

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit L (RSS11) *Islam 2 The Life of the Prophet*

June 2009 Examination Candidate Exemplar Work:

- Candidate A



2009 (June) Unit L Islam 2 The Life of the Prophet

Example of Candidate's Work from the Examination

Candidate A

- 1 (a) Explain the importance of Makkah at the time of Jahiliyyah.

(30 marks)

AO1

Candidate Response

1 a) Explain the importance of Makkah at the time of Jahiliyyah.

The time of Jahiliyyah (time of ignorance) was the pre-Islamic time in Arabia. The customs of the time were dramatically different from that when Islam became the national religion.

Arabia at the time was a vast expanse of desert land with 1 million square miles of nothing. Along the peninsula were a few dotted cities, either close to the Sea or near an oasis (obviously key to survival). Although it was a vast nothingness, it was the connecting country between the great Abyssinia in the South and the even larger Byzantine & Persian empires in the North. This meant that Arabia was a key trading route.

In the center of Arabia lied the Capital of Makkah. This city thrived ~~en~~ because of its central location, it meant that it was the perfect place ~~for~~ for trade between the South and the North. The wealth of this place was helped by Muhammad's great uncle who obtained charters from the surrounding empires so that Arabs at the time could trade wherever (al-hums). This increased both the popularity & economy of the city (as the great-grandfather was living there).

The main society at the time (apart from city folk) were the bedouin nomads. Shepherds and farmers who travelled Arabia looking for grazing and water. These nomads travelled in caravans of sheep, goats and ~~other animals~~ ^{camels}. They would scout Arabia and travel to cities (primarily Makkah) to trade their goods & livestock. So along side the foreign trade which stopped in Makkah, the Arabian nomads also boosted trade & wealth in the city. With Makkah becoming more powerful, more and more nomads were leaving their travellers lifestyles behind to join in with city life.

Makkah also housed some of the most powerful clans and tribes in the whole of Arabia (i.e. Quraysh). These tribes were very influential and had full reign over whatever they

liked. With the code of vendetta enabling them to raid other caravans, the Quraysh tribe with their large numbers would go out on these razzias and bring back even more booty to Makkah, again increasing its importance.

Whilst trade seems to be the most important reason for Makkah's importance, there is one key thing missing... Religion. In the time of Jahiliyya, however much it was a multi-cultural place, with Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and even Hindus travelling and living in Arabia, the most widely accepted religion of the time was Bedouin polytheism. This was an animistic, paganistic religion which centred itself around ancestorship & idolatry.

Central to this religion was the Ka'ba. A 'cube' based in Makkah, meant to have been built by Adam & rebuilt by Abraham. Inside this cube were over 300 idols from the tribes and clans of Arabia. Because of this cube, it meant that at least once every year, clans would pilgrimage to Makkah to visit & pray at the Ka'ba. Not only did this put sole importance of Makkah for the religion at the time, but because of the pilgrimages, it also meant an increase in trade with hundreds of people continuously trading during their pilgrimages.

Commentary

AO1 (30 marks)

'Explain' means that the focus is on understanding. Candidates should expand on the main points with reasons, examples, or illustrations.

The opening paragraph defines jahiliyyah and sets the scene. Makkah's setting on the trade route between south and north is then described. This information is essential to the explanation that follows. The trading agreement is briefly outlined in the next paragraph although its significance is unclear. 'Arabs at the time could trade whenever' is rather vague.

The trading position of Makkah and its importance for both international and local trade is then made clear. Each new paragraph in this well constructed essay deals with a different theme, and Makkah's position as centre of power and a religious centre are explained. The relationship between trade and religion is clearly shown.

Good use is made of technical terms, and the use of language is generally clear. There is no explicit reference to scholarship, but the answer is very well-informed.

Some scholars argue that Makkah's importance as a trading centre has been exaggerated, and that its primary importance was as a religious centre e.g. see Reza Aslan in 'No God but God' (Arrow books 2005.) This idea is not acknowledged in this answer.

Assessment

The quality of the answer has to be judged in the light of the level descriptors and the novelty of demand on the candidates in this first June sitting of the new AS.

The answer is a good length for the time available (around 22 minutes including thinking time).

