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**EXAMINATION
REPORT**

General Studies

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1998 HSC EXAMINATION REPORT

GENERAL STUDIES

In 1998 a total of 14786 candidates presented for the Higher School Certificate General Studies Examination.

On the whole there were fewer shorter answers than in previous years with the vast majority of candidates showing an understanding of the requirements of the subject and the General Studies Syllabus. Many candidates were able to write at considerable length on the issues raised in the questions on the examination paper and were able to support their line of argument with a detailed discussion of a range of examples. Most candidates were able to write convincingly on three questions as required by the paper, but a few attempted to answer nearly every question on the paper, indicating they had ignored the instructions on the front of the paper. These candidates obviously seriously disadvantaged themselves. Teachers may need to stress to candidates, especially to those for whom English is not their primary language, that only three questions are to be attempted.

Once again the questions on the examination paper were directed towards testing the candidates' achievement of the outcomes of the syllabus of 1991. The ability to understand and think critically about the issues raised by the questions, the ability to sustain, support and effectively express an argument, and the skills of interpreting and using relevant material from a variety of areas were particularly focused on. Each Syllabus Topic was specifically covered by the examination questions and candidates were expected to apply interdisciplinary perspectives in the responses if required.

Examination questions were structured in a way that facilitated discrimination between prepared responses and those that exhibited a critical and balanced approach to contemporary issues.

MARKING GUIDELINES

The mark is awarded on the basis of the candidate's response relative to the quality of other responses. The following guidelines are employed when assessing responses.

MARK CRITERIA

- 9–10 Evaluation/logical argument and valid interpretation
- answers total question
 - critical analysis of problem or issue (if required)
 - recognition of issue involved
 - supports arguments with adequate range of relevant examples
 - logical development of argument
 - clarity of expression
 - reasonable length
 - critically evaluates opinions (if required)
 - degree to which targeted outcomes are achieved
- 7–8 Limited Analysis and Argument
- attempts to analyse problem or issue
 - uses relevant and accurate examples to support point of view
 - attempts to argue points and develop argument
 - good understanding of terms and concepts
 - reasonable length
 - clear use of language
- 5–6 Some Analysis and Relevant and Accurate Information
- some analysis of problem or issue
 - description and narration of examples tend to dominate
 - limited understanding of the complexity of an issue
 - limited understanding of alternative points of view
 - addresses most of the question
 - presents answer with relevance
- 3–4 Relevant Information/No Analysis
- description or narration of information only
 - no analysis
 - limited relevant or factual information
 - does not address the issue involved
 - does not answer the question
 - no coherent or developed argument
 - simplistic examples
- 1–2 Irrelevant Information
- one or two disjointed points
 - prepared answers which are not relevant (to topic, issue or question)
 - incomplete
 - too short to warrant sound treatment
 - personal diatribe with no relevance to issue

Question 1

Australia Day, Anzac Day and the Melbourne Cup are seen by many Australians as significant occasions on our national calendar.

How do public holidays and major sporting events assist in defining Australian culture?

General comments

Question One, which focused on Syllabus Topic 3, Culture, was one of the less popular questions in that it was attempted by approximately 5% of the candidature. Candidates were asked to discuss how public holidays and sport assisted in defining Australian culture. There was a range of responses to this question. However, some candidates who had not studied the topic obviously chose to answer the question on the assumption a satisfactory response would be to describe the events of Australia Day or Melbourne Cup Day. These candidates ignored the Syllabus Topic focus on the nature and meaning of culture, and forms of cultural expression. No attention was paid to the specific area of the difficulty of defining culture. Such a simplistic treatment of the question was reflected in the marks awarded to such responses.

Syllabus Outcomes particularly addressed by Question one were:

- to think critically about a contemporary issue
- to define terms accurately
- to express arguments clearly
- to support arguments with relevant evidence.

Excellent responses

These demonstrated a sound understanding of culture. Attempts were made to grapple with the complexity of ideas and issues that underpin the question, notably the difficulty of arriving at a single definition of culture in Australia. In these responses, candidates moved beyond the three events listed in the leading statement, to explore the notion of public holidays and how such days define Australian culture. Some judgement was made as to the relative value of activities pursued on these days in measuring Australian culture, notably outdoor life and the concept of hedonistic pursuits. Some candidates recognised the minimal contribution that public holidays made to defining culture. Rather, these candidates perceived the stereotypical problems of national definition provided by such events, or explored one Aboriginal perspective on Australia Day that focuses on mourning for invasion and genocide rather than cultural celebration. They explored other indicators that better define culture in contemporary pluralistic Australia: religion, food and multicultural policies.

Above average responses

Above average responses were distinguished from excellent responses by their limited examination of the notion of culture in an Australian context, although quite often these responses were linked to simpler, stereotypical comments about Australian identity. A common point in

many of these responses was that Australia is multicultural, however, there was little exploration of how holidays or sporting events may be perceived or celebrated by different cultural groups. There responses were also characterised by lengthy descriptive tracts about Melbourne Cup Day, Australia Day and Anzac Day, with very superficial and often unsupported statements about the contribution that these holidays and events make to the definition of Australian culture.

