



Significant Life Experience of Malcolm X

Unit 3 Outcome 3

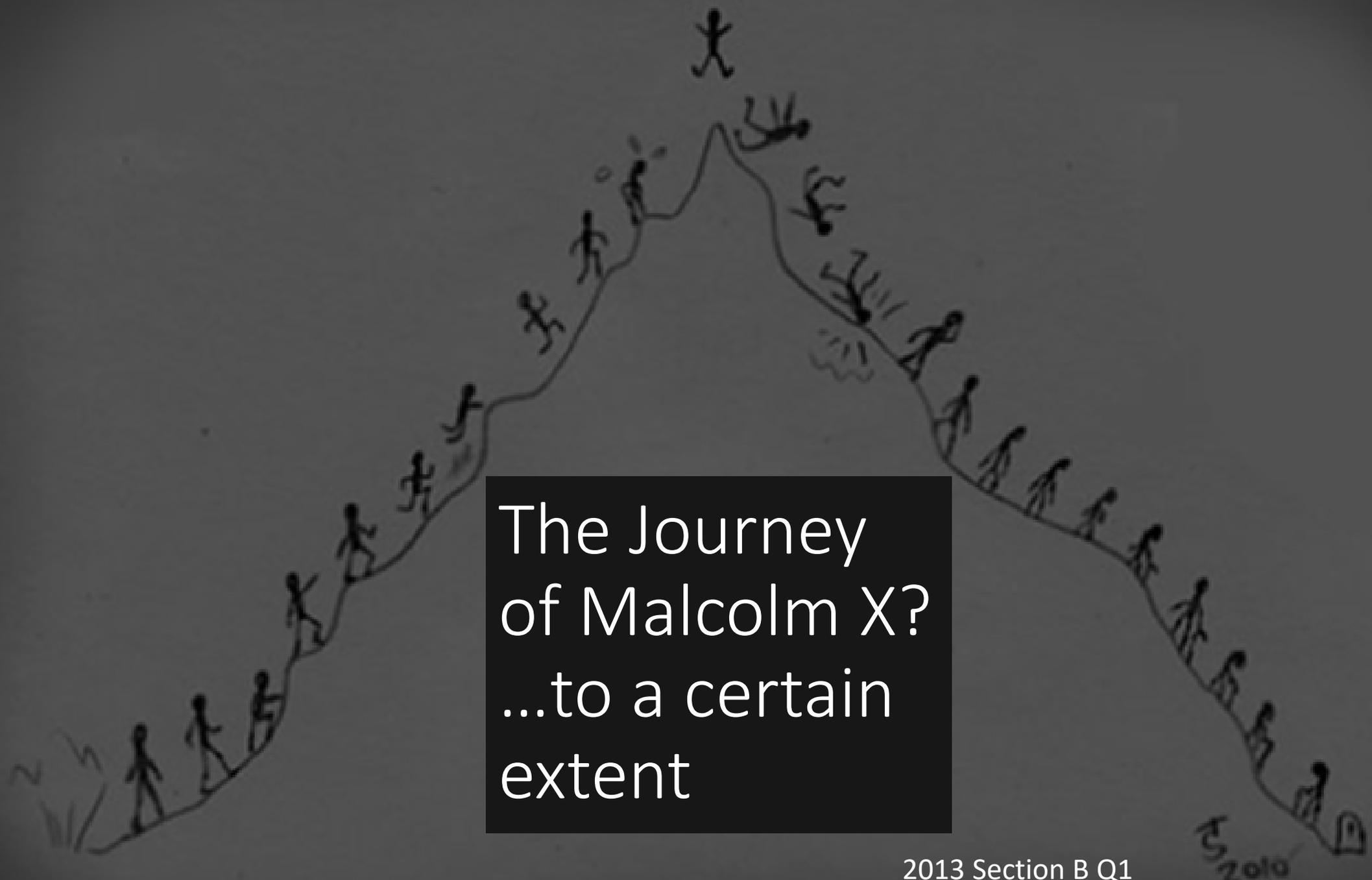
Religious Tradition: Islam

Presenter: Raihan Mohamed Nawawi

24th February 2022

RASNET Annual Conference





The Journey
of Malcolm X?
...to a certain
extent

AS2010

Significant life experience in brief

Malcolm X experienced a series of events at the height of his fame and media publicity after nearly 12 years as a Minister in Nation of Islam NOI:

- He sensed jealousy from senior NOI leaders on his rise as a Minister, where he spent 12 years worshipping God (who is Black)
- He heard the rumours about the scandal surrounding the NOI leader, Elijah Muhammad, whom he regarded and truly believed as a divine messenger, he felt a sense of betrayal
- He received a 90-days isolation where he was banned from communicating with any members from NOI, his own network of African American Muslims where he had championed black supremacy with them because he believed the first man was black.
- He also received death threats.

Jealousy, scandal, isolation, threats

- With the above events in mind... **which Malcolm X could not control**...Did Malcolm X feel intimidated, demoralised, alone, betrayed, fear for his life? Yes, to a certain extent.
- But **he did not let that emotions weaken his mind and soul**, to give up his mission.
- He used the 90-day isolation to search for answers to some of his beliefs and he did, where he read books which he borrowed from some Sunni Muslims, he investigated the scandal of Elijah.
- He eventually left NOI in 1964 and embraced the Sunni beliefs, believing in Allah the true Unseen God (not black or white), and also believed that Prophet Muhammad pbuh is the Last Messenger, not Elijah
- He even went to Mecca to perform a hajj pilgrimage in 1964 where he witnessed the true brotherhood between people of different skin colours, black and white performing rituals together
- He returned to USA after his hajj and brushed aside the fear of his death threats, because he had total faith in Allah and was passionate to fight for social justice for the 22 million African Americans and all humans who were treated unjustly in some parts of the world.
- He consciously **decided not to be reduced or weakened by all the negative events** that happened to him between 1963 and 1964.

