Roman numerals questions** (accessible using the Question Bank search function in AP Classroom):
    - To find all available questions in the Question Bank, search using the following filters:
      - Assessment Purpose and Source: Summative
      - Question Type: FRQ: Part Writing from Roman Numerals
    - Question titles list key, whether the question contains an applied chord, and occasionally additional content information like cadence type:
      - A-flat major part writing – secondary dominant, vii<sup>o6</sup>
      - B-flat major part writing – secondary dominant, V<sup>7-7</sup>
      - E major part writing – secondary dominant

- Summative free-response **part writing from Roman numerals questions** on the three full-length practice exams (accessible via the “Practice Exams” tab in Course Guide):
  - 2008 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 6 (A-flat major, secondary dominant of vi)
  - 2016 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 6 (B-flat major, secondary dominant,  $V^{8-7}$ )
  - 2020 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 6 (G major, secondary dominant, deceptive cadence)

## Question 7

**Task:** Harmonizing a Melody in D Major

**Topic:** Music Theory

**Max Score:** 9

**Mean Score:** 4.57

***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

Students were expected to demonstrate the ability to compose a bass line under a provided melody. Skills included:

- Composing correct counterpoint
- Understanding traditional harmonic progressions that matched the bass line and melody
- Writing appropriate cadences at the end of each phrase
- Knowledge of tonicization, in this case of the V chord

***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?***

- This year's melody contained some discriminating aspects that separated very good responses from others, such as avoiding similar motion into perfect intervals in phrases 3 and 4.
- The method of scoring this question resulted in some good responses receiving low scores while some poor responses received higher scores than deserved.
- Many student responses contained inappropriate harmonic progressions; these are covered thoroughly in many current textbooks.

***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"><li>• Inattention to tendency tones</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep mental track of (implied) local leading tones and chordal sevenths and be sure to write bass lines and chord progressions that appropriately resolve these tones by step. Moreover, be sure not to double these tones.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tonally inappropriate 6/4 chords</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoid 6/4 chords altogether, or employ them in properly executed passing, pedal, or cadential contexts</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flawed PACs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate appropriate bass line and Roman numerals at the PAC</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Failure to recognize/execute the tonicization of V</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate appropriate bass line and Roman numerals to tonicize V</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too many root-position triads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of triads and awareness of the counterpoint between outer voices</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor harmonic progressions (the most common error)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of appropriate chord progressions as found in most textbooks.</li> </ul>

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

- When teaching part writing, start with the outer voice framework.
- Make sure to cover cadences in depth, especially authentic and half cadences, including secondary dominant chords. Suggest that students begin each phrase by writing a good cadence, then go back and complete the bassline and Roman numerals.
- Just a few principles of counterpoint can go a long way (e.g. resolve leading tones and chordal sevenths). Dissonances (2nds, 4ths, 7ths, augmented and diminished intervals) between the outer voices require special attention to prepare, justify, and resolve without error.
- Teach and review appropriate harmonic progressions, as covered in most current textbooks. Teaching this in the context of a phrase model that tends to cycle through tonic- to predominant- to dominant- to tonic-functioned harmonies (N.B. not all of these functions need appear in each cycle through them), with each function subject to various expansion techniques (like voice exchange, change of inversion, or 5-6 motion as in IV-ii<sup>6</sup>) can also give the students a helpful framework for the harmonic shape of the entire phrase.
- Stress the importance of good musical notation. Emphasize the importance of using a sharp pencil, a good eraser (and erasing mistakes completely), and placing accidentals correctly. Discourage the use of slashes as noteheads.

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

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- The online AP Music Theory Teacher Community includes a library of resources with documents and handouts for several topics. For a handout related to harmonizing a melody, view:
  - “Keyboard Harmony as an AP Music Theory Tool”
  - “Composition Project: Composition of a Multiple-Phrase Chorale”
  - “Composition Assignment: Chorale Phrase”
- The AP Music Theory Course and Exam Description provides suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing melodic harmonization skills. Also see “Instructional Approaches” found at the end of the CED, specifically: Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 4, pp. 194-195.
- Within AP Classroom, view introductory videos to part writing with Roman Numerals with your students:
  - “Practice Session 7: FRQ (Part A, Question 7: Harmonization of a Melody)” - The rules of as well as how to approach harmonization of a melody with a guided example from 2022. (16 minutes)
  - “Practice Session 7: FRQ (Part A, Question 7: Harmonization of a Melody)” - The rules of as well as how to approach harmonization of a melody with a guided example. (11 minutes)
  - “Review Session 8: Simplifying Question 7: Harmonization of a Melody” - Includes the directions and strategies for FR 7 with guided practice. (48 minutes)

