

© International Baccalaureate Organization 2026

All rights reserved. No part of this product may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without the prior written permission from the IB. Additionally, the license tied with this product prohibits use of any selected files or extracts from this product. Use by third parties, including but not limited to publishers, private teachers, tutoring or study services, preparatory schools, vendors operating curriculum mapping services or teacher resource digital platforms and app developers, whether fee-covered or not, is prohibited and is a criminal offense.

More information on how to request written permission in the form of a license can be obtained from <https://ibo.org/become-an-ib-school/ib-publishing/licensing/applying-for-a-license/>.

© Organisation du Baccalauréat International 2026

Tous droits réservés. Aucune partie de ce produit ne peut être reproduite sous quelque forme ni par quelque moyen que ce soit, électronique ou mécanique, y compris des systèmes de stockage et de récupération d'informations, sans l'autorisation écrite préalable de l'IB. De plus, la licence associée à ce produit interdit toute utilisation de tout fichier ou extrait sélectionné dans ce produit. L'utilisation par des tiers, y compris, sans toutefois s'y limiter, des éditeurs, des professeurs particuliers, des services de tutorat ou d'aide aux études, des établissements de préparation à l'enseignement supérieur, des fournisseurs de services de planification des programmes d'études, des gestionnaires de plateformes pédagogiques en ligne, et des développeurs d'applications, moyennant paiement ou non, est interdite et constitue une infraction pénale.

Pour plus d'informations sur la procédure à suivre pour obtenir une autorisation écrite sous la forme d'une licence, rendez-vous à l'adresse <https://ibo.org/become-an-ib-school/ib-publishing/licensing/applying-for-a-license/>.

© Organización del Bachillerato Internacional, 2026

Todos los derechos reservados. No se podrá reproducir ninguna parte de este producto de ninguna forma ni por ningún medio electrónico o mecánico, incluidos los sistemas de almacenamiento y recuperación de información, sin la previa autorización por escrito del IB. Además, la licencia vinculada a este producto prohíbe el uso de todo archivo o fragmento seleccionado de este producto. El uso por parte de terceros —lo que incluye, a título enunciativo, editoriales, profesores particulares, servicios de apoyo académico o ayuda para el estudio, colegios preparatorios, desarrolladores de aplicaciones y entidades que presten servicios de planificación curricular u ofrezcan recursos para docentes mediante plataformas digitales—, ya sea incluido en tasas o no, está prohibido y constituye un delito.

En este enlace encontrará más información sobre cómo solicitar una autorización por escrito en forma de licencia: <https://ibo.org/become-an-ib-school/ib-publishing/licensing/applying-for-a-license/>.

Social and cultural anthropology

Higher level

Paper 1

8 May 2026

Zone A afternoon | **Zone B** afternoon | **Zone C** afternoon

2 hours

Instructions to students

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Section A: read the passage and answer questions 1 and 2. Choose either question 3 or 4. Answer question 5.
- Section B: answer the question.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[40 marks]**.

Section A

Read the passage.

Passage adapted from Selmer, B., 2023. Concerns, Considerations and Conceptions of Kinship: Inheritance in Modern Danish Blended Families. *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* (2023), 31(3), pp.18–32.

Danish inheritance law attempts to reflect the diverse ways people experience kinship, balancing marital bond with generational ties. This reflects a classic anthropological debate between descent and alliance. In blended families, the main site of conflict lies between the surviving spouse and the children from earlier relationships, who form distinct family lines. This is a structural conflict.

- 5 Divorce, remarriage, and new partnerships create blended families. These may include children from previous relationships, shared children, or both. Kinning, the process of recognizing kinship, involves three aspects: kinning by nature, by nurture, and by law. Blended families are kinned in different ways, some only by nurture.

- 10 Inheritance becomes a site where kinship is actively negotiated: a process of kinning and de-kinning, filled with emotions, expectations, and disappointments. Here questions emerge: Who are kin? Who counts as family? The experience of kinship is not fixed but fluid and contested.

- 15 After an interview with Peter, I felt unsettled. He was an exception: he refused all his deceased mother's belongings and spent his inheritance on an expensive vacation. "I just got rid of it as fast as possible; I didn't get along with my parents," he told me. His refusal contradicted most people's feelings about inheritance. But this rejection confirmed its significance. Declining his inheritance was part of a de-kinning process.

In this ethnographic project in Denmark, I explore how people in blended families navigate kinship recognition and continuity through inheritance. I conducted ethnographic interviews in 2012–2013, focusing on the meaning of inheritance in relation to economy, identity, and belonging.

- 20 Like gift exchange, inherited objects sustain relationships with deceased relatives. But what should be sold, kept, or discarded? People devise homemade rules to decide, drawing lots or invoking primogeniture (firstborn) and gender, for example giving a gold watch to the eldest son.

- 25 When someone dies, families must decide what to do with their belongings, revealing a delicate balance between affection, memory, and value. Heirlooms (inherited objects) are often placed in attics, in a kind of liminal space, neither used nor disposed of. "It's not worth anything," people say, downplaying the object's market value. But as Hanne admitted, after googling her mother's silverware, "I'm a bit embarrassed that I did, but it was valuable. I could have used the money." Still, she gave it to her sister.

- 30 Two ways in which people understand what it means to be family coexist in Denmark. One emphasizes mutuality and shared life, kinning by nurture. The other relies on normative understandings of kinship, kinning by law or by nature. These views have conflicting implications in inheritance.