Average responses

Candidates who produced average responses wrote descriptively about the three events and listed without analysis the ways in which public holidays influence culture, except by way of a general statement in an introductory or concluding paragraph. Any supporting evidence in these responses was anecdotal and generalised. There was a general lack of understanding of what culture was, or a reduction of culture to simple ockerism. In this range there were also numerous prepared answers on popular culture and high culture.

Below average responses

In the below average range candidates produced responses that interpreted the question in a very narrow fashion. Most responses were brief and made no mention of culture at all, simply giving an overview of what happens at sporting grand finals or on Australia Day. Glaring historical inaccuracies were often a feature of these responses.

Question 2

Some police forces say they cannot stop the illegal drug trade. Others say the fight must go on. Different responses to the problem have included:

- **total prohibition and stiffer penalties**
- **decriminalisation**
- **drug education**
- **medical treatment.**

Assess the effectiveness of at least TWO of these responses.

General comments

The question focused on Topic 10, Society and the Individual. Aspects of Topic 4, Language Communication, could also be included in the response. The question assessed outcomes which expected the candidates to show that they could:

- identify the key issues confronting the world today
- recognise possible solutions to problems arising from these issues
- determine the effectiveness of policies
- accept that only partial solutions may be found to some problems
- acknowledge that many problems remain open questions.

The discriminating factor was the degree to which candidates could assess the effectiveness of at least two responses to the problem of the illegal drug trade, and not merely narrate details of these responses.

Excellent responses

These responses demonstrated that the candidates understood the complexity of the issues and they assessed the effectiveness of different responses to the illegal drug trade. They did this by means of often quite detailed reference to Australian and overseas examples of drug enforcement, treatment, decriminalisation or education, such as experiences in Amsterdam, Switzerland, South East Asia and Canberra in Australia. A distinction was sometimes made between trade in hard drugs and the illicit production of soft drugs for personal use, and the different government and other initiatives to address the problems which have emerged. Occasionally, reference was made to the problems associated with use of legal drugs like tobacco and alcohol. The comments were linked to an analysis of the effectiveness of decriminalisation measures in some parts of Australia and overseas, or the problems arising from the prohibition era in the USA.

Above average responses

Above average responses made brief reference to Australian initiatives in responding to the drug problem but there tended to be a lack of analytical discussion of the effectiveness of different responses. Nevertheless, some acknowledgment of the possible pros and cons of strategies was made.

Average responses

Most average responses made some limited attempt to examine the notion of effectiveness of responses to the drug problem but they emphasised what should happen rather than assess what is happening in terms of drug enforcement, treatment and decriminalisation. There was little understanding of the term prohibition, nor was there much awareness of the current drug laws in Australia. There was some discussion of education in Australia, usually from personal experience, with a fairly superficial examination of its relative success.

Below average responses

These responses generally took a similar approach to the average responses but they were less detailed and reference to 'effectiveness' was implied rather than stated. With the exception of drug education, no reference was made to current practices and vague, subjective comments were the norm about what should be done to address the drug problem. Many responses were little more than anecdotal, didactic tirades on marijuana legislation.

Question 3

People are only interested in environmental issues when their quality of life is threatened.

Do you agree? Support your response with appropriate examples.

General comments

Candidates' knowledge and understanding of Topic 2 of the Syllabus, The Environment, was examined in this question, which required the communication of a clearly expressed personal viewpoint, supported by relevant examples. The question lent itself to a multidisciplinary approach, thus allowing candidates to draw on a range of knowledge from General Studies and from the HSIE Key Learning Area.

It was a popular question attracting a wide range of candidates who were able to draw on a variety of environmental issues at a local, national and international level. Local examples included the Sydney water crisis, air pollution and cancer scares at Port Kembla, as well as potential airport noise at Badgery's Creek. National examples included uranium mining at Jabiluka, the 'Clean Up Australia' campaign and threats to the Great Barrier Reef.

Relevant outcomes to be addressed were:

- recognise the values and assumptions behind different approaches to the analysis of problems and issues
- determine items of knowledge relevant to an issue
- recognise the complexity of current issues in the world
- think critically about contemporary issues and problems
- express arguments clearly and succinctly
- express a personal viewpoint about contemporary issues.