- AP Classroom contains several free-response melody harmonization questions with scoring guidelines that mimic those used on the AP Music Theory exam:
  - Formative free-response **harmonization of a melody questions** (Topic Questions are searchable in the Question Bank; Personal Progress Check questions are accessible from Unit tabs in AP Classroom):
    - Half-length Topic Questions:
      - Unit 4: Harmonization of Melody in A major
      - Unit 4: Harmonization of Melody in A-flat
    - Full-length Topic Questions:
      - Unit 8: Harmonization of Melody in G
    - Half-length Progress Check Questions:
      - Unit 5 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 2 (B-flat Major)
      - Unit 6 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 3 (D Major)
      - Unit 7 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 3 (B-flat Major)
    - Full-length Progress Check Question:
      - Unit 8 Progress Check: FRQ Part A, Question 2 (E-flat Major)
  - Summative free-response **harmonization of a melody questions** (accessible using the Question Bank search function in AP Classroom):
    - To find all available questions in the Question Bank, search using the following filters:
      - Assessment Purpose and Source: Summative
      - Question Type: FRQ: Harmonization of a Melody
    - Question titles list key and occasionally additional content information like soprano scale degrees at cadences 3 and 4:
      - E major compose bass line
      - F major compose bass line – 2-2-1 final cadence
      - G major compose bass line – 3-#4-5 cadence
  - Summative free-response **harmonization of a melody questions** on the three full-length practice exams (accessible via the “Practice Exam” tab in the Course Guide):
    - 2008 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 7 (G Major)
    - 2016 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 7 (G Major)
    - 2020 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 7 (F Major)

## Question 8 (S1)

**Task:** Aurally perform a notated melody in a minor key and a simple quadruple meter

**Topic:** Sight Singing

**Max Score:** 9

**Mean Score:** 4.97

### ***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

Students were expected to demonstrate the ability to sight sing a four-measure melody with 75 seconds of preparation time. Skills included:

- Converting a notated melody in treble clef, simple quadruple meter, and a minor key into an aural performance
- Determining minor tonality based on the notated key signature, clef, starting pitch, and raised scale degree seven
- Recognizing and performing common melodic patterns, such as diatonic steps and leaps
- Recognizing and performing common rhythmic patterns, such as dotted quarter-eighth and quarter/eighth combinations
- Maintaining steady tempo, tonal center, and minor tonality in a vocal performance
- Singing the range of one octave

### ***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?***

Student responses demonstrated:

- Moderately good ability to convert the notated melody into an aural performance
- Fair ability to sing with good intonation
- Good ability to interpret and perform common rhythmic patterns
- Moderate ability to interpret and perform common diatonic melodic patterns
- Fair ability to determine the minor tonality from the clef, key signature, starting pitch, and raised scale degree seven
- Moderately good ability to execute an octave range in the given key

### ***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"><li>• Singing in the wrong mode—many students did not correctly interpret key signature, clef, and starting pitch to determine that the melody was in the minor mode.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Successful responses were sung in the minor mode.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficulty in maintaining a single tonal center throughout the performance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most successful responses demonstrated a clear tonal center.</li></ul>



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

- Sing early and often in your AP Music Theory class!
- Become familiar with the AP scoring guides, even if you do not use them to grade student work in your own class.
- Ensure that students understand that the first sight singing melody on the exam can be in either the major or minor mode.
- Have students perform their “Preflight Checklist”: naming the key, clef, and time signature before beginning to practice the melody, and scanning for raised scale degree seven.
- Practice typical beginning and cadential melodic patterns.
- Practice typical rhythmic patterns.
- Utilize melodic error detection exercises as another way to practice converting between aural and notated music.
- Simulate the conditions under which the students will sight sing on the AP Exam (singing alone in front of a proctor, using the DAC app practice tool when it becomes available, etc.).
- Emphasize that the duration of the final note of the melody must be correct.
- Coach your AP and/or Testing Coordinator in best practices for administering the exam (procuring the best sound quality that is available, having a good logistical plan for one-on-one administration of sight singing, familiarity with DAC app or other recording technology, etc.)