The level descriptor for Level 7 reads:

"A thorough treatment of the topic within the time available. Information is accurate and relevant and good understanding is demonstrated through the use of appropriate evidence / examples."

The descriptor for Level 6 reads:

"A fairly thorough treatment within the time available; information is mostly accurate and relevant. Understanding is demonstrated through the use of appropriate evidence and examples."

28/30 is awarded, putting the answer just into Level 7. A better explanation of the special status of Makkah as a trading centre would have earned the extra two marks. Level 7 does not, of course, represent a 'perfect' answer but the highest quality expected at this level.

Level 7 (28 marks)

- (b) 'The fact that Muhammad was born in Makkah was vital for the success of Islam.'
Assess this view.

(15 marks)

AO2

Candidate Response

b) 'the fact that Muhammad was born in Makkah was vital for the success of Islam'

Muhammad was born into a very wealthy and influential tribe (Quraysh), even though his clan was alot weaker. Whilst he grew up with his uncle (abu talib), he learnt the tricks of the trade and lived a nomadic lifestyle. It was here in mecca that he earned himself the title al'amin (the trustworthy one). It was this title that appealed to the people of Yathrib for a Statesman to help with their blood feud problems. Whilst his prophethood was hindered by nearly everyone, his time in Medina was key to the expansion of Islam. If he was not brought up Meccan ~~and~~ and had gained himself this title, he would not have been able to reach such a high position so that Islam could spread.

However, the ^{Meccans} ~~Meccans~~ did not take kindly to ~~his~~ his prophethood and tortured & murdered his followers. They saw the religion as insulting and detrimental to trade. Because of these reasons, Muhammad needed an escape and then Yathrib came about. Because he was born in Makkah, he slowed the expansion of Islam, it nearly stopped in fact and he also caused needless violence & killing for years to come. Because the Meccans grew to hate him so much, 3 Major Battles ~~had~~ occurred in later years that again caused much death.

On the other hand, although these battles did cause a lot of pain, they also greatly strengthened Islam with it seeming apparent that God was on his side.

Whilst Muhammad's time in Makkah seemed fruitless and he needed to escape in order for Islam to grow, it was only with his childhood life being in Makkah that he enabled himself to leave and to go into a position with enough authority for Islam within 100 years time to be a world known religion.

15

Commentary

AO2 (15 marks)

This was one of the issues flagged up in the Specification and candidates would be expected to debate it prior to taking the examination.

The opening to this answer looked worryingly irrelevant. The key point seems to be that Muhammad's title 'The trustworthy one' led to his success because 'If he was not brought up Meccan and had gained this title, he would not have been able to reach such a high position.' This is not convincingly argued, but it is clear that the candidate is saying that there was some advantage to Muhammad to have been born in Makkah.

The next section counters this with an account of all the opposition from Makkah. The candidate tries to draw a conclusion specific to the question set 'Because he was born in Makkah, he slowed the expansion of Islam, it nearly stopped in fact'. The possibility that the battles against Makkah were a good thing is also raised, but not developed. In the final paragraph a point of view is stated.

Assessment

The candidate is clearly aware that there is more than one point of view on this issue and is able to give some reasons in support. There is an attempt at comment and balance.

This most closely matches the descriptor for Level 5.

The answer was awarded 10/15.

Level 5 (10 marks)

Total for this question is 38/45: Grade A standard in June 2009.

2 (a) Examine the main themes of the Prophet's teaching in Makkah.

(30 marks)

AO1

Candidate Response

2a) Examine the main themes of the prophet's teaching in Makkah.

Muhammad's teachings in Makkah were controversial to say the least, and Muhammad knew it. This can be seen that after Cailat al'Qadr, he denied the religious experience, partially due to its very nature and his agnostic ^(hanifi) beliefs at the time but also partially due to the consequences he could imagine coming from what he was told by Jibreel.

However, after his Second Revelation, he was given courage and believed he was the Shilah. Although he now had the courage to speak and preach about his revelations, he started off first with just his family & recruited his wife (Khadijah) and cousin (Ali). His confidence then grew and started to preach more publically, Abu Bakr (Best friend and 1st Caliph) being the first recruit outside the family.

He was mainly preaching against the polytheistic religion at the time, saying that the concepts of ancestorship were wrong and that there was one and only one God called Allah. He also brought in preachings of life after death - a concept that the Makkans had never heard of before and the concept of a judgement by God.

