

2021 Harvard Certamen Syllabus

This syllabus has undergone significant revisions since previous years to update the information on question distribution and the sourcebooks, add more resources for new players, and clarify the standards at each level.

Question Distribution

The tournament will consist of 5 rounds (3 prelims, 1 semis, and 1 finals) of 20 toss-ups, each with two bonus questions. **This year, the distribution of questions has changed from the NJCL standard** (though it is in line with the distribution adopted by Yale, Duke, and Keartamen 2).

Novice (Latin ½ and I) & Intermediate (Latin II):

- 9 Language
 - These will roughly be divided as follows:
 - 2 Sentence Translations (English to Latin or vice versa)
 - 2 Vocabulary
 - 1 Latin Derivatives
 - 1 PMAQ (Phrases, Mottoes, Abbreviations, and Quotations)
 - 3 Syntax/Misc (e.g. Verb Flip, Noun/Adjective Agreement, Case Uses, Commands, or more of any of the above)
- 5 Greco-Roman Mythology
- 5 Roman History
- 1 Culture/Geography
 - In general, one can expect these to alternate between rounds. History questions may toss up locations or regions and have a “geography” flavor to them, though.

Advanced (Latin III+):

- 7 Language
 - These will roughly be divided as follows:
 - 1-2 Sentence Translations (English to Latin or vice versa)
 - 1 Vocabulary
 - 1 Latin Derivatives
 - 1 PMAQ (Phrases, Mottoes, Abbreviations, and Quotations)
 - 2-3 Syntax/Misc (e.g. Verb Flip, Noun/Adjective Agreement, Case/Clause Uses, Commands, **literary devices**¹, or more of any of the above)
- 4 Greco-Roman Mythology
- 4 Roman History
- 4 Latin Literature
- 1 Culture/Geography

¹ Note that this has fallen under literature in previous years, but since it requires interpreting and noticing features of the Latin in a sentence or passage, it falls more naturally under language.

Sources and Study Materials

[This document](#), though slightly outdated, gives a good idea of the most common question types in each category. In addition, you are encouraged to look at and practice with [past Harvard questions](#) to get a general idea of the style and difficulty of the tournament. It may also be beneficial to look at the [Yale Certamen](#) or [Keartamen](#) rounds from this year.

For newer players, the [Certamen Starter Kit](#) contains useful lists and resources for all categories to help ease the transition into the sourcebooks, and the [Public Certamen Resources](#) folder has a plethora of guides, notes, and tests of various levels. The [FJCL website](#) also has many helpful guides, as does the [Keartamen website](#).

Language:

In addition to the level-specific grammar topics below, the following sourcebooks will be used for all levels:

- Derivatives: All etymologies will be verifiable on [Etymonline](#), and based on the appropriate vocabulary for each level. Rudolph Schaeffer's [Latin-English Derivatives Dictionary](#)² is the primary study material.
- PMAQ: The main sources will be Eugene H. Ehrlich's *Amo, Amas, Amat* and *Veni, Vidi, Vici*, as well as Jon R. Stone's *Latin for the Illiterati* and *More Latin for the Illiterati*. Useful study materials are Wikipedia's [list of state mottos](#), as well as any guides such as the [FJCL guide](#), especially in the lower levels.
- Grammar/Syntax: The ultimate authority will be [Allen and Greenough's New Latin Grammar](#) (A&G).
- Vocabulary: The ultimate authority will be the [Lewis and Short](#) dictionary.
- Literary Devices: See the [NJCL List](#).

The following topic breakdowns are not meant to be all-inclusive, and some boni or semis/finals toss-ups may deviate from the schemes given here. Nevertheless, the following should be seen as a baseline for what is expected of players in each level.

Novice:

Vocabulary:

- Most words will be drawn from the [NJCL Core Vocabulary List](#). The appendices of any Latin 1 textbook should also be sufficient.

Syntax:

Players should be able to:

- Decline **nouns** of all five declensions (with primary emphasis on the first three)
- Understand these case usages in translations and syntax questions:
 - Nominative: subject, predicate
 - Genitive: possession, partitive, description
 - Dative: indirect object, possession, common special verbs
 - Accusative: direct object, place to which, duration of time, with prepositions, extent of space

² The link is to a freely available, revised version courtesy of Michael Kearney.

- Ablative: means, manner, agent, place from which, place where, accompaniment, respect, time when, time within which, with prepositions, separation, absolute
- Vocative: direct address
- Locative: place where
- Note that more case usages (within reason) may be introduced in boni or semis/finals questions.
- Form 1st/2nd and 3rd declension **adjectives** as well as regular **adverbs**
- Be familiar with regular comparatives and superlatives, especially identifying and translating them
- Identify and decline personal **pronouns** (*egō, tū, nōs, vōs, suī*) and **demonstratives** (*hic, ille, is*)
- Identify and decline the relative pronoun (*quī*) and the interrogative pronoun (*quis*), and form basic sentences with relative clauses
- Conjugate **verbs** of all four conjugations in the active and passive indicative, with emphasis on the present, imperfect, future, and perfect tenses
 - Be comfortable with *sum, esse* and *volō, velle* and their compounds
- Form present active imperatives, singular and plural (including the common irregular imperatives), as well as the negative command (*nolī* + infinitive)
- Comprehend and translate (in both directions) simple Latin questions (who, what, when, where, why, etc.)
- Form present active and perfect passive participles (especially in semis/finals)
- Form present and perfect active/passive infinitives; use the complementary infinitive in sentences
- Translate simple subordinate clauses (*quod* causal clauses, etc.) and indirect statements

Intermediate:

Vocabulary:

- Players should be very familiar with the Core Vocabulary (linked above) as well as the vocabulary of a standard Latin 2 textbook. Consider starting to learn Brunel's *Basic Latin Vocabulary*.