Malcolm X's background

- El Hajj Malik El Shabbazz
- an African American Minister from the Nation of Islam (NOI) from 1952 to 1964.
- As a NOI Minister, Malcolm X followed Elijah Muhammad, the founder, and also delivered the message on black nationalism in NOI temples to fight for the black rights who had been discriminated by the white people in America.
- In March 1964, he left NOI, became a Sunni Muslim and formed Muslim Mosque Inc (MMI).
- In April 1964, he performed his first hajj pilgrimage in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.
- After hajj, he formed the Organisation for Afro American unit (OAAU).



Islam is the answer for America he proclaimed and the unity of God (Tawheed) would result in the unity of man.

Two beliefs

Belief in God and the
Apostle

Belief in social justice
for human to
human relationship

Two beliefs
prior to SLE
(first 12
years in
NOI)

God is black, Elijah is a
Prophet

Black nationalism,
black rights, black
supremacy

Two beliefs during & after his SLE

God is Allah, The One & The Unseen, Prophet Muhammad pbuh is the Last Messenger

Unity of man, one human race

The first belief ...

An explanation of how the person engaged with relevant expressions of this belief prior to their experience

With the **beliefs** mentioned in question 2, Malcolm X expressed his ethical thoughts by saying that only black man can go to heaven and white people goes to hellfire. This ethical standards were clearly demonstrated by Malcolm X where he only collaborated with the black people inside the Nation of Islam to fight for black justice.

In terms of performing **rituals**, he would prayed according to what Elijah, his prophet, taught him, and that is to stand on his knees and raised his hands up. He will recite certain verses but mostly in English and less of Arabic.

All NOI members, including Malcolm X, would use both the Bible and the Quran (English translation) for their primary **texts** of Islamic knowledge.

All of the **places** of worship that NOI launched and built are called temples, and not mosques which most Sunni Muslims would refer to. So Malcolm had started to build a number of temples during his 12 years in NOI.

All NOI members had a uniform dress code where the men wear suits and ties, while the women wear white dress and hijab, similar to the Christian nuns' dress code.

NOI displayed a crescent and a star for their NOI logo or **symbols**.

NOI spread a number of **sacred stories** including about the first man being black, and the white people were devils in the story of Yakub, a scientist.

Malcolm X believed that in the **social structure**, black people must be superior to the white people. (246 words)

A comparison of their understanding of those beliefs during the experience with their prior understanding.

Prior to his significant life experience in 1963, Malcolm X believed that there is only one god, whom he claimed "came in the person" of Wallace Fard Muhammad, and that Elijah Muhammad is a messenger of God. The official beliefs as stated by the Nation of Islam have been outlined in books, documents, and articles published by the organization as well as speeches by Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and other ministers. Many of Elijah Muhammad's teachings may be found in Message to the Blackman in America and The True History of Jesus as Taught by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad.

However during his significant life experience in 1963 and 1964, Malcolm changed his beliefs as he read more books given by his friend Ahmed Saddiq Osmen. He even consulted Prof Mahmoud Youssef Shawarbi after he reverted to Sunni beliefs so that he can learnt that Allah is One, the Unseen, is not a man; and Prophet Muhammad is the Last Messenger of Muhammad, who was born in Mecca and lived from 570 to 632CE.

continued

Malcolm also asked Ahmed to interpret Surah Al Maidah verse 51

“O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.”

Ahmed informed Malcolm that Muslims can work with any Jews or Christians, as long as it is for the common good of the human society.

During Malcolm X's hajj pilgrimage in 1964, his observation of the true brotherhood further reaffirmed that all humans are one race, it is not about black against the white people anymore. Also, after the hajj, he began to fight for the black people not because they are black but because they are human beings. Malcolm X also strived to fight for the oppressed humans around the world as well.

An analysis of the influence of the member's beliefs and their related expressions in other aspects of religion **on** their interpretation of the significant life experience.

Malcolm had always believed in Elijah Muhammad being a divine prophet in the Nation of Islam. By definition, divine means the person is morally upright, always say the truth and never commit sins. Also, the divine prophet must have communicated with God and had established spiritual connection with the Ultimate Reality and had received sacred texts and sacred stories from God, to teach among his people and community. That divine person must also showed great role model among his followers and members in NOI.

So, in the social structure of NOI, Malcolm had always placed Elijah as the top leader and well respected by all members without questioning. All his words of guidance need to be followed, including any disciplinary actions meted by Elijah towards his adherents.

continued

In 1963, when Malcolm X heard about rumours linking Elijah to adultery, he brushed aside the rumours and claimed that the white people and the enemies of NOI were trying to tarnish his image. Malcolm X was willing to defend Elijah and was willing to die for Elijah.

However, when he felt the sense of mistrust started to develop among the senior ranks within NOI, especially when he was handed a 90-days isolation ban from NOI, Malcolm started to investigate the rumours and visited two ex-secretaries of Elijah and one of the sons of Elijah, Minister Wallace. Those meetings confirmed his worst fear that Elijah did commit those immoral acts and that truth had devastated Malcolm X's beliefs in Elijah as a divine prophet.

continued

Losing the belief in Elijah did not mark the end of Malcolm X belief in prophethood. In fact, Malcolm X had been reading some books given by his Sunni friend, Ahmed Saddiq Osman, a person who first challenged Malcolm X in one of his lectures.