Alongside this he was preaching a moral code (again something the polytheists didn't have) which put more emphasis on the liberation of women and the help of the poor. He saw that the rich had a moral obligation to help them (now one of the 5 pillars).

This monotheist religion was controversial and so abstract to all the polytheists at the time, whilst the Christians and Jews saw the similarities and the hanifs found what they were looking for. As stated Muhammad was recruiting people to Islam as he was preaching that he was bringing back the religion of Arabia - started by the hanifa Ibrahim - rather than introducing a new one. He saw the Ka'ba as a place of

Islamic interest that somewhere along the timeline had been lost and changed to a paganistic worship place.

Muhammad was also preaching Sawm (prayer everyday) ~~to~~ with the Qibla facing Jerusalem. Alongside his preachings, he practiced what he was saying with him and Khadija praying 5 times a day to the Qibla and gave money and help to the poor and sick. He also changed the religious ~~to~~ ^{tradition} of Ramadan into an Islamic month of fasting during daylight hours. Muhammad also urged the people of Makkah to ~~revert~~ so that they may have their afterlife with Allah. He also ^{believed} that Isa (Jesus) was a prophet of God.

Commentary

AO1 (30 marks)

The answer opens confidently. However, the claims made about Muhammad's reaction to the first revelation needed support. Candidates should make it clear when they are reporting objective fact and when they are offering interpretation.

The second paragraph is not focused on the question set, and the confident claim that Muhammad 'believed he was the Shiloh' needed explanation and support.

The third paragraph does focus on the themes of the teaching, but the reference to Muhammad's rejection of 'ancestorism' was out of place and needed support. The next paragraph continues with themes – but little more than a list is being offered. The command word 'Examine' requires some unpacking of concepts and explanation with reasons, examples or illustrations, and so far this answer has not offered this.

In the next paragraph, some comment is offered and some good points are made. The final paragraph adds reference to teaching through example, but is a little muddled in its use of terminology (sawm in the first line should be Salah) and incorrectly puts fasting in Ramadan in the Makkah context.

There are no direct references to the Qur'an in the answer.

Assessment

A range of ideas is covered and the answer is generally clear BUT the absence of evidence / examples to support the answer limits what can be awarded.

The Level 4 descriptor reads:

A generally satisfactory treatment of the topic within the time available. Key ideas and facts are included, showing some understanding and coherence.

Level 4 (19 marks)

- 2 (b) Assess the view that Muhammad's most important role in Makkah was as a 'warner'.

(15 marks)

AO2

Candidate Response

b) Assess the view that Muhammad's most important role in Makkah was that of a 'warner'.

Whilst preaching in Makkah, it was indeed true that he was warning the people of a Judgement to come in a life after the one they are living. However, Muhammad put a lot of emphasis into the denouncing of ~~poly~~ polytheism, calling it Satanic - going against the will of God - and wrong. The revelations or Surahs in the Quran show a highlighted emphasis on trying to rid the city of its most commercial religion.

Whilst factors such as the rejection for paganism and in favour of hospitality in the name of Allah to women and the poor, the warnings given to the people ~~were~~ stood out on the grounds that concepts of Judgement or life after death, all relating to a moral code, were completely new to them. Never before had they thought of another life as the closest you could get was to be captured in the poetry of the time.

So whilst it was probably not his main theme whilst preaching in Makkah, his role as a 'warner' stood out much more than anything else and had the largest impact on the society of the time - in both a positive and a

negative way. This was the role that was most different from anything else they were used to and this was the role that was most likely to catch people's attention... and it did!

Commentary

AO2 (15 marks)

Muhammad's role as a 'warner' is flagged up in the 'Issues arising' section of the Specification.

The first two paragraphs deal generally with the idea that he was a 'warner', although they are not totally focussed. It is stated that the warnings 'stood out' because teaching about life after death was new to them, and claimed that this had the largest impact - although no evidence of that impact is offered. The answer does make clear that other themes were very important.

There is recognition of more than one point of view, which is a feature of the level 5 descriptor, and taking into account the fact that this was a new paper, the answer scored 10/15.

Level 5 (10 marks)

Total for this question is 29/45: Grade B standard in June 2009.