

Stage 2 Religion Studies – 10 Credit

Assessment Type 4: Investigation (30%)

Select a religious or spiritual phenomenon or a religious issue linked to Australian or global society for investigation.

You should undertake preliminary background research into the phenomenon or issue before seeking more contemporary and contextual information through the use of, for example, interviews, questionnaires, and current media sources.

You will then collect, plan, and organise your materials to produce a comprehensive and integrated written report on your investigation.

The report should be a maximum of 1000 words for a 10-credit subject, and a maximum of 2000 words for a 20-credit subject.

Assessment Design Criteria
Knowledge and Understanding The specific features are as follows: KU1 Explanation of different religious beliefs, perspectives, and experiences within and across traditions. KU2 Knowledge and understanding of religious and spiritual ideas, concepts, and issues in selected sources.
Investigation and Application The specific features are as follows: IA1 Development and application of appropriate methods of investigation, including use of inquiry skills. IA2 Application of knowledge and understanding of religions and spiritualities in local and global contexts. IA3 Investigation and explanation of a range of religious and spiritual phenomena. IA4 Clarity of communication, including presentation of conclusions.
Analysis and Evaluation The specific features are as follows: AE1 Analysis of religious and spiritual ideas, concepts, and issues in selected sources. AE2 Analysis of how religion and spirituality in Australia have an impact on, and are influenced by, sociocultural, historical, and/or political events and attitudes. AE3 Critical evaluation of definitions of religion and spirituality.
Reflection The specific features are as follows: R1 Reflection on the personal significance of religions and spiritualities in traditional and contemporary societies. R2 Consideration and explanation of the social significance of religions and spiritualities in traditional and contemporary societies. R3 Exploration of the relevance of religions and spiritualities in contemporary Australia.

QUESTION: Explore and analyse the period of 'rumspringa' that the adolescents in the Amish faith experience.

The Amish are a group of Christian church fellowships that form a subgroup of the Mennonite churches. They are known for their simple living, plain dress and their reluctance to adapt to the conveniences that modern technology has to offer (DT, 2012). The membership of the Amish church begins with baptism which occurs between the ages of 16 and 25. Baptism is done once one has pledged commitment to the church and it is a requirement for marriage. Once a person has been baptised, he or she may only marry within the faith. There are 30 families on average in a Church district and the worship services are held in the homes of members ever second Sunday, rather than in a Church¹. The rules of the church, titled the 'Ordnung', are tradition and have passed down through speech and must be observed by every member. The rules cover most aspects of day-to-day living from the limitation on the use of power-line electricity to regulations on clothing. (DT, 2012). The event of rumspringa occurs at the age of adolescence and, in Pennsylvania Dutch, means 'running around'². The choices one is faced with at the end of the rumspringa period can be rather dire, with the individual being shunned by friends, family and the world they had been born into if they choose to leave the faith.

The education of Amish children takes place in a one-room school and is terminated after eighth grade³. The idea being that they will go on to receive vocational education via learning skills at home that will be needed when they begin to run a household of their own. The Amish have their own independent schools because they 'see many evils in the public school, which is why they prefer their own private ones.'⁴ In an Amish family, the children grow up being surrounded by gender specific chores. This means that the wife does the cooking, washing and cleaning whilst the husband works on the family farm. The wife is called upon if needed, but the father remains in charge. As the children grow up, they gain a deeper understanding of what is necessary in life and what isn't, done through the strict value of family. (DA, 2012).

In the Amish faith, they believe that *'before a young person chooses to commit to the Amish church as an adult, he or she should have the chance to freely explore the forbidden delights of the outside world'*⁵ and at the age of sixteen, Amish teenagers experience 'rumspringa'.

¹ Igou, B n.d., *Amish Traditions*, , accessed 27 August 2012, <<http://www.yourlancaster.com/lamish-traditional-family.htm>>.

² Harris, J 25th March 2010, *Dug Down Deep*, Breakpoint, accessed 03 September 2012, <<http://www.breakpointorg/features/columns/articles/entry/12114099>>.

³ Igou, B n.d., *Amish Traditions*, accessed 27 August 2012, <<http://www.yourlancaster.com/lamish-traditional-family.htm>>.

⁴ Igou, B n.d., *Amish Traditions*" accessed 27 August 2012, <<http://www.yourlancaster.com/lamish-traditional-family.htm>>.

⁵ Harris, J 25th March 2010, *Dug Down Deep*, Breakpoint, accessed 03 September 2012, <<http://www.breakpointorg/features/columns/articles/entry/12114099>>.

