



2005 Contemporary Australian Society GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2005 Contemporary Australian Society examination included an array of significant social issues that teachers and students had engaged with passionately during the year. There were some excellent responses that contained relevant, well-considered and well-supported arguments in response to the various questions and the representation analysis. However, as in previous years, some students performed below their capabilities by not addressing all aspects of the question in their answer; for example, by not referring to additional material they had studied when answering Question 5d. It was pleasing that students heeded the advice to use a greater degree of contemporary evidence to support their responses.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

Section A

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	1	2	4	18	22	19	16	11	4	1	5.5

This question was structured to allow students a great deal of scope to describe two of the many different traditional or contemporary types of communities. It was anticipated that students would examine both the inclusive and/or exclusive nature of community, and would challenge the fantasies about what a community is, in addition to exploring its reality.

Students were able to identify the purpose of community, such as the ability to provide people with an identity (cultural and/or religious) and a sense of belonging. Some students chose to present a more theoretical perspective, referring to Roland Warren’s key functions of community and the distinction between Tonnies’ Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft types of society. The most common responses referred to the contrast between geographic and interest based communities. Good answers provided clear details about the community being described, and acknowledged changes in the experience of community over time or the links between the two types of communities.

One student described the contrast between traditional and contemporary communities as:

A traditional community is generally homogenous and very tight knit for example a small village or town. They are also generally quite exclusive and self sufficient, with not much involvement from outside bodies. As society changed, however, through urbanisation, so did the concept of community. Many people moved to the city and urban areas and found themselves feeling isolated and alone. This resulted in a new type of community – a modern interest based community.

It is important for students to provide specific detail in their examples, to demonstrate their understanding of the key knowledge and key concepts. For example:

Today however due to increased transport and technology community can be based on many different things. Community today can also mean a group of people who undertake similar activities. For example, sporting clubs such as the Essendon Football Club are a community because of a shared interest and participation in football. Similarly the Girl Guides are a community because of participation in Guide activities and similar interests.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	3	4	6	17	17	17	16	14	6	1	5.6

This question required students to identify the specific strategies employed by groups in order to create a sense of community. Good responses described the various types of memberships and how these are shaped by the community members. Good answers contained a definition and explanation of what was meant by a sense of community. In addition, the steps or process involved in establishing and then maintaining this sense was needed. For example:

Strategies that could be used to create a sense of community are to provide people with mutual support. If people have access to support services and have people they can contact when they need help a sense of community will be felt. A good example of this is Roslyn House Ciro... This community centre provided very cheap meals for people as well as opportunities to gain valuable skills. There [are] literacy and computer programs as well as cooking and child care facilities to help people gain the skills they needed to participate in the wider community. This gave people a sense of self worth and belonging which fostered a sense of community.



As previously mentioned, it is important that students support their responses with detailed evidence. Good answers were very specific about the actions carried out by the community, and its impact on individuals. For example:

The rotary community... is a humanitarian organisation, with over 35,000 members from 31 districts in Australia alone. Each member of the community feels connected with each other because of one common cause. 'Service above Self'. This is the motto in the Rotary community and it helps to create a sense of community. Each week clubs all over Australia, meet over a meal to discuss projects to help their local community. For example, the Rotary club of Mirboo North, recently had a BBQ in order to raise money to go towards the global program of 'Polio – Plus'... the Rotary community have their own symbol, that members wear as pins and it becomes something they can identify with. Symbols are important both for the members of the community and for the recognition of the community.

Section B

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	3	2	2	2	4	10	8	9	13	15	13	6	9	1	2	1	7.9

As mentioned in previous Assessment Reports, it remains a concern that a number of students did not seem to recognise that Section B questions are worth 15 marks rather than 10 and, as such, require greater depth. The best answers were very specific about the community being described, the level or type of government and the government policy (or action) and provided evidence that was contemporary in nature. Many students wrote about women and Australia's indigenous communities. While these are very appropriate examples, some answers were too simplistic or generalised. Such answers often made broad statements that were applied to large groups rather than referring to specific subcultures or qualifying the statements. Such qualifying statements could include referring to 'many' people, 'some' individuals, or this 'often' occurs, rather than using 'all' or 'always'. In addition, many students lost valuable marks by referring to multiple communities rather than 'a' community.

Better responses referred to case studies that had been examined by the students throughout the year. This enabled the students to be more specific about the details of the impact upon the community group. One student used the following specific example to answer the question.

