



Teacher Resource Bank

GCSE Religious Studies Specification A

AO1 Sample Answers



Introduction

The following pages give examples of answers to specimen AO1 questions together with brief comments on how these would be marked. The document **Notes on Levels of Response**, also published in the Teacher Resource Banks gives further explanation of how the level descriptors are to be applied. Although examples of answers from all units have not been included in this booklet, it should be possible for teachers to apply the same principles when marking responses for all units.

UNIT 1 – CHRISTIANITY

Fundamentalism and the liberal view are two approaches to understanding the Bible. Explain what is believed about the authority of the Bible by those who take these approaches. You may use examples in your answer.

Fundamentalists believe the Bible is free from all errors, as it is not the words of men but the 'word of God'. If passages seem to contradict themselves, they must be explained straightaway. In the story of the resurrection in John's Gospel Mary Magdalene went to the tomb first and then Peter. Mary was the first to see the risen Christ. Matthew, Mark and Luke have a group of women going to the tomb first and they see the risen Christ as they are running back to tell Peter and the others. Fundamentalists believe John would have simply not mentioned the other women, but knew they were there. The other appearances took place on different occasions. A point of the case is with evolution. Fundamentalists believe God created the world in six days, and they believe Adam and Eve were the first people. Fundamentalists believe the Bible word for word.

Liberal Christians believe that the writer was inspired, like any great writer is, like Shakespeare. They had insights about human life. They do not take the Bible word for word. They see the six day creation story as a poem which says why the world was created but not how. Liberals believe the Bible shouldn't be taken word for word. There are symbols and meanings that need to be understood properly.

Level 6. This is a clear Level 6 response. It is detailed and coherent, with good development.

Explain both how and why Christians use the Bible in their worship.

Christians use their Bible by reading the Bible. The Bible has teachings of Jesus that Christians want to follow in the footsteps of. Some Christians might use the Bible as making important decisions and they might use the Bible as guidance, to help them. Christians such as fundamentalist Christians believe that by reading the Bible, you are closer to God. They believe they can understand what Jesus went through. Christians use the Bible for praying. Praying is a conversation with God and helps Christians to be a good Christian in everyday life, 'love your neighbour'. This helps them because they know that God wants everyone to be treated equally and that is why the Ten Commandments are here. The Bible contains the Ten Commandments. This shows Christians what to do and what not to do, so they can live an honest Christian lifestyle.

Level 4. How and why are addressed throughout, but there is no reference to public worship. The response does deal with private worship, although the actual words are not mentioned, and there is some development.

UNIT 2 – CHRISTIANITY: ETHICS

Explain examples of prejudice and discrimination that exist in the world today.

An example of prejudice that still exists today is that which many hold of women. As some still prejudice women to be the weaker sex, less able, less intelligent and that men are the superior sex. This thought is held by people in modern cities and others still living in the countryside. Sometimes it turns into discrimination, for example, a woman with the same qualifications as a man also applying for a job doesn't get it for she's a woman. Another example of discrimination is racism, where a person is judged because of the colour of their skin and sometimes beaten or killed. This happens a lot in football, where teams meet and supporters clash. Another would also be religion, for example when Protestants and Catholics fought in Northern Ireland, because of their different beliefs.

Level 5. There are more than two ideas with some development of each. There is clear understanding of prejudice and discrimination, with sound exemplification of both in relation to women, though the third sentence adds little. Colour and religious prejudice and discrimination are less effectively exemplified. The response does not reach Level 6 because it is somewhat repetitive and lacks coherence.

Explain Christian teachings about sexual relationships.

Christians teach that you shouldn't have sex before marriage, as sex is only meant for reproduction, as God said 'Be fruitful'. They believe that only marriage provides the basis for a family and children to grow up in. They also only believe that you should have one sexual partner, therefore adultery is wrong, which is also one of the 10 Commandments. Jesus taught that adultery is a sin. Christians also may believe that if you divorce and remarry you are sinning for it is another sexual partner. They believe that sex consecrates a marriage and is a sign of unity, for the sexual partners are then joined from then on.