This period of adolescence allows boys and girls to form romantic relationships and to live how 'western' teenagers live, usually ending with the choice of baptism into the church or leaving the community⁶. The time frame allowed for rumspringa can last for months or years and gives opportunity for the Amish youths to engage in rebellious behaviours without being punished for doing so. The possible activities which the Amish adolescents engage in include wearing non traditional clothing, experimenting with recreational substances such as drugs and alcohol, engaging in promiscuous behaviour with one another and also not attending prayer services. Technically speaking, the Amish youths are not required to follow the rules of the 'Ordnung' because they have not been officially classed as a member of the faith but they do remain under authority from their parents. At the end of the period, the adolescents are meant to have found a partner and be ready to be baptised, however, they are allowed to abandon the faith altogether with the Amish saying that that person 'went English'. In doing so, some Amish communities will shun the person altogether, cutting off association with them because they have essentially embarrassed the faith but in other communities, they are allowed to keep in close contact with family and friends.⁷ Figure 1 recounts an experience that an adolescent had during rumspringa, resulting in her decision to leave the church.

FIGURE 1

Text removed due to copyright

Harris, J 25th March 2010, *Dug Down Deep*, Breakpoint~ accessed 03 September 2012, <<http://www.breakpoint.org/features-columns/articles/entry/12/14099>>.

Eighty to Ninety percent of Amish teenagers return to the faith at the end of the period of rumspringa⁸. As described by Joshua Harris in an excerpt from his book 'Dug Down Deep', he says *'they binge on all the worst aspects of the modern world long enough to make themselves sick of it. Then, weary' and disgusted, they turn back to the comforting, familiar, and safe world of Amish life.*⁹

⁶ *Rumspringa (Definition)* 2012, , accessed 03 September 2012,<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/american_english/rumspringa>.

⁷ *Amish Facts* n.d. , accessed 27 August 2012, <<http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/amish.htm>>.

⁸ Harris, J 25th March 2010, *Dug Down Deep*, Breakpoint, accessed 03 September 2012, <<http://www.breakpoint.org/features-columns/articles/entry/12/14099>>.

⁹ Harris, J 25th March 2010, *Dug Down Deep*, Breakpoint, accessed 03 September 2012, <<http://www.breakpoint.org/features/columns/articles/entry/12/14099>>.

Harris is an ex Amish person who 'decided to leave the faith after experiencing his period of rumspringa. The way 'western' teenagers live and the way Amish teenagers live are at two opposite ends of the spectrum. Western teenagers are into the materialistic side of life with many wanting the latest of everything our society has to offer in the form of technology, clothes and entertainment whereas the way Amish teenagers live is surrounded with developing skills that they will use in life, something that many 'western' teenagers seem to lack. (D T 2012)

In conclusion, the period of rumspringa has both a positive and negative side. The positive side being the adolescents are given opportunity to experience an entirely different world, where risks are taken daily and they are generally accepted. The negative side is the decision by some Amish communities to cut off all communications with adolescents who decide to leave the faith. As someone who is not a part of the faith, in my opinion, this seems a rather harsh thing to do because they have to begin their new life without moral support but, in saying this, it probably makes a lot more sense to those with wider knowledge of the faith.

Primary Sources

D, T 2012. Pers.comm., 9th August and 13th August

D, A 2012 Pers.comm., 27th July

Secondary Sources

¹ Igou, B n.d., *Amish Traditions*, , accessed 27 August 2012, <<http://www.yourlancaster.com/lamish-traditionalfamily.hlm>>.

² Harris, J 25th March 2010, *Dug Down Deep*, Breakpoint, accessed 03 September 2012, <<http://www.breakpoint.org/features-columns/articles/entry/12114099>>.

³ Igou, B n.d., *Amish Traditions*, , accessed 27 August 2012, <<http://www.yourlancaster.com/amish-traditional-family.htm>>.

⁴ Igou, Bn.d., *Amish Traditions*, , accessed 27 August 2012, <<http://www.yourlancaster.com/amish-traditional-family.hlm>>.

⁵ Harris, J 25th March 2010, *Dug Down Deep*, Breakpoint, accessed 03 September 2012, <<http://www.breakpoint.org/features-columns/articles/entry/12114099>>.

⁶ *Rumspringa (Definition)* 2012, , accessed 03 September 2012, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/american_engJishlrumspringa>.

⁷ *Amish Facts* n.d." accessed 27 August 2012, <<http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/amish.hlm>>.

⁸ Harris, J 25th March 2010, *Dug Down Deep*, Breakpoint, accessed 03 September 2012, <<http://www.breakpoint.org/features-columns/articles/entry/12/14099>>.