The government plays a large role in how a community operates. Whether it be local, state or federal the legislation and laws outline what people as individuals and communities can and cannot do. The ... Dandenong Graphic Artists (DGA) a group of adolescents who possessed a rare talent in graphic design were know and recognised by their art work on roads and walls. Society has labeled this act as graffiti and supporting their views the local government placed restrictions as to where they could draw and if breached, harsh consequences outlined by one boy spending a night in jail. These interventions left the community disheartened and little reason to exist anymore. As a result the numbers of group members began to decline, as did the talent and discovery of such a skill. These actions by government are to have undermined the community, however, after a year or so and many petitions, the local government in Dandenong decided to support this young group and enhance their community. Continuing to uphold the restrictions instilled earlier about defacing private and public property, the local council got involved and recognised the fact that many young teenagers appreciate their particular work. With projects such as the construction of a local skate park, the council allowed members of DGS to decorate the ramps and walls and practically bring this forgotten talent back from the dead, in Dandenong only. Enhancements such as these have broadened the community and provided children with a legal outlet for their controversial act.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	3	1	4	4	5	8	8	11	15	13	11	11	4	2	0	0	7.4

More successful students commenced their response to this question by clearly defining the concept of both multiculturalism and a single national culture. Students were required to either agree or disagree and then argue their position, using evidence to support their views. Many students were able to argue that one culture is dominant but not single, or demonstrate an understanding of the paradox between the two. For example:

Australia may be a multicultural society however this does not mean it does not have a single national culture. Multiculturalism has been a part of Australian society officially since 1973 however immigration was occurring long before then. As Australia developed its identity as a nation, moving from its British origins, it incorporated ideas of tolerance and a fair go into Australian culture. Different cultures have been what make up Australian culture, never having had our own definitive culture.

Many students were able to confidently identify the common Australian symbols and cultural values, for example:

Australia's national culture does not just consist of the symbols like Ned Kelly, the Opera House and the 'fair go' attitude. It includes Australia's institutions of government, school (or education), the workplace, religion and families. Australia is a democratic nation in which all citizens vote. All Australian citizens, whether ethnic, indigenous or other, still follows the same core values. These core values like freedom of speech and basic human rights are at the heart of Australia's single national culture. Thus the claim that as a multicultural society, Australia has a single national culture should not be taken lightly as it is actually true.



Good responses referred to changes in government policy such as the White Australia policy, Assimilation and Multiculturalism. Weaker responses didn't take a clear position and focused on past policies rather than the richness of Australia's current cultural identity.

Section C

Question 5

The representation analysis generated a range of good responses. Many students explained their interpretations well, but they were often less successful in referring to evidence. It is critical that the students link their points for discussion to specific evidence contained within the representation.

5a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	38	35	16	7	1.8

The most successful answers stayed focused on the views of the future presented by the representation (rather than such views' desirability) and looked at both details of the representation and the representation as a whole. There was a more limited range of responses than in previous years. Good answers discussed the success of Australia's multicultural policies as seen by the smiling women in a range of culturally specific clothing, and that the future was one of unity, with an absence of violent conflict. For example:

The photograph and article present a very positive view of the future, showing people of all races coming together despite past tensions. The photograph shows African women lying down together, smiling and laughing. The article's title reads 'Divided by war, united by new life'. The presentation shows the success that multiculturalism and globalisation can have, with different races coming together to celebrate each other...overall the view of the presentation is that globalisation and multiculturalism both have the potential to bring people of different cultures together.

Most students responded by noting that the view of the future was positive, and provided our nation with opportunities and enriched Australian culture. Weaker responses described the representation rather than addressing the question, while others answered the question, but did not support their views with evidence.

5b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	42	33	17	4	1.8

The most obvious example of change identified by students was that, after 32 years of war between their nations, the women were coming together to participate in the Horn of Africa Live Night. One student wrote:

This representation is all about change and how initially these women 'once sat hostile at two ends of the table' and are now able to 'celebrate' with one another. The photo of all the women from their different backgrounds including 'Eritreans, Ethiopians, Somalians and Sudanese' being able to smile and laugh with one another is able to illustrate how far they have come. So much change has occurred from once fighting against one another to laughing and celebrating their different and unique cultures. The representation also highlights through its heading 'Divided by war, united by new life' that now they have relocated to Australia they are able to instigate a positive change in their lives which wasn't possible back home.

Others noted the significance of the story being considered newsworthy in mainstream media, the existence of a greater degree of racial tolerance, and Australia's acceptance of its responsibilities as a global citizen. Again, many students provided good points for discussion, but did not support their ideas with evidence from the representation.

5c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	12	33	28	21	7	1.8

Some students noted that Australian citizens could respond in a negative way to our cultural diversity, through violence or xenophobia; however, most described positive actions. These included attending the Horn of Africa Live Night, including informative and educational items in the media, supporting refugees and asylum seekers, engaging in community education and supporting the funding of the Vic Health government program. One student wrote:

People and communities can also support organisations such as 'Vic Health' whether it be a monetary contribution or volunteering your services. Just being aware of the international conflicts that may have affected people in your community is also another way to support or respond to the changes which are presented in the representation.

5d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	5	18	16	26	18	8	6	1	1	2.9



This question required students to present their own opinion about the future as implied by the representation. Stronger responses restated what this future was, before developing an argument. It is critical that the students referred to both the representation and to the material they had studied in class. Good quality answers, such as the following, contained a reasoned argument supported by a range of evidence. Many responses, however, were far too short and didn't reflect the number of marks that the question was worth.

