

## Exam focus

### Top tips for answering questions

- ✓ Remember, this paper is worth a total of 60 marks. Questions a, b and c are worth a total of 12 marks and questions d and e are worth 24 marks each.
- ✓ You have only 1 hour to complete this paper, so timing is crucial.

### Short-answer questions

- ✓ Aim to finish all three short-answer questions (a, b and c) in around 10 minutes.
- ✓ Don't write out the question or repeat it in your answer – it's a waste of valuable time.
- ✓ Many of these questions start with the word 'suggest' – so you only have to give a short response, not a long explanation.
- ✓ These questions can be answered in bullet points or incomplete sentences.
- ✓ If you are unsure about an answer, leave a gap and come back to it later.

### Essay-answer questions

- ✓ Questions d and e require essay answers, so write in complete sentences and use paragraphs for new ideas.
- ✓ Remember time is tight and spend about 20 minutes on planning and writing each essay answer. If you do overrun on the first and don't answer the second, you will lose 24 marks.
- ✓ Spend a few minutes planning each answer – just enough to streamline writing the essays.
- ✓ For question d, you can earn up to 14 marks for AO1 skills (knowledge and

understanding) and up to 10 marks for AO2 skills (interpretation, application, analysis and evaluation).

- ✓ For question e, you can earn up to 10 marks for AO1 skills and up to 14 marks for AO2 skills.
- ✓ In the essays, define key concepts, such as 'patriarchal'. Don't assume that the examiner knows that you know what it means.
- ✓ There are no guidelines on how much to write for these essays. Write as much as you can in the time, but remember – an essay is marked on its qualities not its length!

### Families and households questions

- ✓ You will meet some views that you disagree with, for example about lone-parent families. Don't let your personal opinions get in the way of a balanced answer.
- ✓ If an essay question is about family diversity, try to work as many different households as possible into your answer. Don't restrict yourself to just nuclear, extended and lone-parent families.
- ✓ When discussing families, avoid stereotypes – not all lone-parent families are headed by teenage mums and not all Asian families are extended.
- ✓ Make sure that you can discuss some reasonably up-to-date research. Remember Wilmott and Young and Oakley were writing in the 1970s. They can be a good starting point, but study research by others too.

## Exam focus

### Specimen question: Families and households

#### Item A

In the past, sociologists spent very little time discussing what a family was. It was assumed that there was the main type of family and that the majority of people lived in this type. This was the nuclear family. However some sociologists were critical of the assumption that such a family was the norm; some even described it as a 'cereal packet family', partly due to how often it appeared in advertisements. Some sociologists have gone further and suggested that, with more lone-parent families and greater cohabitation, we should stop talking about 'the family' and replace it with the term 'household'.

#### Item B

At first sight, 'childhood' appears to be a biological concept in that it refers to a period of time up to a certain age. If we look more closely, however, we see that the age at which someone stops being a child is not always that clear. Society sets down laws about what people can and cannot do at certain ages. In addition, writers such as Ariès have claimed that childhood is a social construction, as it did not exist until quite recent times.

- a) Explain the term 'cohabitation' (Item A). (2 marks)
- b) Suggest two things that the law states people of a certain age cannot do. (4 marks)
- c) Suggest three types of households **other than those mentioned in Item A**. (6 marks)
- d) **Examine** the view that children today have a more important place in the family than in the past. (24 marks)
- e) **Using material from Item A and elsewhere**, **assess** the view that families and households can be said to be more diverse today. (24 marks)

For question d, more marks are awarded for AO1, so concentrate on demonstrating your knowledge and understanding.

The question is about the position of children, but specifically about their place in the family. Think about the role of children in the past, how it has changed, what caused the changes and their role today. Finally, you might want to consider if all children have the same experiences.

For question e, more marks are awarded for AO2, so go into depth in the points you make and be evaluative.

You must make use of Item A. This does not mean copy bits of it out, but means discuss some of the points it makes

This is a command word – it literally means 'look at' – so you are being asked to investigate something, in this case the view expressed in the question.

This command word means make a judgement on something. The question is clearly about household diversity, so you are being asked to judge if this is more true of today than in the past.

## Exam focus

### Exemplar response: Candidate A

a) Cohabitation is another way of saying living together.

This is correct, but the answer is incomplete as it is not clear who or how many people are living together. (1 out of 2 marks)

b) One law states you can't get married until you are 16. It's the same age at which you can start to have sex.

Despite it being short, this answer does what the question asks. Two areas that have age-related laws are correctly identified. (4 out of 4 marks)

c) There are extended families (parents and children and grandchildren), same sex couples and student halls of residence.

The first and second examples are fine, but it isn't necessary to define 'extended'. However, student halls do not constitute a household. (4 out of 6 marks)

d) Children as young as six used to work in factories, but the Factory Act stopped this. Also it was made compulsory to go to school. These two things combined to give children a childhood.