⁹ Harris, J 25th March 2010, *Dug Down Deep*, Breakpoint, accessed 03 September 2012, <<http://www.breakpoint.org/features-columns/articles/entry/12/14099>>.

Assessment Comments

This investigation is a C+ grade, and was used as a benchmark in 2012.

Knowledge and Understanding

- KU1 Well-considered explanation of religious beliefs (paragraphs 1-3). The majority of the first paragraph is a well-considered explanation of religious beliefs, in this case the Amish. The first paragraph includes basic information about this Christian denomination, when Baptism occurs, and the rules of the church. However, this is not directly related to Rumspringa until the final sentence. The top of page 2 shows clear evidence of 'well-considered explanation of religion beliefs'. This is where the knowledge becomes specific to the Investigation.
- KU2 Mostly clear and detailed knowledge and well-informed understanding of the Amish concept of Rumspringa (paragraphs 1-4). Paragraph 2 recounts information on Amish beliefs about education and the structure and roles within the family. This is not directly related to Rumspringa. Paragraph 3 demonstrates mostly clear and detailed knowledge of the concept of Rumspringa. It also gives an example of a person's experience of Rumspringa and how he leaves the faith. This allows the evidence to fall into the 'well-informed' performance standard descriptor.

Investigation and Application

- IA1 Competent development of investigation methods is demonstrated with a generally productive use of inquiry skills. The primary research is structured around comments that are predominantly from one source and the credibility of this source is not explored. Much of the research is based on secondary sources, limiting full exploration and analysis of Rumspringa.
- IA3 The investigation shows evidence of both primary and secondary research into an aspect of a religion. The evidence is predominantly fact-based with limited explanation.
- IA4 Generally clear and well structured, with some reasoned conclusions.
- This Investigation is well-structured in that there is a development of basic information about the denomination at the start, which then builds into specific information about the period of Rumspringa. The focus is largely on general information rather than on analysis and reflection. There is some attempted analysis, comparing the difference in lifestyles between 'Western' teenagers and those of the Amish faith. Conclusions about why the teenagers may or may not return to their faith are not fully developed.

Analysis and Evaluation

- AE1 There is evidence of some 'generally clear analysis' where the student is exploring why a person might return to his faith following Rumspringa. However this is done via a quote that is not fully explained. There is also evidence of some 'generally clear analysis' in the second to last paragraph when explaining some brief differences between teenagers of the Amish faith and those in 'Western culture', and addressing briefly why a young person may or may not choose to return to the faith.

Reflection

- R2 There is evidence of a 'generally informed consideration' of the social significance of Rumspringa in contemporary society in the last two paragraphs. The student has explored what it means to be a teenager in a 'Western society' and how this differs to those following the Amish faith. This explores what teenagers value in 'Western societies' and also what skills the Amish teenagers might have, which 'Western' ones will not. Specific examples may have provided an opportunity to show evidence of the B grade band.
- R3 There is evidence of an 'informed exploration of the relevance of the relevance' of Rumspringa in contemporary society, as there is a comparison between the experiences of 'Western teenagers' and the Amish.

