
AP[®] African American Studies

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 2

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Short-Answer Question 2

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Question 2: Non-Text Source**3 points****General Scoring Notes**

- Each point is earned independently.
- **Accuracy:** These scoring guidelines require that students demonstrate historically defensible, or discipline specific, content knowledge. Given the timed nature of the exam, responses may contain errors that do not detract from their overall quality, as long as the historical or disciplinary content used to advance the argument is accurate.
- **Clarity:** Exam responses should be considered first drafts and thus may contain grammatical errors. Those errors will not be counted against a student unless they obscure the successful demonstration of the content knowledge, skills, and practices described below.
- **Describe:** Provide the relevant characteristics of a specified topic. Description requires more than simply mentioning an isolated term.
- **Explain:** Provide information about how or why a historical development or process occurs or how or why a relationship exists.

A **Describe one way the image serves as evidence of Christianity in early African societies.** **1 point**

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- The image is from Africa in about 1700. It shows two people holding staffs that are each topped with a Christian cross.
- The two people appear to be in a Christian church or similar building in Africa that is topped with a cross.
- The painting depicts at least one African person with a halo, showing that Christianity is present in Africa.

B **Describe an effect religions from outside of West Africa had on West African societies prior to the seventeenth century.** **1 point**

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- Mansa Musa, the powerful Muslim ruler from Mali, made a pilgrimage to Mecca in the fourteenth century, which then attracted more merchants and scholars to Mali.
 - By converting to Islam, West African merchants gained favorable trade conditions with caravans coming from the Middle East.
 - The presence of Islam in Mali led to the flourishing of education and scholarship in Timbuktu and in other centers of learning.
 - When African leaders adopted Islam or Christianity, the result was often a blending of those faiths with Indigenous spiritual beliefs and religions.
 - After becoming a Christian kingdom, parents in Kongo began the practice of naming their children after Christian saints.
 - When the Kingdom of Kongo converted to Christianity, their trade relationship with Portugal was strengthened.
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C	Explain one reason why syncretic spiritual practices developed in the African diaspora.	1 point
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Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- Many Africans blended their local spiritual practices with Christianity as it entered West Africa. These new syncretic faiths were blended further when they were brought to the Americas by enslaved Africans.
 - In West Africa, syncretic spiritual practices predate the African diaspora. These religious combinations were then spread to the Americas by enslaved people, where they continued to blend into new expressions of faith.
 - Roughly one-quarter of all enslaved people who arrived in North America were from Christian societies in Africa. Once in North America, people from those societies found themselves living together, often resulting in continued changes in spiritual practices.
 - In order to cope with the horrible treatment they endured, enslaved people sang spirituals during or after the work day. These spirituals combined Christian and West African spiritual traditions in song, creating new and diverse forms of religious expression.
 - As Afro-Caribbean immigration into the United States increased in the early twentieth century, so did the ethnic and religious diversity of the areas in which they settled. This resulted in the blending of many of those practices with each other and with religious beliefs that were already present where the immigrant communities were formed.
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A) The image serves as evidence of Christianity in early African societies because it showcases elements of the religion within the image. The image displays the announcement of Jesus Christ and has elements of Christianity as can be seen by the crosses on the staffs. Furthermore, the image is written in Ge'ez script which was used by the Aksum people serving as further evidence that Christianity was prevalent in early African societies.

B) The religion of Islam had an effect on the West African society of Mali. The rulers such as Ibrahima Barma and Mansa Musa were Muslim and in result the kingdom of Mali was as well. This resulted in centers of knowledge such as Timbuktu which gained attention from Muslim scholars and others making it a center of knowledge.

C) One reason syncretic practices developed in the African diaspora was due to trade networks specifically maritime trade networks. The Indian Ocean trade network led to the introduction of different belief systems such as Islam and Buddhism, which blended with the belief systems that were already established.

- a) This image serves as evidence of Christianity in early African societies by showing crucifixes and Christian religious traditions in an image created in Africa in the early centuries CE.
- b) One effect that religions from outside of West Africa had on West African societies prior to the seventeenth century is the creation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which blends elements of Christianity with indigenous Ethiopian religions.
- c) One reason why syncretic spiritual practices developed in the African diaspora is the forced relocation of Africans to the Americas where they were often forced to convert to Western religions. Still wanting to practice their indigenous religions while being forced to practice another led enslaved Africans to blend two or more religions together.

- a- this image serves as evidence of christianity in early african societies because the text in the image is written in ge'ez script and the individuals in the drawing arent white. if the bible was written due to later european contact/colonization then the script would be different and both figures would be white.
- b- in west africa mansa musa ruled the christian empire of mali, they went on a large tour all the way from egypt to mecca where they flaunted their wealth as well as built many schools and spread christianity
- c- syncretic spiritual practices developed in the african diaspora due to the quantity of spiritual influences thrust into their lives, one such practice such as voodoo appeared because of the influence of european contact as well as traditional african spiritualism, this contact and swirling of beliefs caused its prevalence

Short-Answer Question 2

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

NEW for 2025: The question overviews can be found in the *Chief Reader Report on Student Responses on AP Central*.

Sample Identifier: 2A

Score: 3

SAQ Part A Score: 1

SAQ Part B Score: 1

SAQ Part C Score: 1

The response earned 1 point for part A for describing the staffs topped with crosses and noting that they are symbols of the Christian faith.

The response earned 1 point for part B for describing the effect Islam had on West African societies. Although it incorrectly identifies Ibn Battuta as a ruler, it states that the Muslim influence on Mali resulted in the development of centers of learning such as Timbuktu.

The response earned 1 point for part C for explaining that the Indian Ocean trading network led to the blending of different belief systems like Islam and Buddhism with existing spiritual beliefs.

Short-Answer Question 2 (continued)**Sample Identifier: 2B****Score: 2****SAQ Part A Score: 1****SAQ Part B Score: 0****SAQ Part C Score: 1**

The response earned 1 point for part A for describing crucifixes in the image, which were signs of “Christian religious traditions” in early African societies.

The response did not earn a point for part B. While it describes the blending of Christianity with indigenous Ethiopian religions, the prompt asks for an impact on West African societies, not East African societies.

The response earned 1 point for part C for explaining that the forced relocation of Africans to the Americas led to their forced conversion to Christianity. In addition, the response further explains that the forced conversion led to the blending of African religions with Christianity in an attempt by enslaved Africans to continue to practice their indigenous religions.

Short-Answer Question 2 (continued)**Sample Identifier: 2C****Score: 1****SAQ Part A Score: 0****SAQ Part B Score: 0****SAQ Part C Score: 1**

The response did not earn a point for part A. It describes the caption at the bottom of the image rather than using the image itself to serve as evidence of Christianity in early African societies. While the response does refer to the image by stating, “the text in the image is written in ge’ez script,” this information does not describe visual evidence of Christianity in the image.

The response did not earn a point for part B. It incorrectly describes Mali as a Christian empire rather than an Islamic empire, and it incorrectly asserts that Mansa Musa built Christian schools in Mecca instead of Islamic centers of learning in Mali.

The response earned 1 point for part C. It provided a minimally-acceptable explanation, arguing that syncretic spiritual practices such as Voodoo developed in the African diaspora because of “the quantity of spiritual influences thrust into their lives” as a result of the blending of Indigenous African spiritual beliefs with European influences.