THE SEARCH FOR MEANING AND VALUES

A. THE QUEST FOR MEANING

The contemporary context
- give two examples from contemporary culture that illustrate the human search for meaning. Examples may be taken from music, art, literature, or youth culture
- provide two examples of each of the following key questions that emerge in contemporary culture: the goal and purpose of life; the meaning of good and evil; the experience of suffering
- identify cultural factors in contemporary society that can block the search for meaning
- give two examples of the contemporary phenomenon of indifference to the search for meaning.

The tradition of search
- give a brief definition and explanation of the nature and purpose of philosophy in terms of the search for meaning and values
- in the case of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle present a summary of two of their main ideas and explain why each idea was important in the development of philosophy
- outline the place of the Sophists in the society of ancient Greece and their importance in the development of philosophical thought
- on the question of the search for meaning: identify and briefly explain three key moments in the development of philosophical thought from the classical to the contemporary period.

B. THE RESPONSE TO THE QUEST

The language of symbol
- explain why symbol emerged in the formulation of responses to the questions of life in each case, give an example of the power of symbolic language on
  - individuals
  - groups
  - societies.

The tradition of response
- outline three myths from ancient cultures which attempt to answer key questions
- provide evidence of religious behaviour in ancient societies from each of the following: rites of passage and initiation; rites of burial and sacrifice; sacred art and artefacts
- provide evidence of the sense of the sacred in contemporary culture
- provide evidence of spirituality in contemporary culture
- identify three key people in the humanist tradition. In each case, briefly outline one key idea of their teaching
- define and explain atheism and agnosticism
• briefly outline two cosmologies of modern science
• briefly explain each of the following non-religious responses to the questions of life:
  – the secular humanist tradition: atheism: agnosticism: reductionism.

CONCEPTS OF GOD

The gods of the ancients
• give two examples of the gods in ancient myths
• explain and give two examples of polytheism
• describe briefly the emergence of monotheism
• explain the concept of God in each of the monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The concept of revelation
• explain the concept of divine revelation
• explain the significance of divine revelation in two different religious traditions
• show the impact of the concept of divine revelation on religious practice and on the interpretation of religious texts in the two religious traditions
• outline the understanding of the transcendent in two religious traditions.

Naming God, past and present
• name and explain three traditional and three contemporary images of God
• explain and give an example of each of the following religious interpretations of contemporary human experience: the prophetic, the mystical, the holy, the poetic, the aesthetic
• outline the traditional proofs of God in the writings of Anselm, Aquinas, and two others.

RELIGION AND THE EMERGENCE OF VALUES

Religion as a source of communal values
• outline the relationship between the understanding of the transcendent/God and the concept of the person in two religious traditions
• give two examples of how these connections determine behavioural norms in religious traditions.

Secular sources of communal values
• identify three key moments in the emergence of an independent secular value system
• show how communal values can be shaped by sources other than religion
• describe three different ways in which religions relate to secular culture.