



2005 Texts and Traditions GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

As in recent years, the standard of work submitted by a large percentage of students in 2005 was very good. Most students who sat the examination had a good working knowledge of the texts they had studied and seemed to approach the various sections of the exam with confidence.

Areas in which students need improvement tended to be similar to previous years. Some advice is given below; however, students and teachers should refer to previous Assessment Reports for more detailed information.

Students must read the questions carefully, especially essay questions, and focus their response on the entire question. There were still students who mistakenly seemed to believe that every essay should start with a general historical run down. Students should not be taught to begin their essays with a general introduction to the text.

Question 4 still posed problems for some students. Students must recognise that this question requires a particular focus in the response, not a general commentary. It is imperative that students are given the opportunity to practise this type of question in class prior to the exam.

All students should improve their awareness that the text is a response to a particular set of historical and/or social problems. As such, it cannot be treated as something written for a particular formal religion, and especially not as a text written for the modern day followers of a particular tradition. Students need to have a firm knowledge of the historical and social setting of the text and come to an understanding of how the text comes from, and is made for, that particular setting. There should be no use of first person pronouns ('I', 'we', etc.) in the examination at all.

Students need to recognise that there are passages in the exegesis questions that can be used to illustrate answers in other questions. Unfortunately, a large number of students of the Qur'an did not take advantage of this and therefore answered some questions more from the point of view of modern Islam instead of showing a detailed knowledge of the text. Students of the other traditions also did not always make use of the resources provided in the examination.

Again, it is recommended that teachers and students revisit previous Assessment Reports, especially for a break down of the marking scheme for the exegesis questions. Further advice is also available on the website of the Victorian Association of Teachers of Texts and Traditions, www.vattt.vic.edu.au.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Part A – Essay

Most students performed well in Part A, although few responses were outstanding. Students who received high grades did so by clearly and directly responding to the set question. They demonstrated a wide working knowledge of the text studied and used examples from a variety of sections. These students not only reported what is in a particular text, but also discussed its relevance to the topic under discussion and related the situation of the creation of the text to the issue or theme. Higher scoring students generally had a sound knowledge of the text as a piece of literature with a historical setting – they were confident in discussing the situation in which the text was originally produced and how that situation shaped the original text. They could also see how the form of the text lends to its meaning.

The following is the beginning of a high-scoring student response to Question 2 of Section II: The Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Jeremiah the prophet prophesied in Judah for over 40 years starting from the 13th year of Josiah's reign till the fall of Jerusalem and exile in 586 BCE.

The people of his day had abandoned G-d, abragating the covenant. They served pagan G-ds, breached the decalogue, were immoral and oppressed the poor. For this Jeremiah condemns the people of Judah. He depict their imminent doom but imbues his prophecies with future hope for his people.

In chapter two, Jeremiah accuses the people of foresaking G-d and serving idolatry. He graphically depicts such infidelity as harlotry. G-d and Judah were metaphorically compared to a husband and wife. Infidelity on Judah's part is thus likened to harlotry. Jeremiah accuses them of 'playing the harlot on every high hill and under every leafy tree.' This was the location where the Judeans served foreign Gods. Jeremiah describes how he planted them 'wholly a right seed' but they had 'turned a degenerate plant unto me'. This allegory condemns the people for turning away from G-d especially as they were destined to be a great nation.



The following is an example of a high-scoring student response to Question 1 of Section III: The Gospel of Luke.

Social Justice is inherently dependent upon the role of the poor and marginalised in Luke's Gospel. On numerous occasions, Luke determines how a just society should be established in the Mediterranean world.

The most prominent example of a just society in Luke's Gospel is the parable of the Good Samaritan. The teaching of mercy and compassion defines not only the way we should live, but the ways in which the disciples must spread the teachings of Jesus. The teaching of compassion for each other is presented in a variety of ways. Love is imperative for a just society to rule. Through the actions of a culturally apposed samaritan, we see that only with compassion of the Lord can the Holy Spirit be enabled to assist in each others lives. The compassion of the samaritan teaches that simple neighbourhood cannot possibly create love; only through love can neighbourhood be created. The caring way of the Lord shines though the overshadowing disrespect of the Priest. So, through acknowledging cultural differences and liberating through love as one, Luke presents a parable that most certainly represents the social justice needed within society.