The future presented here is desirable. If different groups can interact with each other under fun social conditions they will be able to see that they are similar and ethnic and cultural barriers will be broken down. By not having social interaction between different community groups, old beliefs and ethnocentric feelings will be maintained. This is evident with the Serbian and Croatian communities. Each group maintain strong social ties within themselves which leads to them retaining old beliefs and ideas of conflict. If there was more interaction between the Serbian and Croatian communities then perhaps there would not be the violence that occurs when Croatian and Serbian soccer teams play each other. This segregation of communities is undesirable as it can lead to violence and prejudice. The image portrayed in the representation is desirable as it shows people with past differences can get along.

Section D

Question 6

Question chosen	none	a.	b.	c.
%	3	37	52	8

Criterion 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	14	17	24	23	17	2	3.1

Criterion 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	6	14	17	24	27	11	1	2.9

Criterion 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	8	15	16	29	21	11	1	2.7

Criterion 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	7	16	18	25	23	11	1	2.7

Criterion 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	6	17	16	25	22	14	1	2.8

The short essay question allowed students the opportunity to demonstrate a detailed knowledge and understanding of the study as well as their areas of interests and the case studies they had investigated throughout the year. It was pleasing to note that many students seemed to have completed this section of the paper first, enabling them to respond with more depth and attention to all of the examination criteria. Many, responses, however, contained a limited amount of genuine discussion. Most simply cited examples without making points, or gave examples and expected them to be self-explanatory. Students also need to adhere more closely to the essay format by giving detailed, structured responses that state a clear contention and then supporting their contention with relevant examples. In addition, it is critical that students read the questions closely and respond to all parts of the topic.

Question 6a.

This question required students to investigate the fundamental rights afforded to all human beings, regardless of their citizenship status. Good answers included definitions of the key concepts or citizenship and human rights. For example:

Full citizenship involves three aspects: political citizenship, social citizenship and civil citizenship. Not all Australian citizens, however, enjoy all citizenship rights. Until recently, it was generally considered that all Australians had human rights, however this has become debatable. The refugee and immigration policies and the new powers given to ASIO question what human rights Australians have and whether or not they will be protected in the future. Human rights are considered to be held by all Australians, however, this is not necessarily the case. Human rights include the most basic rights a person should have including freedom of speech, movement and the right to live. A policy of the...government currently goes against the advice of the United



Nations and compromises human rights. Mandatory detention involves the compulsory detention of asylum seekers...Australia, as a global citizen has the responsibility to offer refuge to those fleeing persecution however we are not doing so.

It was essential for students to address **two** social issues, and to support their discussion with detailed evidence to support their arguments. For example:

The community of Wadeye in the Northern Territory are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to receiving rights. Wadeye children have their right to an education violated when at the start of the 2005 school year there was not enough seats in the classrooms for the children to sit on. This is because the Northern Territory government spends only 26 cents on the education of a child in Wadeye compared to every one dollar spent on the average Northern Territory child...The people of Wadeye also have their basic human right to health care violated when despite its population of 2500 people the town...has no doctor. This is in contrast to an average of one doctor per 431 people in the wider Australian community.

Those students who wrote good responses noted the difference between citizenship and human rights. Many issues were examined, including: asylum seekers; the challenges experienced by the gay and lesbian communities in regard to marriage, superannuation, wills, and adoption/IVF; the health and wellbeing of Australia's indigenous communities; women's rights in regard to employment opportunities; and the impact of the Anti-Terrorism Bill in relation to its restrictions on Australian citizens.

Question 6b.

This question allowed students to examine any of the social, political, economic or technological effects of globalisation on Australia's future, regardless of whether it was perceived to have a positive or negative impact. Good responses began with a **definition** of globalisation and clearly indicated whether the phenomenon added to or destroyed Australian culture. One student wrote:

Globalisation is the process whereby social, economic and political activities become increasingly globalised so that cultural borders and economic barriers are broken down. This will have a wider impact on Australia, which has a young and barely established identity already and can be easily influenced.

Strong answers provided evidence to support their views, and were consistent in their position throughout the body of the essay. These responses provided specific details to inform the reader about the impact of globalisation on specific social groups. For instance:

Globalisation has also opened up a larger world to Australia through greater accessibility of the internet. As Australia is a vast land with many rural areas, the internet provides access of the wider community to rural isolated areas. Improved technology has also provided children in the outback with education through the 'School of the Air', which is a classroom set up over radio transmitters.

Question 6c.

This was the least popular of the three options for Question 6. Many respondents neglected to refer to both national **and** global benefits of information technology and did not discuss **two** social issues.

Good answers clearly identified what the advantages were and how they were used to promote active citizenship. Responses included: educating the community about local and global social injustices; engaging in social action organised through the Internet, such as the Live 8 concerts; and making financial contributions, such as assisting those affected by the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. While most students were able to discuss at least two groups, many relied on general statements about their issues, which did not allow them to score highly across the five assessment criteria. Many of the students who chose this topic did not define 'active citizenship' or outline what it involves. Similarly, they often chose good examples to discuss but made no concrete link between the example and how it promotes active citizenship. For example, they may have referred to Live 8 as an example, but then failed to provide a discussion of it.