

Advanced Certamen Literature Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



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SAMPLE

Questions

- 1. Where does *Ab Urbe Condita* conclude?**
 - A. With the founding of Rome**
 - B. In 9 BC, with the death of Drusus**
 - C. With the reign of Augustus**
 - D. At the start of the Republic**
- 2. Who granted Ennius citizenship in exchange for a literary work celebrating conquests?**
 - A. Valerius Flaccus**
 - B. Fulvius Nobilior**
 - C. Cato the Elder**
 - D. Pacuvius**
- 3. In which year did Petronius kill himself?**
 - A. 60**
 - B. 65**
 - C. 70**
 - D. 75**
- 4. Lucius Andronicus came to Rome as a?**
 - A. A nobleman**
 - B. A soldier**
 - C. A slave**
 - D. A poet**
- 5. In which work does Cicero explore different philosophical perspectives about the divine?**
 - A. *De Re Publica***
 - B. *De Natura Deorum***
 - C. *De Officiis***
 - D. *De Senectute***
- 6. What is Lucretius' only surviving work?**
 - A. *On the Nature of Things***
 - B. *The Republic***
 - C. *Metamorphoses***
 - D. *The Aeneid***

- 7. Which tragedy is attributed to Seneca that portrays a more sympathetic view of Jason?**
- A. Medea**
 - B. Octavia**
 - C. Philoctetes**
 - D. Thyestes**
- 8. What work of Tacitus records the years 14-68 in 18 books?**
- A. Annales**
 - B. Histories**
 - C. Germania**
 - D. Dialogus**
- 9. What was the primary focus of the Philippics written by Cicero?**
- A. The celebration of Roman gods**
 - B. Critique of Marc Antony**
 - C. Political alliances**
 - D. The history of Rome**
- 10. Which emperor wrote a Greek history of the Etruscans?**
- A. Nero**
 - B. Claudius**
 - C. Augustus**
 - D. Tiberius**

Answers

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- 1. B**
- 2. B**
- 3. B**
- 4. C**
- 5. B**
- 6. A**
- 7. A**
- 8. A**
- 9. B**
- 10. B**

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Explanations

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1. Where does *Ab Urbe Condita* conclude?

- A. With the founding of Rome
- B. In 9 BC, with the death of Drusus**
- C. With the reign of Augustus
- D. At the start of the Republic

The work "*Ab Urbe Condita*," written by the historian Livy, concludes in 9 BC with the death of Drusus, who was an important military leader and the son of Tiberius. This ending serves as a significant historical moment as it reflects the transition and transformation of Roman history leading into the Augustan period. By concluding at this point, Livy captures a pivotal moment that frames the complexities of the Roman Empire's expansion and internal politics. Choosing the moment of Drusus's death allows Livy to highlight themes of legacy, the implications of leadership, and the challenges facing Rome during its imperial phase. This date is essential in contextualizing the historical narrative Livy constructs throughout "*Ab Urbe Condita*," as it encompasses major developments that shaped Rome's future. Other options, such as the founding of Rome, the reign of Augustus, or the start of the Republic, signify important events in Roman history but occur earlier in the timeline that Livy examines. These moments do not encapsulate the culmination of Livy's historical analysis as poignantly as the death of Drusus, which serves as a fitting conclusion to the series of events he detailed throughout the work.

2. Who granted Ennius citizenship in exchange for a literary work celebrating conquests?

- A. Valerius Flaccus
- B. Fulvius Nobilior**
- C. Cato the Elder
- D. Pacuvius

The correct answer highlights Fulvius Nobilior, a Roman general and statesman, who played a significant role in the life of the poet Ennius. Ennius is often referred to as the father of Roman poetry, and his epic works were influential in shaping Latin literature. The story goes that Nobilior granted Ennius Roman citizenship in return for a poem that celebrated Nobilior's military achievements, particularly his victories during the Aetolian War. This exchange exemplifies the interconnectedness of literature and politics in ancient Rome, demonstrating how poets often sought patronage from powerful figures, and in turn, these figures utilized literary works to legitimize and glorify their accomplishments. Therefore, this transaction between Nobilior and Ennius not only reflects the cultural value assigned to literature at the time but also underscores the poet's role in public life and political affairs.