Level 5. There is enough detail here for it to make this level. There are a number of ideas with some development, but the development is not always good. The response does not reach Level 6 because it is slightly list-like and does not really focus on the question.

UNIT 3 – ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Explain why Holy Communion is important to Roman Catholics.

Holy Communion is important to Roman Catholics because it reminds us of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. He died on the cross to deliver us from evil. Also we are fulfilling the covenant which he entrusted us with. He said, 'This is my body broken for you, do this in memory of me.' The Eucharist is part of a lot of other services – Requiem Masses and festivals and pilgrimages.

Catholics believe in transubstantiation which is the belief that the bread and wine really becomes the body and blood of Jesus. We call this the Real Presence. When we receive communion we become part of the body of Christ and this inspires us to do good deeds within the community.

The communion keeps us going until the next because it is spiritual food and helps us carry out the task 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.'

Level 6. This is a clear Level 6 response. It is detailed and coherent, with good development.

Explain how two of the Holy Week ceremonies help believers to understand the last week of Jesus' life.

In the Maundy Thursday service the priest dresses as a deacon to show that he is a servant in imitation of Jesus. To outline this further he washed the feet of twelve parishioners. This expresses the belief that Jesus was here to serve not to be served. Also we perform the watch in imitation of Jesus praying in Gethsemane to show that we will be watchful and stay awake with him. Holy Thursday emphasises the Last Supper in the readings and during the consecration. We remember his words at the Last Supper – 'This is my body broken for you.'

The ceremonies on Good Friday help us remember the last hours of Jesus. By stripping the church bare with decoration we are mourning and remembering how horrible his last hours were. During the veneration of the cross the priest stops three times to show how Jesus struggled to carry the cross. The reading of the Passion in parts outlines what happened to Jesus emphasising his suffering and death. The Seven Last Words help people to meditate on the last words of Jesus and finding meaning in these.

Level 6. Again, this is a very good answer, coherent, with good development.

UNIT 4 – ROMAN CATHOLICISM: ETHICS

Explain what the Roman Catholic Church teaches about marriage.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that marriage is the biggest vow of love a couple can take. Marriage is to be a bond between a couple that can only be broken by death. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that a married couple should at least try for a baby.

Level 3. There are three simple points with no development.

Explain what Christians can learn about how to treat others from the parables of the Forgiving Father and the Good Samaritan.

Christians can learn to treat others with respect. We can especially learn to accept people and not make them outcast because of who they are. You see, the father accepted the son back; he wasn't angry, he was happy. Christians should learn to go back where you come from in times of trouble, no matter how bad things are, how bad you have been, because the father was happy that his son was safe. We learn from the Good Samaritan that you should not look down upon anyone or be prejudiced but love, help and be kind to everyone.

Level 4. There is clear knowledge but limited development. The response is better on The Forgiving Father than on The Good Samaritan. The dual focus does make it quite difficult for the candidate – this was originally an 8-mark question on the legacy specification.

UNIT 5 – ST. MARK’S GOSPEL

Give a detailed account of the Last Supper, starting from when Jesus entered the room.

Jesus and his disciples went into the room that had been prepared for them. The 12 disciples and Jesus were eating and Jesus broke bread, gave thanks to God and then distributed it out to the disciples. He said, ‘This is my body.’ Then he took a cup which had wine in and said, ‘This is my blood, poured out for many, which seals God’s covenant. I tell you I will never drink wine until I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.

Level 4. There are lots of gaps in this response. The betrayal is missing, but the response is good on the bread and wine. Development here pulls the response into Level 4.

Explain what Christians might learn about faith from the miracles in Mark’s Gospel.