Excellent/above average responses

On the whole, discussions of international environmental issues such as global warming and the destruction of the ozone layer were detailed and factual. Excellent responses were able to argue well the different sides of the issue raised in the statement and discuss UN conventions, protocols and conferences on the environment as evidence of concern even to those whose quality of life is not threatened. Examples used here included Kyoto, the Montreal Protocol and the Rio Summit and discussion of the type of role Australia played in them. The question specifically asked for an opinion with examples being used to support that opinion rather than an essay on environmental issues. The above average to excellent candidates were able to do this, giving more detailed and factual local and national examples while engaging in a discussion of the issue raised. These candidates also recognised that some people, for example, Greenpeace, are interested in helping the environment on altruistic grounds, not merely for themselves. Excellent responses were able to keep the question in focus by developing an argument showing the impact on the quality of life. They were articulate and voiced a discernable opinion.

Average responses

Average responses to this question made some reference to quality of life, used a limited range of examples and argued at some length that people were motivated by self interest when dealing with environmental issues. They considered the consequences of environmental damage and responses to that damage but with superficial reference to the issue raised in the question. These candidates used a wider and more specific range of people such as governments, multinational companies and so on, whereas below average candidates limited their responses to generalisations. The weaker average candidates had a prepared answer on the environment which they attempted rather unsuccessfully to link to the question.

Below average responses

Candidates considered only one or two examples of environmental damage, incorporated inaccurate statements in their response and treated the issue in a superficial, sometimes anecdotal manner. These responses tended to discuss local issues only with less breadth and depth of knowledge of environmental issues. In many cases weaker candidates reacted to the ‘trigger’ word ‘environment’.

On the whole, candidates felt confident in tackling this question as all had personal or local experience on which to draw, while better candidates had ample opportunity to demonstrate a range of knowledge and understanding and clear analysis of the issues.

Question 4

Since the United Nations was established in 1946 there have been over 150 international conflicts in countries from Korea and Cambodia to Somalia and Serbia.

Is this a fair measure of the success of the United Nations as an international peace-keeping body? Justify your response with relevant evidence.

General comments

This question specifically related to Topic 8, Conflict and Conflict Resolution. The question required candidates to have an understanding of the role of the United Nations, and to make a judgement about its relative success or failure in the light of international conflicts that have occurred since its inception. Though not a large proportion of candidates attempted this question, it did elicit a wide range of responses. Very few saw the United Nations as being very successful and many were highly critical. Virtually all saw the United Nations as falling well short of its ideals.

There was evidence that many candidates had studied examples of conflicts without reference to the United Nations and had difficulty relating their examples to the question. Such conflicts could have been made relevant to the question if there had been analysis of why the United Nations was not involved, or was not central to the peace process. This was a problem for candidates who wished to discuss the Arab-Israeli conflict, Northern Ireland and Indonesia.

Syllabus outcomes particularly addressed were:

- identify the salient features of a contemporary issue
- assess the significance of the issue and its problems
- recognise the complexity of current issues of the world
- think critically about a contemporary issue
- support arguments with relevant evidence
- accept that only partial solutions may be found to some problems.

Excellent/above average responses

Responses in the excellent to above average range showed a greater sophistication of argument by discussing the intricacies of peace-keeping operations over the years and their relative degree of success or failure in particular conflicts. Specific examples were analysed in some depth, with Rwanda and Somalia being generally perceived as failures, Iraq as a qualified success, and a range of responses to Bosnia and Kosovo. In these top responses, the content was relevant and free of obvious error concerning the role of the United Nations in the conflict. There was some analysis of the inherent limitations faced by the United Nations, based on its charter, structure and the veto in the Security Council. A number of candidates commented on the relative ineffectiveness of the United Nations in the Cold War period, when the interests of the United States or the USSR were at stake. Many saw relative success in the avoidance of another world or nuclear conflict; others saw relative success in the ability of the United Nations to contain a war within a country's borders, even though it could not prevent conflict or atrocities, eg Bosnia.

