4.6 Religion, Science and Ideology as Competing Belief Systems: Test Pack

AQA 7192 · about 20 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write at least three full-sentence answers for the three extended questions (Q7, Q11, Q16). Use sociological terms where relevant. Spend about 20 minutes in total.

1 Which one of the following best describes Karl Popper's view of science as a belief system?

- ☐ A) Science is based on accumulating proofs that confirm theories
- ☐ B) Science advances by falsifying theories that can be tested and found false
- ☐ C) Science is identical to religious faith in its methods
- ☐ D) Science progresses only when scientists agree on a single paradigm

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

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2 Explain in two or three sentences Jean-Francois Lyotard's postmodern challenge to grand narratives and how this applies to claims of objective truth in both science and religion.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

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3 Identify and explain two features of Kuhn's idea of paradigm shifts in scientific knowledge.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

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4 Item A: A short extract describing two claims about belief systems. "Claim 1: Science uses systematic testing and can revise theories when evidence conflicts. Claim 2: Some political ideologies claim a single truth that must not be questioned." Using Item A and your own knowledge, explain one similarity between political ideology and religion as belief systems.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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5 Describe two features of Kuhn's idea of 'normal science' that distinguish it from revolutionary science, in the context of comparing scientific belief systems with other belief systems.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 4.6 Religion, Science and Ideology as Competing Belief Systems: Test Pack

Question 1

B (science advances by falsifying testable theories) **B1**

Answer: B

Question 2

identifies Lyotard's rejection of grand metanarratives, e.g. scepticism about single, overarching explanations **B1**

explains application to science, e.g. science's claim to universal objective truth can be treated as one grand narrative among others **B1**

explains application to religion, e.g. religious grand narratives are similarly seen as contested and culturally situated **B1**

brief development or example, e.g. postmodernists emphasise local, plural knowledges rather than universal claims **B1**

Answer: Lyotard rejects grand metanarratives, arguing we should be sceptical of single overarching explanations. Applied to science, this means questioning science's claim to universal objective truth as only one narrative among many; applied to religion, religious grand narratives are likewise contested and culturally situated, with postmodernists favouring plural, local knowledges.

Question 3

identifies feature one, e.g. normal science works within a paradigm solving puzzles **B1**

explains feature one, e.g. scientists use shared methods and assumptions to extend the paradigm rather than question it **B1**

identifies feature two, e.g. anomalies build up leading to crisis **B1**

explains feature two, e.g. when anomalies cannot be solved, a revolutionary shift replaces the old paradigm with a new one **B1**

Answer: One feature is that normal science operates within a paradigm solving puzzles using shared methods; another is that accumulating anomalies can cause a crisis, leading to a paradigm shift where a new framework replaces the old.

Question 4

identifies a similarity, e.g. both can be totalising systems that demand conformity and discourage questioning **B1**

develops similarity with reference to Item A, e.g. Item A's Claim 2 shows some ideologies claim a single truth similar to certain religious doctrines **B1**

further development, e.g. both can provide moral frameworks and rituals that bind followers **B1**

applies sociological terminology or example, e.g. Marxist critique of ideology as 'false consciousness' or examples like nationalism acting like a secular religion **B1**

Answer: Both political ideology and religion can be totalising belief systems that demand conformity and discourage questioning, as Item A's Claim 2 suggests; both provide moral frameworks and rituals that bind followers, a point used by Marxists who describe ideology as creating false consciousness or by commentators who compare nationalism to secular religion.

Question 5

identifies feature one, e.g. normal science focuses on puzzle-solving within an accepted paradigm **B1**

develops feature one, e.g. research extends the accepted framework rather than replacing it as revolutionary science does **B1**

identifies feature two, e.g. normal science tends to set aside or explain away anomalies rather than immediately abandon the paradigm **B1**

develops feature two, e.g. an anomalous result is treated as a problem to resolve within the existing framework, so the paradigm is retained rather than replaced **B1**

Answer: First, normal science involves puzzle-solving within an accepted paradigm: scientists extend the framework rather than replace it as revolutionary science does. Second, normal science tends to set aside or explain away anomalies: an unexpected result is treated as a problem to resolve within the existing framework, so the paradigm is retained rather than replaced.

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