

Religious attitudes to non-violence

Christianity

- Christians generally favour non-violent responses because of Jesus' teaching and example.
- St Paul in Romans 13 talks about Christians obeying governing authorities.
- Non-violence is humane and creative.
- Standing up for justice and equality is expected – despite rejections and abuse received as a result.

Buddhism

- Peace, compassion and calmness are the main aspects of Buddhist living and attitudes.
- Non-harming is also the first of the five precepts – so non-violence is an integral part of not harming others.
- Some Buddhists accept that being willing to commit harmful acts against oneself in order to save or protect others is acceptable.

Hinduism

- Ahimsa – not harming other living beings – is at the heart of Hinduism; so non-violence is the way preferred.
- Gandhi's example of non-violent direct action inspired many, and achieved much.
- It is important also to work for and maintain peace and justice – and to protect the innocent; this may require force.

Islam

- It is the command of Allah that all live in peace, justice and responsible brotherhood – therefore non-violence is best.
- Reconciliation and forgiveness are taught clearly in the Qur'an.
- However, it may be necessary at times for the striving for justice (*jihad*) to use force and fighting.

Judaism

- Peace and harmony between people – when non-violence is the basis – is hoped for.
- Offers for peace and reconciliation should be made before any use of force or war.
- However, it is right to defend justice and life – even if force and violence are needed.

Sikhism

- Non-violence and peaceful means are the basis of much Sikh action; some Sikhs also believe in *ahimsa* (not harming other living beings).
- Defending the faith, and standing up for justice is also expected – even if it means fighting to do so.



Religion and Medicine

The Big Picture

Is it right to spend so much money on IVF when people are starving in the world?

Should people have free will to make life/death decisions?

What are the moral and ethical issues/dilemmas in life and death decisions and because of scientific advancements?

Is it ever right to end someone's life?

Why is life so special?

What are the rights of the unborn child?

How does a religion help or hinder people making decisions?







Whose life is it anyway?

Questions to ask

Key concepts to think about 	
CONSCIENCE	
	FREE WILL
HIPPOCRATIC OATH	
	MEDICAL ETHICS
	QUALITY OF LIFE
SANCTITY OF LIFE	

Check it out

The definitions used in the Check it out boxes in this chapter are basic outlines only; always add an appropriate example in your explanation, and remember the context is religious believers.

Religious teachings to explore		
  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sanctity of life • Medical ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support in making decisions about medical ethics • Abortion • Euthanasia • IVF (In-vitro fertilisation) 	  

'A man is ethical only when life, as such, is sacred to him, that of plants and animals as that of his fellow men, and when he devotes himself helpfully to all life that is in need of help.'

Albert Schweitzer

Why is life so special?

For many people living things are very special simply because life is a mystery. We know how people and animals are born, and we know what 'ingredients' there are in physical bodies. We know all about the workings of the human and animal bodies, and even a great deal about the workings of our brains and minds, our memories and emotions. But, the one thing that we still do not know is exactly what makes something alive.

No one is able to create life, although by using the 'ingredients' of sperm and ovum it is possible to stimulate fertilised cells. Eventually, though, the growing embryo needs to be implanted into a womb in order for it to grow and develop.

All the world religions teach that life is special and should be protected and valued – for each life is unique and valuable beyond any price or measure.