Jesus performs many healing miracles, and none more so dependent upon the teaching values of justice then when he 'heals the man with the withered hand'. Taking the scenario into account; the Passover was being celebrated, meaning the Pharisees were awaiting the chance to highlight the apparent impetuosity of Jesus. Clearly, Jesus disregarding their warnings by healing the injured man. While this angered the Jewish people, Jesus significantly portrayed the question of compassion, purity laws depicted against purity of heart. Jesus taught that customs and rituals must be interpreted with God's will in order for society to reign justly. He performed this act to demonstrate the wider values that behaving with love for one another can achieve, if not be made aware of. By defying the customs, Jesus also taught his followers of the lengths one must travel in order to teach God's will. They had to recognise that when Jesus had passed, they would be left to establish the Kingdom of God within society. By recognising the strengths of compassion, service, and trust in God's will they could effectively deliver the message of prayer and Kingdom virtues that embellish the ways of disciples; Jesus must teach his followers how to teach, in order for them to preach the ways of justice in society. Clearly, through this twofold presentation of healing and teaching, Jesus was able effectively demonstrate how a just society should be run. This example determines Luke's intent encouraging justice within society.

The annunciation stories comprehensively portray how the word of God can directly influence change, and justice in society. The parallel between Zechariah and Elizabeth, and the lowly servant Mary sufficiently provides evidence of change. Elizabeth was barren; a disgraced woman in Jewish society. Zechariah was a priest unable to carry on his family line. The angel of the Lord provided these two marginalised people with the spirit, so they could conceive. Here, Luke demonstrates how socially disabled people can become equals, if not greater influences within society. As penitence and respect, Elizabeth chooses not to follow in naming her son in hierachal order, but names him John instead. Mary is the servant of the Lord who willingly accepts God's question, and becomes the mother of Jesus Christ. Clearly, this impregnated teenager, supposedly without support of a father would be scorned upon in societal eyes. But through the will of God and the Holy Spirit, Mary successfully raises Jesus with Joseph. It must be made clear that through these stories, Luke shows how even the most custom followers of God can be made socially just, and provide the rest of the community with people who will change the unjust ways of society permanently. Ultimately, it is these differences that provide avenue for intolerance of others, and this will lead to physical and emotional abuse. Luke's writing demonstrates how God's interference can create a socially just community.

Luke's interpretation of the many ways society can be made more just has been developed through each the Jewish community, the Gentile community, and the later Church. Through reconciliation, providing area for social justice, accomidating for the needs of others, the Church has established firm grounds for societal tolerance. In Acts, Luke aimed to further develop his concepts of compassion, love, teaching God's will, interpreting community customs and values, and neighbourhood by demonstrating the disciples building of the Kingdom of God. It is certain that Luke encouraged a more just society in the Mediterranean culture.

The following is the beginning of a high-scoring student response to Question 3 of Section III: The Gospel of Luke.

Luke portrays, throughout his gospel, Jesus as the fulfilment of the Messianic expectation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and reflects and develops this throughout the use of Literary techniques such as parables, narratives, annunciations, canticles, proclamations, miracles and theophanys.

In chapter 4 (narrative), Jesus is portrayed as the fulfilment of the passages Isaiah 61 & 62 of the Old Testament which were believed, by the Jewish people to detail the mission of the Messiah when he is arrived – his mission of ministry would be inclusive in its salvation, would be healing, would establish the Kingdom of God and would bring reversal in the context of the presence of the KoG (that is deaf hearing, blind seeing, lame walking). Jesus identifies himself as the Messiah by Isaiah 61 & 62 in the scripture passage in the Nazorean synagogue through the inclusivity of his mission. This is also echoed in chapter 7 (narrative/miracles) where Jesus identifiys himself again as the Messiah – this time to messengers of John the Baptist through the results of his inclusive ministry as explained in Isaiah 61 & 62 – deaf hearing, liberty to captives etc. Jesus is portrayed as fulfilment of Isaiaah 61 & 62.

Part B – Extended responses

Students who respond to Question 4 need to understand the difference between this question and the exegesis questions in Part C. High-scoring students were able to isolate the particular theme or issue mentioned in the question and directly relate the passage to that theme or issue. Strong students not only stated **what** the text says but also indicated some reasons **why** the text says what it does in its original historical setting.



Other extended response questions generally focus on direct knowledge that students should have gained in the completion of the outcomes. Successful students gave enough relevant details to gain high marks. This did not necessarily entail a lengthy response; some answers that gained full marks were comparatively brief, but concise. High-scoring students showed an excellent knowledge and understanding of the topics being covered.

The following is an example of a high-scoring student response to Question 4 of Section III: The Gospel of Luke.

