



2004 **Texts and Traditions GA 3: Written examination**

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, the standard of responses across all four traditions in the Texts and Traditions examination is to be commended. Most students had reviewed all Areas of Study with precision and had a firm working knowledge of both the set texts and the outcomes of the Study Design. As such, a large number of students were able to respond to the questions in the examination with confidence and knowledge – indicating that those who excelled in the study did so through wider reading, an ability to express themselves confidently in the language of the study and a firm working knowledge of the texts and their context.

Students with a good understanding of the formation of the text within the social and historical context of its creation were able to respond to the examination with greater complexity and surety than those students who only seemed to know the internal workings of the text. This study requires a strong understanding of the text as a working historical document rather than as a piece of writing with no definite formative process. Knowledge of the theories of authorship, dating, audience, and literary forms and styles formed the background of a confident student's response to the examination, even if these actual pieces of knowledge were not directly questioned or referred to within the examination.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Part A – Essay

Each year, the Assessment Report tends to focus on the same point: students must answer the question directly in the essay response. There were still too many students who started their essays with bland introductions that can be found in the forward to most commentaries on the text. Others wrote memorised essays on a particular theme which, although it may have been mentioned in the essay question, was presented in such a way as to not truly respond to the actual question. The questions are designed to elicit a complex response from students and often require an analysis of one or more particular passages, rather than a general essay that refers only in passing to the passages as examples of the theme being discussed. As such, some exegetical skills are required to show how a passage illuminates an understanding of the theme or ideas being discussed.

The following introduction to Question 3 of Part III, The Gospel of Luke, has many features of a good response. It tackles the question immediately and indicates a structure for the rest of the essay to follow. It allows for some complexity by indicating three aspects of the kingdom, and also refers to specific passages which will be used in the essay. However, terms such as 'many different ways' and 'various facets' lack specificity and should be avoided in favour of more precise terminology.

The concept of the 'kingdom of God' is revealed in many different ways throughout the Gospel of Luke, and the Evangelist explores various facets of the nature of the kingdom, from the conditions of entry – such as the need for repentance and metanoia, in chapter three, to its growth (parables in 13), to the universal kingdom for all peoples in the says of John and Simeon in chapter 3. Furthering this, chapter 21 conveys the idea that the kingdom is present, yet not yet complete.

Conversely, the introduction below, which was created from a number of responses for the sake of illustration, does not tackle the question directly. It seems to be based on a pre-prepared response which could be used for any question simply by replacing the term 'kingdom of God' in the last sentence with whatever theme the question has asked the students to explore. Such a beginning rarely leads to a more complex response later in the essay.

The Gospel of Luke contains many themes. It is said to have been written by a physician, Luke, in 85CE in Antioch in Syria. While the dating of the Gospel is not exact most scholars place the dating somewhere between 65 and 90. It was written for an audience of mostly Gentile people of a variety of socio-economic backgrounds at a time when the Roman Empire was ruling the middle east. Luke's audience needed to be told about the meaning of Jesus to their lives which were removed both chronologically and geographically from the actual Jesus event. The kingdom of God is one of the themes Luke writes about.

All essays required an analysis and discussion of specific passages from the studied text to illustrate of the point of view being expressed by the student. Too many students still either retold the plot of a passage with no real discussion of its relevance to the wider discussion, or listed a number of passages which might be used to help understand the theme being discussed but never actually analysed or discussed the passages at all.

The following excerpt of a response to Question 3 of Section II, The Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, is a good example of a passage being used to illustrate a wider discussion:

Thus far in Ezekiel's Messianic vision, the corrupt leaders have been deposed of and Israel's enemies destroyed, clearing the path to the full restoration and regeneration of the Nation of Israel. In Chapter 36, Ezekiel describes how the Land of Israel itself will



undergo regeneration. He prophesies that the land will once again sprout fruit and produce, the same land that had, for centuries, known only conflict and bloodshed. The previous impurity attached to the land would dissipate and it will not longer be a land which [unreadable] its inhabitants. As articulated by the prophet, the reason for this regeneration of the land is because the people are on hand to return – the nation will be coming back to their ancestral homeland.

This paragraph refers to the passage and uses imagery and concepts from the passage without undue retelling of any section of the text. It relates the ideas from within the passage to the wider notions being discussed in the essay. It demonstrates a firm grasp of the content of the passage in relation to the theme being discussed in the essay.

Overall, essays which grew from the question and used passages as illustrations of ideas that were discussed tended to achieve better grades. Essays that worked around the question without ever really tackling it and which only listed or retold particular passages struggled to achieve similar grades.

The responses from all traditions were affected if the student assumed that their understanding of particular technical terms was the same as all people's understandings of those terms. Words and phrases such as 'the Jews' (Question 3 of Section I, the Gospel of John), 'covenant' (Question 1 of Section II, The Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel), 'messianic' (Question 3 of Section II, The Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel), 'Kingdom of God' (Question 3 of Section III, The Gospel of Luke) and 'revelation' (Question 2 of Section IV, The Qur'an) all needed to be explored and explained for a student to be able to respond to the question in a complex manner.

