



Government of **Western Australia**
School Curriculum and Standards Authority



ATAR course examination, 2020

RELIGION AND LIFE

SOURCE BOOKLET

Question 1 Source

Read Source 1 and then answer Question 1 in the Question/Answer booklet.

Source 1

The quick and easy answer to why people are religious is that God – in whichever form you believe he/she/they take(s) – is real and people believe because they communicate with it and perceive evidence of its involvement in the world. Only 16% of people worldwide are not religious.

Why people believe is a question that has plagued great thinkers for many centuries. Karl Marx, for example, called religion the ‘opium of the people’. Sigmund Freud felt that god was an illusion and worshippers were reverting to the childhood needs of security and forgiveness.

We are social creatures who interact and communicate with each other in a co-operative and supportive way. In doing so we inevitably have stronger attachments to some individuals more than others. We continue to rely on these attachments in later life, when falling in love and making friends, and can even form strong attachments to non-human animals and inanimate objects.

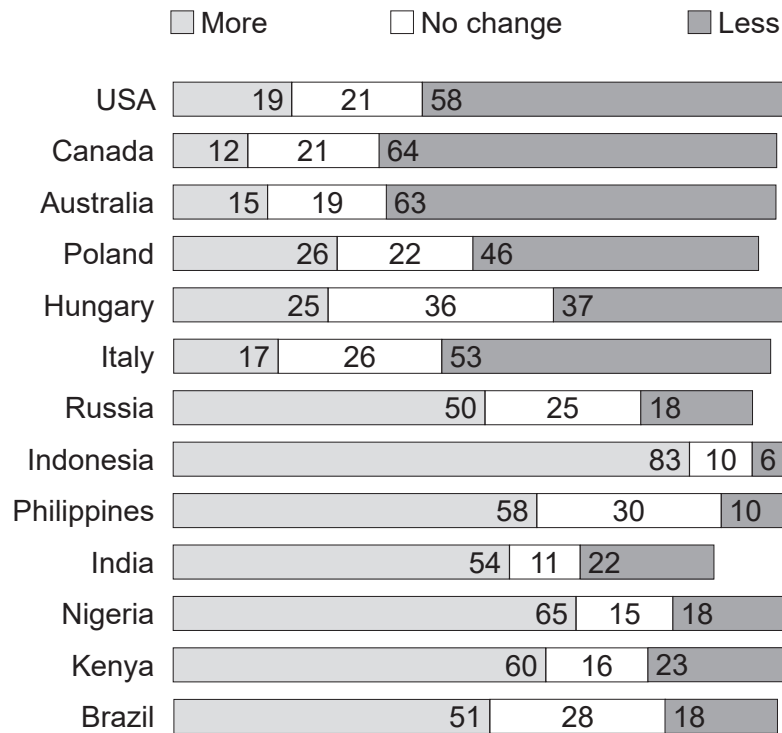
The ritual behaviour seen in collective worship makes us enjoy and want to repeat the experience. Dancing, singing and achieving trance-like states were prominent in many ancestral societies and are still exhibited by some today – including the Sentinelese people, and Australian aborigines. As well as being acts of social unity, even more formal rituals also alter brain chemistry. They increase levels of serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin in the brain – chemicals that make us feel good, want to do things again and provide a closeness to others. These cognitive adaptations are facilitated by educational and household norms which don’t tend to dispute religious ideas. While we are encouraged to challenge other ideas presented to us early in childhood that may not have a strong evidence base – such as Father Christmas or the Tooth Fairy – this is not the case with religion. These challenges are often discouraged in religious teachings.

Question 2 Source

Read Source 2 and then answer Question 2 in the Question/Answer booklet.

Source 2

Percentage of respondents in selected countries who feel the importance of religion has increased (more), remained the same (no change) or decreased (less) compared to 20 years ago.



Note: As some respondents did not complete the survey, the total for each country does not equal 100%.

Question 3 Source

Read Sources 3A and 3B and then answer Question 3 in the Question/Answer booklet.

Source 3A**Source 3B**

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See next page

Question 4 Source

Read Source 4 and then answer Question 4 in the Question/Answer booklet.

Source 4

What does religion have to do with history? Just about everything. Religious belief has both united societies and ripped them apart. Religion probably played a large and forceful role in creating civilisation. Religious belief has also been a primary cause of wars, revolutions, explorations, and migrations. It shapes societies, because people live according to what they believe.

Civilisations were built around belief. For thousands of years, societies raised their rulers to divine status or thought of their royalty as human descendants of gods or mortal representatives of gods. Egyptians, at least as long ago as 2950 BC, considered their kings to be deities. Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) declared himself a god. Rome bestowed divinity on Augustus (27 BC–14 AD), its first emperor. In South America, the Incas of the fifteenth century AD worshipped their king as *Sapa Inca*, or Son of the Sun. About 250 years ago, many Christians still thought that absolute monarchy was the right way for a godly society to be organised. They believed God wanted the world run that way.

No single definition could sum up the traditions, practices, and ideas lumped together under the general category *religion*. The word *religion* refers to publicly shared beliefs, privately held convictions, and ways that people express their faith. Worshipful customs such as regular churchgoing and daily prayer are part of it. So are dietary rules (as when Muslims fast for Ramadan) and modes of dress (such as an Orthodox Jew's skullcap, called a *yarmulke*). It also refers to rituals, from the simple lighting of a candle to human sacrifice. (The Aztecs, for example, used to slaughter thousands of captives at a time to feed their war god's blood lust.)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Source 1** Adapted from: Perham, N. (2018, December 19). Why are people religious? A cognitive perspective. *The Conversation*. Retrieved June, 2020, from <https://theconversation.com/why-are-people-religious-a-cognitive-perspective-108647>
Used under a Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International licence.
- Source 2** Adapted from: Pew Research Center. (2018). *People in North America, Europe and Australia say religion plays a less important role today* [Infographic]. Retrieved June, 2020, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/04/22/how-people-around-the-world-view-religions-role-in-their-countries/>
- Source 3A** Adapted from: Chappatte, P. (2013, May 13). *After Bangladesh* [Cartoon]. Retrieved June, 2020, from <https://www.chappatte.com/en/images/after-bangladesh/>
- Source 3B** Adapted from: Kelly, A. (2013, May 16). Bangladesh's garment workers face exploitation, but is it slavery? *The Guardian*. Retrieved June, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/may/16/bangladesh-garment-workers-exploitation-slavery>
- Source 4** Adapted from: Haugen, P. (2009). *World history for dummies* (2nd ed.) (Chapter 10). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved June, 2020, from https://archive.org/stream/world-history-for-dummies/world-history-for-dummies_djvu.txt

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