

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Candidate Exemplar Work:

Unit 1F: *Old Testament*

Example of Candidate's Response

N.B. This example of candidate's work was taken from the 2004 examination.

Two commentaries are provided, the first considers the quality of the work provided, and the second, in bold font, considers how the material links to the new Specification.



CANDIDATE EXEMPLAR WORK

GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY



ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES UNIT 1F OLD TESTAMENT

RSS06

EXAMPLE OF CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE

For this paper you must have:

- an 8 page answer book.

You are permitted the use of a Bible, which may include the Apocrypha.

Time allowed: 1 hour 15 minutes

Instructions

- Use black ink or ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book.
The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is **RSS06**.
- Answer **two** questions.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 90.
- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- In each question, part (a) tests your knowledge and understanding, while part (b) tests your skills of reasoning and evaluation.
- You will be marked on your ability to use English, to organise information clearly and to use specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

RSS06: Old Testament

- 1 **Read the passage and answer questions (a) and (b) which follow.**

“One of the most dramatic episodes in the Old Testament narrative is the story of the occasion when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. This story is of great significance for the Hebrew religion and also tells us much about Abraham’s relationship with God.”

- (a) ***Explain the nature of the sacrifice which, according to this story, God told Abraham to make.***

(10 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

When God instructed Abraham to sacrifice his only Son Isaac, Abraham faced the greatest test of faith. The sacrifice was due to take place at an altar constructed by Abraham and therefore it appeared to be what God desired however Yahweh had other plans in store for Abraham and he later told the trustworthy devotee to sacrifice a lamb instead. If the sacrifice were to have taken place it would have gone against a fundamental belief in Judaism which states that no human sacrifices should be made only animal ones. Even so, such sacrifices would have occurred in the ancient temple. The sacrifice was said to be made to Yahweh thus confirming God’s omnipotence and enforcing the Jewish belief in ethical monotheism. As there is only one God in Judaism it was unsurprising that the sacrifice would only have been made to him. Unlike the Canaanite practices where children were sacrificed in exchange for divine intervention on Earth in the form of good harvests or rain, Abraham was to make the sacrifice to seal his covenant with God. Blood was to bind God and Abraham in their covenant relationship highlighting their commitment and promises made to each other. As the covenant was promisory, Abraham was told to devote his life to Yahweh even if it meant sacrificing the dearest person to him. In exchange God would give Abraham land and descendants. The nature of the sacrifice thus reflected how Yahweh was: a considerate God who did not like to see His people suffer.

General Comments

This was another excellent script which attracted very nearly full marks. It showed fluency and sophistication. There is material in these answers which goes well beyond what is expected at AS, and it should be emphasised that well-focussed answers which lacked this degree of sophistication would also be able to gain high marks. This script has been selected to show what can be achieved by candidates at this level.

Commentary

The candidate focussed clearly on the question, and was able to talk about the nature of the sacrifice. The candidate focussed on the idea of sacrifice as a test of faith, (a point which was developed later in the answer), and the idea of this as part of Yahweh’s plan. The candidate wrote about the way in which human sacrifice was against what Yahweh required of his people, and was able to comment on the role of sacrifice in the Ancient Near East. The relationship between the test and the promises was clearly established.

Level 5 (10 marks)

- (b) **Explain what this story and others which you have studied show about Abraham's relationship with God.**

(10 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

This story only emphasises how devoted Abraham was to God. He was willing to sacrifice the son he had waited a life time for and whom God had only recently blessed him with. The fact that Abraham had previously left his home town of Ur is also testament to his unfailing faith. At his father Terah's deathbed, Abraham was told by God to leave and go to a strange and foreign land which God would give to him. Abraham did so, which was a huge risk to take, and persuaded most of his family to go with him; all on the basis that he had heard a voice.

