



General Certificate of Education

Anthropology 1111

**ANTH1 Being Human:
Unity and Diversity**

Report on the Examination

2011 examination – January series

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ANTH1

General

Overall the vast majority of candidates performed reasonably well. They were able to manage the time effectively and completed all questions. Answers were largely of sufficient length. There did not appear to be any one question which caused particular difficulties for candidates. There was a significant range in the quality of responses, both within and between centres, to this first examination for GCE Anthropology.

Positive features:

- Use of detailed, well contextualised ethnographic studies.
- Use of relevant theoretical and analytical concepts.
- Knowledge of specific anthropologists (both their ethnographic and theoretical work).
- Understanding of biological anthropology.
- A wide range of material was present, both between and within centres, indicating that students were not merely memorising 'model' answers. Anthropology is such a wide subject that examiners should expect to see considerable variation in the ethnographic materials presented.

Key Issues:

- There were too many references only to western societies and Britain, with the odd reference to an unidentified 'tribe'.
- There was the tendency for candidates to generalise rather than point out the complexity in cultural differences (see, for example, comments on gender roles in Q05 below). A further example is that candidates would refer to 'African tribes'. A greater sensitivity in discussing other cultures through ethnographic detail is required to achieve the very best marks.
- Candidates should try and identify exactly the ethnographic context and the ethnographer of the studies they use in their answers.
- Though the mark scheme does allow for examples that are not specifically anthropological, many candidates relied on common sense and over-generalised examples, possibly from other subjects, throughout the exam paper.
- Better answers called on a range of perspectives and concepts in order to develop their analysis and discussion of the ethnographic examples.
- Where candidates did explain the concepts and ideas in general terms, their answers were often lacking in ethnographic examples.
- There was not enough actual comparison – simply juxtaposition of two cultures.
- In some cases, centres seemed to have taught model answers, with all candidates producing very similar responses.

Question 01

There were few very precise definitions offered. Answers often stated that a symbol carried meaning but did not always stress that a symbol represents something other than itself. The example given was often non-anthropological. This in itself is not necessarily a problem, although an anthropological example is, of course, preferable. The non-anthropological examples were often not sufficiently developed to gain the two marks available. Candidates should be encouraged, where possible, to use anthropological examples because their meaning will be clearer in relation to anthropological concepts and issues. Most candidates wrote the right amount for this question and the better answers generally received full marks in a maximum of about 5-6 lines.

Question 02

This question was very poorly answered in some centres. Answers relied on common sense rather than knowledge of anthropological ideas. This question was interpreted differently in some cases – *why* humans classify was confused with *how* they classify. Again, ethnographic studies, where used to support a reason, were often highly successful in answering the question. Candidates need to be aware of the structure of the marks, one for identifying and the further two for unpacking and offering examples. There was a problem of overlap in some cases as some candidates used Sapir-Whorf for both question 2 and question 3. This was allowed if their work was used in a sufficiently different way to answer the two separate questions.

Question 03

This question also demonstrated an area of relative lack of knowledge for many candidates. Answers tended to be very general and lacking in any anthropological knowledge or ethnographic examples. Typically, weaker responses described characteristics of language (and its uses) and simply stated that language is part of culture, without examining the relationship between the two. There was sometimes confusion between language and communication. There were very few theories of language development and of the ways in which language evolution was linked to cultural evolution (eg Rappaport, Dunbar). There was a tendency to discuss new technologies without application or interpretation to the question. The better answers referred to Sapir-Whorf, Lévi-Strauss and Ingold, and included ethnographic detail to illustrate the points made.

Question 04

This question was one of the best answered questions, with a considerable amount of ethnographic detail as well as a variety of different ways in which humans control the body discussed. Better answers also showed relevant and focused analysis. Some candidates referred to theoretical perspectives such as Geertz, Foucault and Mauss. However, the quality of the responses varied and there was a problem with some candidates referring too readily and too frequently to western societies and common sense examples that would be known without studying anthropology. Weaker candidates gave accounts of different types of plastic surgery and issues presented by this, and did not offer cross-cultural examples. Alternatively, examples such as hair styles and clothing were used, without reference to anthropological examples or issues. Too many answers used examples of how the body is used as a symbol to express identity without relating the example to the issue of 'control'. A surprising number of candidates did not use the Item to help them. However, often if they did use the Item it was more to repeat what was said rather than to focus on the issue of 'control'.

Question 05

All combinations were attempted. The most popular were to relate kinship to biology or gender. Where power and control was selected, responses sometimes tended to become gender and kinship essays. This occurred in a minority of cases, however, and on the whole candidates understood the question and were aware that they had to discuss one topic only. Weaker candidates were more likely to simply describe types of kinship patterns rather than focus on the relationship between kinship and gender/biology/commodities and exchange/power and control. This frequently involved list-like definitions of concepts such as matrilineality and patrilineality, often confusing these terms with matriarchy and patriarchy. A major problem was that many candidates were unclear on the nature of kinship; they tended to assume kin meant family and this then often led to quasi-sociological responses about roles within the family. Another major problem was that some candidates did not focus on kinship at all but just on gender, exchange or power. There seemed to be a lack of knowledge about kinship as it is studied by anthropologists. There was a tendency to generalise kinship patterns in the west as opposed to 'other' cultures. For example, it was often rather generally (and erroneously) implied that kinship in the west no longer reinforces gender inequalities as relationships between men and women are now equal.

Stronger responses focused on ethnographic exceptions/cross cultural examples that demonstrated the relationship between kinship and the topic of their choice. The candidates who chose biology as their option seemed to find it easier to focus on the question. These ethnographic studies were often very well linked to the question. Concepts were numerous, integrated and explained, and appropriately applied to the question.

Question 06

This question elicited some good responses with candidates clearly arguing for a position. Most candidates finished with a clear conclusion. It was somewhat surprising that so many candidates argued against the position stated in the question. This might indicate that teachers had been effective in introducing their students to the importance of biological evolution. Stronger responses tended to discuss biological evolution (in some depth) and then contrast this with cultural evolution, pointing out the ways in which both types of evolution are inextricably linked. Stronger responses also discussed the ways in which technological advances are superseding biological evolution.

However, few candidates attempted a definition of culture. Weaker responses involved a discussion of culture in general terms, without considering the relationship between biology and culture.

Many candidates did not answer the question set and instead wrote answers to a question on the differences and similarities between humans and apes, recycling the material in the Item without interpreting and applying the Item appropriately to meet the demands of the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.