Ahmed had given him a book called The Eternal Message of Muhammad which explained the message of Prophet Muhammad pbuh, the Last Messenger of Allah, which is meant for **the whole of mankind**. So Malcolm X was able to shift his belief and allegiance from Elijah towards the true divine Prophet Muhammad pbuh.

Malcolm X then started his spiritual journey to understand the Sunni beliefs on Allah (Tawheed – Oneness of God) and reaffirmed his belief on Prophet Muhammad when he travelled to Mecca in 1964, the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad for his hajj pilgrimage.

Surah Al Fatiha (1): verses 1 to 7



Iyyaaka na'budu

Verse 1-3 describes first part of verse 4 "You alone we enslaved ourselves to & worship"

wa

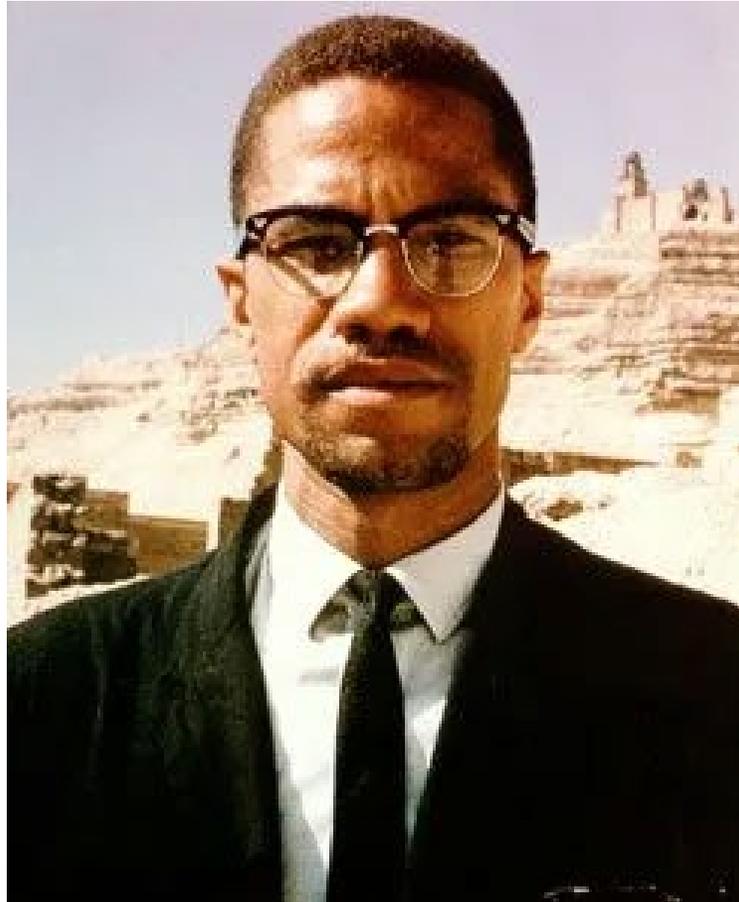
The middle ayah (verse 4) can be divided into equal parts, in the middle is 'wa' (and)

iyyaaka nasta'een

Verse 5-6 responds to the second part of verse 4 "it is only Your help that we seek"