Performance Standards for Stage 2 Religion Studies

	Knowledge and Understanding	Investigation and Application	Analysis and Evaluation	Reflection
A	<p>Insightful explanation of different religious beliefs, perspectives, and experiences, within and across traditions.</p> <p>Clear and in-depth knowledge and perceptive understanding of religious and spiritual ideas, concepts, and issues in selected sources.</p>	<p>Sustained and logical development and application of appropriate investigation methods, including highly productive use of inquiry skills.</p> <p>Insightful and appropriate application of knowledge and understanding of religions and spiritualities in local and global contexts.</p> <p>In-depth investigation and detailed explanation of a range of religious and spiritual phenomena.</p> <p>Well-informed, clear, and well-structured communication, and well-reasoned presentation of conclusions.</p>	<p>Perceptive and critical analysis of religious and spiritual ideas, concepts, and issues in selected sources.</p> <p>In-depth and well-informed analysis of the various ways in which religion and spirituality in Australia have an impact on, and are influenced by, sociocultural, historical, and/or political events and attitudes.</p> <p>Insightful and critical evaluation of definitions of religion and spirituality.</p>	<p>Insightful and critical reflection on the personal significance of religions and spiritualities in traditional and contemporary societies.</p> <p>Well-informed and perceptive consideration and explanation of the social significance of religions and spiritualities in traditional and contemporary societies.</p> <p>Well-informed and perceptive exploration of the relevance of religions and spiritualities in contemporary Australia.</p>
B	<p>Well-considered explanation of different religious beliefs, perspectives, and experiences, within and across traditions.</p> <p>Mostly clear and detailed knowledge and well-informed understanding of religious and spiritual ideas, concepts, and issues in selected sources.</p>	<p>Clear development and application of appropriate investigation methods, including productive use of inquiry skills.</p> <p>Well-considered and appropriate application of knowledge and understanding of religions and spiritualities in local and global contexts.</p> <p>Some depth of investigation and accurate explanation of a range of religious and spiritual phenomena.</p> <p>Mostly well-informed, clear and structured communication, and reasoned presentation of conclusions.</p>	<p>Clear and critical analysis of religious and spiritual ideas, concepts, and issues in selected sources.</p> <p>Detailed and well-informed analysis of the various ways in which religion and spirituality in Australia have an impact on, and are influenced by, sociocultural, historical, and/or political events and attitudes.</p> <p>Considered and critical evaluation of definitions of religion and spirituality.</p>	<p>Thoughtful and critical reflection on the personal significance of religions and spiritualities in traditional and contemporary societies.</p> <p>Well-informed consideration and explanation of the social significance of religions and spiritualities in traditional and contemporary societies.</p> <p>Well-informed exploration of the relevance of religions and spiritualities in contemporary Australia.</p>
C	<p>Some considered explanation of different religious beliefs, perspectives, and experiences, within and across traditions.</p> <p>Generally relevant knowledge and informed understanding of religious and spiritual ideas, concepts, and issues in selected sources.</p>	<p>Competent development and application of appropriate investigation methods, including generally productive use of inquiry skills.</p> <p>Appropriate application of knowledge and understanding of religions and spiritualities in local and global contexts.</p> <p>Competent investigation and explanation of a range of religious and spiritual phenomena. Explanation may include some inaccuracies.</p> <p>Generally informed, clear, and structured communication, with some reasoned conclusions.</p>	<p>Generally clear analysis of religious and spiritual ideas, concepts, and issues in selected sources.</p> <p>Informed analysis of some of the ways in which religion and spirituality in Australia have an impact on, and are influenced by, sociocultural, historical, and/or political events and attitudes.</p> <p>Some critical evaluation of definitions of religion and spirituality, tending towards description.</p>	<p>Considered reflection on the personal significance of religions and spiritualities in traditional and contemporary societies.</p> <p>Generally informed consideration and explanation of the social significance of religions and spiritualities in traditional and contemporary societies.</p> <p>Informed exploration of the relevance of religions or spiritualities in contemporary Australia.</p>
D	<p>Description of aspects of more than one religious belief, perspective, or experience, within or across traditions.</p> <p>Identification and some consideration of one or more religious and/or spiritual ideas, concepts, or issues in a selected source or sources.</p>	<p>Application of aspects of an investigation method, including inconsistent use of some inquiry skills.</p> <p>Application of some basic knowledge of religions or spiritualities in local and global contexts.</p> <p>Partial investigation and explanation of aspects of religious and spiritual phenomena, with limited detail and some inaccuracies.</p> <p>Disjointed and partly informed communication, with inclusion of some summary comments.</p>	<p>Description and some attempted analysis or consideration of aspects of religious or spiritual ideas, concepts and issues, with partial reference to sources.</p> <p>Description and some attempted analysis or consideration of one or more ways in which religion and spirituality in Australia have an impact on, and are influenced by, events or attitudes.</p> <p>Some recognition and description of definitions of religion or spirituality.</p>	<p>Some reflection on the personal significance of religions or spiritualities in traditional and contemporary societies.</p> <p>Some basic consideration and description of the social significance of a religion or spirituality in a traditional and contemporary society.</p> <p>Partial exploration of the relevance of religions or spiritualities in contemporary Australia.</p>
E	<p>Identification of one or more beliefs, perspectives, or experiences, in a religious tradition.</p> <p>Limited consideration of any religious or spiritual ideas, concepts, or issues in a selected source.</p>	<p>Attempted application of aspects of an investigation method, including identification of one or more sources of information.</p> <p>Attempted application of some emerging awareness of religions or spiritualities.</p> <p>Communication of some awareness of a religious phenomenon.</p> <p>Attempted communication of limited information.</p>	<p>Attempted description of a religious or spiritual idea, concept, or issue, with limited reference to any sources of information.</p> <p>Description of limited aspects of religion or spirituality in Australia.</p> <p>Listing of some definitions of religion or spirituality.</p>	<p>Recognition of the personal significance of an aspect of religion or spirituality in traditional or contemporary societies.</p> <p>Limited consideration of the social significance of religions or spiritualities in traditional or contemporary societies.</p> <p>Attempted exploration of an aspect of the relevance of religion or spirituality in contemporary Australia.</p>