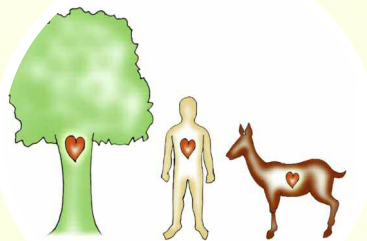
Check it out

Always add examples

Sanctity of Life

No one should take life or deny it, e.g. abortion, euthanasia

Life in all its forms is sacred



Exam Tip

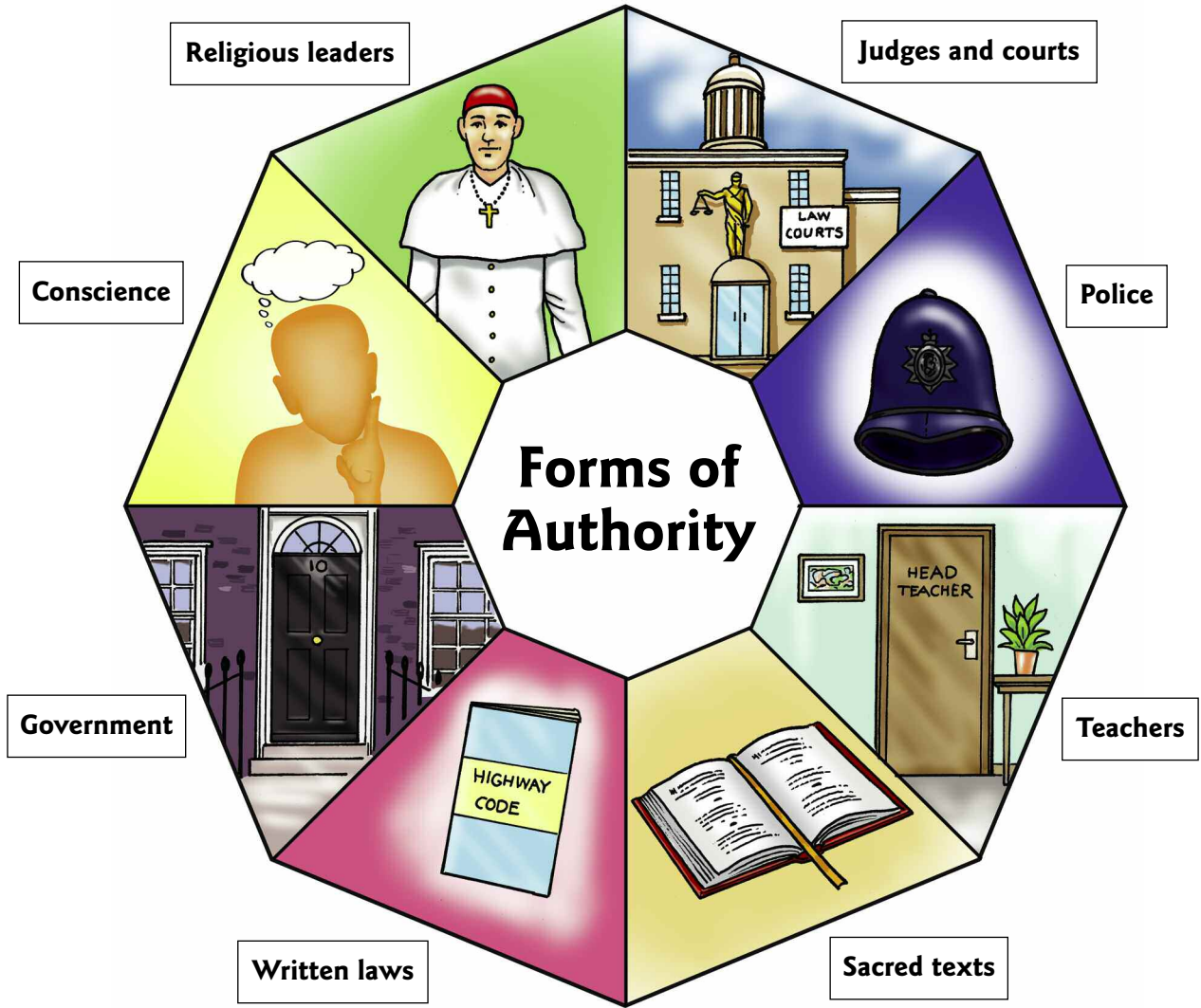
You must include specific religious content in your answers to questions about the teachings or practices of religious traditions, even though it seems easier to write about more general cultural traditions or understandings.

Q Explain how a belief in life being sacred might affect religious believers. [4]

Look at the answer below. Using the Levels of Response Grids (AO1) on page 137, decide what mark to give the answer, and explain why. Then rewrite the answer so that it can gain full marks. Note what you are adding – and learn to always include these elements in your answers to these questions.

Because many believers see life as sacred they believe it is a gift from God, so it belongs to him. So all life is precious and should not be wasted.

Why should we obey authority?



Check it out

Always add examples

Authority



Right or power over others

The moral power behind a person's words or actions, e.g. conscience

The law or those who ensure it is kept/enforced, e.g. religious rules or leaders

Task

- What other forms of authority do you have in your life?