A promising introduction because it sets the scene and explains that the answer will look at changes in childhood over time. It would be better if there were some reference to children's position within the family.

Also medical advances meant children could live longer, which improved their lives. Family size got smaller and the contraceptive pill meant women could choose when to have children and how many to have. All the evidence is that women are putting off having children until later so they can have a good career and earn enough money to look after them.

To improve the answer, the points made here could be developed to specifically answer the question, e.g. the point about women controlling the timing and size of families could be broadened to discuss how this gives rise to more child-centred families.

There are a lot of laws telling children what to do. You are not able to get married until 16 and you have to stay in school until this age. This is both a good and bad thing. It allows young people the chance to get qualifications and so go on to get a good job, but some don't want to stay in school, which is why they play truant. This will get worse if they lift the age to 18.

This paragraph about restrictions placed on children could be opened up to include the idea that children are economically dependent on parents for a long time. It would then specifically address the question.

So overall children are in a better position than they used to be. They don't have to go to work and they get the chance to go to school so they can enjoy growing up and can be like children for longer. This has got to be better than working from the age of six and not being able to go to school.

This final paragraph attempts to reach a conclusion, but on how much children are better off now than in the past, with no specific mention of their place in the family.

This answer contains quite a lot of potentially relevant material and demonstrates quite good knowledge, but it is not always well applied. The interpretation is weak because the focus is not always on the question asked. The candidate has reinterpreted the question to be about changes in childhood in general, but the question asked for discussion on the position within the family. Analysis is not well developed, as the candidate does not always discuss the significance of the points made.

To improve, the candidate needs to focus more on the position of children in the family and to explain more fully the impact of the points raised, e.g. how laws impact on children. Finally the answer needs to be more up to date, perhaps by considering the rise of consumerism.

**(13 out of 24 marks)**

e) In the past it was assumed that there was one main type of family and that the majority of people lived in the nuclear family. However some sociologists were critical of the assumption that such a family was the norm.

Now we have got different types of families such as extended, single parent and even gay couples, so maybe we should stop talking about 'the family' and replace it with the term 'household'. If we did this, we could include students who share a house as well as childless couples and old people who live alone.

This is not a very strong opening, most of it copied sections of the item, often word for word. This is not, therefore, scoring any marks. Only the candidate's knowledge of different types of households can be rewarded.

The nuclear family became less popular after women's rights came on the scene. Women did not want to put up with being second class so they fought against men and many got divorced. Also because women could now work just like men they could have their own independence and this meant they didn't need to get married or to stay married if they didn't want to.

This is much better as it starts to discuss women's rights. However it misses the chance to apply this knowledge by discussing how these changes impact on household diversity. There is no mention of how divorce can create lone-parent, reconstituted and single-person households. It could also make the point that women's economic independence has led to the rise of what sociologists call 'creative singlehood', i.e. people, often women, choosing to live alone.

Another big change has been the rise of ethnic minorities. Britain now has more of these types of families than in the past and research shows they are more likely to be extended. This is another reason why the nuclear family is less popular and is no longer the norm.

Gay rights have meant that gays are no longer discriminated against and they can live together if they want. This is another example of something that is not a nuclear family.

Potentially relevant points relating to ethnic minorities and same-sex couples are not developed. The candidate could go beyond the basic assertion that ethnic minorities have extended families, perhaps by quoting studies that support this view or even to question if this is the case for all ethnic minorities, especially second and third generation.

So we can clearly see that the nuclear family used to be the norm but now we have other things such as gay couples and ethnic minorities so it is not the norm anymore.

This attempts a conclusion, but actually just restates points already made.

This is a limited response. Instead of making use of Item A, the candidate merely recycles it, often word for word. Material introduced from elsewhere is fairly basic and remains very underdeveloped. Also the candidate doesn't obviously evaluate the material, e.g. by questioning if we really are more diverse than in the past or, indeed, if the nuclear family ever was the norm. The candidate's analysis is weak because most points are simply stated rather than developed or explained.

(11 out of 24 marks)

Total: 33 out of 60 marks

Grade: this would normally be somewhere around the C grade

## Exemplar response: Candidate B

a) This refers to when two people choose to live together as man and wife but do not get married.

This is a more complete answer than candidate A's in that it says how many people are living together and what the relationship is. (2 out of 2 marks)

b) In this country you cannot leave school until 16 and you cannot vote until 18.

Again there is enough to gain maximum marks without going into too much detail (leaving more time to answer the essay questions). (4 out of 4 marks)

- c) • empty-nest families  
• extended families  
• students who share a house

All three are acceptable responses. Bullet lists of incomplete sentences are fine for short-answer questions. (6 out of 6 marks)

d) In the past it was said that children should be 'seen but not heard'. Today we have changed totally and society has become more child-centred. I will look at how this has changed children's position within the family.

A good opening paragraph. It interprets the question clearly, introduces the concept of 'child-centeredness' and explains what the essay will do.

