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EDUCATION

SAMPLE QUESTIONS
One question from each section of this exam, with its marking scheme, so teachers can see what the full paper is like. Full exam and solutions: captivateeducation.com.au/trial-exams

History: Australian History

Question and Answer Book

Practice examination 1 – 2027

- Reading time is 15 minutes
- Writing time is 2 hours

Materials supplied

- Question and Answer Book
- Sources Book

Instructions

- Use the additional space at the end of this book if you need extra space to complete an answer.

Students are not permitted to bring mobile phones and/or any unauthorised electronic devices into the examination room.

Contents

Section A (2 of 4 questions, 50 marks)

Section B (1 of 4 questions, 20 marks)

Assessment criteria for Section B

SAMPLE

Practice material in the layout of the 2025 VCAA paper – generated 2027. Not a VCAA examination.

Section A

Instructions

- Answer two of the following questions in the spaces provided.

SAMPLE

- Write your responses in English.

Sample – Question 1 of the 4 questions in this section; Question 1 is shown to part c of its 5 parts.

Question 1 (15 marks)

From custodianship to the Anthropocene (60 000 BCE–2010)

Refer to Sources 1–4 in the Sources Book when responding to this question.

a. Using Source 1, identify **two** features of the image that show how Aboriginal people engineered the land to manage food resources. 2 marks

b. Evaluate the extent to which colonisation changed the use of land in Australia between 1788 and 1901. Use Source 2 and other evidence to support your response. 10 marks

SAMPLE

c. Using Source 3, outline **three** ideas that influenced environmental action in Australia between 1960 and 1980. 3 marks

SAMPLE

Section B

Instructions

- Write an essay on one of the following questions in the space provided.
- Write your response in English.
- Your response will be assessed according to the assessment criteria set out at the end of this book.

Sample – Question 1 of the 4 questions in this section.

Question 1 (20 marks)

From custodianship to the Anthropocene (60 000 BCE–2010)

'Change in how Australians valued the environment came mainly from those outside government.'

Discuss with reference to the periods 60 000 BCE–1901 and 1950–2010. 20 marks

Write your essay on the ruled pages that follow the last essay question.

OR

End of sample questions

SAMPLE

Assessment criteria for Section B

The essay in Section B will be assessed against the following criteria:

- construction of a coherent and relevant historical argument that addresses the specific demands of the essay question
- demonstration of historical knowledge that is accurate and appropriate for the essay question
- application of historical thinking concepts such as cause and consequence, continuity and change, and/or historical significance
- use of sources as evidence to support a historical argument, including a range of primary sources, perspectives and historical interpretations