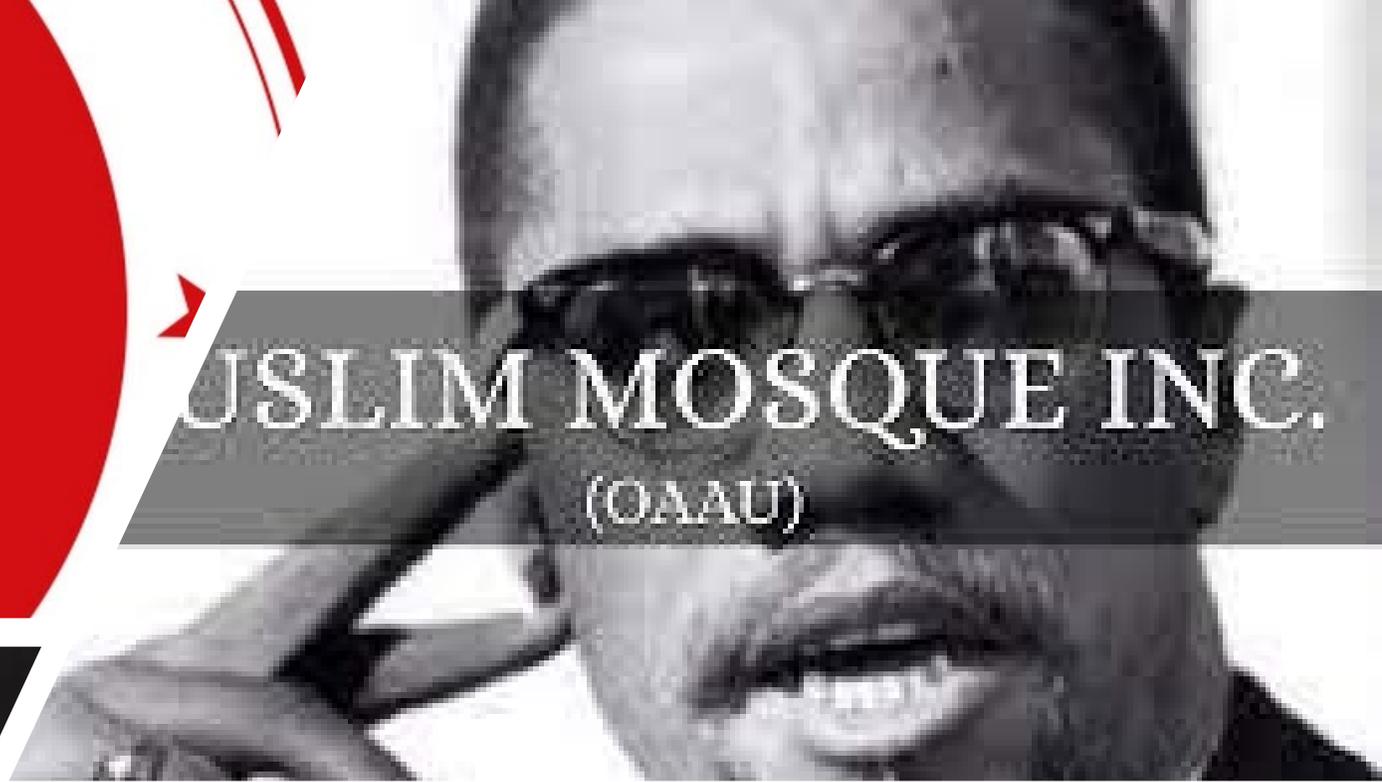
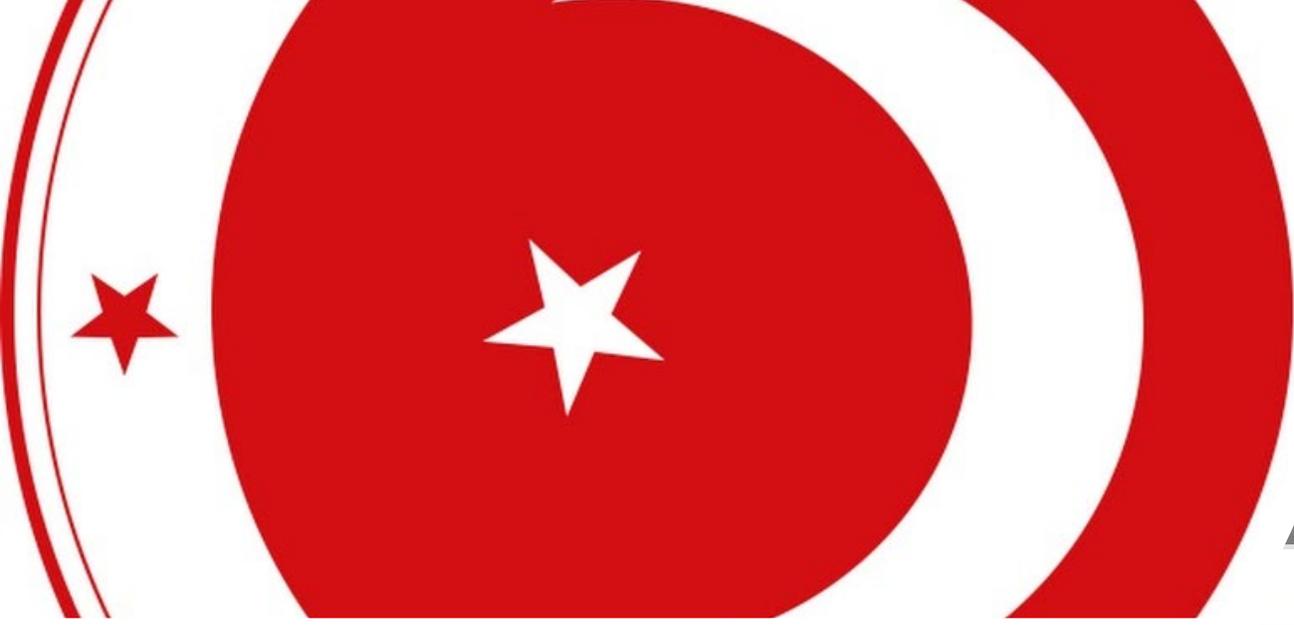
Adherence phase ...



Understanding phase ...



Faith phase



ORGANIZATION OF AFRO-AMERICAN UNITY INC.

Aims & Objectives

"WE WILL DO FOR OURSELVES —
WHAT OTHERS ARE BEGGING FOR"

The Organization of AFRO-AMERICAN UNITY Inc. welcomes all persons of African origin to come together and dedicate their ideas, skills, and lives to free our people from oppression. The following is a concise version of the Aims and Objectives in order for the community to have at its finger tips, and see at a glance the ultimate goals of the Organization of AFRO-AMERICAN UNITY Inc. under the leadership of Mrs. Ella Collins. Fully detailed and more explicit Aims and Objectives are available for registered members.

1. Free Black Americans from Economic Oppression.
2. Create Business Opportunities and Jobs.
3. Establish an Environment of Security, Stability, Dignity, and Initiative for Our Youth.
4. Demand Justice Whenever It Becomes Evident that the Laws as Composed and Enforced are Contrary To the Welfare and Well-Being of Our People, by Any Means Necessary.
5. Pledge Unity and Strive for Understanding Among Black Americans.
6. Restore Communication and Trade with Africa.

ELLA COLLINS
SISTER OF MALCOLM X



MALCOLM X
FOUNDER OF THE O.A.A.U.



"FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT"



O.A.A.U. No. Seal

7. Devise Original Educational Methods.
8. Stimulate International Economic and Political Awareness.
9. Act as an Overseas "Voice" for Afro-Americans.
10. To Provide A Means to Defend Ourselves by Any Means Necessary from Racist Oppression where the Government Proves It is Unwilling and/or Unable to Do So.



