

Markscheme

May 2026

Social and cultural anthropology

Higher level

Paper 1

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The following interpretation of the markscheme is offered as an example of the types of responses we may expect, however it is not prescriptive or exhaustive, and other possible answers should be appropriately rewarded if relevant.

Section A

1. Define the term **age** and describe how it is understood and applied in the context of the passage. **[4]**

This question requires students to demonstrate conceptual knowledge and understanding of the term “age” and apply it in relation to the text. Students may write in terms of any of the following guidelines, but other definitions or applications will also be acceptable if made relevant to the context of the passage.

Possible ways of defining the term:

- as a universal principle of social differentiation and classification
- age as a biological process and also as a cultural construct
- different meanings according to specific historical, social and class contexts
- related to life-stages and processes of socialization
- related to ranks, statuses, rights, and duties
- culturally situated/experienced
- in relation to discourses of childhood.

Other appropriate definitions should be credited.

Possible examples of description and application:

- in relation to the roles of children in hunter-gatherer societies compared to industrialized societies
- in relation to views of childhood (vulnerable infants vs capable actors)
- in relation to the notion of play-work
- in relation to methodological decisions when doing fieldwork with children
- in relation to childhood studies and theories of socialization/enculturation
- in relation to intergenerational change.

Other appropriate applications should be credited.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The response demonstrates a basic knowledge and understanding of the concept. There is a partial application of the concept in relation to the text.
3–4	The response demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding of the concept; the concept is described in detail. The concept is clearly applied in relation to the text.

2. Analyse the ethnographic data presented in the passage using the concept of **culture**. [6]

This question requires students to develop an analysis and explanation of this ethnographic text using the key concept of **culture** to help make sense of the ethnographic data. In order to do this, students are required to demonstrate an understanding of the key concept and use it to illuminate certain issues within the context of the passage, developing an analysis with reference to the ethnographic data of the extract.

Possible ways of defining the key concept include:

- Organized system of symbols, ideas, explanations, beliefs, and material production that humans create and manipulate in their daily lives
- Shared social construction of meanings, such meanings are not static, but dynamic, fluid and can be contested.
- Culture as embodied practice.

Other appropriate definitions should be credited.

Possible examples and ways of analysing:

- culture as learned
- culture as dynamic
- cultural relativism
- cultural change
- culture and material constraints
- cultural reproduction, enculturation, socialization
- cultural contact, cultural colonization, globalization
- cultural adaptation, resistance
- embodied culture, lifeworlds, habitus.

Other appropriate examples and ways of analysing should be credited.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The response offers a common-sense or superficial understanding of the key concept. There is an attempt to relate the key concept to the text, and some ethnographic examples are presented but these are only partially relevant.
3–4	The response demonstrates an understanding of the key concept and establishes its relevance to the text. There is an analysis of the text using the key concept, although there are some inconsistencies. Relevant ethnographic examples from the text are presented to support the analysis.
5–6	The response demonstrates a clear understanding of the key concept, discussing this in the context of the text. There is a clearly explained analysis of the text using the key concept and a detailed interpretation of the ethnographic data. Clear and explicit ethnographic examples from the text support the analysis.

3. Compare and contrast the ways in which the key concept of **change** or **materiality** is evident in this passage with how it is evident in **one** other ethnographic example you have studied. Make reference to theory in your answer. **[10]**

Students are expected to show an ability to think about the text in relation to other contexts and to draw explicit comparisons. In order to do this, responses must demonstrate an understanding of how either the key concept of **change** or **materiality** relates to this ethnographic context. Either of the key concepts on which such comparison may be drawn should be made explicit and clearly linked to any anthropological issues raised by the text.

The target societies for this comparative question are varied and many. Students should be able to establish a relevant comparison with any other group or society based on either of these concepts. The response should be structured as a comparison, highlighting similarities and differences. Students must situate the comparative case in terms of place, author, and fieldwork context.