- 35 Torben was hurt when his step-grandfather left him nothing: "I have known him since childhood, I regarded him as my grandfather. I thought we were close." In contrast, Morten justified his inheritance from his father resentfully: "He was never there for me when he was alive. His new family was more important. Now he has to compensate."

After Christina’s mother died, her father kept the family home undivided. When he planned to remarry, Christina objected: “I think it’s only fair that I receive my inheritance from my mother if he marries again. That’s what the rules say.” Though legally correct, this position created family tensions.

Louise grew up in a happy blended family. But when her maternal grandfather died, her mother gave many of his “funny male things” to Louise’s stepbrother. “He has his grandfathers,” Louise said. “There might be boys in our branch of the family in the future. It would have been cool for them to have these old family things.” Her mother seemed to assign inheritance based on gender, seeing her stepson as the only male child in the household. Louise, however, thought in terms of lineage.

Objects—silverware, gold watches—materialize relationships, preserve memories, and shape perceptions of fairness and belonging. While legal frameworks attempt clarity, it is in attics, dining rooms, and conversations that family ties are ultimately redefined.

Kinning captures the different ways members of blended families are connected. When kinship is based on nature or law, passing on an inheritance may feel like a moral or legal obligation. But ties between step-relatives remain ambiguous. Kinning and de-kinning involve deciding who is included and who is not.

Answer question 1 **and** question 2.

1. Define the term **agency** and describe how it is understood and applied in the context of the passage. [4]
2. Analyse the ethnographic data presented in the passage using the concept of **symbolism**. [6]

Answer **either** question 3 **or** question 4.

3. Compare and contrast the ways in which the key concept of **belief and knowledge** or **social relations** 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]

OR

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]

Answer question 5.

5. Why does anthropology matter? Discuss with reference to **at least two** sources of ethnographic material and examples from the passage. [10]

Section B

Answer question 6.

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

[10]

Stimulus A

In his book *Energy without conscience: oil, climate change, and complicity* (2017), anthropologist David Hughes argues that the problem with oil is that it has not been made a moral issue. It is this “ethical deficit” that facilitates the “evil of dumping carbon dioxide into the skies”. For Hughes, Trinidad and Tobago is a compelling case: the island country will suffer from climate-
 5 change induced sea-level rises yet depends on oil production for economic growth. Besides criticizing petroleum geologists for facilitating the expansion of oil production, Trinidadian environmental activists and ordinary citizens are also “complicit” because, he claims, they benefit from the “lethal hydrocarbon system[...] exacerbating climate change”. For Hughes, then,
 10 his duty is to reveal the harms caused by these people. Hughes argues that a lack of sympathy for one’s interlocutors is required to produce a “militant anthropology of elites” that emphasizes “responsibility more than care”. He acknowledges that North Atlantic environmentalists may act imperialistically, imposing their agendas on the Global South, but argues that the dangers posed by climate change necessitate such unpleasant interventions.

Hughes’ agenda rests on a black-and-white ethical world where oil is immoral, and his
 15 interlocutors are “wrong and doing wrong”. Hughes’ work fails to understand the ethical sensibilities of others, judging them by the analyst’s standards of right and wrong. This creates blind spots in our disciplinary understanding and our ability to engage across difference. While we do not need to endorse the ethical standpoints of our interlocutors, we do need to be able to understand them on their own terms in order to respond to them.

[Source: High, M. M. and Smith, J. M., 2019. Introduction: The ethical constitution of energy dilemmas. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 25(S1), pp. 9–28. [online] Available at: <https://rai.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-9655.13012>
 [Accessed 25 April 2024]. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Deed license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. Source adapted.]

Stimulus B

After research in Ladakh during the early 1980s, anthropologist Sophie Day revisited the area periodically. During three short return trips between 2009 and 2011, she took books of her fieldwork photos to share with the Ladakhi people, some of whom recognized themselves in the photos.



[Source: Day, S., 2011. *Looking at a photobook (2011) spanning the period 1981-2010 and the distance from Kharnak to Kharnakling.*]

Disclaimer:

Content used in IB assessments is often taken from authentic, third-party sources. The views expressed within them belong to their individual authors and/or publishers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the IB. Sometimes fictitious companies, products or individuals are included in assessments; any similarities with actual entities are purely coincidental. Any trademarks™ or registered® trademarks included are used for illustrative purposes only, and use does not imply any affiliation with or endorsement by the International Baccalaureate.

References:

- Section A** Selmer, B. 2023. Concerns, Considerations and Conceptions of Kinship: Inheritance in Modern Danish Blended Families. *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* (2023), 31(3), [e-journal] pp. 18–32. <https://doi.org/10.3167/saas.2023.310303>. [Accessed 22 May 2026]. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Deed license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. Source adapted.
- Stimulus A** High, M. M. and Smith, J. M., 2019. Introduction: The ethical constitution of energy dilemmas. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 25(S1), pp. 9–28. [online] Available at: <https://rai.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-9655.13012> [Accessed 25 April 2024]. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Deed license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. Source adapted.
- Stimulus B** Day, S., 2011. *Looking at a photobook (2011) spanning the period 1981-2010 and the distance from Kharnak to Kharnakling*. [image online]. Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sophieday/6418524127/> [Accessed 25 April 2024]. Source adapted.