

AQA qualification support

GCSE Religious Studies A – New Specification

Preparing to Teach – Commentaries

POST CONFERENCE BOOKLET

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Example A :

Give two examples of what religious believers might do to help to carry out the duty of stewardship. (2 marks)

Answer 1

Christians could write letters to their MPs, trying to put pressure on the government to do more to conserve natural resources and encourage an eco-friendly lifestyle. Muslims could do this also.

Stewardship is about living in a responsible way by not wasting resources and Christians and Muslims could put this into practice in everyday life by turning off computers rather than leaving them on standby and switching off lights when going out of a room.

2 marks

Answer 2

Be kind to animals

Recycle

2 marks

Answer 3

Christians could look after their pets

Christians could use recycling bins for packaging, bottles etc.

2 marks

Commentary

Answer 2 shows the best technique. Two words / phrases are sufficient for questions with a maximum of 2 marks. Students who write lengthy responses might well find they run out of time when answering the AO2 questions, where they do need to respond in detail.

Example B:

Explain two ways in which practising ahimsa (non-violence) influences Hindus today. (4 marks)

Answer 1

Ahimsa influences Hindus because they believe if they harm others, they will build up bad karma.

2 marks for one developed point.

Answer 2

Ahimsa influences Hindus by stopping them from being violent.

1 mark for one simple point.

Answer 3

Practising Ahimsa makes Hindus kinder to one another, for instance they may give money to charity.

They want to break free from the cycles of samsara, so to build up good karma they avoid saying unkind things to people.

4 marks for two developed points.

Answer 4

Many Hindus are vegetarian because they think that the principle of ahimsa applies to animals as well as humans. The atman is in every living being and is a divine spark, so to harm others is wrong.

4 marks for two developed points.

Answer 5

Gandhi practised ahimsa by supporting only non-violent protests. Hindus today see Gandhi as a role model for their lives. They do this to avoid creating bad karma.

2 marks for one developed point.

Example G:

War is never right.'
Evaluate this statement.

In your answer you:

should give reasoned arguments in support of this statement

should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view

should refer to religious arguments

may refer to non-religious arguments

should reach a justified conclusion.

Answer 1

I agree with that statement because there is no need to have wars. For pacifists, killing goes against teachings in sacred writings. They agree that war causes suffering, bitterness, hatred, prejudice and greed. The suffering is out of proportion to the evil beings fought, it damages the environment and wastes precious lives and resources that could be used to solve world poverty and other world problems. 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.'

Strengths

Explicit and implicit religious content.

Weaknesses

Too brief. Lacks detailed development. One-sided.

Level 2 Mark 4

Answer 2

War is necessary when the outcome benefits the greater good of the people who are involved. It can have good and bad outcomes, involving death but also involving victory. I think that war is right depending on the situation, and if it involves bombing village people who haven't done anything to deserve it, for example in the poorer countries in the world, it is not right.

Strengths

An attempt to answer the question.

Weaknesses

Incoherent. Far too brief. Lacks development. No religious content.

Level 1 Mark 3

Answer 3

Sometimes war can be justified by the reason, the intent and the means used to fight the war. If the intent the means and the reason for going to war are just, for example, to defend your country. However in a war there is no denying that millions of people become displaced, are injured or killed. Moreover most Christians believe that it is better to forgive rather than have to seek retribution. However, war is right in some situations but should be used as the last resort.

Strengths

Reference to Just War criteria and to importance of forgiveness.

Weaknesses

Too brief. Lacks development.

Level 2 Mark 4

Answer 4

War is never right, in the sense that it causes many deaths and injuries, destruction of a country's economy and infrastructure and can cause people to be left homeless with disease and famine. People can be left with nothing and many flee the country, which gives the problem of refugees. War also uses a lot of money which could have been spent on helping people in poverty. However there are some situations where war can be good, but not as many. For example, it can provide people with freedom or the replacement of a corrupt government which can bring benefits to the country.

Some Christians are pacifists and won't take part in any form of violence. Killing is against their conscience. They have formed the Society of Friends. They work for human rights and prevention of war. Not all pacifists are religious. Christians believe in the sanctity of life, and that only God can decide when it ends. They also believe in peace and justice. They agree with the terms of a 'Just War' which is more a form of self-defence. It is also present in Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. They also believe that war is generally wrong. Jesus taught that one should oppose wrongdoing and on occasion use force. Some non-religious people still oppose war but some still believe in a 'Just war' or that there just shouldn't be wars. I conclude that wars are generally wrong but in certain circumstances it is necessary, for example in self-defence.