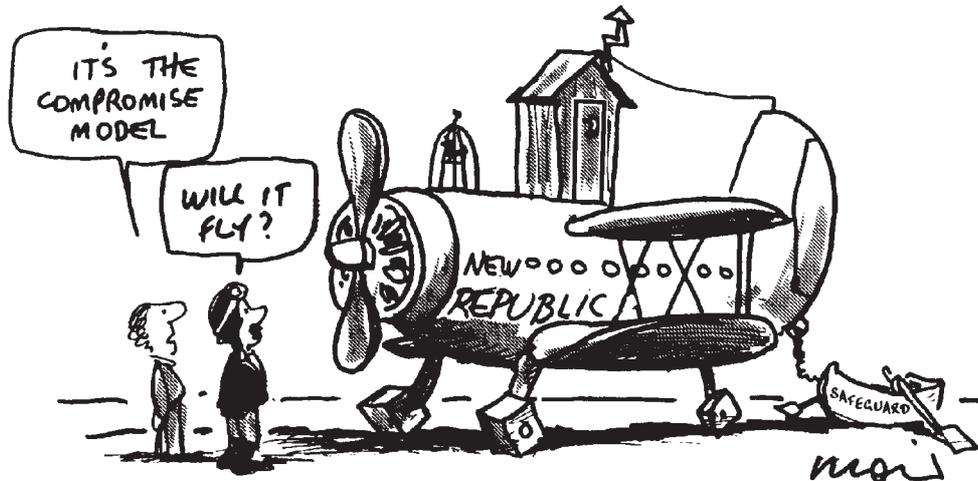
Average responses

In the average there was often a common problem. Either there was detailed knowledge of the structure of the United Nations, its origins and aims, but limited knowledge of the conflicts the United Nations had been involved in; or there was knowledge of recent conflicts, but very vague understanding of the role of the United Nations in them. A number of responses showed a certain naivety. For example, the use of force by the United Nations to drive Iraq out of Kuwait was viewed as a failure of the United Nations, simply because force was used instead of achieving that end by negotiation. There was an unexamined assumption that everything could be successfully negotiated. In this range of answers there was a lack of precise knowledge and a tendency to sweeping statement.

Below average responses

Below average responses showed the shortcomings evidenced in the average responses but to a greater degree. There were signs of essays prepared on particular conflicts that candidates were committed to using regardless of the question. In such cases, the United Nations was barely mentioned at all. A number of candidates confused the United States and the United Nations. In these responses there were significant errors of fact and minimal argument. Such candidates overall were highly critical of the United Nations without much supporting evidence.

Question 5



(a) What issues are raised in the cartoon?

(b) What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of Australia becoming a republic?

General comments

This question related to Topic 7, Social and Political Institutions, and Topic 8, Conflict and Conflict Resolution. It was a question designed to test candidates' knowledge of a contemporary issue, in this case the Republican debate as highlighted by the Constitutional Convention which occurred in February 1998.

The question did not attract a large candidature but it was attempted by candidates of all abilities, thus providing a wide range of responses. The cartoon may have dissuaded students from attempting this question, as they were expected to demonstrate their understanding of the issues raised in part (a) of the question. Responses which avoided making any reference to the cartoon were not considered for the excellent range, no matter how thorough their analysis of the pros and cons of the republican debate.

Syllabus outcomes relevant to this question were:

- identify the salient features of a contemporary issue
- recognise possible solutions to problems arising from the issue
- determine items of knowledge relevant to an issue
- infer meaning from information presented in pictorial form
- communicate ideas, arguments and conclusions
- outline the differing analyses of issues.

Excellent responses

Excellent responses answered both parts of the question. The issues raised in the cartoon were discussed in relation to the Constitutional Convention of February 1998. Candidates were able to explain the concepts of compromise, icons, safeguards and the feelings of insecurity engendered

by the cartoonist's model of the republic. A detailed knowledge of the personalities and the debate at the Convention was frequently demonstrated. Arguments reflected a good understanding of the pros and cons presented in the republican debate and were expressed logically and fluently, using sophisticated language.

Above average responses

These did not relate the cartoon to the Constitutional Convention but described the problems that would arise if a republic was instituted. These candidates displayed good knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of Australia becoming a republic but tended to focus on a narrower range of issues.

Average responses

Average responses often failed to address both parts of the question. These responses were, particularly in relation to part (a), either brief, or provided a literal interpretation of the cartoon. Language used was frequently colloquial and lacking in sophistication. The advantages and disadvantages were simply stated, rather than developed as part of the argument.

Below average responses

These responses were simplistic in their comments and showed minimal understanding of the terminology 'monarchy' and 'republic'. The cartoon was either ignored or was given scant attention.

Question 6

Scientists use technology to develop solutions for problems. However, they often take no responsibility for whether the solutions are good or bad.

Discuss this approach with reference to at least TWO of the following:

- **communication satellites**
- **military weapons**
- **irrigation**
- **cloning**
- **woodchipping**
- **electricity generation.**

General comments

This question related to Topic 1, Science, Technology and Society, Topic 2, The Environment and Topic 4, Language and Communication. Candidates needed to demonstrate their knowledge of two specific technological developments selected from a list nominated in the question and show that these developments can produce both negative and positive results. They also needed to discuss the concept of responsibility and discern where such responsibility belongs. This question proved to be quite popular and was attempted by candidates of all abilities, providing a wide range of responses.

Syllabus outcomes addressed were:

- identify issues confronting the world today
- recognise the importance of these problems for society
- recognise the complexity of current issues of the world
- think critically about contemporary issues
- support arguments with relevant evidence
- draw conclusions based on reasoned arguments.

Excellent responses

Excellent responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the development of technology and the role of the scientist. They were able to marry the pros and cons of technological development with the concept of responsibility. The more sophisticated responses focused on military weapons and cloning, demonstrating a sound knowledge of both. These responses were very perceptive and were able to demonstrate that technology had both good and bad solutions for problems, and that judgements about scientific responsibility were often difficult to make.

Above average responses

These did not demonstrate detailed knowledge of particular technological developments and they frequently wrote about the pros and cons for more than two items from the given list. These responses tended to be descriptive and did not carry the argument to conclusion, often failing to address in any detail the concept of responsibility.

