

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies v1.1

IA3 high-level annotated sample response

March 2019

Investigation — inquiry response (25%)

This sample has been compiled by the QCAA to assist and support teachers to match evidence in student responses to the characteristics described in the instrument-specific marking guide (ISMG).

Assessment objectives

This assessment instrument is used to determine student achievement in the following objectives:

1. define and use terminology related to maintaining and retaining the culture and identity of Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples within the context of resilience
2. demonstrate an understanding of the connection between land, language, culture, time, place and relationships within Aboriginal societies and/or Torres Strait Islander societies within the context of resilience
3. analyse worldviews of Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples through identifying, examining and considering these within the context of resilience
4. consider and organise information related to cultural expression as a form of resilience through which Aboriginal culture and identity and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity are maintained and retained
5. evaluate the significance of cultural expression as a form of resilience through which Aboriginal culture and identity and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity are maintained and retained
6. create an analytical essay that communicates ideas related to cultural expression as a form of resilience through which Aboriginal culture and identity and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity are maintained and retained.

Instrument-specific marking guide (ISMG)

Criterion: Defining, using and demonstrating understanding

Assessment objectives

1. define and use terminology related to maintaining and retaining the culture and identity of Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples within the context of resilience
2. demonstrate an understanding of the connection between land, language, culture, time, place and relationships within Aboriginal societies and/or Torres Strait Islander societies within the context of resilience

The student work has the following characteristics:	Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thorough and accurate use of terminology related to maintaining and retaining the culture and identity of Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, with the meaning of words, phrases and concepts correct in all key aspects • comprehensive and appropriate identification of the connection between land, language, culture, time, place and relationships within Aboriginal societies and/or Torres Strait Islander societies through the form of cultural expression selected • detailed explanations of the connection between land, language, culture, time, place and relationships within the context of resilience, with inaccuracies or omissions not being significant to the response. 	5–6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of appropriate terminology related to maintaining and retaining the culture and identity of Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, but with the meaning of some words, phrases and/or concepts characterised by inaccuracies or omissions • some identification of the connection between land, language, culture, time, place and relationships within Aboriginal societies and/or Torres Strait Islander societies through the form of cultural expression selected • explanations of the connection between land, language, culture, time, place and relationships within the context of resilience are evident, but with some errors or omissions. 	3–4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of terminology related to maintaining and retaining the culture and identity of Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, but with the meaning of words, phrases and/or concepts characterised by significant inaccuracies and/or omissions throughout the response • one or more statements on the connection between land, language, culture, time, place and relationships through the form of cultural expression selected and/or within the context of resilience • significant errors and/or omissions within statements are evident throughout the response. 	1–2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not satisfy any of the descriptors above. 	0

Criterion: Analysing

Assessment objective

3. analyse worldviews of Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples through identifying, examining and considering these within the context of resilience

The student work has the following characteristics:	Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• well-reasoned analysis of worldviews of Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples evident in the form of cultural expression selected• thorough and detailed examination of the identified worldviews within the context of resilience• an in-depth understanding of worldviews clearly supports the analysis.	6–7
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• considered analysis of worldviews of Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples evident in the form of cultural expression selected• substantial examination of the identified worldviews within the context of resilience• an understanding of worldviews generally supports the analysis.	4–5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• partial analysis of worldviews of Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples evident in the form of cultural expression selected• some consideration of the identified worldviews within the context of resilience• a basic understanding of worldviews affects the analysis.	2–3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• one or more statements are made on worldviews of Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples evident in the form of cultural expression selected• statements based on a simplistic and/or erroneous understanding of worldviews within the context of resilience• significant inaccuracies and/or use of irrelevant information affects the analysis.	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• does not satisfy any of the descriptors above.	0

Criterion: Evaluating

Assessment objective

5. evaluate the significance of cultural expression as a form of resilience through which Aboriginal culture and identity and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity are maintained and retained

