

A-level

ANTHROPOLOGY

ANTH1 Being Human: Unity and Diversity
Report on the Examination

2110
June 2013

Version: 1

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ANTH1

General

The quality of answers continues to improve, though there is considerable variation between schools and colleges. Students seem to be improving on the overall timings of the questions with the vast majority not spending too much time on any one question.

Positive features

- Use of detailed ethnographic studies, with knowledge shown of the context and specifics of the society/culture chosen.
- Reference to specific ethnographies, showing evidence of wider reading and knowledge of specific anthropologists.
- A wide range of different ethnographic examples were used to answer the questions. Students were able to use interpretive skills to apply what they knew to the questions in a variety of ways.
- Understanding of biological anthropology.
- Some use of theoretical and analytical concepts; the best answers were ones that combined ethnographic detail with analysis.
- Explicit cross-cultural comparison.
- A wide range of material was present both between and within schools and colleges, indicating that students were discouraged from simply memorising 'model' answers. Anthropology is such a wide subject that examiners expect to see considerable variation in the actual ethnographic material presented.

Key Issues

- The main issue was a focus on descriptive detail rather than analysis. In other words, there was often little comparison or comment on the material presented.
- There was a tendency to juxtapose description of different cultures/societies rather than explicitly to compare and find specific similarities and differences.
- There was the tendency for students to over-generalise rather than point out the complexity in cultural differences.
- Students should try and identify exactly who did a study and where it was done.
- Though the mark scheme does allow for examples that are not specifically anthropological, some students relied on common sense and over-generalised examples, possibly from other subjects, throughout the exam paper.

Question 01

The vast majority of students had a good understanding of the concept of natural selection. The better answers were ones that were able to explain the process rather than simply give the consequences. Some students confused sexual selection with natural selection.

Question 02

The vast majority of students were able to give two ways in which descent is organised in kinship groups, most referring to matrilineal and patrilineal. Some students confused matriarchal/patriarchal with matrilineal/patrilineal. Some students did not focus on descent and what exactly is being passed down.

Question 03

This question was very well answered. Students had a good knowledge of anthropological critiques, including some from named anthropologists. Clearly distinguishing between different points (in this case, criticisms) continues to be a problem for some students. This makes it difficult to identify the different criticisms being made. For example, some students mixed up the problems of defining race with the implications of race. These should have been two distinct points.

Question 04

Many students had no problems with this question and clearly identified at least two ways in which biological evolution may have influenced the organisation of social relations. The detailed knowledge of evolution that some students sometimes led to answers being unnecessarily long. Students need to focus on applying their knowledge in ways that are relevant to the set question. Some students struggled to make the link between the biological aspects of humans and the consequences for social relations. It must be kept in mind that the biological aspect of human beings is a theme that runs through the whole unit and is not just relevant for the section on 'The Body'. The question said 'may have', which provided students with the opportunity for gaining A02 marks by questioning whether or not the biological adaptation may have had much influence on social relations.

Question 05

Students had considerable knowledge on the topic of this question, including ethnographic studies and relevant theories and concepts. However, while some showed a great deal of knowledge about language, they were unselective in its use and tended to include everything they knew without making the material relevant to the set question. This led to some very long, unfocused answers. Some shorter answers that focused specifically on the set question of the *role* of language scored considerably better. Some students wrote more about the origins of language than its role. Some students made a point of distinguishing between the cultural and social roles of language. This was fine but not absolutely necessary as there is often considerable overlap between its social and cultural roles.

Question 06

Many students used the Items effectively and had considerable knowledge of the debate identified in the question. Many, however, focused more on the debate between biocentric and anthropocentric approaches to the environment. As biocentric and anthropocentric attitudes are actually both part of cultural values, simply contrasting them does not answer the question of the impact of the natural environment on cultural values and practices. Some students seemed to have memorised an answer to a biocentric/anthropocentric question and were determined to use this answer regardless of the question. Some students managed to apply the biocentric/anthropocentric distinction effectively by arguing that the actual natural environment (or lack of natural environment) could have led to particular values emerging. They then went on to question whether or not these values actually were the result of the environment or whether the values emerged from culture and society itself, independent of the natural environment. Some students did not identify that the question asked for natural environment and not the social environment.

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