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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies A

Paper 4 Textual Studies

4A Mark's Gospel

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Introduction

Religious Studies A

Paper 4A: Textual Studies Mark's Gospel

The paper contributes to 25% of the overall award. The assessment consists of two questions and candidates must answer all questions. The details of the assessment content are provided in the specification.

This area of study comprises a study in-depth of Mark's Gospel.

The two sections are:

Section 1: Who was Jesus?

Section 2: The Nature of Discipleship.

Question 1a:

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Who is Jesus? Bullet point 1.8 The last days of Jesus' life: **the prayers in Gethsemane** (Mark 14:32-42)

The question asked was: 'Outline **three** features of the prayers in Gethsemane.'

This question was answered well with many candidates correctly identifying three features. The most common errors were features taken from the other Gospels and features that did not take place in the garden of Gethsemane.

Examiner advice: Candidates should make a detailed study of the passages from Mark's Gospel in the specification.

Question 1b:

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Who is Jesus? Bullet point 1.4 The healing miracles in Mark's Gospel; **what they show about Jesus ... the raising of Jairus' daughter** (Mark 5:21-43)

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** reasons the raising of Jairus' daughter is important.'

Most candidates knew the details about this healing miracle but did not use this knowledge to explain the importance of what it showed about Jesus. Some candidates wrote about healing miracles in general and did not link their answer to the raising of Jairus' daughter.

Examiner advice

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two different reasons are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, quotes or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked.

Question 1c:

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Who is Jesus? Bullet point 1.7 The conflicts of Jesus in Mark's Gospel: **the healing of the paralysed man (Mark 2:1-12); disagreement about the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-3:6) and their link with Old Testament understandings of the Sabbath; the cleansing of the Temple (Mark 11:15-18)**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** reasons Jesus came into conflict with others in Mark's Gospel.'

Many candidates were able to give different reasons why Jesus came into conflict with others and referred to the conflicts over the Sabbath or the cleansing of the Temple. They developed their answer by referring to the text in Mark's Gospel. Some candidates did not attempt this question or identified a conflict but gave incorrect or inaccurate details and no reason as why it led to conflict.

Examiner Advice

The candidate does not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word. The source of wisdom can be given as a recognisable paraphrase.

Question 1d:

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Who is Jesus? Bullet 1.2 The baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:2-11): **the events of the baptism, divergent understandings of its significance, including marking the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, what it showed about him, and its significance for Christians today.**

The question asked was: 'The baptism of Jesus is the most important event in Mark's Gospel.' Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Mark's Gospel
- reach a justified conclusion

(d) items are marked using levels and awarding is carried out using 'best fit' according to the level descriptors.

In response to this question most candidates knew the events of the baptism and were aware of their importance for the Gospel and Christianity and a significant number demonstrated sound understanding of religion and belief and started to form logical chains of reasoning. Most referred to Jesus' death and/or resurrection or the miracles as the argument against, those that attempted to compare/contrast this argument with the baptism of Jesus started to offer a good analysis and moved into the higher levels. Many candidates showed a good knowledge and understanding of the Gospel in their answers but needed to 'use' this to help them make reasoned judgements.

Examiner Advice

Candidates are reminded they are evaluating the given statement therefore they should use the arguments for and against to help them form a conclusion referencing the statement. A justified conclusion goes beyond saying which view they agree with or is the stronger /weaker argument; it

needs to be 'justified' through evidence and / or reasoning. Formulas and writing frames often restrict the flow of the arguments and hinder the candidate progressing to the high levels.

Question 2a:

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: The Nature of Discipleship: 2.2 Parables: **the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-20) how each group shows different types of Christians; the nature of discipleship as shown in each group and the role of the sower; its significance for Christians today**

The question asked was: 'Outline **three** different ways people respond in the Parable of the Sower.'

Most candidates knew the allegorical interpretation of the Parable and gave the different ways people may respond based on the different types of soil outlined in Mark 4:13-20.

Examiner advice: Candidates are advised to write three separate sentences in response to (a) questions, starting a new line for each point made.

Question 2b

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: The Nature of Discipleship: 2.3 The story of the rich young man (Mark 10:17-31); **how this shows the nature of discipleship in the command to sell things and how it will affect Christian discipleship today in different ways**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** ways the story of the rich young man helps a Christian.'

Many knew the story of the rich young man and therefore could identify the way it may help a Christian and made good use of sources of wisdom to develop the point made e.g. Mark 10:25. Weaker candidates tended to confuse this with other events/parables in the Gospel or did not attempt to answer the question.

Examiner advice

(b) questions required candidates to give two developed reasons/ways; any further reasons or ways cannot be credited; candidates should not waste time in the examination writing more than is required.

Question 2c:

Candidates were assessed on Section Two The Nature of Discipleship: 2.4 The spirit cast out of the boy (Mark 9:14-29): **the problems of discipleship as shown in the effort to cure the boy, and its significance for Christians today.**

The question asked was: ‘Explain **two** reasons why the story of the spirit cast out of the boy is important.’

A significant number of candidates confused this with the healing of Legion or included elements from the healing miracle e.g. the spirit calling Jesus Son of the Most High God (Mark 5:6) or the demons being sent off into pigs (Mark 5:11). It was clear where candidates knew the story of the spirit cast out of the boy as they were able to use the details to develop their answer and give an appropriate source of wisdom.

Examiner Advice

For a textual study of Mark’s Gospel candidates are advised to know chronologically where the events/teachings are in the Gospel, what comes before and after, this will give them a context to the passage they are studying and help to answer the questions set.

Question 2d:

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: The Nature of Discipleship: 2.6 Peter’s denial (Mark 14:66 -72): the challenges that the denial brings and **what it teaches about the problems of discipleship, and its significance for Christians today. Christian responses to non-religious arguments which suggest religious observance, such as discipleship, can be seen as unnecessary.**

The question asked was: “Discipleship is necessary in the world today.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Mark’s Gospel
- refer to non-religious point of view
- reach a justified conclusion

Some candidates found this question challenging; it appeared that many did not understand what discipleship today meant and hence gave long explanations about the work of such people as Mother Teresa without linking it to the statement. Some candidates did not refer to non-religious points of view so could not go beyond level 2. The candidates scoring the higher levels underpinned the points made with a sound understanding of discipleship from this section of the specification; often referring to such things as the responsibility to preach and serve, or the need to serve others in the world today.

Examiner Advice

(d) questions require candidates to underpin their arguments with knowledge and understanding outlined in the specification.

Summary

- Candidates should write three sentences in 'outline' (a) questions. Each sentence should contain one piece of information. There is no need for development. Incorrect words or sentences should be crossed out.
- The 'explain' questions (b) and (c) require two developed points. For (c) items an additional mark is given for a reference to a source of wisdom, which does not need to be referenced and can be paraphrased.
- Candidates should be directed to the specification and other published resources to learn key terms and sources of wisdom.
- The (d) items are level marked and assess A02 not A01; responses should be underpinned by an understanding of religion and belief as outlined in the specification. Centres are advised to refer to the appropriate training material about (d) items that has been published by Pearson.