The student work has the following characteristics:	Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • insightful and well-justified evaluation of the extent to which cultural expression as a form of resilience has contributed to Aboriginal culture and identity and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity being maintained and retained • justification supported by assessing and examining cultural expression as a form of resilience through using discerning and thorough reasoning, with effective use of the selected form of cultural expression • reasoning is consistently accurate within the evaluation in relationship to the hypothesis established. 	6-7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • justified evaluation of the extent to which cultural expression as a form of resilience has contributed to Aboriginal culture and identity and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity being maintained and retained • justification supported by assessing and examining cultural expression as a form of resilience through using considered reasoning, with use of the selected form of cultural expression evident • reasoning is generally accurate within the evaluation in relationship to the hypothesis established. 	4-5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluation of the extent to which cultural expression as a form of resilience has contributed to Aboriginal culture and identity and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity being maintained and retained is evident • evaluation supported by assessing and examining cultural expression as a form of resilience through basic and appropriate reasoning • inaccuracies within the reasoning affect the evaluation in the response. 	2-3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • superficial evaluation of the extent to which cultural expression as a form of resilience has contributed to Aboriginal culture and identity and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity being maintained and retained is evident • statements related to cultural expression are based on a simplistic understanding and/or are unclear • significant inaccuracies and/or irrelevant information throughout the response affect the evaluation. 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not satisfy any of the descriptors above. 	0

Criterion: Considering, organising and creating

Assessment objectives

4. consider and organise information related to cultural expression as a form of resilience through which Aboriginal culture and identity and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity are maintained and retained
6. create an analytical essay that communicates ideas related to cultural expression as a form of resilience through which Aboriginal culture and identity and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity are maintained and retained

The student work has the following characteristics:	Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a variety of primary and secondary sources is used effectively in response to the hypothesis• succinct, with ideas conveyed logically in relation to the hypothesis devised• genre, language (spelling, grammar, punctuation) and recognised referencing conventions are adhered to, with minimal errors.	4–5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• relevant primary and secondary sources are used in response to the hypothesis• conveys ideas that are related to the hypothesis devised• genre, language (spelling, grammar, punctuation) and recognised referencing conventions are generally adhered to, but with some errors evident throughout the response.	2–3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• some use of primary and/or secondary sources is evident• conveys ideas not related to the hypothesis devised• frequent and/or significant errors in genre, language (spelling, grammar, punctuation) and/or referencing conventions impede communication of ideas.	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• does not satisfy any of the descriptors above.	0

Task

Context
Cultural expression has been used to maintain and retain culture and identity for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Cultural expression in the form of art, dance, drama, film, literature and music has been used as a significant expression of resilience.
Task
Investigate and evaluate <i>one</i> form of cultural expression used to maintain and retain the culture and identity of Aboriginal peoples <i>or</i> Torres Strait Islander peoples. Evaluate the significance of this form of cultural expression within the context of resilience. Present your response in an analytical essay.
To complete this task, you must:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> select a form of cultural expression from the list below <ul style="list-style-type: none"> art, e.g. by Albert Namatjira (Western Arrente), Alick Tipoti (Badu, Wakaydh and Agan), Brian Robinson (Waiben), Lin Onus (Yorta Yorta), Papunya Arts Movement, Thanakupi (Thaynakwith Elder), Ricardo Idagi (Mer) dance, e.g. Bangarra Dance Company, Gheona Gela (Koedal and Waumer woman), Vicky Van Hout (Wiraduri) drama, e.g. The Rabbits, Black Diggers, Pecan Summer. develop a hypothesis to investigate the extent to which the chosen form of cultural expression has contributed to the resilience of Aboriginal peoples or Torres Strait Islander peoples locate and use primary and secondary sources explain and analyse worldviews of Aboriginal peoples or Torres Strait Islander peoples evident in the form of cultural expression with regard to the connection between land, language, culture, time, place and relationships evaluate the significance of cultural expression as a form of resilience through which Aboriginal culture and identity or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity is maintained and retained support your analysis and evaluation with evidence organised from sources present your response using the conventions of an analytical essay using appropriate terminology and referencing.