Average responses

Average responses tended to merely describe either the good or bad solutions created by a variety of forms of technology without engaging in any discussion about responsibility. Many candidates made a token comment about responsibility in the introduction or conclusion or both. These responses often included incorrect or irrelevant information about technological developments as well as demonstrating a lack of language skills. These responses tended to use an inordinate amount of colloquial language. Prepared responses often hampered the development of an argument and indeed provided only broad generalised descriptions.

Below average responses

Candidates frequently wrote about issues not included in the question or only briefly mentioned one technological development from the given list. These responses were simplistic and usually brief, making one pertinent point about each issue mentioned. They rarely addressed the concept of scientific responsibility.

Question 7

The media has become increasingly interested in the lives of high-profile individuals, sensational events and trivia.

Should there be a balance between the public's right to know and the individual's right to privacy? Support your response with appropriate examples.

General comments

This was a popular question which addressed Syllabus Topics 4 and 10, linking the media with the privacy aspect of society and the individual. The question, unfortunately, caused some confusion with those candidates who attempted to address the media's interest in high profile individuals, sensational events and trivia as three separate, unrelated areas. In general, most candidates were able to write well integrated responses of considerable length on this question.

Question 7 focused on the following syllabus outcomes:

- identify a key issue confronting the world today
- determine items of knowledge relevant to an issue
- recognise the complexity of current issues of the world
- think critically about contemporary issues
- assess the appropriateness of decisions about such issues and problems
- support arguments with relevant evidence.

Excellent/above average responses

Excellent responses were able to comment on the rise of media interest in individuals, linking it with the demand for such information from the general public, which was itself fuelled by the media attention. These responses were able to discuss successfully the need for balance between the right to know and that of the privacy of the individual. As well, the idea of the public's 'right to know' and their 'want to know' was mentioned. While these responses used Princess Diana and President Clinton as examples, they were able to find additional examples, eg sporting identities and the victims of major accidents and tragedies. These responses explored the privacy issue thoroughly, querying the level of privacy possible for well known public figures. There was also discussion as to what extent this publicity is sought by these individuals at different stages of their lives.

Average responses

The average responses tended to get bogged down with long and graphic descriptions of incidents in the lives of high profile individuals and usually concluded that these individuals were entitled to as much privacy as less prominent people. However, the public's right to know was usually not discussed in any depth.

Below average responses

The weaker responses unfortunately concentrated more on the anecdotal aspect, detailing instances of the invasion of privacy of individuals such as Princess Diana and President Clinton, but not attempting to relate this to the concept of a balance between the right to know and the right to privacy.

Question 8

It has been argued that religion should have no place in political and social issues in the 1990s.

What do you think? Support your opinion with reference to at least TWO examples of religious involvement in such issues.

General comments

Candidates were able to draw on content contained in Syllabus Topic 6, Religion and Society, Topic 8, Conflict and Conflict Resolution and Topic 9, World Development and Inequality, in responding to this question. Although a less popular question, those who did attempt this question often gave lengthy answers, addressing the issues using a multiplicity of approaches. In considering the role of religion in political and social issues, a wide range of examples was used. The most common political issues included the religious differences of Northern Ireland, the Middle East and the Balkans, and the role of the church in domestic policy areas such as tax reform and wealth distribution. The most common social issues included birth control, euthanasia, homosexuality and pornography. Other interesting themes considered by some candidates were capital punishment, the role of women and gambling.

Syllabus outcomes addressed by Question 8 included:

- recognise the values and assumptions behind different approaches to the analysis of problems and issues
- recognise the complexity of current issues in the world
- think critically about contemporary issues
- communicate arguments and conclusions
- support arguments with relevant evidence
- express a personal viewpoint about a contemporary issue
- show tolerance to viewpoints other than one's own.

Excellent/above average responses

These responses went beyond a statement of religious beliefs and focused on the role religion is presently playing and whether that role is justified. There was also recognition of the significant role many religious organisations play in society, particularly in assisting the underprivileged, which allows these groups to offer valuable advice to government on social issues. Against this was the view that within an increasingly secular society the role religion should play must diminish. The better responses did not restrict discussion to a Christian/Judaism context but recognised the emergence of Middle Eastern and Eastern religions within a multicultural society such as Australia.

