

# Understanding Assignment Questions

Assignment questions often use the following words to describe the task or question. The following gives you some explanation of what is expected. If in doubt talk to your facilitator.

Account for:	Explain, clarify, give reasons for.
Affect:	1. Have a preference for, use, assume, adopt; 2. Act upon, influence; 3. Feeling, emotion.
Analyse/ Analysis:	Resolve into its component parts; examine critically or minutely.
Argument:	Reason urged in support of a theory; discussion of a question; debate.
Assess:	Determine the value of, weigh up, take stock of; (see also evaluate).
Compare:	Look for similarities and differences between; may lead to a conclusion about which is preferable.
Compare & Contrast:	Find some points of common ground between X and Y and show where or how they differ.
Compatible:	Capable of existing together, in agreement with, consistent with.
Contrast:	Set in opposition in order to bring out differences.
Criticise:	Make a reasoned judgement (backed by a discussion of the evidence, the opinions of acknowledged authorities or reasoning involved) about the merit of theories or about the truth of facts and statements.
Debate:	Argument; discuss thoroughly.
Define:	State the exact meaning of a word or phrase, mark limits of, show clearly the outlines of; sometimes it may be necessary or desirable to examine different possible or often used definitions and use co-existing definitions.
Describe:	Give a detailed or graphic account of.
Discuss:	Investigate or examine by argument; explain, then give two sides of the issue with reasons for and against and examine any implications.
Distinguish or Differentiate between:	Look for differences between.
Effect:	Result, consequence.
Evaluate:	Make an appraisal of the worth/ validity/ effectiveness of something in the light of its truth or usefulness; (see also Assess).
Examine the argument that:	Look in detail at this line of argument.

Explain:	Make plain; interpret and account for; give reasons – details about how and why it is.
Extract:	Pull out, draw out, select, obtain, selected passage, concentrated substance obtained from another.
How far...:	To what extent; usually involves looking at evidence/ arguments for and against and weighing them up.
Illustrate:	Make clear and explicit, usually requires the use of carefully chosen examples.
Implication:	Secondary meanings.
Integrated:	Joined with, harmonised, compatible.
Interpret:	Expound; explain what is meant by; make clear and explicit, usually giving your judgement also.
Justify:	Show adequate grounds for decisions or conclusions, answer the main objections likely to be made about them.
Outline:	Brief general explanation; describe without detail; give the main features or general principles of a subject, omitting minor details and emphasising structure and argument; (see also Summarise).
Rationale:	Logical cause.
Relate:	1. <i>Narrate</i> – Give an account of history of something. 2. Explain how variables are related or connected and how they affect each other.
State:	Present in a brief, concise, clear form.
Summarise:	Brief statement of the main points; give a concise, clear explanation or account of, presenting the chief factors and omitting minor details and examples; (see also Outline).
To what extent:	How much? What measurable or qualitative degree?
Trace:	Outline or follow the development of something from its initiation or point of origin.
What arguments can be made for and against this view? :	Look at both sides of this argument; (see also Argument).

# Different Types of Questions

Below you will find a little more guidance on the different types of questions you will find.

- 1. i) A What? When? Where? Why? How? type essay (This is the easiest kind to deal with.)**  
e.g. *How can worship be made more accessible for all who come to church?*

Brainstorm : I need to give a brief definition of what I mean by 'worship' for the purposes of this essay. Then, what about 'more accessible'? More accessible to whom?

1. Different ages?
2. Different genders?
3. Different maturity/ experience of church going? (Life-long, new Christian, 'fringe', visitor.)
4. Different physical and intellectual abilities/infirmities? (Literacy, visual and audio impairment, wheelchair, etc.)
5. Different family backgrounds (single parent, larger family group, single person, retired couple).

You may be able to think of others. But supposing the above was your final list - then each of 1-5 could become a paragraph. In each paragraph you could unwrap the problem and then move to discuss a possible solution. If each paragraph is in danger of becoming too long, make 2 paragraphs out of each point - one unwrapping the problem and one discussing the solution.

- 2. ii) A 'Compare-and-contrast' essay**

e.g. *Compare the BCP and CW Eucharist services. How do you account for the differences?*

The first thing this kind of essay requires is a cool evaluation of the two items. In the case of comparing 2 liturgies, as in this question, you could set out a 2-column analysis. You could include this as part of your essay, but it would be better to have it as an Appendix to which you referred, rather than in the main text. Your opening paragraph could then include an awareness of the task in hand and include phrases such as *'... In order to compare and comment on different aspects of the two services, it is important first to be aware of the detailed structure of each. This has been done (See Appendix A) and will be referred to in what follows.'*

You will then need to decide how many similarities and differences there are that you want to mention. If possible, group them in some way in your mind, e.g.

- a) Similarities between BCP and CW.
- b) Things in BCP omitted in CW.
- c) Things in CW not previously in BCP.
- d) Things in BCP and CW but placed in a different point of the liturgy.
- e) Things in both BCP and CW but done in a different way.
- f) Any other differences not covered by the above.

A possible essay structure could then be:

- Introductory paragraph.
- Short paragraph on BCP service - the overall intention behind its writing, and giving it a historical setting.
- A similar paragraph on the CW service. Neither of these paragraphs should include detail that you are going to mention in the next paragraphs. They also shouldn't say everything you know about these services but only things that will have relevance to your answers.
- Two paragraphs for each of the sections a)-e) above [and f) if you have other points to make]. In the first of each pair, you could describe the differences/similarities/omissions, etc. In the second, you could comment on why that was done, the effect that it has (or doesn't have) on the liturgy and on the worshipping congregation. Instead, make sure that your first sentence is short and pithy, but tells your reader what the paragraph is going to be about.  
e.g. *'The analysis reveals several features included in a CW service, but absent from the BCP. The most striking of these is ....'*
- A short concluding paragraph summing up your findings.