Strengths

Reasoned consideration of different points of view. An attempt to develop points.

Weaknesses

Limited religious content. Some incoherence in the 2nd paragraph.

Level 3 Mark 8

Answer 5

I think that this statement is true due to the fact that there are huge amounts of consequences from war. Some examples of these include many deaths, which go against the sanctity of life. War can also damage a country's economy and infrastructure. Every hour £100 million is spent on military equipment. Some people may agree with war and disagree with this statement. These people may argue that war is a way to find peace between countries, even though millions of people may die. Muslims seek peace. The Qur'an teaches that peace and reconciliation are better than fighting and therefore they will agree with this statement. There are many different kinds of opinion on war. However I would say that most people including religious believers would agree with this statement.

Strengths

An attempt to make a number of points. Some religious content.

Weaknesses

Incoherent and lacking in development.

Level 2 Mark 6

Answer 6

Conflict causes many deaths and problems. Sometimes it creates more problems than it solves. War destroys a country's economy and infrastructure. The roads, waters supplies, electricity and schools can become majorly affected. The modern biological weapons that contain bacteria and viruses can easily contaminate water and food supplies, which can lead to the spread of disease. War also can cause many refugees, which can become a major inconvenience for countries as supply and demand targets cannot be met.

However others may believe that war can protect from greater evil. War has to be a last resort for most governments to agree to it. A country may go to war to defend an ally or regain lost territory. Both are of significance to a country's importance and protection. Relationships with other countries, especially allies, must be upheld. Another reason people may go to war is to prevent genocide. The most memorable example in history is the Holocaust. The Nazis brutally murdered millions of Jews, simply because of their religion. The world is constantly working to prevent future atrocities with no discrimination.

The Muslim community are mainly against, however they may accept a 'jihad' (Just War) as long as it is a last resort and abides to the terms.

In conclusion I disagree with the statement because war can prevent greater evil and help many, despite the possible damages and death, however morally under most circumstances it is wrong.

Strengths

An attempt to give a structured answer with developed points on both sides of the debate.

Weaknesses

Limited religious content.

Level 3 Mark 9

Answer 7

I believe that it is right under some circumstances, like to protect ourselves from attack and not look weak in front of them.

But this statement could be right to keep the peace and not allow unnecessary deaths and deaths of innocent civilians and try to stop terrible wars such as the Vietnam War.

Wars such as a 'Just War' is a Christian's idea of what a war should be like. It has certain criteria of what should have been tried before starting a war, e.g. war being the last resort, just cause meaning self-defence. Although Christians were taught peace, one time Jesus did lose control and use force to drive out those turning the Temple into a 'den of thieves'.

Strengths

An attempt to include religious content and to give more than one viewpoint.

Weaknesses

Lacks coherence and development.

Level 2 Mark 5

Answer 8

I think this statement is very true as there are a lot of consequences when it comes to war. Some may be positive but the majority are negative. Nearly all conflicts that happen all over the world cause many deaths and injuries among the armed forces, but also for innocent civilians/non-combatants. In addition, there is the destruction of a country's economy, culture and infrastructure. Not only that, but wars destroy the homes of everyone in one country and leave people in worse places, for example, homeless refugees are often reduced to living in camps in squalid conditions. Even disease and famine can spread when fresh water supplies have been contaminated, so survivors may not be alive for much longer due to getting ill. The cost of conflict is enormous and it causes more problems when they go ahead with it.

However some are positive, like wars can solve a problem to do with a country, e.g. freedom from an occupying power (a foreign country that has taken over the government), or the replacement of a corrupt government with something better can bring benefits to a country's people. So overall war is making more problems than it's solving and really should stop.

Strengths

An attempt to develop points on both sides of the debate.

Weaknesses

No religious content so capped at Level 2.

Level 2 Mark 6

Answer 9

War is never right because it creates more bad than good. War always has consequences and most of them are negative, like death and injury, destruction of homes, hospitals, schools and many other buildings. Disease and famine spread easily through infected water sources. Also the cost of conflict is enormous. Every hour £100 million is spent worldwide on weapons. This money could be used for world poverty and hunger.