O.A.A.U. HEADQUARTERS:
write - HOTEL THERESA
2090 7th AVE.
(Corner of 125th St. & 7th Ave.)
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or call - UN. 6-3300 Extension-128

JOIN THE O.A.A.U.

"BE A BUILDER — NOT A BEGGAR"
WRITE OR CALL TODAY!

**ORGANIZATION
OF
AFRO-AMERICAN UNITY
INC.**

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

An explanation and comparison of the member's adherence to, understanding of and faith in their beliefs after the significant life experience with those held prior to and during the experience.

| Prior to SLE (1952 to 1963) | During SLE (1963 & 1964) | After SLE |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Malcolm X was so passionate about the beliefs enshrined in NOI, he worshipped Elijah, he was willing to die for him, he championed the black people cause in America</p> | <p>His fame led to jealousy from senior NOI and Elijah, scandal of Elijah with secretaries was throwing doubt in Malcolm's loyalty to Elijah, 90 days ban after JFK assassination, death threats, left NOI, became Sunni, went for hajj</p> | <p>After his hajj in 1964, he visited a few world leaders in Africa, Europe and Middle East. He is spiritually touched by the true unity of man and brotherhood.</p> |

Continue

| Prior to SLE (1952 to 1963) | During SLE (1963 & 1964) | After SLE |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Based on his beliefs as mentioned above, Malcolm X showed his strong adherence to the beliefs taught by NOI for almost 12 years.</p> <p>GOD IS BLACK. ELIJAH A PROPHET</p> | <p>Malcolm started to doubt Elijah as a leader and prophet, he also started to read books that was given by his friend Ahmed Saddiq Osman. Eventually, Malcolm X became a Sunni and continued his quest for knowledge with Prof Mahmoud Youssef Shawarbi, before he embarked on hajj pilgrimage in Mecca.</p> <p>He was striving to understand Islam, relearn and unlearn in the process. Malcolm also launched Muslim Mosque Inc (MMI) so that his followers will know that he had reverted to the new Sunni belief and he will teach adherents the authentic belief, not those from NOI which was a false denomination.</p> | <p>A Saudi official appointed Sheikh Ahmed Hassoun to become Malcolm X's personal and spiritual guide to live with him in America so that Malcolm X could reaffirm his beliefs on Unity of God (tawheed), Prophet Muhammad and his understanding of the Quran</p> <p>GOD IS ALLAH. PROPHET MUHAMMAD THE LAST PROPHET</p> |

continue

| Prior to SLE (1952 to 1963) | During SLE (1963 & 1964) | After SLE |
|--|---|---|
| <p>He was very firm towards the white as devils and was not willing to work with any non-black for his fight for social justice in America</p> <p>BLACK IS SUPERIOR THAN WHITE</p> | <p>Malcolm X had asked Ahmed Saddiq Osman to interpret two Quranic verses Taha (20) verse 102 and Al Maidah (5) verse 51 These two verses challenged his understanding on the white, Christians and Jews.</p> | <p>Malcolm X returned to America, despite knowing the death threats from NOI never subside, because he had a stronger faith to continue to fight for the human rights of the 22 million African Americans and also for other oppressed human race. Malcolm formed the OAAU Organisation of Afro American Unity to fight for the human rights of the African people, plus other oppressed people in the world e.g. Palestine.</p> <p>ONE HUMAN RACE</p> |

A conclusion on the relationship between life experience and religious belief.

Malcolm X's beliefs would not change if he did not face the hatred and jealousy from his NOI senior members including Elijah. The fame that he enjoyed as a NOI spokesperson, which led to the jealousy, was significant enough to spark a new perspective in his new beliefs.

Malcolm X's beliefs would not change if he did not totally reject those brothers who challenge his beliefs as a NOI Minister. In fact, he continued to keep close contacts with them and approached them for further guidance when he needed them most during his most troubling times.

Malcolm X's beliefs would not change if he did not pursue to seek the truth behind Elijah's scandals, the man whom he regarded as "divine". He listened to his wife and ventured to find the truth from the paths that were deemed forbidden (by NOI) for him to take.