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

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- The online AP Music Theory Teacher Community includes a library of resources with documents and handouts for several topics. For a handout related to sight singing, view:
  - “Practicing with raised ^4 in sight-singing melodies”
- The AP Music Theory Course and Exam Description provides suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing sight singing skills. Also see “Instructional Approaches” found at the end of the CED, specifically: Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 3, p. 193 and Aural Skills Progression, pp. 197-203.
- Within AP Classroom, view introductory videos to part writing with Roman Numerals with your students:
  - “Review Session 1: Overview of the Exam & Strategies for Sight Singing” - Strategies for sight singing in the exam and practice from the 2019 exam. Also includes melodic patterns and warm-up drills to sing. (46 minutes)
  - “Review Session 3: Ideas and Strategies for Sight Singing” - Reviews typical make up of sight singing examples, ending melodic patterns, compound meter rhythms, and more. (49 minutes)
- AP Classroom contains several sight singing questions with scoring guidelines that mimic those used on the AP Music Theory exam:
  - Formative **minor mode sight singing questions in treble clef, simple meter** (Topic Questions are searchable in the Question Bank; Personal Progress Check questions are accessible from Unit tabs in AP Classroom):
    - Full-length Topic Question:
      - Unit 1: Sight Singing in A minor

- Unit 1: Sight Singing in C minor
- Unit 1: Sight Singing in D minor
- Unit 1: Sight Singing in E minor
- Summative **minor mode sight singing questions in treble clef, simple meter** (accessible using the Question Bank search function in AP Classroom):
  - To find all available questions in the Question Bank, search using the following filters:
    - Assessment Purpose and Source: Summative
    - Question Type: FRQ: Sight-Singing
  - Question titles list key, clef, and information about meter type. The title will occasionally include information about whether the melody contains a chromatically inflected note:
    - B minor sight-singing – treble, simple, chromatic
    - D minor sight-singing – treble, common time
    - D minor sight-singing – treble, simple meter
    - D minor sight-singing – treble, simple meter, chromatic
    - E minor sight-singing – treble, four-four time
    - E minor sight-singing – treble, simple
    - E minor sight-singing – treble, simple meter
    - E minor sight-singing – treble, three-four time
    - F minor sight-singing – treble, simple meter
- Summative **minor mode sight singing questions in treble clef, simple meter** on full-length practice exams (accessible via the “Practice Exams” tab in the Course Guide):
  - 2008 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 8 (D minor, treble clef, simple meter)

## Question 9 (S2)

**Task:** Aurally perform a notated melody in a major key and a compound meter

**Topic:** Sight singing

**Max Score:** 9

**Mean Score:** 3.79

### ***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

Students were expected to demonstrate the ability to sight sing a four-measure melody with 75 seconds of preparation time. Skills included:

- Knowledge of bass clef, key signature, and accidentals
- Singing in major mode
- Performing compound duple meter and maintaining the same meter throughout the performance
- Accurately singing five different compound meter rhythmic patterns
- Singing dotted eighth note rhythms in compound meter, as in segments 3 and 7
- Singing with a steady tempo
- Retaining tonic throughout the performance
- Singing leaps within the tonic triad, as in segments 1 and 2, and between segments 4 and 5
- Singing a chromatic lower neighbor note to scale-degree  $\hat{6}$ , as in segment 6
- Singing leaps that imply a tonic-to-subdominant harmonic progression, as between segments 2 and 3
- Performing ascending whole-step approaches to segments 2 and 4
- Performing ascending perfect fourth approaches to segments 3 and 5
- Performing descending whole-step approaches to segments 5, 6, and 7
- Performing stepwise contours, as in segments 4 through 8
- Singing a melody in two phrases with good musical flow

### ***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?***

Student responses demonstrated:

- Some difficulty with singing in general (some students spoke their attempt)
- Some difficulty starting with a skip instead of a step
- Difficulty differentiating among chromatic steps, diatonic steps, skips, and leaps
- Difficulty performing the ascending major second approach to segment 4
- Difficulty performing the ascending perfect fourth approaches to segments 3 and 5
- Difficulty performing the descending major second approach to segment 6
- Difficulty maintaining tonic throughout the performance
- Difficulty performing in the correct mode (many students sang in minor)
- Difficulty maintaining subdivisions in compound meter, particularly in segments 2, 4, and 6
- Difficulty performing compound-meter rhythmic patterns, particularly dotted eighth notes
- Difficulty maintaining a proportional relationship among eighth- and sixteenth-note beat divisions
- Disconnect between singing/counting systems and the actual performed melody
- Difficulty maintaining the tempo
- Difficulty maintaining musical flow

**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"> <li>Inability to sing correct rhythms and note durations, including sustaining the last note of the prompt for its full duration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform rhythmic patterns correctly, including sustaining final note for a full dotted quarter note duration</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inability to internalize compound meter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform in a consistent compound duple meter</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inability to recognize and sing in major</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform in the same major key throughout</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inability to sing common diatonic skips and leaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sing diatonic third skips and fourth leaps as indicated in the melody</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inability to sing a chromatic neighbor note</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sing a lower chromatic neighbor note to scale degree ^6</li> </ul>

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

- Have students sing and vocalize every class period.
- Practice common melodic patterns, including stepwise motion and commonly used skips and leaps.
- Practice chromatic neighbor notes and passing tones.
- Practice performing in compound meter.
- Practice internalizing and physically embodying the pulse.
- Teach basic vocal techniques, including air support.
- Teach effective warmup techniques.
- Encourage prepared and at-sight singing practice.
- Encourage students to record themselves singing and/or sing with small peer groups.
- Ensure familiarity with bass clef notation.

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

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this question:

- The online AP Music Theory Teacher Community includes a library of resources with documents and handouts for several topics. For a handout related to sight singing, view:
  - “Practicing with raised ^4 in sight-singing melodies”
- The AP Music Theory Course and Exam Description provides suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing sight singing skills. Also see “Instructional Approaches” found at the end of the CED, specifically: Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 3, p. 193 and Aural Skills Progression, pp. 197-203.

- Within AP Classroom, view introductory videos to part writing with Roman Numerals with your students:
  - “Review Session 1: Overview of the Exam & Strategies for Sight Singing” - Strategies for sight singing in the exam and practice from the 2019 exam. Also includes melodic patterns and warm-up drills to sing. (46 minutes)
  - “Review Session 3: Ideas and Strategies for Sight Singing” - Reviews typical make up of sight singing examples, ending melodic patterns, compound meter rhythms, and more. (49 minutes)
- AP Classroom contains several sight singing questions with scoring guidelines that mimic those used on the AP Music Theory exam:
  - Formative **major mode sight singing questions in bass clef, compound meter** (Topic Questions are searchable in the Question Bank; Personal Progress Check questions are accessible from Unit tabs in AP Classroom):
    - Half-length Topic Question:
      - Unit 1: Sight Singing in D major
  - Summative **major mode sight singing questions in bass clef, compound meter** (accessible using the Question Bank search function in AP Classroom):
    - To find all available questions in the Question Bank, search using the following filters:
      - Assessment Purpose and Source: Summative
      - Question Type: FRQ: Sight-Singing
    - Question titles list key, clef, and information about meter type. The title will occasionally include information about whether the melody contains a chromatically inflected note:
      - A major sight-singing – bass, compound
      - B-flat major sight-singing – bass, compound
      - B-flat major sight-singing – bass, compound, chromatic
      - C major sight-singing – bass, compound, chromatic
      - D major sight-singing – bass, compound, chromatic
      - E-flat major sight-singing – bass, compound
      - E-flat major sight-singing – bass, compound, chromatic
      - E-flat major sight-singing – bass, six-eight time
      - F major sight-singing – bass, compound, chromatic
  - Summative **major mode sight singing questions in bass clef, compound meter** on full-length practice exams (accessible via the “Practice Exams” tab in the Course Guide):
    - 2008 Practice Exam FRQ: Question 9 (B-flat major, bass clef, compound meter)