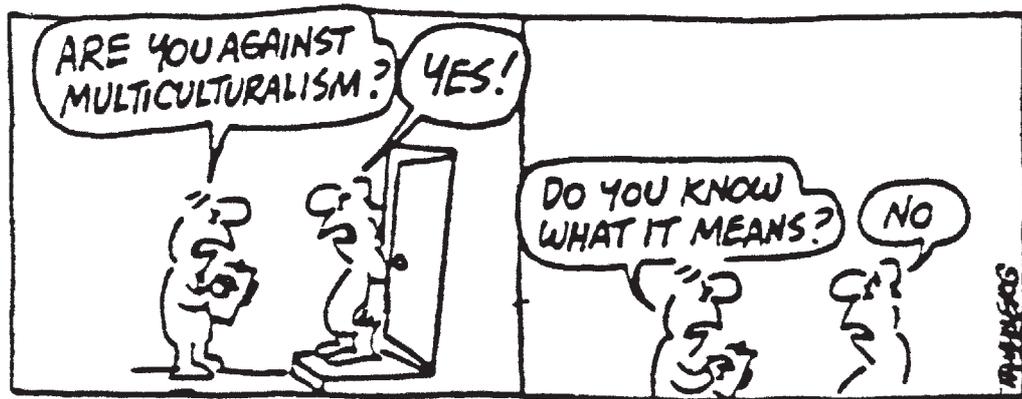
Average responses

Average responses tended to give many examples of political and social issues which gain attention from religious groups, but then did not consider in any depth whether religion should have any influence in setting policy. Such responses were often a statement of religious rulings on moral issues.

Below average responses

The poorer responses were characterised by an absence of opinion and a weak use of examples of political and social issues.

Question 9



- (a) What does multiculturalism mean to you?
- (b) How successful is Australia as a multicultural society?

General comments

This question, which focused on Syllabus Topic 5, Prejudice and Discrimination, Topic 10, Society and the Individual and aspects of Topic 3, Culture, was very popular.

There was a wide range of responses which allowed accurate discrimination between better and weaker candidates. While it was evident that the majority of candidates had some understanding of the issues involved, others seemed to be attracted to the question because of media reports of the federal election results and the demise of the One Nation Party, and the wide publicity given to recent police involvement in Sydney's inner western suburbs.

The syllabus outcomes most relevant to the question were:

- identify the salient features of contemporary issues and problems
- infer meaning from information presented in pictorial form
- communicate ideas, arguments and conclusions
- determine the effectiveness of policies
- define terms accurately.

Excellent responses

These gave accurate and cogent meanings for multiculturalism and were much more objective in their references to discrimination and the 'ethnic debate'. These candidates gave a more lucid account of the assimilation/integration debate and their evidence was non-anecdotal and reliably sourced. Responses were more likely to focus on the relative success of multiculturalism in Australia and compared Australia favourably with those countries that deliberately oppress cultural diversity both socially and legislatively. These excellent responses were typically well ordered in their argument, non-contradictory in their analysis and much more balanced in their conclusions.

Above average responses

Above average responses were characterised by a clear definition of multiculturalism which then led to a more pertinent discussion of the issues. Distinction was drawn between assimilation and integration and parallels were drawn between our treatment of migrants and Aboriginal people. Success was still largely defined in terms of racial or ethnic tolerance but reference was more frequently made to the legislative arm of multiculturalism, ie Racial Discrimination Act, interpreting and translation services and the repeal of the White Australia Policy. References to Pauline Hanson appeared less frequently but to far greater effect with more references to her electoral failure than to her policies.

Average responses

These were hampered by a lack of understanding and subsequent definition of multiculturalism. Many focused on the history of post war migration and defined its success on the ready availability of a variety of foods and the emergence of a few colourful festivals. Ethnic concentrations were generally perceived to be inhibiting the success of multiculturalism and this apparent contradiction was a result of a fuzzy definition of the term. One Nation was mentioned frequently and often ambiguously.

Below average responses

Below average responses treated multiculturalism and inter-racial harmony as synonymous. These candidates wrote brief essays about gang warfare and ethnic foods, and failed to come to grips with any of the more salient issues raised by the question.

Question 10

In Australia, the United States of America and many developing countries, the health and education levels of the indigenous population remain below those of the non-indigenous population.

- (a) What do you believe are the causes of these differences in living standards?
(b) What strategies would you suggest to improve the situation?

General comments

This question, which related to Syllabus Topic 9, World Development and Inequality and touched on aspects of Topic 5, Prejudice and Discrimination, Topic 3, Culture and Topic 10, Society and the Individual, proved to be reasonably popular and generally attracted a higher standard of response. The majority of candidates who attempted this question were well informed and displayed good essay writing skills. The wording of the question with its reference to ‘many developing countries’ meant a certain proportion of candidates launched into a prepared essay on Less Developed Countries and their problems in general without putting enough focus on the disparity in living standards between indigenous and non-indigenous populations in those countries, and the reasons for such a situation.

Part (a) of the question called for an analysis of the causes rather than the symptoms of the health and education levels of the indigenous populations; part (b) tried to elicit an ability to identify the problems, to generalise and make deductions, and thus to present a well-supported argument.

The outcomes most relevant to the question were:

- identify the salient features of contemporary issues and problems
- communicate ideas, arguments and conclusions
- support arguments with relevant evidence
- determine the effectiveness of policies
- accept that only partial solutions can be found to some problems.