continued

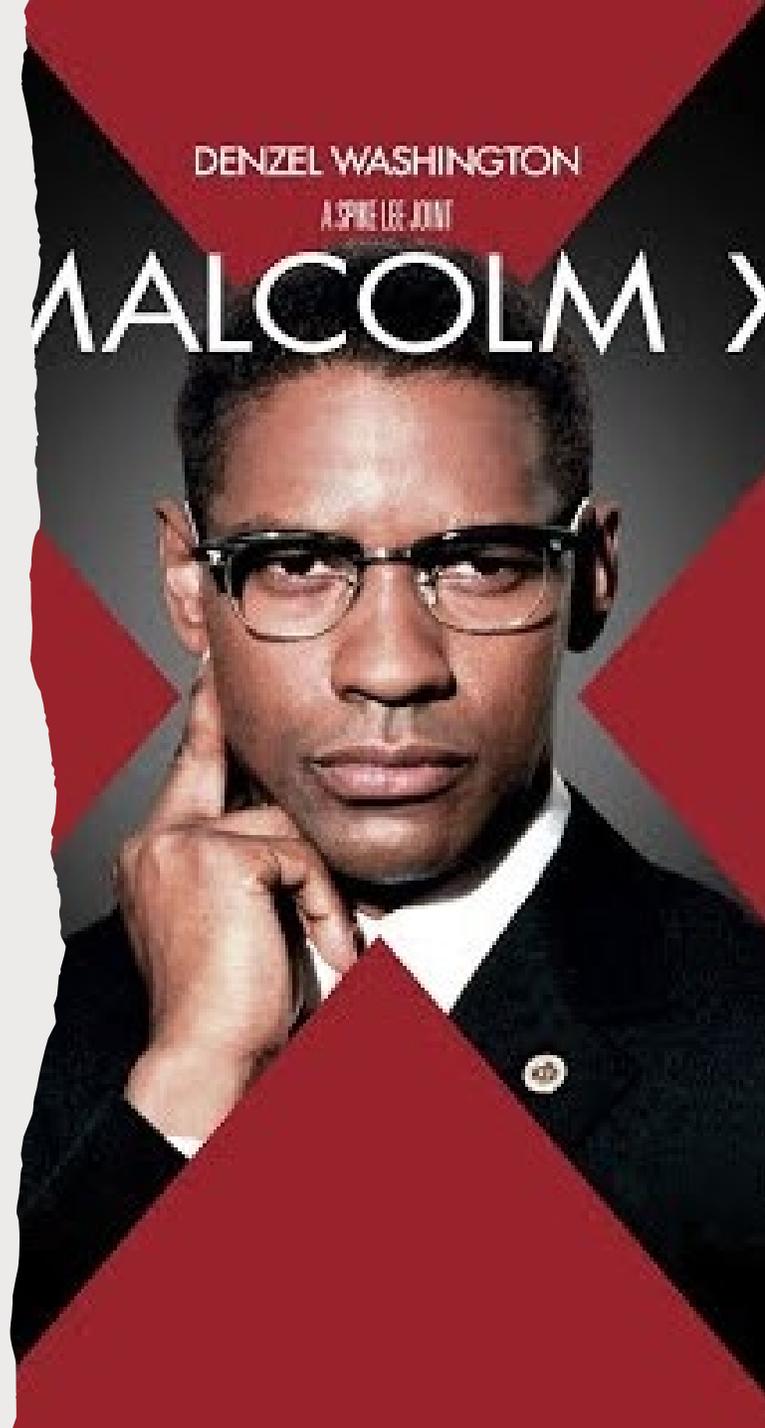
Malcolm X's beliefs would not change if he did not perform the hajj pilgrimage, his one and only hajj, despite of the financial constraint that he had faced after leaving NOI. In fact, he accepted the invitation, to be away from his wife and family, to be away from the death threats, so that he can become a guest on Allah's sacred land, Mecca, to find solace, peace, spirituality and new insight to his beliefs, and to seek repentance for all of his wrongdoings while he was in NOI.

Malcolm X's beliefs would not change if he opted to close his mind and shut down other beliefs, including the orthodox (sunni) beliefs that he was exposed to, despite being a firm believer in Elijah and NOI for almost 12 long years. His firm belief to listen to other views and beliefs, to learn from others and to travel the world helped him to become a new man with new beliefs (sunni) and a new man with a mission to fight for humanity, not just the black race.



Secondary Sources

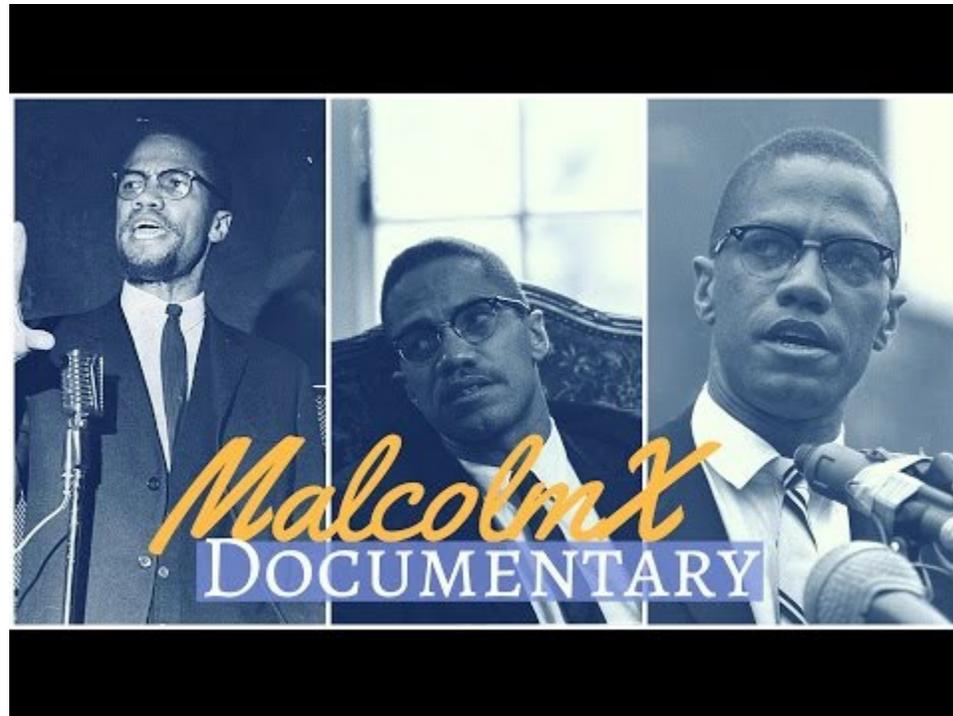
- Book, 1965
- Movie, 1992
- Documentaries



Documentary, 2021



Documentary, 2017



Letter from Hajj



End of Presentation

Q&A



RS Study Design

2017 to 2022

Significant life experience, religious beliefs and faith

In this area of study students focus on the interplay between religious beliefs and significant life experiences of members. Students consider the relationship between different types of significant life experience and religious beliefs generally. They then undertake a detailed study of one particular significant life experience of a member of a religious tradition or denomination. One or more than one religious tradition or denomination is studied, with an individual selected from each. **The significant life experience may be a single event at a particular time or occur over an extended period**, and has to be one that informed, reinforced or changed the person's understanding and expression of the meaning of their religious beliefs. Students investigate what happens to an individual's adherence to and understanding of the relevant religious beliefs and related expressions as a result of a significant life experience.