For change, possible ways of defining the key concept include:

- The alteration or modification of cultural or social elements in a society.
- Change may be due to internal dynamics within a society, or the result of contact with another culture, or a consequence of globalization.

Other appropriate definitions should be credited.

Possible examples from the text about change may include:

- children as creative and dynamic agents
- intergenerational changes
- As lived experience
- in relation to non-indigenous societies, colonization, and globalization
- social and economic changes (the ongoing transition from hunter-gatherer lifestyles in the forest toward more urban, money-based economies)
- consequences of spatial change: forest to river
- changes in methodological and theoretical approaches.

Any other relevant point of comparison used from the text should be credited.

Possible examples of theory in relation to change may include:

At HL, students need to use theory in the response in order to achieve more than **[4]**.

Neo-Marxist theories

Practice theory

Phenomenology

Globalization theories

Symbolic theories

Any other relevant theory.

For materiality, possible ways of defining the key concept include:

- As objects, resources and belongings that have cultural meaning, embedded in all kinds of social relations and practices.
- linked to a non-material/symbolic dimension, for which material objects or sensory experiences are given meaning and function within a set of social practices.
- With reference to how some anthropologists seek to understand human experience through the study of material objects as a research approach.

Other appropriate definitions should be credited.

Possible examples from the text about materiality may include:

- In relation to the relevance of play-work as embodied activities
- In relation to the concept of lifeworlds
- Participatory photography, drawings as key material resources used by the ethnographer
- Hunter-gatherers and their relation to the forest
- Changes in relation to the environment (sedentarization)
- The centrality of the river in children's lives
- The importance of the river as a conduit/means of transport of materials, people, and ideas
- Economic constraints related to global capitalism.

Any other relevant point of comparison used from the text should be credited.

Possible examples of theory in relation to materiality may include:

At HL students need to use theory in the response in order to achieve more than 4 marks.

Practice theory

Phenomenology

Neo-Marxist theories

Globalization theories

Actor-Network Theory

Any other relevant theory.

4. Compare and contrast the approaches to research adopted by the anthropologist in this passage to the approaches to research used by **one** other anthropologist you have studied. Make reference to concepts, ethnographic material and theory in your answer. **[10]**

Here, students are expected to show an ability to think about the text with emphasis on the methodological and theoretical perspectives of the ethnographer as the focus on which such comparisons should be established.

By “approaches to research” the question essentially refers to the research methods used by the anthropologist to gather data. However, as theory is required for level 5–6 and above, it is expected that students will also discuss theory with reference to approaches.

Possible comparative examples regarding approaches may include:

- Participant observation
- participatory photography
- Informal/ethnographic interview
- Research with children compared to research with adults.

Students may also mention other relevant methodological terms and discussions. For example: child-centred participatory methodologies, the ethnographer’s agency-oriented approach, visual methods, access to the field, insider/outsider, local categories/analytical categories, positionality, representation, empathy, and collaboration.

Any other relevant point of comparison used from the text should be credited.

Possible examples of theory in relation to approaches may include:

- Discussion of structure-centred theories or agency-focused theories.
- Phenomenology
- Decolonized methodologies
- Interpretivist epistemologies.

Any other relevant theory.

Identification of ethnographic material includes: fieldwork location(s), fieldwork context(s)*, group(s) studied, and ethnographer(s).