In the miracles that Jesus performed, Christians will learn that as long as you have faith then anything is possible. In the healing of blind Bartimaeus, Jesus said, ‘Your faith has healed you’. He also says this when he heals the woman with a haemorrhage; here Christians can interpret ‘healed you’ as ‘saved you’. This could be saved you from your discomfort or saved you from death. This could prove that if you have been ‘saved, then you will receive eternal life in the Kingdom of God and this is because of faith and belief in God and Jesus as he is God on earth.

Level 5. This response just reaches Level 5. It includes the key element of faith in these miracles, uses examples, gives some detail and shows some understanding.

UNIT 7 – PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Explain how a personal religious experience might lead a person to believe in God. You may use an example to support your answer.

A religious experience may lead to someone believing in God because in their experience things might happen that are out of the ordinary and can't be explained in any other way. For example, if something happened that defied the laws of nature like walking on water. Without a scientific explanation people might think that it must be to do with a God. Only something as powerful as a God could make something like that happen and because they might be so convinced it did happen, the only solution they could justify is God.

Level 4. The response shows some understanding. One idea (miracles) is developed well, but there would need to be another experience or idea for this question to reach Level 5. (Using 'examples' in the question might have helped the candidate.)

Explain two arguments that suggest the existence of God cannot be proved.

One argument that suggests that the existence of God cannot be proved is that we have no physical evidence of God. We cannot hear, see, touch or even smell God. Without these key things it seems impossible to prove the existence of something that would have to be so physically different to us. Another argument is that none of the things he supposedly does and is supposed to be can be proved. Supposedly he created the world and it is scientifically proven that it was the big bang that created the world.

Level 4. There are two ideas with some development, although this is not well-expressed. The first idea is better developed than the second.

UNIT 8 - ISLAM

Describe how Muslims perform Salah.

Before performing Salah, a special washing ritual is performed known as wudu. It is important to perform wudu as you clean yourself and mentally prepare yourself for prayer, so you are physically and mentally focused on praying to Allah. All Muslims pray facing towards the Ka'aba in Makkah, facing 'qibla' towards Allah. They read the Salah with the imam teaching the prayers and the rest following. At the end of prayer a special Du'a is read by each person. This is personal and it can be said in any language at any time. You are speaking to Allah in your Du'a alone.

Level 4. While the question does not explicitly demand understanding, the most important points need to be included in the answer to fulfil the 'understanding' part of the level descriptors. This response omits rak'ahs, an important part of a full response, and the last three lines are irrelevant.

Explain the importance to Muslims of Sawm.

Sawm is important for Muslims as it reminds them about the one less fortunate and how they feel when they starve. This is why every Muslim fasts. They wake up for Sehri, to eat about 4 o' clock and finish before sunrise. And then they end their fast at sunset after prayer. During fasting you are not allowed to eat or drink smoke, watch telly, listen to music, swear to others. All these are forbidden whilst fasting.

Level 2. The first sentence is a point with development, but the rest of the response is description of what Muslims do and does not explain the importance.

UNIT 10 – JUDAISM

Describe the events that take place after the death of a Jew and at the funeral.

At the death of a Jewish person the family and friends of the dying person will gather around him or her. They will then allow the dying person to recite the Shema. If the person is unable to, then the family and friends will try to recite it on the person's behalf. After the dying person has deceased, the family will close the person's eyes. Jews will make a tear in their cloths. Prayers and blessings will be said. After this somebody must be with the dead person all the time, like a family member. If they are not available then someone from the Chevra Kaddish can. The body will then be taken to be washed in the Mikveh by the same member of sex. They body will then be wrapped up in the kittel. If the dead person is a man they will be wrapped in the tallit with the tzitzit cut. The body is then taken to be buried. The kaddish will be recited. Jews will then wash their hands and return home. At home they will eat eggs. Then the 7 day mourning period begins, called the Shiva. The immediate member of the family cannot leave the house. The shiva is included in the Sheloshim which is the 30 day mourning period. The Kaddish will be recited every day. During this time, Jews cannot have any sexual relationships. They cannot cut their hair or nails.