SAMPLE

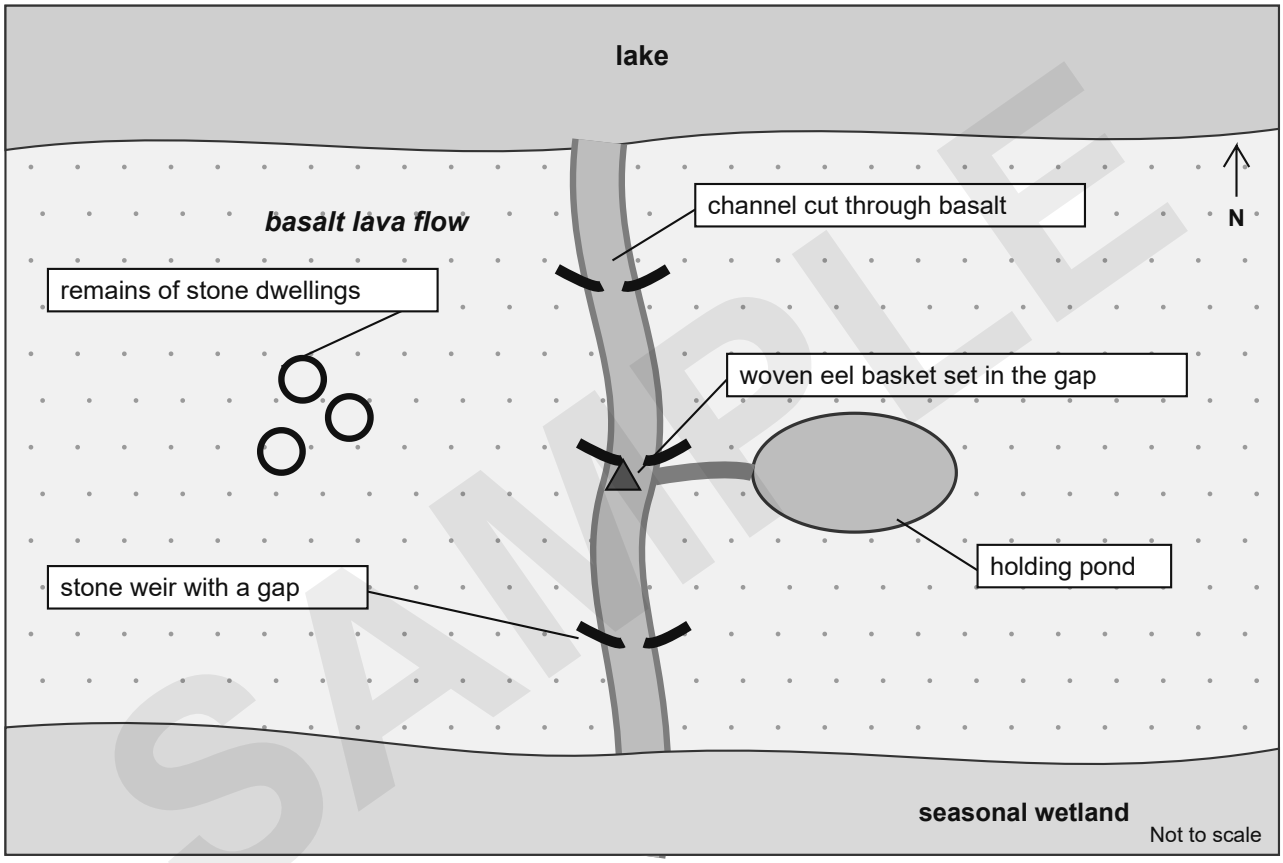
Sources Book for Section A. Refer to the sources for each question as indicated in the Question and Answer Book. You may keep this Sources Book.

From custodianship to the Anthropocene (60 000 BCE–2010)

Sources 1–4 relate to Question 1.

Source 1

A diagram drawn for this practice examination of a stone-walled channel and weir system built by Aboriginal people to trap and hold eels in south-western Victoria



SAMPLE

Diagram drawn for this practice examination; not to scale.

The labels read: ‘lake’, ‘channel cut through basalt’, ‘stone weir with a gap’, ‘woven eel basket set in the gap’, ‘holding pond’, ‘remains of stone dwellings’, ‘basalt lava flow’ and ‘seasonal wetland’.

Systems of this kind in the Budj Bim landscape of the Gunditjmara people have been dated to at least 6600 years ago.

Source 2

An extract from the journal of Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor-General of New South Wales, published in 1848, describing the use of fire in the country he explored

> Fire, grass, kangaroos, and human inhabitants, seem all dependent on each other for existence in Australia; for any one of these being wanting, the others could no longer continue. Fire is necessary to burn the grass, and form those open forests, in which we find the large forest-kangaroo; the native applies that fire to the grass at certain seasons, in order that a young green crop may spring up, and so attract and enable him to kill or take the kangaroo with nets. In summer, the burning of long grass also discloses vermin[1], birds' nests, &c., on which the females and children, who chiefly burn the grass, feed. But for this simple process, the Australian woods had probably contained as thick a jungle[2] as those of New Zealand or America, instead of the open forests in which the white men now find grass for their cattle …

Source: TL Mitchell, *Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Tropical Australia*, Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, London, 1848

1. vermin – small animals
2. jungle – dense, tangled forest and undergrowth

Source 3

A historical interpretation written for this practice examination of the ideas that influenced environmental action in Australia from the 1960s