Excellent/above average responses

These responses showed a sophisticated understanding of the question, citing a wide range of examples and their historical basis. Initiatives of the Australian Governments, both Federal and State, in the case of the Australian Aborigines, and a knowledge of some of those of the United States, were features of these responses. They dealt with customs, beliefs and prejudice on the part of both non-indigenous and indigenous populations and often of the latter’s remoteness from medical and educational facilities as causes of their problems. Their suggested strategies stressed self-help and self-determination, including land ownership. These responses, while offering well-considered solutions, also accepted the difficulties of their implementation.

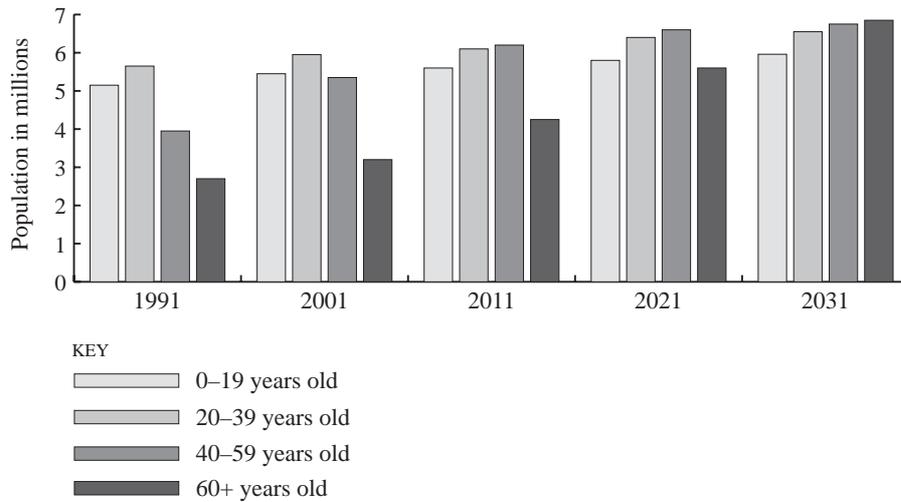
Average responses

In the middle range of responses, the majority of candidates used the Aboriginal experience to support and sustain their arguments. Knowledge of the American indigenous experience, their problems and strategies were either superficial or, in some instances, erroneous. Little or no mention was made of prevailing government strategies to address the Aboriginal issues, rather dwelling on the symptoms of the inequality of health and educational levels between indigenous and non-indigenous populations.

Below average responses

Below average responses (which were few) were often very generalised, and presented solutions which were often simplistic and sweeping in their application. These candidates were unable to distinguish between 'indigenous' and low socio-economic groups in general. Most of this range of responses presented prepared answers on developed and developing countries with little or no engagement with the implications of the question.

Question 11



- (a) What does the above information indicate about the changing nature of the Australian population?
- (b) What are the implications of these changes for government policies and family life?

General comments

Question 11 applies to Syllabus Topic 7, Social and Political Institutions, Topic 10, Society and the Individual and Topic 5, Prejudice and Discrimination. Only a small percentage of candidates attempted this question.

Many candidates responded to this question in two distinct parts rather than as an integrated response. Although this format is completely valid, it led, in many instances, to a superficial interpretation of the stimulus material. In order to provide a balanced response, candidates needed to focus on three main points: the changing nature of the Australian population, implications for government policies and implications for family life. Most candidates could interpret the graph, although this was achieved with varying degrees of sophistication. The key word, ‘implications’ tended to be reinterpreted as ‘describe’.

Relevant syllabus outcomes were:

- identify key issues
- recognise possible solutions to problems arising from the issues
- recognise the importance of these problems for society
- deduce information from graphs
- think critically about contemporary issues
- determine the effectiveness of policies.

Excellent/above average responses

Above average responses were better able to perceive that a number of figures could be extrapolated from the graph rather than simply concentrating on an aging population. These candidates saw relationships between the implementation of present government policies, such as

superannuation, and the long term implications of such policies. These candidates linked improvements in medicine/technology to an increased aged population, but also evaluated the flow-on effects for economic policy, infrastructure, hospitals, housing, transport and the environment. Candidates were balanced in their appraisal of the aged, rather than simply seeing this group as a negative for society. The political power of this group and the rise of 'grey power' were cited. The whole spectrum of population change was addressed in these responses.

These responses discussed youth initiatives and policies, such as Austudy, unemployment, education and childcare. Immigration was discussed as a possibility to increase the tax base, as well as the proposed GST, to supply funding for government policies relevant to all sections of the community. The necessity of re-evaluating economic policies was made clear. An evaluation of changing attitudes and women's roles in the work force, contraception and the changing nature of the traditional family structure were also discussed in relation to the figures on young adults and the implications of a slow growth in the younger population levels into the next century. Family life was seen as changing, but this was not necessarily viewed as a negative change. Greater flexibility in childcare through multi-generational families, the aged as role models, changing perceptions of old age and the responsibilities of the family to its members were discussed. These candidates expressed their arguments clearly and succinctly and supplemented their discussions with valid examples and source materials.