*fieldwork context refers to when the fieldwork was carried out regardless of the publication date of the material.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented but in limited detail; relevance is only partially established. The response is not structured as a compare and contrast. The identification of ethnographic material is missing.
3–4	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented and although this is in limited detail, its relevance is established. The response is structured as a compare and contrast, but this is not balanced and lacks detail. The identification of ethnographic material is partially complete.
5–6	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented; relevance is established and explained. The response is clearly structured as a compare and contrast; however, either comparison (similarities) or contrasts (differences) are explained in detail, but not both. Anthropological theory has been identified although this may not be relevant or the application is limited. The identification of ethnographic material is mostly complete.
7–8	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented; relevance is clearly established and explained in detail. The response is clearly structured as a compare and contrast with comparisons (similarities) and contrasts (differences) being discussed in detail, although this is not balanced. Relevant anthropological theory has been identified and used as part of the analysis although there are some inconsistencies. The response demonstrates anthropological understanding. The identification of ethnographic material is mostly complete.
Capped marks	If fieldwork location(s), fieldwork context(s), group(s) studied and ethnographer(s) have not been fully identified, no more than 8 marks will be awarded.
9–10	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented; relevance is clearly established and discussed in detail. The response is clearly structured as a compare and contrast with comparisons (similarities) and contrasts (differences) discussed critically. Relevant anthropological theory has been identified and used as part of the analysis. The response demonstrates anthropological understanding. The identification of the ethnographic material is complete.

5. To what extent is knowing others possible? Discuss with reference to **at least two** sources of ethnographic material and examples from the passage. **[10]**

This question requires students to develop an argument that is built on an understanding of the following “big anthropological question”: **to what extent is knowing others possible?** This response should include argumentative discussion and analysis and should be supported by making reference to the passage and by relevant, detailed ethnographic material that gives evidence of the understanding of this big question in different cultural contexts. This big anthropological question should be the very backbone of the response.

In the development of their response, students may make reference to a number of ideas or propositions connected to the question. For this reason, below are some ideas that may appear in students’ responses. However, any other relevant lines of thought should be rewarded.

Possible issues to develop an argument may be:

- ethnocentrism, cultural relativism
- outsider/insider, local/analytical categories
- meaning and context
- systems of knowledge, systems of classification
- ethnography as a way of knowing and knowledge production
- anthropologists as cultural translators
- intercultural/ intergenerational communication
- representation
- particularism, universalism
- cross-cultural translation/comparison
- relation between knowledge, power, and social organization.

Other appropriate discussion and arguments should be credited.

Identification of ethnographic material includes: fieldwork location(s), fieldwork context(s)*, group(s) studied, and ethnographer(s).

*fieldwork context refers to when the fieldwork was carried out regardless of the publication date of the material.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	There is limited understanding of the big anthropological question. The response refers to ethnographic material; relevance to the question is superficial or not established. There is no reference to the passage. The identification of ethnographic material is missing.
3–4	There is partial understanding of the big anthropological question. The response presents some of ethnographic material and establishes its relevance to the question, but this lacks detail. There is no or limited reference to the passage. There is an attempt to analyse and interpret the ethnographic material in relation to the big anthropological question, but this lacks clarity and coherence. The identification of ethnographic material is partially complete.
5–6	There is an understanding of the big anthropological question. The response presents a range of relevant ethnographic material and establishes its relevance to the question. There is some reference to the passage. There is some analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic material and passage in relation to the big anthropological question but there is a limited or an undeveloped argument. The identification of ethnographic material is mostly complete.
7–8	There is clear understanding of the big anthropological question in different cultural contexts. The response presents detailed comparative ethnographic material and establishes its relevance to the question. There is clear reference to the passage. The analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic material and passage support the development of an argument; however minor inconsistencies hinder from the strength of the overall argument. The identification of ethnographic material is mostly complete.
Capped marks	If fieldwork location(s), fieldwork context(s), group(s) studied and ethnographer(s) have not been fully identified, no more than 8 marks will be awarded.
9–10	There is clear understanding of the big anthropological question in different cultural contexts. The response presents detailed comparative ethnographic material and establishes its relevance to the question. There is clear reference to the passage. The analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic material and passage in relation to the big anthropological question support the development of a reasoned argument; any minor inconsistencies do not hinder from the strength of the overall argument. The identification of ethnographic material is complete.