**3. iii) Assess the importance/significance of one thing for something else type essay**

e.g. *How significant do you think the rise in ecumenical awareness has been for the development of the worship of the Anglican church?*

There are several interesting points in this essay. For a start, notice that the question mentions the Anglican church, not just the Church of England, so it is important that you consider the world-wide situation. Secondly, it refers to the 'rise in ecumenical awareness'. This means you will need to devote some space to a historical reflection on that rise - but don't let it dominate the essay! A structure might be:

- Introductory paragraph outlining where the essay is going.
- Paragraph(s) on the historical 'rise' in ecumenical awareness.
- Ways in which ecumenical involvement has specifically contributed to Anglican worship. (It may be that you will need to sub-divide this into several paras, each one dealing with a different aspect, or with examples from different countries.)
- A paragraph(s) on other factors that have contributed to changes in Anglican worship but have *nothing to do with ecumenical issues*.
- An evaluation, in the light of the above, of the *relative* importance of ecumenical awareness over other factors.

N.B. Just because a question suggests that something has been influential, do not be afraid to disagree by concluding that such-and-such is of minimal importance ('minimal' is safer than saying that something has no importance - humility in all things!) compared with some other factor; provided, of course, you can substantiate your arguments!

#### **4. iv) A quotation from someone. Respond to it**

e.g. *'Worship is like good wine - to be taken in appropriate measure and selected to accompany the food'. (Woan 1999 p.666) Do you agree?*

When a question is framed in allegorical language, it is very tempting to feel the need to continue in that allegorical mode. This is OK up to a point but do not let that dominate. You are not being asked to write an extended parable!

One way of preparing for such a question is to 'brainstorm' all your ideas and lines of thought:-

- Wine = worship. Is this a valid analogy? Or not?
- What happens if you have too much worship/wine?
- If wine is supposed to = worship, what did the questioner have in mind for 'food'? Bible reading? Secular life? Sacraments? One's mood? What could 'food' be for this essay?
- What 'vessel' allows one to partake of this worship/wine? Does it matter?
- What kinds of wine are said to be appropriate for accompanying what foods? What would the parallels be for 'worship'? etc, etc, etc.

Having done all this, try to distil the thoughts into 3 or 4 basic points that you want to make and devote a paragraph to each. A basic framework might then be:

- Opening paragraph in which you address the problem as it seems to you and explain to the reader what you are understanding both by 'worship' and 'food' and the 'vessel' for the purposes of the essay.
- 3 or 4 paragraphs in which you develop your points, e.g.
  - The appropriateness of the analogy from a biblical perspective.
  - The effect of 'over-indulgence' for both wine and worship.
  - Different types of 'food' (whatever you have decided is meant by that) and different forms of worship that may, therefore, be appropriate.
  - The importance of the 'vessel'.
- A concluding paragraph in which you state how valid you think the analogy is overall in dealing with the situation described.

#### **5. v) An essay asking for personal reflection &/or experience**

e.g. *How important do you think music is in worship? Illustrate from your own experience.*

This kind of essay may seem easier but it is hard to be structured. The tendency is to ramble - often ending up focusing in on just one or two personal experiences to the exclusion of other aspects that the question demands. It is better to do the same kind of analysis of the different points you want to make FIRST (in a similar way as for some of the other types of essay we have dealt with) and then consider personal experiences that could illustrate each point. Occasionally, one experience can be used to serve all the points. In that case it should be described at the end and the different points you have made highlighted (verbally, not with coloured pen!) so that your example is used to good effect.

**6. vi) A 'Here's a provocative statement - how do you react?' type**

e.g. *Since we are now in the 21st century, we should finally put to death that anachronism of the Church of England - the BCP. Do you agree?*

This kind of essay can be quite exciting - provided you do actually have a view on the subject. There are two dangers. One is to be so incensed (or enthusiastic) that you 'ride your hobby-horse' to the exclusion of any other point of view. The other is that you are so careful to balance 'this with that', and litter your essay with phrases like: 'But on the other hand ....' that you never end up coming down on one side or the other!

The key to this kind of essay lies in the construction of the opening paragraph. For this reason you may find it easier to write it at the end - once you are clear about the way the essay has gone. In the opening paragraph, signal to the reader that you are aware of what the issues are going to be and give an indication of where your heart lies.

e.g. *'Put the BCP to death'? That is something that many in the Church of England would see as being long overdue. But before we set our experts the task of creating a suitable liturgy for such an ultimate act of 'closure', it would be appropriate to trace the influence that the BCP has had on the eras since its inception and with what we would replace it.*

This then paves the way for some paragraphs on the reasons for which the BCP was created and the effect that it has had in successive generations. Within each paragraph do not be afraid to mention both sides of the question (indeed the marker will be looking to see if you can see both side of the argument); but, where relevant, give an indication of where the weight of the argument lies.

This question specifically demands that you discuss whether or not the BCP is an anachronism. Where you have essay titles that use long words like this, one starting point can be to quote what a reliable dictionary gives as a definition, and then develop your argument from there. You could then explore the various forms of service available to take the place of the BCP. Do not let this section dominate, but it should include an assessment of the positive things each brings to a 21st century worshipping congregation as well as any noticeable deficiencies.

Your concluding paragraph can then be as 'biting' as the original quote. Perhaps:-

*'Bury the BCP'? Is it not sufficient that we already have Cranmer turning in his grave at the mishmash we have made of his glorious Communion service? 'Bury the BCP' ? Never! As this essay has shown, the witness of history demands that we retain it, understand it, teach it.... and most importantly, worship God by means of it!*

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