

Sample Student Essays, Enduring Theme g9w10n2

Scoring 100, 85, 65, 55

Author's Note: These are simulated student essays that I composed to illustrate several scores on the grading rubric. The samples are inspired by actual similar student work in my class. This grading rubric is based on the New York State performance level descriptors 4.1, 1.4, and 1.6 but it also includes elements from the rubrics on the old Global Regents exams (such as delineating levels of "depth" for effectively summarizing a theme) and from the Common Core State Standards for writing for this grade (such as tone, cohesion and using domain-specific vocabulary). The actual rubric to be used on the NYS Regents in 2019 may be different than mine in some ways.

4		
100	94	85
<p>theme Identifies and effectively summarizes a theme with depth.</p> <p>Source Interpretation Creates an historically accurate interpretation of how sources are related using historical context, current perspectives, and relevant evidence.</p> <p>Significance of theme Student makes a strong case that this is a significant theme that has endured by showing how the theme has affected people or been affected by people and has continued to be a theme or changed over time.</p> <p>Writing Well-organized essay is cohesive, enriched with domain-specific vocabulary, and maintains objective style and objective tone.</p>		

Belief systems developed beliefs and practices to address questions of origin, the requirements to live a good life, and the nature of the afterlife. These questions represent an enduring theme that exists across belief systems across time. Many spiritual leaders have attempted to address them.

One such theme reflected in several of these documents is an enlightenment experience in the wilderness. Sources from Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam all recount situations where a spiritual leader or founder had a profound experience out in the wilderness, away from people. The fact that this kind of story exists in so many traditions is in itself significant and evidence for the importance of the idea. The document on Buddhism shows that it is not just a Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition. The common pattern in these stories is that the founder of a religion, at an early point in his career, was moved somehow to go out away from people alone in nature. There, he had experiences that proved to be turning points in his life and so of his followers.

Document 1 recounts the Gospel story of Jesus in the desert. During his forty days in the desert while fasting, the devil came to tempt him. He resisted the temptation. This story is also related in two other Gospels. It represents an important point in Jesus' ministry, right after his baptism. Christians regard Jesus as the Son of God. After only three years of preaching, he was put on trial and executed by the Romans who ruled Palestine at that time. Jesus' followers believe he came back to life three days later and that his death was a sacrifice to make up for humanity's sins.

Document 2 recounts the time when the Buddha was out in the forest alone in meditation and Maara, the tempter, tried to get him to stop his meditations and to go ahead and eat and live it up. Like the story from Christianity above, here a religious founder is out, away from people. He is seeking enlightenment through meditation. Buddhists believe that the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, had figured out the way to live life without suffering. The Four Noble Truths describe the fact of suffering and the causes and the remedy.

The Eightfold path is a code of behavior that will result in a state of nirvana, or release from suffering.

Document 3 is the story of Muhammad's revelation from the hadith. Muhammad, like Jesus and the Buddha, felt drawn to go off in nature for solitude. In the case of Jesus, it was a desert, In the case of the Buddha, it was the forest. In the case of Muhammad, it was a cave. There an angel named Jibreel (Gabriel) appeared to him and started dictating to Muhammad the Quran. Muslims believe that Muhammad is the seal of the prophets, meaning he is the last one. They hold that Jews and Christians did not quite get God's message right and so they have it. Muslims believe the Quran contains God's (Allah's) teachings. Humans are to surrender to God and to follow his teachings. Muhammad has to overcome his fear of this situation. Both Christianity and Islam teach that there will be rewards and punishments after one dies. Buddhism does not.

All three documents show the common theme: the founder of a religion goes off alone into nature and experiences some suffering to overcome. The experience happens early in his career and the experience is one we all share. We all experience hardship of isolation and temptation. We all want to overcome it. The spiritual leader serves as a model of how we can overcome, such as when both Jesus and the Buddha take a militant attitude against their tempters. Muhammad's case shows the utter power of the supernatural over us and our powerlessness in the face of it.

4			3	
100	94	85	76	65
<p>theme Identifies and effectively summarizes a theme with depth.</p> <p>Source Interpretation Creates an historically accurate interpretation of how sources are related using historical context, current perspectives, and relevant evidence.</p> <p>Significance of theme Student makes a strong case that this is a significant theme that has endured by showing how the theme has affected people or been affected by people and has continued to be a theme or changed over time.</p> <p>Writing Well-organized essay is cohesive, enriched with domain-specific vocabulary, and maintains objective style and objective tone.</p>			<p>theme Identifies and effectively summarizes a theme with limited depth.</p> <p>Source Interpretation Explains how sources are related using historical context, current perspectives, and relevant evidence. There may be inaccuracies or minor omissions.</p> <p>Significance of theme Student makes a statement that this is a significant theme that has endured but provides only limited support.</p> <p>Writing Adequately-organized essay is cohesive. May be lacking domain-specific vocabulary. May have weakness in style and tone.</p>	

Belief systems developed beliefs and practices to address questions of origin, the requirements to live a good life, and the nature of the afterlife. These questions represent an enduring theme that exists across belief systems across time. Many spiritual leaders have attempted to address them.

One such theme reflected in several of these documents is an experience with the supernatural in the "wilderness". This meeting represents a huge change in their lives. It's a turning point because it's so powerful.

In document 3, we see Muhammad being first visited by the angel Jibreel (Gabriel). It's a very scary situation. The angel kept saying "Recite!" and he really did not get what to do. he went home scared to his wife and to recover for the next encounter. Muslims

believe that Muhammad is the seal of the prophets, meaning he is the last one. They hold that Jews and Christians did not quite get God's message right and so they have it. Muslims believe the Quran contains God's (Allah's) teachings. Humans are to surrender to God and to follow his teachings. Muhammad has to overcome his fear of this situation. Both Christianity and Islam teach that there will be rewards and punishments after one dies. Muhammad now has a mission.

Document 4 shows us Joseph Smith's first visit by divine beings in 1832. Smith is looking for guidance from God and he gets it. Jesus appears to him, says his sins are forgiven, and explains how messed up the world is. Joseph now has a mission too. He started the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This is a sect of Christianity that has its own books in addition to the Bible. These books, the Book of Mormon, Mormons believe are revealed divine truth. Just like Muhammad's experience led him to start a new religion.

Document 5 is a map of the path Jews believe Abraham took when he led his people out of Mesopotamia and into Canaan (Palestine). Abraham's God is Yahweh (YHWH). Jews believe he spoke to Abraham and offered him a kind of contract. Yahweh would make the Jews a great nation and be His chosen people if Jews would agree to follow the commandments he gave about behavior and ritual. So following Yahweh's commands, Abraham led his people out to the land promised them by their god. That's what the map shows.

In all three cases, the founder of a religion had a direct contact with a supernatural being and the received instructions of some sort. The result in all three cases was the start of a new religion.