



RS.TC11 The Nature and Importance of Dreams as a Source of Knowledge of God

AQA 8062 · Calculators not allowed · about 60 minutes

Total Marks

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Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Show all your working.

- 1** Define the term 'dream' as used in the study of religious experience, in the context of Theme C on knowledge of God.

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Give two reasons why some people believe dreams can be a source of knowledge about God, in the context of Theme C on religious experience.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

- 3** Explain two ways dreams are used as evidence for the existence of God, referring to Theme C ideas about divine communication through dreams.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

- 4 Explain two contrasting religious beliefs about the importance of dreams as a way to know God. In your answer refer to a sacred writing or another source of religious belief and teaching.

(Total for Question 4 is 5 marks)

- 5 Evaluate the view that dreams cannot be trusted as evidence for the existence of God. In your answer you should give reasoned arguments to support this statement, give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view, refer to religious arguments, reach a justified conclusion. This question carries 3 SPaG marks as indicated and concerns Theme C on religious experience.

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 5 is 15 marks)

- 6** 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 6 is 3 marks)

- 7** Explain two sceptical challenges from psychology and neuroscience that undermine the use of dreams as evidence for God as discussed in Theme C.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

- 8** State two ways in which Joseph's dreams in Genesis influenced events in his life and the lives of others, as covered by Theme C.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

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

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

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

(Total for Question 10 is 4 marks)

- 11** Give three features commonly associated with prophetic or divinely inspired dreams in religious traditions, relevant to Theme C.

(Total for Question 11 is 3 marks)

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

(Total for Question 12 is 4 marks)

- 13** 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 13 is 2 marks)

Mark scheme · RS.TC11 The Nature and Importance of Dreams as a Source of Knowledge of God

Question 1

- **B1** a series of images, sensations or thoughts that occur during sleep and may be interpreted as carrying meaning, oe
- **Answer: A series of images, sensations or thoughts that occur during sleep and may be interpreted as carrying meaning.**

Question 2

- **B1** they report receiving guidance or warnings that seem to come from a divine source, oe
- **B1** dreams can produce deep conviction or conversion, changing belief or behaviour, oe
- **Answer: Any two: reports of divine guidance or warnings; dreams leading to deep conviction or conversion.**

Question 3

- **B1** point 1: a dream that gives accurate, verifiable information or prophecy may be taken as evidence of a supernatural source, oe
- **B1** development: for example a dream that correctly predicts an event or reveals unknown facts can convince the dreamer a divine agent provided the knowledge, oe
- **B1** point 2: dreams that prompt moral change or deep conversion are used as internal evidence that a divine presence influenced the person, oe
- **B1** development: the lasting change in attitude or behaviour is taken as supporting evidence that the dream had a spiritual origin rather than being a random mental event, oe
- **Answer: E.g. verifiable prophetic dreams seen as evidence of supernatural source; dreams causing moral change seen as internal evidence of divine influence.**

Question 4

- **B1** belief 1: some religious traditions accept dreams as genuine channels of divine communication, oe
- **B1** development: Joseph in Genesis receives dreams that he interprets as messages about future events which later influence action, Genesis 37 and 41, oe
- **B1** belief 2: other religious thinkers are cautious and place scripture or recognised prophecy above dreams, oe
- **B1** development: these views argue dreams must be tested against scripture, reason or community judgement before being accepted as divine, oe
- **B1** accurate reference to a sacred writing or source of religious belief made, oe
- **Answer: Contrast: some accept dreams as divine guidance, illustrated by Joseph's dreams in Genesis 37 and 41; others insist dreams must be tested against scripture and community authority before acceptance.**

Question 5

- **Level 4** (10-12): 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.
- **Level 3** (7-9): A competent evaluation giving arguments on both sides, with some reference to religion. Some judgement and a conclusion are present, though not fully developed.
- **Level 2** (4-6): A limited evaluation showing some relevant points for and against the view, with basic use of religious material and a simple conclusion or judgement.
- **Level 1** (1-3): One or two superficial points are made about whether dreams can be trusted, with little development and no real conclusion.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant points made.
- **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.

Question 6

- **B1** 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
- **Answer: Any three: later verification of details; leads to lasting moral change; affirmed by religious community or fits faith tradition.**

Question 7

- **B1** point 1: psychologists argue dreams arise from unconscious wishes, fears or memories, not from external divine sources, oe
- **B1** development: Freud, Jung and others describe mental processes that can create meaningful-seeming dreams without invoking a deity, oe
- **B1** point 2: neuroscientists point to random neural firing in REM sleep producing vivid images, so dreams are brain-based and unreliable as evidence, oe
- **B1** development: such research explains many dream features without recourse to the supernatural, reducing the need to accept dreams as proof of God, oe
- **Answer: E.g. dreams as products of unconscious wishes or memories (psychology); dreams as results of random neural activity in REM sleep (neuroscience), each with brief development.**

Question 8

- **B1** they led to Joseph being resented and sold into slavery by his brothers, oe
- **B1** they later enabled Joseph to interpret the Pharaoh's dreams and save Egypt from famine, raising his status, oe
- **Answer: Any two: caused his brothers to resent and sell him; led to him interpreting Pharaoh's dreams and saving Egypt from famine, raising his status.**

Question 9

- **B1** 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
- **Answer: Any two: interpreters may disagree; symbolic readings are often untestable and subjective.**

Question 10

- **B1** 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 person's character before accepting a dream as divine, oe
- **Answer: E.g. testing against scripture; seeking confirmation from religious leaders and community, each with development.**

Question 11

- **B1** vividness or clarity beyond ordinary dreams, oe
- **B1** containment of specific, useful information or warnings, oe
- **B1** the dream leads to changes in behaviour or is later shown to be fulfilled, oe
- **Answer: Any three: vivid clarity; specific information or warnings; leads to behavioural change or later fulfilment.**

Question 12

- **B1** 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
- **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 13

- **B1** 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
- **Answer: Any two: independent witness corroboration; fulfilment of specific predictions from the dream.**