Syntax:

Players should be fully comfortable with the material at the novice level, and additionally should be able to:

- Understand additional case usages (within reason), such as:
 - Genitive: subjective, objective
 - Dative: special adjectives, purpose, reference, agent, double dative construction
 - Ablative: description, comparison, degree of difference
- Know the common irregular comparatives/superlatives as well as the so-called *ūnus nauta* adjectives that form their genitive singular in *-īus* and dative singular in *-ī*
- Be familiar with other demonstratives or pronouns, especially in the later rounds (e.g. *aliquis, quīdam, ipse*)
- Conjugate verbs in the indicative, including deponent verbs and all the common irregular verbs (*sum, volō, eō, ferō, fiō, dō*)
 - Be able to form all participles and infinitives, as well as (especially in the later rounds) subjunctives
- Be familiar with all tenses of indirect statements, as well as (especially in the later rounds) the most common subjunctive uses: hortatory/jussive, purpose, result, indirect question, indirect command, cum clauses

Advanced:

Vocabulary:

- Words will mostly be drawn from Brunel's *Basic Latin Vocabulary* and Lodge's *The Vocabulary of High School Latin*, with emphasis on the AP Latin curriculum. Words that appear in A&G in connection to particular grammatical ideas are also likely to show up.

Syntax:

- Players should be familiar (within reason) with all the grammar presented in A&G, especially topics that appear in the AP Latin curriculum. For newer advanced players, Dante Minutillo's guides on [Subjunctive Uses](#) and [Verbal Nouns/Adjectives](#) (participles, gerunds, etc.) can hopefully be helpful stepping stones on this path, along with Michael Kearney's [A&G notes](#).

Mythology:

The [Morford Outline](#) from the Certamen Starter Kit (linked above) is a great place to start. For the epics, there are many summaries available online. At the advanced level, Nikhil Ranjan's [Iliad](#), [Odyssey](#), and [Aeneid](#) guides are nearly comprehensive, as is Dante Minutillo's [Ovid Outline](#).

Novice:

- *Mythology* by Edith Hamilton (not including Norse myths)
- Major events from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*
- Some lead-ins or boni may come from *Classical Mythology* by Morford and Lenardon

Intermediate:

- Greater knowledge of all the above, especially Morford
- Some lead-ins or boni may come from *Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology* by Edward Tripp

Advanced:

Players should be comfortable (within reason) with all of the following sources:

- Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*
- *Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology* by Edward Tripp

Players should be familiar with these sources, though toss-up answers will not derive from them:

- *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* by Jenny March³

History:

The [Roman History Outline](#) from the Certamen Starter Kit (linked above) is a great place to start. You can also study the NRCE study guides for each level (available at the bottom [here](#)), and Ketan Ramakrishnan's outlines for [monarchy/republic](#) and [empire](#) are invaluable even at the advanced level.

Novice:

- Emphasis will be on the monarchy, republic, and early empire (to 180 A.D.), with major figures from 180-476 A.D.

³ Note that Pierre Grimal's *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, though a very interesting read, will not be used as a source. There is more than enough material in March, Tripp, and the epics.

- The [Yale Certamen syllabus](#) has a good list of foundational topics to know from 753-201 B.C., though questions here may go beyond those, especially in the later rounds.
- Key topics from *A History of the Roman People* by Heichelheim, Yeo, and Ward
- Well-known stories from the widely used guides (especially for the monarchy)

Intermediate:

- *A History of the Roman People* by Heichelheim, Yeo, and Ward (at a deeper level)
- Key topics from *A History of Rome* by Cary & Scullard
- Well-known stories from the guides and the two *Chronicles* books (see below)

Advanced:

Players should be comfortable (within reason) with all of the following sources:

- *A History of the Roman People* by Heichelheim, Yeo, and Ward (to the death of Justinian)
- *A History of Rome* by Cary & Scullard
- Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, Book 1

Players should be familiar with these sources, though toss-up answers will not derive from them:

- *Chronicle of the Roman Republic* by Philip Matyszak
- *Chronicle of the Roman Empire* by Chris Scarre
- Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, Books 2-5

Culture/Geography:

The NRCE study guides for each level (available at the bottom [here](#)) give most of the relevant information for Roman life. In addition to those guides, players should be familiar with:

- [The Private Life of the Romans](#) by Harold Whetstone Johnston
- *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome* by Leslie and Roy A. Adkins (especially for military terminology)

For geography, any map of the Roman empire (including those presented in Adkins or Heichelheim) should do.

Players should be able to convert ancient names of cities and some physical landmarks to their modern names, and vice versa. In addition, players should consult *Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide* by Amanda Claridge, or any equivalent resource, for information on the geography of Rome itself.

Literature:

The [FJCL Guide](#) and [Ketan's outline](#) are a good place to start. In addition to those guides, players should be familiar with:

- *Latin Literature: A History* by Gian Biagio Conte (tr. Joseph B. Solodow)
- *A History of Latin Literature* by Moses Hadas
- On rare occasions, a lead-in could come from the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* or the *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, but no answer lines for toss-ups or boni will be exclusive to these books