> From the early 1960s a new vocabulary entered Australian debate about the environment. Warnings about the poisoning of birds and rivers by pesticides travelled quickly from the United States, and the science of ecology[1] taught readers to see a swamp, a heath or a river as a web of living things rather than as waste land awaiting development. Australian writers and poets turned that science into a moral argument: the land was not simply property but something held in trust for those who came after. Some environmentalists began, often clumsily, to borrow from Aboriginal ideas of custodianship, speaking of obligations to Country that most of them had only recently learned existed. By the 1970s fear of radioactive fallout and of uranium mining had joined these ideas, so that protecting a forest and opposing the bomb came to seem parts of the same cause.

Written for this practice examination in the register of a published historical interpretation; it is not the work of a published historian and carries no attribution.

1. ecology – the study of how living things relate to one another and to their surroundings

SAMPLE

Source 4

A historical interpretation written for this practice examination of the campaign to save the Franklin River

> The campaign to save the Franklin River is often told as a story of victory, but its real achievement was to change where environmental decisions were made. When Tasmania's Hydro-Electric Commission planned to dam the Gordon River below its junction with the Franklin, the state government and most Tasmanian voters seemed to stand behind it. Conservationists answered by taking the issue to the nation: photographs of the wild river were published across the mainland, thousands joined a blockade in the summer of 1982–83, and more than a thousand were arrested. The decisive moves, however, were made in Canberra. A newly elected federal government used its power over international treaties to stop the dam, and the High Court upheld that power. After the Franklin, no state could assume that its forests and rivers were its business alone[1].

Written for this practice examination in the register of a published historical interpretation; it is not the work of a published historian and carries no attribution.

1. its business alone – a matter for the state government only

… the sources for the other questions are in the full exam.

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Marking scheme for the sample questions

Section A

Question 1a. (2 marks)

*Using Source 1, identify **two** features of the image that show how Aboriginal people engineered the land to manage food resources.*

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

This question required students to identify two features of the diagram in Source 1 that show Aboriginal people shaping the land to manage food. Features had to come from the image, its labels or its caption.

describing one structure twice (‘the weir’ and ‘the gap in the weir’)

explaining Aboriginal fire management or other practices from own knowledge, which earns nothing here

Mark allocation: 1 mark for each of two distinct features drawn from the source (2 marks). Creditable features: a channel cut through basalt to carry water and eels from the lake; stone weirs built across the channel with gaps that funnelled eels; woven eel baskets set in the gaps to catch them; a holding pond to keep eels alive until needed; the remains of stone dwellings beside the system, showing people lived permanently near the food source; the system’s age of at least 6600 years (from the caption).

Responses could have included:

- name two different structures and say what each did, using the labels
- keep to the source — the caption’s dating is a feature; knowledge of the Gunditjmara or Budj Bim beyond it is not needed

Sample full-mark response

> **Sample plan.** (1) A channel was cut through the basalt lava flow to direct water, and the eels in it, from the lake to the wetland. (2) Stone weirs with gaps were built across the channel, with woven eel baskets set in the gaps to trap the eels.

Question 1b. (10 marks)

Evaluate the extent to which colonisation changed the use of land in Australia between 1788 and 1901. Use Source 2 and other evidence to support your response.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

This question required students to evaluate the extent to which colonisation changed land use between 1788 and 1901, using Source 2 and evidence beyond it. The question was marked holistically: a judgement of extent weighing change (pastoralism, gold, agriculture, introduced species, urbanisation)

SAMPLE

against continuity (colonists' dependence on landscapes shaped by Aboriginal fire, the survival of custodianship beyond the frontier).

narrating colonisation without judging the extent of change

relying on Source 2 alone, or summarising it

ignoring continuity, or treating 1788 Australia as untouched wilderness

drifting after 1901

Mark allocation: Descriptors: Marked holistically. High (8–10): a clear contention about extent sustained throughout; Source 2 integrated with a range of accurate, dated evidence across 1788–1901; change and continuity weighed and consequences for both Aboriginal people and colonists considered. Mid (5–7): a relevant argument with accurate but narrower evidence; change described more than weighed; Source 2 summarised. Low (1–4): general statements or narrative; little evidence beyond the source; no judgement.