Section B

6. With reference to **either** stimulus A **or** stimulus B **and** your own knowledge, discuss the defining features of anthropological ethics.

[10]

This question requires students to develop a response in which they demonstrate an understanding of the anthropological ethical issues raised by the stimulus material, and an ability to engage in a critical discussion applying their own knowledge.

If stimulus A is used:

This extract is based on an academic paper in which an anthropologist comments on her research experience while doing ethnographic fieldwork with incarcerated women. It offers a reflection on underlying assumptions and on the discontinuity between political intentionality and capacity for intervention. Through the review of a situation that arose in a feminist workshop with incarcerated women in which she is the protagonist, the author seeks to make visible the risks involved in ignoring constitutive aspects of the reality that is criticized and sought to transform.

Students are expected to demonstrate –with reference to the passage- their knowledge about participant observation as the main method in anthropological fieldwork and the ethical principles governing the conduct of fieldworkers as professional practitioners. The stimulus allows for a wide range of responses.

Students may develop a discussion based on the following:

The nature of interaction between fieldworkers and research participants, for example:

- asymmetries of power (class, gender, age, intersectionality)
- working with vulnerable groups
- reflexivity and positionality
- issues of representation
- how the reciprocal benefit of the studied group is being considered
- any relevant principle of anthropological codes of ethics (they may be informed by diverse professional national associations)
- the ethical issues related to political decisions taken by the ethnographer
- the differing ethical/political frameworks involved
- militant and engaged/activist anthropology
- unintended harm
- the ways in which fieldwork is conducted and to what end.

Other possible relevant lines of thought should be credited.

If stimulus B is used:

In this case, during her fieldwork, the anthropologist participates in a political protest with members of an environmental organization.

Students are expected to demonstrate –with reference to the image- their knowledge about participant observation as the main method in anthropological fieldwork and the ethical principles governing the conduct of fieldworkers as professional practitioners. The stimulus allows for a wide range of responses.

Students may develop a discussion based on:

- Engaged and activist/advocacy anthropology
- The nature of the participation and collaboration of anthropologists and research participants
- The extent to which anthropologists are involved in the experiences of the people they conduct participant observation among
- an analysis from any relevant principle of anthropological codes of ethics (they may be informed by diverse professional national associations)
- issues of confidentiality, anonymity, and protection of informants
- safety issues
- anthropology and human rights
- the ways in which fieldwork is conducted and to what end
- data gathering technologies
- the changes of the ethical anthropological practices over time.

Other possible relevant lines of thought should be credited.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The response identifies one or more ethical concerns but their relevance to anthropology is not established. There is little or no reference to the stimulus.
3–4	The response identifies one or more ethical concerns and partially establishes their relevance to anthropology. There is an attempt to engage with the stimulus, but understanding of the ethical issue presented is superficial or limited.
5–6	The response develops an analysis of one or more ethical concerns and establishes their relevance to anthropology. There is clear understanding of the ethical issues presented in the stimulus. An argument is presented that indicates the student's perspective on the relative importance of the ethical issue(s) in relation to anthropological practice, but this is only partially developed.
7–8	The response discusses one or more ethical concerns, is anthropologically informed, and incorporates the student's own knowledge of the defining features of anthropological ethics. There is clear and relevant engagement with the stimulus, and the ethical issues presented are explained demonstrating sound understanding. An argument is presented that indicates the student's perspective on the relative importance of the ethical issue(s) in relation to anthropological practice; however, there are inconsistencies that hinder the overall strength of the argument.
9–10	The response critically discusses one or more ethical concerns, is anthropologically informed, and integrates the student's own knowledge of the defining features of anthropological ethics. There is relevant and thorough engagement with the stimulus, and the ethical issue(s) presented are fully explained demonstrating excellent understanding. A reasoned argument is presented that indicates the student's perspective on the relative importance of the ethical issue(s) in relation to anthropological practice; any minor inconsistencies do not hinder the overall strength of the argument.