Sample response

Criterion	Marks allocated	Result
Defining, using and demonstrating understanding Assessment objectives 1 and 2	6	6
Analysing Assessment objective 3	7	7
Evaluating Assessment objective 5	7	7
Considering, organising and creating Assessment objectives 4 and 6	5	4
Total	25	24

Hypothesis: *Both contemporary and traditional dancing plays a vital role in maintaining the culture and identity of Torres Strait Islander people, and being able to express culture in this way is a cornerstone of resilience.*

Criterion: Defining, using and demonstrating understanding [5–6]

thorough and accurate use of terminology

The response employs terms such as dispossession, cultural expression, and ethnicity.

comprehensive and appropriate identification of the connection between land, language, culture, time, place and relationships

detailed explanations of the connection between land, language, culture, time, place and relationships

The response identifies distinct cultural groups and traditional practices associated with life on the islands.

Criterion: Analysing [6–7]

well-reasoned analysis of worldviews of Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples evident in the form of cultural expression selected

thorough and detailed examination of the identified worldviews within the context of resilience

The response reasons that Christian missionaries could easily exert influence on the practices of various nations within the Torres Strait because of their familiarity with Pacific Islander peoples arising from historical cultural

Resilience is defined as “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties” (Dictionary.com, 2018). The people of the Torres Strait Islands have had to be extremely resilient over the years, with the Europeans bringing dispossession and multiple threats to their culture and way of life. However, they have demonstrated resilience through expressing their culture. One of the most important parts of Torres Strait Islander culture is dance, which is expressed in both contemporary and traditional formats. Almost every Islander, young or old, participates in dancing and this form of cultural expression is vital for maintaining strength of culture in the future.

The Islanders have been settled in the Torres Straits for approximately 2,500 years, originally coming overland from Papua New Guinea (BBC News, 2018). Their lives are and have always been centered around the ocean, which permeates every aspect of Torres Strait Islander culture. Dance is one of the aspects of the Torres Strait Islands that clearly shows the influence of the sea, with fishing implements, headdress motifs and ships being commonly used (Kuipers, 2018). Each island had distinct differences in language, culture (including dance) and customs, and until the 20th century Islanders did not even think of themselves as one people (Shnukal, 2001). Today, people live on 17 main islands, however before the dispossession caused by Europeans many more islands were inhabited and Islanders often return to their traditional home islands to garden and fish (Creative Spirits, 2018). Torres Strait Islanders belonged to five different groups based on ethnicity, ties to mainland Australia/Papua New Guinea, and geographical areas. These groups still exist today, and are traditionally called Saibailgal (Top Western Islands), Maluilgal (Mid-Western Islands), Kaurareg (Lower Western Islands), Kulkalgal (Central Islands) and Meriam Le (Eastern Islands) (Schnukal 2001). Each island group had their own customs and dances, however at the start of the 20th century Torres Strait Islanders were dispossessed of their land and moved to the 17 main islands (Schnukal 2001) to make it easier for the government and church authorities to exert control over them as well as concentrate infrastructure in certain areas.

As the Torres Strait Islanders made gardens, built dwellings and were fearless defenders of their territories, early records show that they were generally considered by the Europeans to be superior to the Aboriginal people of mainland Australia (Shnukal, 2001) because these practices reflected the way of life of the Europeans. While the earliest contact with Europeans was marked by violent conflict (ADCQ, 2018) the first Christian missionary who came to Erub (Darnley Island) in 1871 was welcomed, maybe because “he was accompanied by New Caledonian mission teachers and their wives” (ADCQ, 2018). By the end of the 19th century, most Islander communities were

interactions. It examines the impact of both Polynesian and Christian influences on Torres Strait Islander worldviews, practiced through traditional rituals and beliefs such as headhunting.

Criterion: Analysing [6–7]

thorough and detailed examination of the identified worldviews within the context of resilience

The response identifies the impact of missionaries on worldview and that the survival of traditional practices represents resilience.