3. In which year did Petronius kill himself?

- A. 60
- B. 65**
- C. 70
- D. 75

Petronius, known for his work "Satyricon," is believed to have taken his own life around 65 AD. This was during the reign of Emperor Nero, a time marked by political intrigue and personal danger for many who were associated with the imperial court. Historical sources suggest that Petronius was implicated in a conspiracy against Nero, which led him to choose suicide as a way to defy the emperor and maintain his dignitas. The specific date is significant as it highlights the tumultuous political landscape of the Roman Empire during that period, where individuals in high positions often faced fatal consequences for perceived disloyalty or opposition to the emperor's wishes. By opting for suicide, Petronius aimed to preserve his honor in the face of inevitable execution. This act also reflects a broader cultural understanding of honor and shame in Roman society, making the year 65 a crucial point in both Petronius's life and the historical narrative of the era.

4. Lucius Andronicus came to Rome as a?

- A. A nobleman
- B. A soldier
- C. A slave**
- D. A poet

Lucius Andronicus is a significant character in Shakespeare's works and is often considered one of the earliest examples of a tragic hero. He arrived in Rome as a slave, which sets the stage for his dramatic journey throughout the narrative. His initial status as a slave is crucial because it reflects the themes of captivity and struggle against adversity that permeate the play. The story of Lucius Andronicus highlights the complex dynamics of power, identity, and vengeance within Roman society. His transformation from a captive to a warrior exemplifies the potential for personal agency and resilience despite the bonds of slavery. This background informs the character's motivations and actions throughout the narrative, as he seeks to reclaim his honor and navigate the treacherous political landscape of Rome. In contrast, other options such as nobleman, soldier, or poet do not accurately reflect the foundational circumstances of his character. The elements of nobility and military status imply a different social starting point that would not resonate with the struggles depicted in the work. Additionally, while Lucius Andronicus is indeed involved in martial activities, being identified as a soldier overlooks the critical significance of his origins as a slave. His identity as a poet, though relevant to the overall theme of art and expression within the

5. In which work does Cicero explore different philosophical perspectives about the divine?

- A. De Re Publica**
- B. De Natura Deorum**
- C. De Officiis**
- D. De Senectute**

Cicero's "De Natura Deorum" is the work that delves into various philosophical perspectives on the divine. In this text, Cicero presents a dialogue in which characters such as the Stoic, Epicurean, and Academic philosophers discuss the nature of the gods and their relation to the world. This examination of different viewpoints allows for a rich exploration of philosophical arguments regarding religion, divinity, and the implications of these beliefs on human life and morality. The dialogue format facilitates the juxtaposition of contrasting philosophies, enabling readers to engage with the complexity of the topic. The rigorous analysis of divine nature reflects Cicero's deep interest in reconciling Greek philosophical thought with Roman traditions. In contrast, other works like "De Re Publica" focus primarily on political philosophy, "De Officiis" on moral duties and ethics, and "De Senectute" on aging, none of which place the same emphasis on the philosophical inquiry into the divine as "De Natura Deorum" does.

6. What is Lucretius' only surviving work?

- A. On the Nature of Things**
- B. The Republic**
- C. Metamorphoses**
- D. The Aeneid**

Lucretius' only surviving work is "On the Nature of Things." This poem is notable for its exploration of Epicurean philosophy, which emphasizes the nature of the universe, atomism, and the pursuit of a tranquil life through the understanding of natural phenomena. Written in a didactic poetic format, the text remains significant in both literary and philosophical contexts, providing insight into ancient Roman thought and the materialist worldview. In contrast, "The Republic" is a philosophical dialogue by Plato that addresses justice and the ideal state, not associated with Lucretius. "Metamorphoses" is a narrative poem by Ovid that chronicles the history of the world through transformations, while "The Aeneid," an epic poem by Virgil, tells the story of Aeneas and the founding of Rome. Each of these works belongs to different literary traditions and authors, making "On the Nature of Things" the sole survivor of Lucretius' writings.