However sometimes there is no other choice, as every other had failed and war is the only option. Sometimes it can have a good consequence, like freedom from an occupying government or replacement of a corrupt government.

Muslims and Christians are taught that war is bad because it goes against the laws and idea of peace. Muslims believe in 'Just War'. In conclusion war is mainly negative and causes more wrong than right.

Strengths

An attempt to develop points on both sides of the debate.

Weaknesses

Limited religious content.

Level 3 Mark 7

them.

It causes untold misery to so many people who lose loved ones on the front line. Jesus taught his disciples not to use violence when he was being arrested in Gethsemane. He said, 'Those who live by the sword die by the sword.' We can see from the Middle East that all the conflict there over the past twenty years has resulted in yet more conflict. The many deaths as a result of war cause lifelong suffering for families and the terrible injuries from cluster bombs and other explosive devices lead to trauma for those injured. War ruins a country's economy and infrastructure, leaving people homeless and hungry. They are left with absolutely nothing and may flee the country, becoming refugees. We see this in the world today, where nothing good has come from the war in Syria. War also uses a lot of money which could be put to much better use. It is bad stewardship to spend huge sums on killing while letting so many people die of starvation. According to Jesus, we shall be judged on how we have treated those in need. This means we should be feeding and educating people, not killing them.

However, it could be argued that in certain situations war is the lesser of two evils. Although it is never good, it may sometimes be right. If a corrupt regime is in power, the only way of overthrowing it, then surely as an absolutely last resort, a nation like ours with the means to get rid of it is justified in doing so to help the population of that country. The Just War theory is

a Christian theory that tries to limit the wars being fought, but it does accept that in some cases, going to war might be justified.

Overall, though I think that the statement is right. Jesus told his disciples to love not only their neighbours but also their enemies. Going to war against our enemies is hardly loving them.

Strengths

A well-argued response with reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning leading to an effective conclusion. Sound religious content.

Weaknesses

The religious points might be better developed.

Level 4 Mark 11

Example H (SPG):

‘War is never right.’

A common concept across all religions is the sanctity of life. In Islam they believe Allah is ‘the one that created you from a single soul’ and in the bible it says ‘when he give them breath he creates new life’. This shows us that in almost all religions God is the creator and he gave us life as a gift. However in war we abuse this gift and disrespect God when we take the life he has created. War is not right as it is disrespecting and destroying his creation.

Alongside life, we get a feeling of natural awe, wonder and beauty from our planet as it was also created by God. On the third day of creation God gave us land and he said that it was ‘good’. By destroying this natural beauty we are again disrespecting God. Another rule given across most religions is the responsibility of looking after God’s creations. In Christianity we call this stewardship and in Islam it is Khalifah. In Islam they believe that this role of Khalifah is Accra, meaning they will be judged on how well they fulfilled this role on judgement day. By going to war lots of land is destroyed through explosion and invasions, therefore we aren’t carrying out our roles as carers for the planet. In fact this is a part of the Lesser Jihad where land must not be destroyed as it is part of the unity of Allah, Tawhid. Therefore we should not go to war as we destroy God’s creation.

War isn’t the right outcome and there are many other ways of sorting out problems. The work of the Quakers should be replicated across the world as they strongly believe in pacifism, which means they don’t believe or take part in any violence. Martin Luther King is another example of a peaceful protestor and a pacifist. His work changed the future for everybody and was so influential and not once did he use violence, therefore we do not need to either.

On the other hand war is declared for a reason and this is seen as a Just War where there is a legitimate reason for it such as being an allie of another country. This is declared by the government and usually supported by religion. The Qur’an says ‘Do not kill...except for a just cause’. This could be an example of relative morality as if you have a legitimate reason to kill, then you may, so you’re doing what is right and justified for the certain circumstances.

In conclusion, I agree with the statement that war is never the right option as it is abusing the sanctity of life. By following the ways of leaders like Gandhi and Martin Luther King, then we would all live in harmony with each other and there would be no reason for war.

SPAG High Level 5 marks.

This is securely within the high level and despite the occasional error, the standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar is very good. A wide range of specialist terms is used.