Criterion: Defining, using and demonstrating understanding [5–6]

comprehensive and appropriate identification of the connection between land, language, culture, time, place and relationships

Criterion: Analysing [6–7]

well-reasoned analysis of worldviews of Aboriginal peoples and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples evident in the form of cultural expression selected

thorough and detailed examination of the identified worldviews within the context of resilience

an in-depth understanding of worldviews clearly supports the analysis

Criterion: Analysing [6–7]

thorough and detailed examination of the identified worldviews within the context of resilience

nominally Christian and the arrival of Christianity has been celebrated annually on the 1st of July (the date of the first Christian service) as 'The Coming of the Light'. The London Missionary Society employed Pacific Islander missionaries whose Polynesian cultures were already influencing Torres Strait Islander's customary practices (ADCQ, 2017) and they instantly set to work on abolishing the practice of headhunting and many other traditional rituals and beliefs (Shnukal, 2001). While the influence of the missionaries has been credited with abolishing tribal warfare between groups and protecting the Islanders from exploitation caused by the pearl-fishers (ADCQ, 2017), the fact remains that the wide-spread adoption of Christianity and the influence of European and Polynesian culture caused profound and in many cases irrevocable changes to Island life.

This change is evident in the language used by the Torres Strait Islanders to refer to the time before the arrival of the missionaries. They call it "bipotaim" which means "before time" (ADCQ, 2017). The missionaries worked to end conflict between the islands and draw the Islanders together into a homogenous group. Unfortunately, this led to the loss of many aspects of culture, including traditional songs and dances. As Ephraim Bani explains "The Torres Strait Islanders preserve and present their oral history through songs and dances; in other words, the songs and dances are Torres Strait literature material!" (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2018). These songs and the accompanying dances explain aspects of Island life such as important events, the movement of the stars and winds, the purpose of the marine creatures in the ocean and the myths and legends of the Strait (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2018). With the loss of many of these songs and dances, much of the history of the Torres Straits has also been lost. Over time, the traditions of the individual islands melded into a more uniform group of customs called Ailan Custom, and the Islanders from each individual group began to refer to themselves as Torres Strait Islanders. This attitude was encouraged by the missionaries, who believed that the Straits should be unified under Christianity, with the old individual traditions put aside. However, while they may today consider themselves a homogenous group (ADCQ, 2017), each island still maintains aspects of their individual cultures and this is especially evident in the remaining dances, with each traditional dance originating from a particular island or island group and therefore cultural protocol dictates that these dances are unable to be performed by other Islanders without permission (NAISDA, 2018). The traditional dances have adapted to incorporate aspects of modern life and the changes the missionaries brought, while still maintaining the history and traditions in which they are rooted. Dancing continues to play a vital role in Island life and culture.

The strength and resilience of the Islanders is demonstrated in the way in which they have incorporated the changes Europeans and the missionaries brought and still maintained a strong and vibrant Ailan Custom, albeit with contemporary changes. "The importance of dancing and songs in the Torres Strait Islands... [is not] mere entertainment... [but] is the most important aspect of

Criterion: Defining, using and demonstrating understanding [5–6]

comprehensive and appropriate identification of the connection between land, language, culture, time, place and relationships

The response discusses cultural transmission of knowledge from generation to generation.

Criterion: Evaluating [6–7]

insightful and well-justified evaluation of the extent to which cultural expression as a form of resilience has contributed to Aboriginal culture and identity and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity being maintained and retained

justification supported by assessing and examining cultural expression as a form of resilience through using discerning and thorough reasoning, with effective use of the selected form of cultural expression

reasoning is consistently accurate within the evaluation in relationship to the hypothesis established

Torres Strait lifestyle” (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2018). Bani further explains that just as in literature, the songs are the illustrations and the dancer tells the story. The dances are usually performed in rows, with the dancers performing in bare feet and with grass skirts. They often use intricate and detailed headdresses, masks and handheld objects which demonstrate the topic of the dance (this can even include aeroplanes in dances about World War 2) (Creative Spirits 2018). The different islands have their own distinct dances, like those of Mer (also known as Murray Island) in the eastern Torres Strait, who dance the Baizam (Shark) dance, the Kab Kar dance with the dhari headdresses and many different women’s dances. The Top Western Islands, like Saibai and Boigu, just off the coast of Papua New Guinea, are greatly influenced by that region, as can be seen in the long drums, sometimes covered with shark skin, and the warrior’s dance Maumatang, performed with bows and arrows. The Saibai Islanders’ Eagle Dance is unique, with its wooden wings and head movements, rapidly side-to-side with their huge headdresses (Kuipers 2018). Traditional dancing is taught by the older people to the younger, and is learnt both in the Islands and at many of the schools in the Far North Queensland region.

