

# Classical Literacy Exam - Sample questions and answers (list 1)

## Introductory Exam

1. What Latin phrase means “with the highest praise”? *summa cum laude*
2. What son of Daedalus flew too close to the sun? *Icarus*
3. What adjective meaning “happy” derives from a Roman name for Zeus? *jovial*
4. What Latin abbreviation means “for the sake of an example”? *e.g.*
5. What mythological hero cut off the head of Medusa? *Perseus*
6. What is the Roman numeral for 1000? *M*
7. What is the Greek name for Cupid? *Eros*
8. What is the Latin term for the male head of a household? *paterfamilias*
9. What deities inspire the arts and sciences? *the muses*
10. Who was the author of the *Iliad*? *Homer*

## Level I Exam

1. What abbreviation stands for the Senate and the Roman People? *SPQR*
2. What Latin phrase means “in place of the parent”? *in loco parentis*
3. What is the belief in many gods called? *polytheism*
4. What is the term given to the student who gives the “farewell” address at graduation? *valedictorian*
5. What English adjective from the Latin word for boy means “childish”? *puerile*
6. Who was the Greek goddess of victory? *Nike*
7. What were the wars between Rome and Carthage called? *Punic*
8. What Latin phrase means “Love conquers all”? *Amor omnia vincit*
9. What is the sea to the east of Greece called? *Aegean*
10. What English word is derived from Latin roots meaning “all” and “knowing”? *omniscient*

## Level II Exam

1. What Latin phrase means “Let the buyer beware”? *caveat emptor*
2. What is the term for art of prophecy based on the flight of birds? *augury*
3. Who was the faithful wife of Odysseus? *Penelope*
4. What is the term for a victory won at too great a price? *Pyrrhic victory*
5. The abduction of whose wife brought about the Trojan War? *Menelaus*
6. What is the Greek word for “city”? *polis*
7. What was the snake-entwined staff of Mercury or Hermes called? *caduceus*
8. What Latin abbreviation means “in the same place”? *ibid.*
9. Who gave Caesar’s funeral oration “Friends, Romans, Countrymen . . .”? *Mark Antony*
10. What is the Latin motto of the District of Columbia? *Iustitia Omnibus*

## Level III Exam

1. What Greek playwright wrote the *Oresteia*? *Aeschylus*
2. What was the name of Aristotle’s school in Athens? *Lyceum*
3. Who has provided us with an eyewitness account of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius? *Pliny the Younger*
4. What is the Greek word for excellence? *arete*
5. What presocratic philosopher said, “you can’t step in the same river twice”? *Heraclitus*
6. What are the first seven words of Caesar’s commentaries on the Gallic Wars?  
*Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres*
7. What philosophy did Lucretius’ *De rerum natura* espouse? *Epicureanism*
8. What is the rhetorical term for the conclusion of a speech? *peroration*
9. What philosopher illustrated his distinction between the visible and intelligible realms by a twice-divided line?  
*Plato*
10. What Greek writer is considered the father of history? *Herodotus*