The person and experience studied must have been published in publically accessible documentary, biographical or autobiographical non-fictional material, which provides detailed commentary on the interaction of the related beliefs to their significant life experience.

Study Design RS Unit 3 Outcome 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss and analyse the interplay between religious beliefs and their expression through related aspects and significant life experience.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 3.

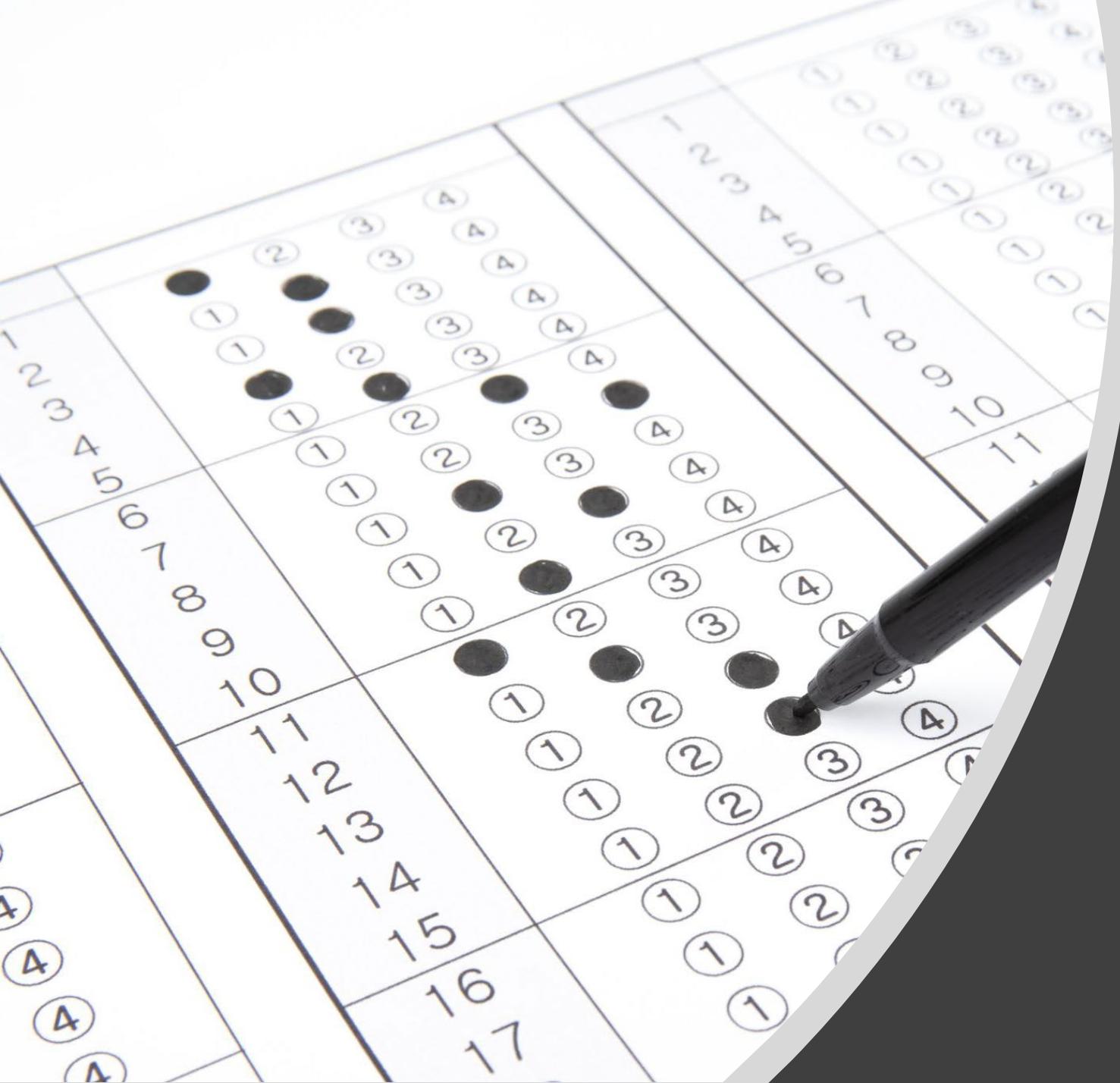
Key knowledge

- the relationship between a range of significant life experiences and religious beliefs for religion in general
- a significant life experience of a member from one or more than one religious tradition or denomination
- the member's level of adherence to, understanding of and faith in, relevant religious beliefs and their engagement with the related expressions prior to the experience, during the experience, and after the experience
- the influence of the member's religious beliefs and related expressions on their interpretation of the significant life experience.

Study Design RS Unit 3 Outcome 3

Key skills

- describe the relationship between a range of significant life experiences and religious beliefs
- describe a significant life experience of a member of a religious tradition or denomination
- 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 prior to a significant life experience, during the experience and after the experience
- analyse the influence of the member's religious beliefs and related expressions on their interpretation of the significant life experience
- interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material.