The journey to Canaan would not be easy as Abraham had to avoid the famine and go through Egypt where they faced heavy resistance from forces. God was still Abraham's mentor throughout this time and the young man underwent a few months separated from his family as his nephew had to take half the group via the plains of Jordan. Eventually, though, as with the intended sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham was rewarded by God as he lived settled in a new land where he and his family could live. Abraham's love, dedication and unwavering loyalty to God is on show via these stories and his entire life was similarly devoted to Yahweh. Abraham obeyed every order he was given and his faith was duly rewarded. Abraham's relationship with God continued to strengthen throughout his life.

Commentary

The candidate focussed clearly on Abraham's relationship with God, speaking of his devotion, his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, and his earlier leaving of his home. The candidate made intelligent comments on the points raised, and although other issues from the material studied could have been mentioned, this was awarded a Level 5 mark.

Level 5 (9 marks)

This structure, with its division into two short AO1 sections, will no longer feature, so the question set for part (a) would need to test a wider range of material. Material relating to Abraham belongs to the second section of the specification (God's relationship with his people) and a question might be set, testing understanding of the covenant concept with special reference to Abraham. Some of what the candidate wrote in these two excellent responses could be used in answer to such a question. Part (b) now tests only AO2. An appropriate question might require assessment of the relevance to the 21st century of ideas of God contained in the Abraham stories.

- 3 (a) **Explain the nature of the social and religious ‘crimes’ with which Amos charged the people of Israel.**

(15 marks) AO1

Candidate Response

Amos charged the people of Israel with the serious sin of turning away from God. They had fallen victim to the Canaanite Baals and were indulging in syncretic worship. This was not acceptable as they were now worshipping other Gods and defying Yahweh’s claim and law that they practise only ethical monotheism. Amos said that the Israelites had forsaken their God, with whom they were meant to be in a special relationship with. They were thus breaking the covenant relationship and committing various sins including the most fundamental of the Decalogue: to not worship any other God besides the Lord Your God. The Israelites were also carving wooden images, another act of defiance against the Ten Commandments. With Canaanite practise, Jews were also participating in human sacrifices which were not part of Yahweh’s Laws. They had also been wallowing in decadence concerning the temple prostitutes which made worship a seedy and sordid affair. Amos’ main criticism though was directed towards the economic and authoritative elite who had been exploiting the poor. To the rich Samarian women Amos cried ‘You Cows of Baalan’ in ‘Ch4’:v1-2. He was referring to their greed for material worth and them placing greater attention to wealth rather than religious practices.

The rich people in Israel had exploited the poor to such a degree and had taken such advantage of their power that Amos was disgusted by their unjust behaviour. He was appalled with their abuse of power and with the fact that they levied such high ‘taxes on the poor’. (ch 5 v 11). The rich had oppressed the poor to such an extent that social injustice was Amos’ main stated crime of the Israelites. They had sold the ‘honest folk for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals’ (ch 2 v6). For this, God would not grant them a reprieve. When Amos cried ‘Go to Bethel – and infringe my law,’ he was delineating how the Jews had surrendered to the temptation of the Canaanite’s religion. According to Amos, the Israelites had not given sacrifices to Yahweh for 40 years. Thus it is evident that the social and religious ‘crimes’ of the Israelites had now become so appalling that God would have to take action. They had even ‘profaned my (God’s) holy name’ as in ch 2 v7, in direct contravention with another of the Ten Commandments.

Commentary

The candidate gave a full and clear answer to this question, giving an excellent response to the idea of the social and religious ‘crimes’ with which Amos charged the people. The answer was not just a ‘catalogue’ of wrongs, but was well-organised around key ideas, with the idea of Israel’s turning away from God being clearly established at the outset. There was a clear understanding of the social sins of the people, and these were clearly explained with useful exemplification. There was one misunderstanding in the answer, in relation to the prophet’s question ‘did you give me sacrifices for 40 years?’, but that did not prevent full marks from being awarded.

Level 5 (15 marks)

- (b) ***“Amos taught that God was just as concerned with other nations as he was with Israel.”***

Examine the evidence for this claim and assess how far it is true.

