7.3 The Nature and Importance of Dreams as a Source of Knowledge of God: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8062 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Give three reasons from Theme C why a person might accept a dream as revealing divine guidance rather than as a random mind event.

(Total for Question 1 is 3 marks)

2 Give two reasons why interpretation of dreams is considered unreliable by many critics, in the Theme C context.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Give two forms of independent verification that could make a dream claim more persuasive as evidence for God, in the Theme C context.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 Explain two ways religious communities or traditions might 'test' claimed divine dreams before accepting them, as discussed in Theme C.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Explain two differences between dreams and visions when both are discussed as potential religious experiences in Theme C.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Evaluate the view that dreams cannot be trusted as evidence for the existence of God, with reference to religious and philosophical considerations about dreams recorded in Theme C.

(Total for Question 6 is 15 marks)

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Mark scheme · 7.3 The Nature and Importance of Dreams as a Source of Knowledge of God: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

the dream contains detailed information later verified as true, oe	**B1**
the dream causes a deep, lasting moral change or conversion, oe	**B1**
the dream is consistent with the persons faith tradition and has been affirmed by religious leaders or community, oe	**B1**

Answer: Any three: later verification of details; leads to lasting moral change; affirmed by religious community or fits faith tradition.

Question 2

different interpreters can give conflicting meanings for the same dream, oe	**B1**
interpretations often rely on symbolic readings that are not testable or falsifiable, oe	**B1**

Answer: Any two: interpreters may disagree; symbolic readings are often untestable and subjective.

Question 3

corroboration by an independent witness who can verify details the dreamer could not have known, oe	**B1**
fulfilment of specific, timebound predictions made in the dream that are later shown to be true, oe	**B1**

Answer: Any two: independent witness corroboration; fulfilment of specific predictions from the dream.

Question 4

point 1: testing consistency with sacred texts, ensuring the dream message does not contradict scripture, oe	**B1**
development: communities may reject dreams that conflict with established doctrine or moral teaching, oe	**B1**
point 2: seeking community or prophetic authority confirmation, where elders or recognised leaders evaluate the dream, oe	**B1**
development: leaders may look for corroborating signs, patterns or the persons character before accepting a dream as divine, oe	**B1**

Answer: E.g. testing against scripture; seeking confirmation from religious leaders and community, each with development.

Question 5

point 1: dreams occur during sleep, while visions normally occur during waking states or trance, oe	**B1**
development: this affects how the experience is reported and assessed by others in the community, oe	**B1**
point 2: visions are often more coherent, sensory and directly perceived, whereas dreams may be more symbolic and fragmented, oe	**B1**
development: therefore visions may be treated as more authoritative in some traditions, while dreams may require interpretation, oe	**B1**

Answer: E.g. dreams happen during sleep, visions usually when awake; visions often more coherent and sensory while dreams are more symbolic, each with development.

Question 6

Level 4 A well-developed, balanced evaluation that analyses reasons why dreams may not be trusted and reasons why they might be trusted. Religious arguments and counter-arguments are used, evidence such as Joseph's dreams is considered, and a clear, justified conclusion is reached.	**10-12**
Level 3 A competent evaluation giving arguments on both sides, with some reference to religion. Some judgement and a conclusion are present, though not fully developed.	**7-9**
Level 2 A limited evaluation showing some relevant points for and against the view, with basic use of religious material and a simple conclusion or judgement.	**4-6**
Level 1 One or two superficial points are made about whether dreams can be trusted, with little development and no real conclusion.	**1-3**
Level 0 No relevant points made.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Arguments supporting the view: dreams are products of the subconscious brain and can be caused by memory, stress, or random neural activity, so they are not reliable evidence for the supernatural.
- Arguments supporting the view: dream interpretation is highly subjective and varies between cultures and individuals, so independent verification is often lacking.
- Arguments against the view: some dreams appear to give verifiable information or prophecy, and such cases can be argued to support a supernatural explanation.
- Arguments against the view: dreams that bring moral transformation, conversion or deep conviction may be evidence of a transcendent reality acting on a person, even if not externally verifiable.
- Religious arguments: reference to Joseph's dreams in Genesis 37 and 41 as an example where dreams guide action and are later fulfilled, supporting their credibility within a faith context.
- Religious counter-arguments: many faith traditions require testing of dreams against scripture, prophetic office or community judgement, showing religious caution rather than full endorsement.
- Philosophical considerations: Occam's Razor, falsifiability and the need for independent corroboration as standards for evidence can be used to criticise dreams as evidence for God.
- Consideration of personal testimony: the strength of witness, repeated similar experiences, and cultural context can affect how persuasive a dream report is.
- Conclusion: a balanced judgement might be that dreams can be personally significant and sometimes persuasive, but they rarely provide conclusive, independent proof of God's existence without corroborating evidence.

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