Before industrialisation children used to work just like every other member of the family. As Aries noted, they were mini-adults and parents did not feel the need to treat them differently. Things changed in the 19th century when the Factory Acts banned children from working and the Education Act made them attend school. This turned children from an economic asset to an economic liability, which means they became expensive to have as parents had to look after them but they could not bring in any money for the family.

Another good paragraph. Note the reference to a study (Aries) and the point about the impact of different Acts. It scores marks for analysis because it explains how these acts changed the position of children.

Also the infant mortality rate fell. McKeown said this was due to clean water, which helped reduce disease so children had a better chance to survive. As a result of this, parents had fewer children because they knew they would survive. It also meant parents changed their attitudes towards their children. They started to develop much closer bonds and this was the start of the child-centred family.

This clearly discusses how a decline in infant mortality had an impact on children. It would help if the candidate located this as occurring around the turn of the 19th/20th century.

As the 20th century went on advertisers started to target children. Firstly this was teenagers with pop music but now it is even younger children who have fashion and films made for them. We now have something called 'pester power' which means children see things on TV and demand them from their parents who give in and spend lots of money on them, especially at Christmas and for their birthday. Children now have a bigger say on what goes on in the family such as where to go on holiday and some parents even move house to get their children into good schools.

Some good examples of how children's position has changed. It would be even better if it finished with a sentence that pulls the points together, e.g. 'All these things show that children have a greater say in their lives and exercise more control in the family than in the past.'

It is also the case that children have more rights, e.g. if parents want to divorce, children can now have a say in where they will live, unlike in the past when it was decided for them.

Brief, but makes a good point. Candidate could build on this by exploring the growth of children's rights, i.e. by discussing the Children Act 1989 more fully, and modern concern for children's welfare and protection against abuse.

So we can see that children are now at the centre of many families. Parents work hard to get them things and society sees childhood as a special time where children should be loved and protected.

Overall this answer has a very clear and logical structure as it starts off in pre-industrial times and comes right up to date. The candidate also interprets the question correctly and applies the information well. A number of relevant concepts, e.g. child-centred, economic asset, economic liability and pester power, are introduced.

Another strength is that the answer links points together in order to discuss their importance, e.g. in paragraph 2 where the impact of the different Acts is discussed and in paragraph 3 where the point about the fall in infant mortality is developed to show how this had an impact on children within the family.

This answer could be improved by presenting some alternative ideas to give a more balanced response. It suggests that children are central to the family; it could go on to look at possible class, gender or cultural differences in children's experiences and also consider the restrictions families place on children, e.g. on choice of friends, use of leisure time.

(18 out of 24 marks)

e) Functionalists such as Parsons believe the nuclear family is the norm and claim this is the best type of family. The New Right go further and claim lone-parent families are dysfunctional as they don't socialise their children properly. Others criticise this view and point to the major changes in lifestyles in the last part of the 20th century. Post-modernists say we live in a 'pick and mix' society and we have many types of families and households. For example, same-sex couples are more acceptable today and they can now legally adopt children. Also we have seen the rise of creative singlehood where people, often women, choose to live alone.

Lots of good points, which score quite a few marks. It shows good knowledge of competing perspectives and introduces a few concepts such as dysfunctional and 'pick and mix'. However it jumps straight in and fails to really introduce the essay or give a clue about what will be discussed.

High divorce rates increase the numbers of lone-parent families but as many later get married again we see more reconstituted or step families. More students are going to university, so we see more students sharing a house.

Candidate adds to their list of household types and suggests some reasons for their increase. More marks could be gained with a little more explanation, e.g. divorce rates are higher due to changes in the law and differences in social attitudes. Other reasons for the rise of lone-parent families could be discussed, such as secularisation or increased social acceptability.

Not everyone thinks family diversity is that great. Chester talked about the neo-conventional family. He said most people live in or have lived in a nuclear family. Support for him comes from evidence that many who are not in a nuclear family would like to be in one, e.g. many single people are waiting to get married.

An excellent point. It addresses the question and uses a theorist to make the point that when we discuss diversity we often only give one side. However, it is too abrupt as a final paragraph and gives nothing by way of a conclusion.

Overall, although this is shorter than Candidate A's response, it has a much greater focus on the question and there is the basis for a very good answer. Note the references to sociologists and to perspectives. These are important because they show that Candidate B has interpreted the question well and applied knowledge to directly address the question. The answer also mentions quite a few types of families and households.

The candidate also introduces a sense of debate between those who think diversity is important and those who think it is overstated, as well as some analysis in discussing some of the causes of diversity.

This answer could be improved by developing some of the good points it makes, e.g. why the New Right thinks lone parents don't socialise children properly or what exactly is meant by 'pick and mix' society. The candidate

could also make more use of Item A by discussing why the cereal packet image became so common. Finally, other factors that promote diversity could be explored.

(13 out of 24 marks)

Total: 43 out of 60 marks

Grade: this should be enough to secure a grade A