Luke's prologue to his Gospel (1:1-4) acts as an introduction to the main themes that will be explored throughout the Gospel. Luke's prologue works to inform readers what will take place. It is almost like a programme of events that are to take place. The prologue flags important themes, and in turn events, for readers. The theme of fulfillment, is perhaps most prominent in Luke's prologue, as he informs his readers and Theophilus, that he has 'set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us'. This introduces the importance of the theme of fulfillment to the readers, as suggests to them that fulfillment of promises and prophecy is an important part of the gospel. In fact, the inclusion of 'handed on to us by those who...were eyewitnesses and servants of the word' reiterates this idea. It strives to introduce readers to the idea of fulfillment.

Moreover, Luke's prologue works to introduce readers to the theme of spreading the word of Jesus. Luke's inclusion of 'just as they were handed onto us' re-enforces this point, and demonstrates the extent to which the word has spread.

The prologue of Luke also strives to have readers understand the importance of the theme of the truth. Luke, in his prologue states that he is writing so that 'you may know the truth', a theme that will become important later in Luke's gospel. The truth is something the Luke's Jesus is always alluding to, and states that it will be discovered when the time is right, after the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

Lastly, in dedicating his gospel to Theophilus, who is considered to be either a Greek patron of Luke's who wishes to know more about Christianity, or is a Gentile community, Luke is introducing the theme of the inclusion of gentiles and outcasts.

Luke's prologue to his gospel, through its various statements and intentions, works to introduce the main themes of Luke's gospel in his readers, so that they may better understand the events that take place.

The following is an example of a high-scoring student response to Question 4 of Section IV: The Qur'an.

The Qur'anic notion of punishment for rejecting God's guidance is given in the set text in chapter 41.

Allah starts off by talking of His creation and the Power he has to do anything. With this, He is referring to the disbelievers, the Quraysh in Makkan, about rejecting the revelation sent to them by making noise, and that with such powers, He has the ability to destroy them.

An example of a previous nation, Ad' & Thamud, are given as a warning for the consequences of rejection of faith. The Qur'an makes it clear on the excuses used to reject, where they say that a Prophet who is human can be no prophet, for he is the same as us. If an angle was sent down by God, only then would we believe.

Pride is another factor that stands out. Those who have pride, God shows them. This could be referred to the Ad' & Thamud or Quraysh. God questions His servants; how is it that I created you, and you have pride? How could you be mightier than me?

The result of rejection of faith was a 'shameful scourge in this life'. But it doesn't end there. Those who disbelievers will continue to be punished in the Hereafter.

After the example of Thamud, Allah talks of the believers. Here, He is comparing the disbelievers & believers in punishment. That is, if you disbelieve, you will be punished, but if you believe, we will serve you. He opens up two ways for man, making it clear that by rejecting, the punishment will be everlasting.

The following is an example of a high-scoring student response to Question 7 of Section II: The Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Jeremiah draws on images from nature to communicate his messages to the people of his day. Religiously, politically, socially and leadership wise the nation is castigated for their misbehaviour and breach of the covenant.

To illustrate the nations religious apostasy Jeremiah speaks of the nation, '...bursting thy bands...' meaning the nation are using extreme force to break free from the ties of the covenant. God explains through Jeremiah of how the nation have become a 'degenerate vine' contrasting the commitment and devotion of the nation of old to the present status. '...Upon every high hill and under every leafy tree thoust did recline playing the harlot.' Jeremiah uses the landscape of nature to illustrate the participation of the nation in harlotry and child sacrifices. '...like a swift young camel traversing in her ways...' likening the nation to that of a inadvertant camel following/retracing the iniquities that she previously committed.

To illustrate the social injustices of the nation, Jeremiah outlines the sin of the nation in which they oppress the poor, stranger and widow. All of which are present in the nature of the human existence throughout the world.

In chapter 2 the shepherds (also known as leaders) are addressed for not collecting the scattered sheep (greater Judean populace) allowing them to stray to these cultic ceremonies demonstrating paganism under God's name. Jeremiah speaks of the foreign alliances undertaken by the leaders, '...nile and ...Euphrates.' Jeremiah making reference to the cultures that the nation have adopted under the lack of care of the leaders.



Geographically Jeremiah makes reference to future hope and restoration which will be prefaced by the reunification of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel.

We thus see Jeremiah drawing upon images from nature to communicate his appropriately named messages to the people of his day. This would have been an effective technique, to draw upon nature, for the Judean's being an agricultural nation would have easily been able to parallel the meaning of Jeremiah's messages.

The following is an example of a high-scoring student response to Question 7 of Section III: The Gospel of Luke.