Students of the Qur'an in particular need to demonstrate a greater understanding of the other traditions being referred to in the Qur'anic texts. References to characters and historical occasions from beyond the Qur'an need to be studied in their earlier literary context as well as the Qur'anic context. Similarly, students of the Gospels need to be familiar with references to the Hebrew Scriptures and students of the Jewish texts should be familiar with earlier writings and traditions that Ezekiel and Jeremiah relied upon for imagery and understanding.

Part B – Extended responses

For all traditions, students approached Question 4 more confidently in 2004 than in previous years. They needed to understand that the question asked them to discuss what the given passage says about a particular theme, issue or thing. A summary of the passage was not suitable, neither was a general discussion of the particular theme. Responses to Question 4 should have used quotations and made direct reference to relevant parts of the presented passage.

Some students wrote much more than what was required for the questions in Part B. For example, many students who answered Question 5 of Section I, The Gospel of John, outlined the use of 'I am' statements, which verged on a mini essay, and then went into great detail on two examples, which verged on mini exegeses. In doing so, some of these students missed the point of the question, which was focused on 'imagery'. It is important that students read the questions carefully so as to recognise the specific focus of any particular question.

Further to this, some questions had more than one part: Question 7 of Part IV, The Qur'an, asked firstly, 'What is the purpose of this question?' and then 'Comment on the terms: "a man" and "themselves".' A large proportion of students answered the first half of the question (worth five marks) but not the second; therefore, at best, they could only receive five marks out of a possible ten for that particular question. As in the essay section, students must read, understand and respond appropriately to the questions asked.

Part C – Exegetical responses

Students need to recognise that this exegesis is different from the type required in the School-assessed Tasks undertaken in Units 3 and 4. This is a shorter type of exegesis, usually with a fairly short passage (approximately eight to ten verses), which requires the student to demonstrate that the skills they gained through writing larger pieces in their SACs can be used effectively in a smaller, unseen exegesis.

The weighting of various exegeses differed according to each passage – some passages had a wealth of content relevant to literary form, while others had a context which was able to be commented on a great deal. As such, the manner in which particular passages were marked varied according to the passage and the approach individual students took. Below is an overview of the manner in which the exegesis questions were marked:

- context*: a maximum of four points (one for naming, one for describing, and two for the meaning or significance)

2004 Assessment Report



- historical or sociocultural setting and people, places and historical material of significance (where appropriate)*: a maximum of ten points (one for naming, one for describing, two for relevance, and the remainder for an analysis)
- literary form and/or techniques*: a maximum of five points (one for naming, two for describing, and two for the significance)
- meaning: a maximum of eight points (so that the total marks available for the entire response do not exceed 20 points)

* the total number of points given for these areas combined could not exceed 15 points

Students were required to comment on a number of highlighted words in the passage under analysis during the course of their exegesis. When doing this, students should note that:

- the highlighted words and phrases could be commented on in any section of the analysis, but should have been linked to the discussion as a whole
- if the highlighted words in the passage were not commented on 'in the course of [the] exegesis', the student could not get more than 17 marks out of 20. This often happened when students had finished their exegesis and then tacked on the words/phrases at the end
- they could comment on the words and phrases first and then discuss their meaning. This was allowable without penalty, as long as these words and phrases were also integrated into the subsequent discussion
- most highlighted words fit into the historical/sociocultural or people/places sections, and all should lend argument to the meaning section. Sometimes the highlighted words and phrases were left until the general discussion
- if they did not comment on the highlighted words and phrases at all, they could not be awarded more than 10 marks out of 20.

A lot of students failed to adequately describe the meaning of the passage for the original audience. Although an outline of the entire theory of the original audience was not required, references to specific aspects relevant to the meaning of the passage were often useful. Students needed to do more than describe the teaching in one summative sentence.

Most students tended to adopt the method used in a lot of commentaries; that is, to first discuss particular aspects and then move on to a more general discussion of meaning. Another option chosen by students was to write an essay which covered meaning during the discussion of the other dot points. Some of the best exegeses were written as mini essays and incorporated responses to all the dot points within a detailed and well-structured piece of writing. However, many students gained full marks in particular responses by using subheadings based on the dot points to express their ideas clearly. There is no 'recommended' or 'best' way to format a good exegesis; either method was effective.

Students are advised to practise on as many past papers as possible – either from the VCAA website (www.vcaa.vic.edu.au) or the VATTT website (www.vattt.vic.edu.au). Doing this under examination conditions with constructive feedback from their teachers should allow students to familiarise themselves with the type of responses required and the best methods to satisfactorily answer the examination.