Responses could have included:

- open with a contention about extent — for example, that colonisation transformed how land was used in the south-east within two generations, yet first depended on the open country Aboriginal burning had made
- use Source 2 precisely: Mitchell shows Aboriginal people firing grass 'at certain seasons' to make 'open forests', and that 'the white men now find grass for their cattle' in them — continuity of landscape, change of use
- trace change with dated evidence: the squatting rush of the 1830s–40s; the gold rushes from 1851 (sluicing, deforestation, silted rivers); selection under the Land Acts of the 1860s and clearing for wheat; rabbits released in 1859; Murray River irrigation at Mildura (1887) and Renmark; 'Marvellous Melbourne' in the 1880s; land degradation in the Federation drought from 1895
- weigh continuity: custodianship continued in much of northern and central Australia beyond the frontier in 1901; colonists used Aboriginal guides, waterholes and paths; historians such as Bill Gammage argue that colonists inherited a managed estate (summarised, not quoted)
- reach a judgement of extent, not a list

Sample full-mark response

> **Sample plan.** Contention: colonisation changed land use profoundly and quickly, but the first colonial economy was built on a landscape Aboriginal people had made. (1) Continuity at first — Mitchell (Source 2) saw fire creating 'open forests' where colonists now grazed cattle; squatters followed Aboriginal paths and waterholes in the 1830s–40s. (2) Rapid change — sheep and cattle replaced kangaroo and firing ceased; gold from 1851 stripped forests and silted creeks; selection in the 1860s brought ploughing and fencing; rabbits from 1859; irrigation colonies from 1887; the Federation drought exposed overstocking. (3) Limits — custodianship continued beyond the frontier; dispossession, not ecology alone, explains the change. Judgement: to a great extent in the south-east by 1901, to a lesser extent elsewhere.

SAMPLE

Question 1c. (3 marks)

*Using Source 3, outline **three** ideas that influenced environmental action in Australia between 1960 and 1980.*

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

This question required students to outline three ideas from Source 3 that influenced environmental action between 1960 and 1980, in full sentences or close paraphrase, using only the source.

isolated quotations (‘ecology’) with no sentence of explanation

adding own knowledge of Rachel Carson or Judith Wright, which earns nothing here

giving two versions of the same idea

Mark allocation: 1 mark for each of three distinct ideas from the source (3 marks): concern about pesticides poisoning birds and rivers; ecology — seeing places as webs of living things rather than waste land; the land held in trust for future generations rather than as property; Aboriginal ideas of custodianship and obligations to Country; anti-nuclear fears of fallout and uranium mining linked to protecting forests.

Responses could have included:

- write three separate sentences, each naming an idea and saying how the source presents it
- paraphrase or quote whole clauses (‘something held in trust for those who came after’)

Sample full-mark response

> **Sample plan.** (1) The science of ecology encouraged Australians to see a swamp or river as a web of living things rather than waste land awaiting development. (2) Writers argued that land was held in trust for future generations, not simply owned as property. (3) Fear of radioactive fallout and uranium mining made opposing nuclear weapons seem part of the same cause as protecting forests.

Section B

Question 1. (20 marks)

From custodianship to the Anthropocene (60 000 BCE–2010)
‘Change in how Australians valued the environment came mainly from those outside government.’ Discuss with reference to the periods 60 000 BCE–1901 and 1950–2010.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

This question required students to discuss whether change in how Australians valued the environment came mainly from those outside government, with reference to both 60 000 BCE–1901 and 1950–2010. Knowledge from both periods was required, though not in even amounts; the key terms are ‘valued’ (attitudes and priorities, not only laws) and ‘mainly’.