In Chapter 22, the Passion Narrative begins the re-interpretation of the Passover meal and celebration with Jesus offering his 'body' 'given for you' and his 'blood' 'poured out for you'. Such a description evokes the lamb of the Passover meal stipulated in Exodus 12 'they shall eat it (lamb) roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.' Whilst earlier in the chapter, Luke has Jesus instruct two disciples to prepare the Passover lamb. Also the meat is never mentioned during the course of the Passover meal itself. Rather, it is Jesus who offers himself as a sacrifice, giving his whole life, which is in return life giving, just as the 'bread of atonement' of the Mosaic covenant is transformed into a bread of life, bringing redemption. Luke has Jesus describe 'I will not eat it (the Passover) again until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God', highlighting another re-interpretation of the Passover tradition. Whilst this supper looks back in remembrance of the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt, so too does it look towards the future and the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. Similarly, whilst the Passover remembers the exodus, the disciples are to 'do this in remembrance of me', signalling not only remembrance by entry into a process initiated by Jesus, as in the Passover Haggadah which states 'In every generation, let every man look upon himself as if he too came forth out of Egypt.'

The image of the 'blood' 'poured out for you' of the Lord's Supper also evokes the blood of the Mosaic covenantal sacrifice (Exodus) that brought the people under the Lord's saving protection. Yet it also evokes the 'new covenant' of the prophet Jeremiah's vision (Jer 31:31) at a time of national crisis under the threat of the Babylonians c. 587 BCE. Thus, this giving of a whole life makes the establishment of a new covenant that both remembers and continues the Mosaic covenant.

Part C – Exegesis

The exegesis questions were generally answered fairly well, but students who gained higher grades had an obvious depth to their knowledge which other students tended to lack. Students should revise constantly to build their knowledge over the year rather than quickly memorise a few points just prior to the examination.

Students who performed the best in these questions answered all the dot points and recognised, through their analysis of the text, which dot points required more focus for a particular passage and which dot points only required a brief comment. For example, responses to a text which has a set, describable form (parables are the most obvious example) should have more written on literary form than, for example, a list of laws or a basic narrative would have. In such a case, less time may be given to people and places, or one of the other dot points. Then again, in another text the characters and locations might be historically significant, but the literary form is simply basic retelling of an event. In this situation, greater weight may be given to the background relevance of the people and places and their sociohistorical relevance, while literary form might only be mentioned briefly.

Students seemed comfortable with the format of the questions. Better responses recognised that all exegeses should lead towards explaining the meaning of the passage to the original community. Other students just tacked this on at the end – it is important that students recognise that all analysis should lead to the final synthesis.

The following is an example of a high-scoring student response to Question 9 of Section 1: The Gospel of John.

John 4:46–53 follows the Samaritan woman's progression of faith in acknowledging Jesus identity, and thus, this passage continues the progression of faith, but in response to the failing of 'signs-based' faith. This passage forms the final part of Moloney's 'Cana to Cana' theory, which from chapter 2 this point establishes a progression of faith in both Jewish and non-Jewish context.

'Jesus Heals the Official's Son' is a healing miracle with dialogue. Yet within Johannine literature, this passage is considered particularly devoid of literary techniques; rather a pure theological exploration of faith. 'Cana' is a reference to the first appearance of Jesus' divinity in the changing of the water into wine. The exact geographical location is unclear, yet is most often attributed to the modern-day Khirbet Qana. Galilee so often represent of Jesus, as his homeland, a place of acceptance and true faith, so purposefully contrasted with the inadequacy and hostility of Judea, the true stronghold of 'the Jesus' who would not accept. Thus, the setting in Galilee for this scene is appropriate, an example of perfect discipleship.

The 'royal official' is labelled a Gentile by the evangelist's synoptic counterparts. Yet in the Johannine Gospel, his race remains ambiguous, possibly continuing the theme of Jesus pertaining to all, not limited by racial distinctions. Initiated in Chapter 3, Jesus language is inclusive of all, 'so that the world might be saved,' (3:16) something continued in his breaking of cultural boundaries by talking to the Samaritan Woman. However, in coming from Capernaum, a largely Gentile town on the Sea of Galilee, and his role as an official, he is often labelled a Gentile, possibly pertaining to Gentile facet of the Johannine community.