Level 6. This response is excellent on the events that take place immediately after the death, but somewhat limited on the funeral. There is irrelevant material at the start of the answer, but there is nevertheless enough creditworthy material with good development to reach Level 6.

Explain the importance to Jews of the main features in a synagogue.

The synagogue has many important features. Firstly, the Magen David is the symbol of Judaism and is seen around the synagogue to remind Jews of the symbol. Another feature is the Ner Tamid. This is the everlasting light that shows God is omnipresent and is everywhere. Furthermore the Menorah is also an important feature. It is a seven- branched candle to show that God made the world in seven days, it reminds Jews. The bimah is also an important part of the synagogue, it is where the Torah is read from and where Bar/Bat Mitzvah is held. Also the Ark is an important feature. It is where the holy Torah scrolls are kept. As well as this, the stained glass windows show stories of the past and the 7 tribes of Israel. The seats are separate, some upstairs, where the women sit, and some downstairs, where men sit. This is to avoid any distraction and to let them concentrate on God alone.

Level 6. This is a borderline Level 6. All main features are mentioned, and there is development of all points. We would probably want good development of at least two main features for Level 6, and there is more than that here.

UNIT 11 – JUDAISM: ETHICS

Explain Jewish attitudes to abortion.

Abortion is very much disliked and detested. Jews only allow abortion to happen in very extreme cases. For example if the mother's life will be in danger, then her life is seen to be more important than the baby's. In this case abortion would be allowed. As well as this, if the baby that is going to be born will have a serious problem, e.g. they are retarded, then abortion is allowed. However some orthodox Jews believe that even if the baby will be born disabled, abortion is not allowed. Jews believe that only God has the right to take life away because he gives it. Nobody else can make that decision, no matter what the circumstances, except him.

Level 6. Again, this is borderline, but there is more here than in the mark scheme.

Explain Jewish attitudes to euthanasia.

Jews also dislike and detest euthanasia. Nobody has the right to take a person's life away, even if the dying person has requested it. Jews believe all life belongs to God, and only he has control over who lives and dies. Jews believe that life should neither be prolonged nor taken away too soon. However, Jews have difficulty in trying to figure what to do. For example, if a person is on a life support machine they do not have the right to switch it off but they can't keep it on as it would be prolonging death and making the person carry on living.

Level 4. The candidate makes a good start and there is some development, but the response is not detailed enough to reach Level 5.

UNIT 12 - BUDDHISM

Explain Buddhist attitudes towards prejudice.

The Buddha taught that the road towards discrimination and prejudice is caused by attachment and the three poisons. Buddhists also believe strongly in equanimity which simply means that everyone should be treated as equals. So prejudice and discrimination should be avoided at all costs. Buddhism also teaches that one should always speak positively about everyone and that we should not lie and spread rumours about other people. Buddhists, again repeating their beliefs in equanimity, believe that all forms of racial and sexist prejudice are wrong and that we should all look on each other as equals.

Level 5. This just reaches Level 5. It is a concise response, but there is some repetition, and the response is not coherent or well-developed enough for Level 6.

Explain the importance of any two of the five moral precepts.

Do not destroy life; this means that a Buddhist should follow ahimsa which literally means harmlessness or non-violence. They believe that you should respect life and the environment around you and that you should make skilful decisions when it comes to this sort of thing. Abortion and euthanasia are also frowned upon hugely as it disobeys this precept and it will only be accepted after the amount of suffering which may occur is taken into account. Do not lie; this is also echoed in the noble eightfold path, in Right Speech. A Buddhist should always speak positively and never negatively. A Buddhist should never speak falsely as it can accumulate bad karma too. Lying leads to suffering in many ways and this precept, as they all should, should never be broken.

Level 6. A good, coherent response with good development. The first phrase, 'Do not destroy life', refers to the moral precept 'abstain from killing'.