

Candidate Style Answers

GCSE Religious Studies A

OCR GCSE in Religious Studies: J620

Unit: B579 (Judaism)

These candidate style answers are designed to accompany the OCR GCSE Religious Studies A specification for teaching from September 2009.

GCSE Religious Studies A

Unit B579 Judaism 1 (Beliefs, Special Days, Divisions and Interpretations)

OCR has produced these candidate style answers to support teachers in interpreting the assessment criteria for the new GCSE specifications and to bridge the gap between new specification release and availability of exemplar candidate work.

This content has been produced by senior OCR examiners, with the support of the Qualification Manager, to illustrate how the sample assessment questions might be answered and provide some commentary on what factors contribute to an overall grading. The candidate style answers are not written in a way that is intended to replicate student work but to demonstrate what a “good” or “excellent” response might include, supported by examiner commentary and conclusions.

As these responses have not been through full moderation and do not replicate student work, they have not been graded and are instead, banded “medium” or “high” to give an indication of the level of each response.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

3e) ‘The Twentieth-Century Holocaust proves that G-d does not exist.’ Discuss this statement. You should include different, supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Judaism in your answer. (12)	
<i>Candidate style answer</i>	<i>Examiner’s commentary</i>
<p><i>The Holocaust, [the Shoa] was the attempt to eliminate a whole nation and religion. It was an effort to eliminate Israel, a nation committed to the service of G-d. This uniquely evil event was part of a wider scheme of world domination by the Nazi party that saw millions of people killed. The question is how a good G-d could allow this to happen.</i></p> <p><i>The issue is part of a wider issue known as the problem of evil, which asks how a good deity allows the suffering of innocent people. Theists believe that G-d is both all good and all powerful. So if he is all-powerful he can prevent this evil; and if he is all good he wants to. So</i></p>	<p>High level answer</p> <p>The candidate focuses quickly on the issue and makes reference to Judaism. He/she poses the key question at the end of the paragraph.</p> <p>The candidate then sets the question within the broader context of the problem of undeserved suffering and the difficulties that it poses for belief in a good G-d. He/she explains it in terms of the well-known tension between omnipotence and goodness and draws the conclusion that G-d does not exist. He/she</p>

why does he not prevent it? Surely the easiest answer is to say that G-d does not exist. Some Jews came to this conclusion during the Shoa, though others did not.

There are special reasons for Jews to challenge the existence of G-d in this matter. Israel committed itself to the covenant at Sinai, where it pledged itself to G-d's Torah in return for his protection. How could a G-d who protected his people allow millions to be murdered and tortured? You might argue that the promise was conditional on Israel's not sinning, but did so many Jews sin badly enough to deserve the holocaust? Of course not, it was an act of gratuitous evil unparalleled in history. Surely a God who worked miracles to open the Red Sea could have dealt with Hitler. So it seems that G-d does not exist.

Yet most Jews did not draw this conclusion. They were aware that innocent people do suffer in a harsh world. They also note that despite Hitler's efforts, Nazism was defeated and the Jewish race survived. The Scriptures make clear that G-d often works through intermediaries, just as he worked through Cyrus to restore Israel after the exile. So maybe the Allies were G-d's intermediaries in defeating Hitler. Nothing happens instantaneously, so the defeat of Hitler took time and there were evils in the process.

Jews also believe that the final victory of G-d will come in the messianic time when G-d make his power fully known in the world. Until then Israel must go through difficulties and persecutions. They have happened in the past. The Shoa is only the worst of these, but it is unique only in its intensity and size, so Jews can keep on believing in G-d despite the Holocaust, as they have done through centuries of difficulties.

In my opinion it is useful for Jews to look at the book of Job, the story of a good man who suffers appalling calamities

points out that some Jews drew this conclusion.

To maintain the specific Jewish focus the candidate then discusses the problem of evil in terms of the covenant between G-d and Israel and how the Shoa bears on it. Again this leads to the conclusion that G-d does not exist.

The counter-argument is now introduced. The candidate discusses it in Scriptural terms and draws out the implications in a short discussion.

The candidate then continues the discussion in terms of the messianic hope of Israel and the problems that must occur on the way to its realization. By now the counter-argument has been made and is quite balanced in relation to the argument.

The candidate's personal opinion is introduced. He/she draws on scriptural material to make the point. This maintains the

and loses everything. Friends try to explain his sufferings by reference to theories of the causes of suffering, but then G-d speaks through the storm, demanding "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the Earth?" The message is that suffering is a mystery that cannot be fully explained. So Jews may wonder why G-d allowed the Shoa, but they must accept that there are mysteries beyond human comprehension, one of which is the problem of evil. They therefore do not feel a need to abandon belief in G-d because of the Shoa.

Jewish focus of the question and provides a Jewish response. This is a balanced answer that focuses on the issues and does justice to both sides of the argument

3e) 'The Twentieth-Century Holocaust proves that G-d does not exist.'

Discuss this statement. You should include different, supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Judaism in your answer.

(12)

Candidate style answer

The holocaust was the attempt to wipe the Jews from the face of the Earth. Many people wonder how G-d could allow this kind of event to happen. Why does a good G-d not exercise his power to eliminate great evils? Surely, if he could split the waters of the Red Sea and make manna fall in the desert then he could deal with the Nazis. Why did he not cause a meteor to fall on Hitler's bunker or create a convenient earthquake? It must be within the power of an omnipotent G-d. The answer must be that G-d does not exist.

Did G-d not declare Israel to be his special, chosen people and promise to protect them if they kept his law? How can people say that G-d has kept his bargain with the Jews when he allowed millions to be murdered and tortured?

Yet Jews have always known that their commitment brings persecution. Many times in the past Jews have suffered. but did not abandon their faith. The reason that they did not give up their faith is that they know that there will be persecutions of the righteous people until the messianic time, which is yet to come.

Jews know that the only time that they will be fully safe is when the messiah arrives. This has not happened yet. So the Jews do not regard the holocaust as disproof of G-d's existence but as a sign that his purpose is yet to be completed.

In my view the holocaust does not count against the existence of G-d. Only if the Jews were completely destroyed and their religion lost forever would G-d's promises to Israel be frustrated forever. This did not happen, so the holocaust does not show that G-d does not exist.

Examiner's commentary

Medium level answer

The candidate begins by getting to the point and addressing the issue. The key question is posed. The candidate gives some examples of what G-d could have done. Examples are a useful tool, but the candidate gives more than are necessary. So the response is a bit 'over-factual' at this point. One example would have sufficed.

The essay proceeds by the candidate referring to G-d's promises to Israel that he would protect his chosen people. The candidate then makes the point that allowing them to be murdered is hardly protection and draws atheistic conclusions.

At this stage he/she moves to counter-argument, showing that past tribulations have not caused Jews to abandon their faith, but there is no detail of these. He/she draws upon the Jewish concept of the messianic age to explain the point that the holocaust is not an effective argument against Jewish belief in G-d.

This paragraph extends the argument to make the point more strongly.

The candidate's personal viewpoint is now introduced. It is a valid point but it is not well supported. The candidate finishes with a summary statement of where he/she stands in relation to the question posed.

This is a satisfactory response and contains no errors, but could have offered more evidence and argument to support the views expressed.