'Unless you see signs and wonder you will not believe' is a blatant criticism, not necessarily of the official, but rather of the superfluosity of this type of faith. As Grenier observes, perfect discipleship relies on understanding the 'spiritual realities signified by the deeds'. This was one failure of Nicodemus, that his belief was so ingrained in the signs, something recognised only as a legitimate first step. Yet it is in the compassion of 'Go; your son will live,' that the true emotional climax of the story is created, a compassion that parallels God's 'love' of the world, (3:16). Thus, as the man 'believed' his faith is perfect, for even without seeing the sign his belief is reinforced. Before this passage the Samaritans claim that they no longer believe because of Jesus' prophecy, but rather that they have heard for themselves, something that parallels the faith of the official.

'His slaves met him' not only pertains to his role as a royal official, in which slaves, most probably Jews, were common. Yet in the theological context, the excitement implied in meeting their master pays homage to the true glory of Jesus' actions, a glory embodied in 'signs' called such because they are exactly that, signs of his divinity. Some scholars assert that the importance of the 'hour', often a reference to the crucifixion and exaltation, could be that in occurring after hour of Jesus' crucifixion, it is symbolic of the saving efficacy the Jesus' death and resurrection will have. 'Along with his whole household' pertains not only to the power of Jesus' glory, so humbling that all believe, yet also to the capacity of Galileans to have faith, contrasted with Jerusalem.

Thus, it is in this passage that such perfect faith is revealed. Yet more pertinently, it is that where there was rebirth, given in Chapter 3, living water given in Chapter 4, actual life is given here.

The following is an example of a high-scoring student response to Question 8 of Section III: The Gospel of Luke.

The passage detailing the Annunciation of Gabriel announcing Jesus' birth to Mary has a profound place in the infancy narrative of Jesus. The passage comes right after the Annunciation of John & is followed by Mary's visitation of Elizabeth (1:39–45) which allows for contrasts of the two Annunciations as well as a affection of the divinity of the boys births as proclaimed by Mary & Elizabeth. The setting up of this in structure gives Luke's audience easy transition between the navigation of the two boy's roles.

In this passage, Mary is painted strongly in a faithful light & Jesus' birth from her womb is perceived as the rightful one through the use of Old Testament references. The fact that Gabriel is sent to Mary 'in the sixth month' tells the audience that it is sometime since the time Annunciation of John occurred – Luke gives a time & the audience is aware of the passage of it. This is akin to the use of location, as Luke's audience was well aware of the places of Jesus' life. The use of Joseph as connected with the 'house of David', Luke provides an Old Testament connection between Jesus & the figure of King David of 1 & 2 Samuel. This presents a Messianic perspective of Jesus as following the line of David & this coincides with Old Testament prophecy. The use of such prophecy shows that Luke was keen to show that while Jesus was dramatically different to the political Messiah that Jesus was expecting, he still is the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The fact that the angel tells Mary to 'not be afraid' it is clear he meant to suggest that Mary had reason to be afraid, & this could be because of his appearance. Many strong & prominent figure like Daniel & Ezekiel quaked at the appearance of an angel, yet Mary here is seen as 'much perplexed'. Mary is communicated as being strong and of faith. The use of reference to Elizabeth makes such connections to suggest both the women's strength is of faith, as seen in that they are relatives. Hence: while one such as the priestly Zechariah doubts, both the women are strong & have faith. This is directly affirmed in the passage following where Mary visits Elizabeth & the Holy Spirit is introduced.

Luke's use of literacy forms & techniques in the passage give good & clear direction through the text to signify different things. The use of wording is of heavy emphasis in this passage as terms like 'ancestor David' & 'house of Jacob' provide Old Testament allusions to Jesus' fulfillment of prophecies. Moreover, certain christological titles are utilised to give reference to Jesus' role as a saviour. By naming him 'son of God' Luke is contrasting with the title 'Son of Man' – an Old Testament title as described by Ezekiel as being made man (Ezekiel 2: 1–2) & by Daniel as one 'coming on the clouds of heaven' (Daniel 7 13–14). 'Son of Man' as generally given to Jesus before his death & resurrection: and so the title 'Son of God' suggests Gabriel is linking Jesus to the glorified he will be in after the resurrection. The literacy form of Annunciation is structured according to how they are usually: an appearance & greeting followed by a response, & then the initial proclamation and sometimes concluded with miraculous sign. Luke abides by these structures to allow for easy navigation that lets his audience contrast & identify with other Annunciations of the same structure.

Luke's message for his audience through this passage is reasonably obvious: that while those seen as faithful may doubt, those seen as doubtful may have faith. This is a stereotypical ideal expressed in Luke's Gospel regarding reversal of rules & universal salvation. Luke's audience would also have identified Jesus with all the Old Testament connections & thus God's fulfillment of a prophetic Messiah offering salvation to all nations would have been strengthened.