7. Which tragedy is attributed to Seneca that portrays a more sympathetic view of Jason?

A. Medea

B. Octavia

C. Philoctetes

D. Thyestes

The tragedy attributed to Seneca that portrays a more sympathetic view of Jason is "Medea." In this version of the myth, Seneca shifts the focus to highlight Jason's internal conflict and dilemmas, presenting him in a more complex light than traditional interpretations. Unlike the portrayal of Jason in Euripides' "Medea," where he is often seen as a villainous figure who betrays Medea for his own ambition, Seneca's adaptation allows for a deeper exploration of his motives and the consequences of his choices. The sympathetic view comes from showcasing Jason's struggles between duty, love, and betrayal, which complicates his character and encourages the audience to empathize with his predicament. Additionally, Seneca's language and dramatic structure amplify Jason's tragic dimensions, provoking thought about the nature of love, loyalty, and the sometimes harsh realities of personal ambition. This nuanced interpretation adds depth to the characters and ultimately contributes to the tragedy's impact.

8. What work of Tacitus records the years 14-68 in 18 books?

A. Annales

B. Histories

C. Germania

D. Dialogus

The work of Tacitus that records the years 14-68 in 18 books is the "Annales." This historical account provides a detailed narrative of the Roman Empire during the reigns from Tiberius to Nero, effectively capturing significant political events, cultural dynamics, and the character of the era. "Annales" is particularly important because it covers a critical period of transformation and turmoil in Rome, including the transition from the Julio-Claudian dynasty through considerable political unrest and change. The depth and analytical perspective found in "Annales" set it apart from Tacitus's other works, such as "Histories," which focuses on the Year of the Four Emperors and subsequent civil wars, and "Germania," which describes the customs and geography of the Germanic tribes without the same focus on Roman political history. The "Dialogus" serves as a philosophical dialogue about rhetoric and its decline in Rome, thus not fitting the criteria of covering the specified period in a narrative historical format.

9. What was the primary focus of the Philippics written by Cicero?

- A. The celebration of Roman gods**
- B. Critique of Marc Antony**
- C. Political alliances**
- D. The history of Rome**

The Philippics, written by Cicero, primarily focus on the critique of Marc Antony. In these speeches, Cicero vehemently opposed Antony's political maneuvers and actions following the assassination of Julius Caesar. He viewed Antony as a threat to the Republic and sought to expose what he saw as Antony's tyrannical tendencies. By addressing Antony directly and calling out his ambitions, Cicero aimed to rally support from the Senate and Roman citizens to resist Antony's increasing power. The speeches effectively articulate Cicero's broader concerns about the erosion of republican values and the potential for dictatorship in Rome. This context solidifies the critiques as not just personal attacks on Antony but also as a defense of the Roman political system itself, emphasizing Cicero's commitment to preserving the Republic. The other options do not align with the central theme of the Philippics, as they do not address Cicero's urgent political agenda against Antony's influence.

10. Which emperor wrote a Greek history of the Etruscans?

- A. Nero**
- B. Claudius**
- C. Augustus**
- D. Tiberius**

The emperor who wrote a Greek history of the Etruscans was Claudius. His work, known as "Historia Etruscorum," is significant as it reflects his interest in Etruscan culture and history, an interest that was somewhat uncommon among Roman elites. Claudius, who was a more scholarly emperor compared to some of his predecessors and successors, engaged deeply with Etruscan studies, demonstrating a curiosity about the origins and contributions of the Etruscans to Roman culture. This perspective also aligned with his broader efforts to establish a scholarly legacy, as he sought to enhance Rome's understanding of its past and the civilizations that once occupied Italy. The other emperors listed did not contribute a similar work on the Etruscans. Nero is better known for his artistic pursuits and disasters during his reign, Augustus focused on consolidating his power and promoting a Roman identity, while Tiberius was more focused on governance and military matters than on scholarly writing about ancient cultures. Thus, Claudius stands out as the correct choice for having authored a significant historical narrative on the Etruscans.