VCAA Examination Reports

2017 to 2020

From VCAA 2017 exam report

A weakness in student responses to questions related to Unit 3, Area of Study 3 was the **lack of explanation of the actual beliefs of the individual studied**. The naming of a belief in a word or two does not articulate the belief, nor show how the person understands it.

Individuals who went through change rather than strengthening of religious beliefs are better choices for study. Some students attempted to cover the whole life of the individual. Some individuals studied did not fit the new study design requirements.

From VCAA 2018 Exam Report

Students selected a diverse range of individuals. However, some choices for the case study did not enable students to deal adequately with all key knowledge points. A few students had studied a person who converted to the religious tradition. This was an incorrect selection, as **the person had to be a member of the selected religious tradition when they had the significant life experience.**

While few students gave unnecessary biographical detail in their responses, their **ability to deal with the analysis of the person's significant life experience required improvement.** This was especially so with the third key knowledge point as it required a number of different yet interrelated things to be analysed.

From VCAA 2018 Exam Report

Generally, **students showed little ability to explain the terms ‘adherence to’, ‘understanding of’, ‘faith in’ and ‘engagement with’.** Most students repeated the phrase ‘adherence and engagement’ throughout their response, treating them as one and without explaining their meaning or showing how they were demonstrated by the member of the tradition. Many students did not answer the question asked and responded about the beliefs rather than working with the focus terms.

From VCAA 2018 Exam Report

It asks that students explain and compare the member's:

- level of **adherence** to relevant religious beliefs
- **understanding** of relevant religious beliefs
- **faith** in relevant religious beliefs
- **engagement** with the related **expressions** of those beliefs **prior** to the experience
- **engagement** with the related **expressions** of those beliefs **during** the experience
- **engagement** with the related **expressions** of those beliefs **after** the experience.

From VCAA 2019 Exam Report

Students selected a diverse range of individuals in Area of Study 3.3 and most were appropriate. The best responses showed that students had studied the writings of the selected person which reflected on their significant life experience. A few students had studied a person who converted to the religious tradition. This was incorrect, as the person had to be a member of the selected religious tradition when they had the significant life experience. Others selected an appropriate person but chose the wrong significant life experience, thus using **a conversion experience, which is not part of the Study Design.**

From VCAA 2019 Exam Report

Some students included unnecessary biographical detail in their responses, and went on to tell a story about the person's life, rather than to analyse the person's significant life experience as required. This area requires improvement.

The third key knowledge point in Area of Study 3.3 required a number of different yet interrelated things to be analysed. It asks that students explain and compare the member's:

- level of adherence to relevant religious beliefs
- understanding of relevant religious beliefs
- faith in relevant religious beliefs
- engagement with the related expressions of those beliefs prior to, during and after the experience.

From VCAA 2020 Exam Report

The person needed to be clearly and accurately named and located in place, time and a particular religious tradition. The significant life experience had to be described, along with a location of the significant experience in time and place.

The following sample response (part of a longer response) shows the type of information a high-scoring response would include.

Malcolm X (El-hajj Malik Al-Shabazz) was an American Muslim minister and human rights activist during the 1960s civil rights movements in the USA. His significant life experience was as a result of his spiritual and physical journey to various Islamic countries and to Mecca for the hajj. His whole perspective on life was changed as he came to experience something he had been unaware of: the oneness of Allah as expressed in the united community of Muslims from many countries and races.

From VCAA 2020 Exam Report

Responses needed to include how the person's:

- understanding of certain beliefs (identifying clearly) was influenced (showing exactly how)
- faith in those beliefs (making clear what 'faith in' means) was influenced (showing exactly how)
- adherence (making clear what adherence means) to those beliefs was influenced (showing exactly how).

Responses also needed to explain how the person responded to the various influences experienced upon their understanding, faith in and adherence to certain beliefs and their expressions. That is, what did they do, think and say in response to the various influences of the significant life experience upon their beliefs and expressions of those beliefs? For example, did they go to particular sources of information and guidance of their tradition or outside the tradition to seek help?

From VCAA 2020 Exam Report

Responses to the influences of the significant life experience may be immediate and short term, and other responses may be lasting. They could be demonstrated outwardly in dramatic nature or in gentle, gradual changes, or they could be internalised with no obvious outward signs. Responses needed to deal with both 'influenced by' and 'responded to' in relation to the significant life experience stated in Question 1a.

Students needed to support their responses with appropriate quotations or references.

From VCAA 2020 Exam Report

The following sample response (part of a longer response) shows the type of information a high-scoring response would include.

As a Muslim, Malcolm belonged to an extremist group, Nation of Islam, and had an ill-informed view of Islam. He did not know about the central belief of Islam, oneness ('Tawhid') and saw Islam as a religion for the black people of America to free them from the white dominance. He aimed for separation of whites and blacks in America, but not as it had been.

During his spiritual and physical journey through Islamic countries, this understanding of Islam and of human relations was radically changed. Malcolm saw people of all colours and races, male and female, treating each other with respect. In Mecca he experienced the oneness of Allah and humanity in the ritual of hajj. Everyone wore the same white cloth, participated in the one ritual and said the one prayer towards the same point to the one God.

Malcolm subsequently wrote a letter from Mecca to the USA. In this he confessed he was brainwashed by Nation of Islam, in particular its leader, and that the Islam he had followed was false. He now saw Islam as the one religion that could unite American society because of its belief in oneness, Tawhid of God and of humanity.

From VCAA 2021 Exam Report

Not published yet