(10 Marks) AO1 & (15 marks) AO2

Candidate Response

I believe that Amos did not teach that God was just as concerned with other nations as he was with Israel. Throughout his book, Amos specifically refers to the Israelites and to their crimes, be they social or religious. For it was the Israelites who God had chosen as his Special people. It was to Abraham that he had promised land, and descendants and a ‘kingdom of Priests.’ God had entered the covenant relationship with these people and had defined them so that they were unlike everyone else. They were instructed to obey specific laws given to Moses on Mount Sinai in the Torah. All 613 Mitzvot were intended to separate the Jews as different and make them a unique race. The fact that they were to practise ethical monotheism and worship Yahweh solely was evidence that they were to be regarded as an example to all other people. The Jews would have to obey special absolute and casuistic laws which set them apart from the Canaanite people. Not only would they not offer sacrifices but they would all be seen as equal in the eyes of the law and they would all be subject to the laws. The male Jews were also to be identified as separate from other people as they were to undergo the Circumcision of Cutting or Brit Milah which showed that they were continuing Abraham’s covenant. The Jews were therefore going to have physical signs that they showed they were God’s people.

As there were ritual and ethical laws in the Torah, Jews were expected to carry out celebrate festivals such as Sukkot and Pesach which other people would not celebrate. They were also meant to keep kosher laws, another sign that they were different. Amos preached that Israel as a country would fall victim to God’s mercy as it had fallen into a state of moral decline which had disappointed God. Amos reveals how God is affected by the Israelites crimes when he says ‘I (God) groan under the burden of you.’ (ch2 v13). Amos also says that God specifically said in ch 3 v2, ‘You alone I have cared for among all the nations of the world; that is why I shall punish you for all your wrongdoing.’ This clearly refers to the Israelites only and as they were meant to have set an example to other peoples, they have failed in their duty and rôle. Amos also points out specific places in Israel such as Gaza where God will ‘send fire on the walls.’ Other places like Bethel and Gilgal refer to destinations in Israel where polytheism had supplanted ethical monotheism.

However although Amos is particularly concerned with Israel as he says ‘She has fallen, to rise no more, the virgin Israel... with no one to lift her up,’ I believe he is also concerned with other nations. It is just that other countries have not been enlightened to Yahweh and his covenant relationship and laws and so they cannot be expected to behave any better. Amos does threaten that a foreign country, which some believe to be Assyria, would come to take over Israel which duly occurs. This shows that other countries were not peaceful and that they too had succumbed to barbarious tendencies. As it is the Canaanites who have introduced polytheism into Israel, the land of Canaan must also be a land of concern. When Amos says in Ch v 12 ‘People will stagger from sea to sea’ and ‘they will range from north to east,’ he is clearly referring to other countries as well.

In conclusion I believe that Amos is primarily concerned with the state of Israel as it was meant to be representative of God's people on Earth. However it had fallen into a state of moral decline which rendered it identical to neighbouring countries in Mesopotamia which was a great disappointment to Yahweh. Therefore I think that God was more concerned with Israel than he was with other nations, especially as Israel was meant to be a holy land with Abraham's descendants and a 'kingdom of priests', which it unfortunately was not.

Commentary

This was a very competent answer in which both assessment objectives were clearly addressed. The answer starts, as will often happen, with the candidate's conclusion, which is then 'unpacked' through the remainder of the answer. The candidate makes good reference to a range of examples which show Amos' concern for other nations, but also develops a clear argument to show that, in his / her view, Amos was more concerned with the people of Israel. The candidate draws on background which goes beyond material found in Amos, but this answer would have gained very high marks without this material.

AO1 Level 4 (8 marks)
AO2 Level 5 (15 marks)

The question set for part (a) could still be used as it stands, and the candidate's response is firmly within the content set out in the new specification. Part (b) now has no AO1 element, but the question set here for assessment would still be appropriate. The AO2 element in the candidate's response is of a very high level and this answer would be awarded a high mark.