Average responses

Average responses were able to discuss either government policies or family issues, but rarely incorporated both into a balanced response. Many discussed why the population was aging rather than the implications of this. The issues raised in relation to an aging population were seen in the need for increased facilities such as nursing homes and hospital beds. Many recognised that this would create funding problems for welfare departments. Some discussed whether retirement age should/would be changed and how this may affect pension payments. There was confusion about the issues of an aging population and the role of immigration, increasing population and the impact on unemployment. Few saw caring for the aged as a labour intensive industry.

Candidates who realised that population growth was an issue mentioned the growth of cities, environmental quality and town planning. The issue of the impact on family life was generally given cursory treatment. Families were seen as undergoing change and becoming multi-generational. Some attempt was made to evaluate this but it generally remained simplistic and directed towards negative aspects. Superficial statements dismissing further discussion were common and no attempt was made to validate ideas with source material other than the printed stimulus material.

Below average responses

These failed to identify or explain that the graph indicated an aging and increasing population. These candidates failed to present a considered discussion and showed little or no understanding of government policies designed to address population issues.

Many weaker candidates discussed why the population was aging and made invalid assertions about immigration and population control. Many misinterpreted the graph and so called for population controls such as China's one child policy. Family life was largely dismissed. At best most responses in this group contained descriptive comparisons of the columns in the graph.

Question 12

Many inventions have influenced our lives.

Evaluate the impact of this influence by referring to at least TWO of the following:

- **computers**
- **mobile phones**
- **surveillance cameras**
- **random-breath-testing machines**
- **electronic banking.**

General comments

This question related specifically to Syllabus Topic 1, Science, Technology and Society, with reference to Topic 4, Language and Communication and Topic 10 Society and the Individual.

The question was responded to by a disproportionately large number of candidates despite its obscure placement on the examination paper. It is difficult to state absolutely the reason for its popularity. It could mean that this was a widely taught topic; it could have been due to that fact that large numbers of candidates felt familiar with the inventions provided; it could have been the 'structured' nature of the question. The length of response was generally pleasing, with even weaker candidates attempting two pages.

The overall standard of responses was not particularly high because a large proportion of candidates tended to overlook, disregard or failed to understand the requirements of the key instruction within the question, ie evaluate. A limited number of candidates elected to define the terms of the question, with most failing to grasp the concept of evaluating the impact of inventions. Many such candidates proceeded to describe the function of computers, mobile phones, etc, often supported by anecdotal experiences. Responses of this nature were, not surprisingly, those in the below average range.

The number of candidates who referred to either all examples or only two was about evenly divided; neither group was disadvantaged by this decision although those who cited just two examples were able to discuss the influences in more depth and tended to have more substance in their responses. Many of the better responses moved outside the parameters of the question and cited illustrations of other inventions such as the motor vehicle, electricity, television and medical advances which have had a profound impact on our lifestyles. Nearly all candidates chose computers as their first influential factor followed by, and to a varying extent, mobile phones, surveillance cameras, random-breath-testing machines and electronic banking which interestingly enough was the order that they were listed on the examination paper.

Relevant syllabus outcomes targeted were:

- recognise the importance of problems arising from key issues for society
- assess the significance of contemporary issues and problems
- recognise the complexity of current issues.

Excellent/above average responses

Excellent responses considered such factors as the impact of inventions on employment within the community whereby those made redundant by technology often have difficulties in finding new positions because they are unable or incapable of retraining due to such things as age or technophobia; the social problems associated with unemployment; that an entirely new work perspective or culture has been created which demands consideration of reskilling, re-education/training; new work practices; the development of anti-social attitudes; the feeling of isolation in an ever-shrinking world; privacy considerations; structural unemployment; feelings of despair and hopelessness. Some considered the social positives of computers by enabling social contact through the web. Better candidates were able to discuss the issues that inventions create sunrise (as well as sunset) industries and therefore were able to show that inventions created jobs as well as destroyed them. Many of the candidates realised that the jobs created were often for the upper socio-economic groups while they impacted less favourably on the under-educated.

Average responses

These responses tended to present personal opinion, often as fact, with little consideration given to the larger (global) implications. They generally only presented one side of the argument, mostly presenting the positives ñ citing personal anecdotes as their examples. While the question provided the broad sketch for an essay plan by listing five influences, the average response struggled to extrapolate from the general and present relevant examples in support of its evaluation of the statement.

Below average responses

Below average responses made no attempt to evaluate the impact on the inventions they chose. Responses tended to be very superficial. Examples, which dealt almost exclusively with computers and mobile phones, were of the personal experience anecdotal variety with no attempt to generalise about any impact on the wider community. Occasionally reference was made to surveillance cameras but again any discussion was at a personal level, eg use of such cameras in change rooms.

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