

RASNET Conference 2022

A.O.S 3.3: SIGNIFICANT LIFE EXPERIENCE &
RELIGIOUS BELIEFS. (DIANA DODIG)

Who is the person (member) and their sig. life experience that you are studying?

* be careful with your choice.....if you are unsure about whether the person is appropriate, please check with Mary Tuohy, RASNET President

* you need to ensure that the person that you choose underwent a ***CHANGE in their religious beliefs, within the same religious tradition, BEFORE, DURING & AFTER*** their significant life experience.

* in my presentation today we will examine the following key skill dot point, through the example of Jan Ruff O'Herne ('50 years of Silence').



Exam tip for students.....



- * the exam often has a question related to AOS 3.3 where the students need to **identify** the particular person they studied and to **describe** the significant life experience that they experienced.
- * this particular part of the bigger question can vary in the marks that are assigned to it – anything between 2 to 4 marks.
- * students are writing far too much information in their responses to this part of the question. Sometimes up to half a page!! This is a waste of their valuable time.
- * students need to keep their response succinct – Who? When? Where? And briefly outline the significant life experience.

Case study: Jan Ruff O'Herne



In her autobiography '50 Years of Silence', Jan Ruff O'Herne, outlines parts of her childhood, youth and adult years spent both in Indonesia and Australia.

Jan was born in Java, Indonesia, in 1923 into a Dutch Catholic family with a strong faith. During WWII, the Japanese army invaded Indonesia and Jan and her family were taken to prison camps, after which she and several other young women were taken to brothels to serve as 'sex slaves' (comfort women) for the Japanese army.

Jan was brutally raped for 3 months (her SLE) by various army personnel and suffered immensely but stated in her book, "My deep faith in God, my Catholic upbringing was what helped me survive".

Today's focus is on this **Key Skill**:

* *explain* and *compare* a member's *level of adherence to, understanding of* and *faith in*, relevant *religious beliefs* AND their *engagement with the related expressions* (aspects) **PRIOR TO** a significant life experience, **DURING** the experience and **AFTER** the experience.

What was Jan's *level of adherence to*, understanding of and faith in.....**religious beliefs** AND her **engagement with the related expressions** PRIOR TO the experience?

- Throughout her childhood, Jan Ruff O'Herne had a deep religious belief in the **Trinity and the Incarnation** but her understanding in this belief **was quite simplistic**. She is brought up in the Catholic faith by her religious parents and accepts it and adheres to it, unquestioningly.
- Jan prays to the Father, Son & the Holy Spirit and she describes her father "...as implanting in her a **great and strong faith** (that is, a trust and confidence in God) and a love of prayer" (**ritual & spiritual experience**) and holy scripture (**artifact & texts**) and the Mass (**ritual & spiritual experience**).



PRIOR to the experience....cont.....

- Her deep religious belief is evident when she attends and completes a religious retreat, one of a number in her decision to join the nuns of the Franciscan order (**social structure**). One of Jan's most treasured items becomes the "Book of Saints", (**artifact**) an item that is gifted to her by the Franciscan nuns during her retreat.



What was Jan's *level of adherence to*, *understanding of* and *faith in*.....*religious beliefs* AND her *engagement with the related expressions* DURING the experience?

However, during her significant life experience of those months in the brothel, we see Jan's *level of adherence* to the *Trinity & Incarnation* *profoundly deepen* and she displays a *much stronger understanding of* and engagement with these beliefs. Her profound religious belief and *faith* in the *Incarnation* is demonstrated through her *daily prayers*, particularly the "prayer of Jesus", recited whilst also using a *wooden crucifix* to keep her strong which she always wore tucked into her belt. Jan stated that she also often *prayed the rosary* together with another girl, Lies on a daily basis, as it would have a "healing effect" on the two of them. Throughout her trauma, Jan does not come to resent God but rather, her *faith strengthened and deepened*. She stated that indeed now "...she loved God more than she had ever loved him".



DURING the significant life experience..

Throughout her trauma, Jan does not come to resent God but rather, her **faith in a loving and merciful God strengthened and deepened**. She stated that indeed now ”....she loved God more than she had ever loved him”.

During her traumatic ordeal, we also see Jan’s adherence to and **understanding** of the Catholic belief of **Salvation & Redemption**. She prays to God for the sins and the redemption of the Japanese soldiers and their deeds; “....forgive them for they do not know what they are doing”.



What was Jan's *level of adherence to*, understanding of and faith in.....**religious beliefs** AND her **engagement with the related expressions** **AFTER** the experience?

After the end of the war, Jan resumes her life determined to put her traumatic experiences behind her and resolves never to speak of them, thus embarking on a silence on the matter for 50 years. But in the early 1990s, after seeing a number of Korean ex-comfort women on television asking for an apology from the Japanese government, she decides to undertake a campaign of more than 15 years for the protection of women in war.



AFTER the significant life experience.....

This campaign is focused, on the recognition of human rights and the spreading of the message of forgiveness **(Salvation/Redemption)**. Jan **still strongly adheres** to and has **faith** in the beliefs of **Trinity and Incarnation**, which is evident through the love she shows her fellow man. However, her **belief in Creator God** results in her **understanding** that because man was made in the image of God, therefore each person has dignity, value and worth. God's creation is all good and therefore, so too is each person. The WW2 'comfort women' are thus deserving of recognition, an official apology – justice!



AFTER the significant life experience....

Jan travels the world in her mission for world-wide recognition and justice for these women. At an International Public Hearing in Tokyo in 1992, she speaks as a witness and gives evidence of her ordeal. Her **belief** and **understanding** of Salvation & Redemption is evident as she states, “.....I started by telling the Japanese people that I had not come with anger or hate in my heart, but with forgiveness.....but I can never forget”.



AFTER the significant life experience.....

She has a new **understanding of** and **engagement with** the importance of these **beliefs** and the transformative role that forgiveness and reconciliation play in upholding a person's dignity, value and worth (**spiritual experience**). This is also evident when she lays a 'Wreath of Forgiveness' at Tokyo's memorial to an unknown soldier (**artifact, & spiritual experience**).



Questions??

Don't be
afraid.....ENJOY!

3.3 can be a very enjoyable
and fulfilling Area of Study
for you and your students.....