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Point bank — 60 000 BCE–1901: Aboriginal custodianship and land management, continuing outside colonial authority; colonial governments as agents of the doctrine of land improvement (survey, land sales, the Land Acts of the 1860s); Mitchell and other government surveyors recording Aboriginal burning; artists and writers — Eugene von Guérard's alpine and volcanic landscapes, the Heidelberg School in the 1880s, Marcus Clarke and Henry Lawson; the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (1880); governments creating the Royal National Park (NSW, 1879) and Tower Hill (Victoria, 1892), chiefly for recreation; acclimatisation societies importing species.

Point bank — 1950–2010: the Little Desert campaign (1969) defeating the Bolte government's settlement plan; the flooding of Lake Pedder (1972) despite protest and the United Tasmania Group; the Green Bans of the NSW Builders Labourers Federation (1971–74); the Australian Conservation Foundation and The Wilderness Society; the Franklin campaign and the Hawke government and High Court (1983); the Ranger Inquiry (1975–77) and Kakadu; Landcare (1989) as a partnership of farmers, conservationists and government; Clean Up Australia (1989); the Millennium Drought and government water reform (Water Act 2007); the Kyoto ratification of 2007.

Structure:an introduction that defines 'valued' and 'outside government' and states the contention (for example, that values changed mainly outside government, but became lasting only when governments and courts acted); three body paragraphs, chronological or thematic — custodianship and colonial ideology; artists, naturalists and the first parks; post-1950 movements and their relationship with government — each with an argumentative topic sentence and a link back to 'mainly'; a short conclusion restating the extent.

Mark allocation: High (15–20): a contention that tests 'mainly' — weighing artists, writers, scientists, Aboriginal custodians, campaigners and unions against colonial and federal governments, courts and agencies, and showing how they interacted — supported by precise evidence from both periods and attributed primary sources and historians. Middle (9–14): a relevant argument with mostly accurate evidence; one period thin or the weighing asserted. Low (1–8): narrative of campaigns, little weighing, few sources.
Band guide:18–20 very high · 15–17 upper high · 12–14 upper medium · 9–11 medium · 6–8 upper low · 3–5 low · 1–2 very low · 0 no evidence of meeting the criteria.

Responses could have included:

- Aboriginal custodianship and land management, continuing outside colonial authority; colonial governments as agents of the doctrine of land improvement (survey, land sales, the Land Acts of the 1860s); Mitchell and other government surveyors recording Aboriginal burning; artists and writers — Eugene von Guérard's alpine and volcanic landscapes, the Heidelberg School in the 1880s, Marcus Clarke and Henry Lawson; the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (1880); governments creating the Royal National Park (NSW, 1879) and Tower Hill (Victoria, 1892), chiefly for recreation; acclimatisation societies importing species.
- the Little Desert campaign (1969) defeating the Bolte government's settlement plan; the flooding of Lake Pedder (1972) despite protest and the United Tasmania Group; the Green Bans of the NSW Builders Labourers Federation (1971–74); the Australian Conservation Foundation and The Wilderness Society; the Franklin campaign and the Hawke government and High Court (1983); the Ranger Inquiry (1975–77) and Kakadu; Landcare (1989) as a partnership of farmers,

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conservationists and government; Clean Up Australia (1989); the Millennium Drought and government water reform (Water Act 2007); the Kyoto ratification of 2007.

Sample full-mark response

> **Sample plan.** Contention: new environmental values usually began outside government, but governments decided whether they lasted. (1) 60 000 BCE–1901 — Aboriginal custodianship embodied values colonial governments overrode through land improvement and the Land Acts; yet governments also made the first national parks in 1879 and 1892, though for recreation more than ecology. (2) Artists, writers and naturalists — von Guérard, the Heidelberg School and the Field Naturalists Club — taught colonists to appreciate the bush. (3) 1950–2010 — the Little Desert, the Green Bans and the Franklin show values changed by campaigners, but the World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983, Landcare and the Water Act 2007 show governments embedding them. Judgement: largely true for the origins of change, less so for its effects.

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