Dancing is used as a symbol of resilience not only on the Islands, but also throughout Queensland, in particular the mainland Far North Queensland region where many Islanders now live. While Torres Strait Islanders commonly dance on their home islands for events and gatherings, they also showcase their traditional dances at festivals such as The Winds of Zenadth, which is held every year on Waiben (Thursday Island). A major part of the festival is the Ailan (old dance), which is held every day. In 2018 there were 19 dance groups from various islands entered in a dance competition (NITV, 2018) which the mayor of the Torres Straits describes as being “about showing the distinction between communities... we (the Torres Straits) are all broken up into different communities and there are nations within nations” (NITV, 2018). This statement demonstrates a major change from the past acceptance of homogeneity caused by the unification at the hands of Christianity, as Torres Strait Islanders have become much more emphatic in discussing the region’s differences. The Torres Strait Islanders also showcase their dancing at events throughout Queensland such as the Laura Aboriginal Dance Festival, the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair and various NAIDOC events. There are many groups such as BlakDance Productions and the Jaran Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dance Company which also showcase Torres Strait Islander dancing for a southern audience, utilising dancers who live in that region. Alongside these cultural events, Torres Strait Islanders also dance at political events such as the G20 summit held in Brisbane in 2014. Dancing at these events not only strengthens culture, but also raises awareness of the people and culture of the Torres Straits. Karina Naibu, who danced in the G20 performance, said that “our performance was well received... with smiles but also disbelief as I don’t think many of the leaders knew that there were two Indigenous groups in Australia” (ABC News, 2018). Traditional dancing at these events

Criterion: Evaluating [6–7]

insightful and well-justified evaluation of the extent to which cultural expression as a form of resilience has contributed to Aboriginal culture and identity and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity being maintained and retained

Criterion: Defining, using and demonstrating understanding [5–6]

thorough and accurate use of terminology

Criterion: Evaluating [6–7]

insightful and well-justified evaluation of the extent to which cultural expression as a form of resilience has contributed to Aboriginal culture and identity and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity being maintained and retained

justification supported by assessing and examining cultural expression as a form of resilience through using discerning and thorough reasoning, with effective use of the selected form of cultural expression

The response returns to the hypothesis and the definition of resilience to exemplify that contemporary practicing of cultural traditions is a form of resilience.

reasoning is consistently accurate within the evaluation in relationship to the hypothesis established

demonstrates the incredible resilience of the Islanders and the way in which cultural practice shapes identity.

Contemporary dancing based on the ancient traditions also plays a huge role in maintaining culture and identity which builds resilience. Dance groups such as Bangarra Dance Theatre give Torres Strait Islander dancers and choreographers a means through which to showcase their art and culture. An example is the dance 'About' created by Waiben (Thursday Island) choreographer Elma Kris, who created this dance with permission from the Mer (Murray Island) elders. It is composed of traditional sequences and material and is blended with contemporary style dancing as an expression of the effect of the Gub (winds) on the land, sea and community, specifically the Zey, which are winds that blow from the south (ABC Splash, 2018). The NAISDA Dance College, located in Gosford NSW, has been developed to train the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dancers. They "develop songs, dances and materials, in a culturally appropriate manner and in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities" and empower young Indigenous people to share their knowledge and culture in a contemporary way with audiences around the globe (NAISDA Dance College 2018). This type of dancing brings Torres Strait Islander culture to cosmopolitan audiences who may never have witnessed a traditional Torres Strait Islander dance previously and gives young Torres Strait Islanders the means to participate in both traditional and 'Western' culture.

Moving forward, Torres Strait Islander dances will continue to play a vital role in cultural expression and reflect ongoing resilience. Each time they are performed for an audience it serves to strengthen knowledge and awareness of culture as a living entity, a way of life that has real relevance for Torres Strait Islander people today and has survived despite the enormous challenges faced in the past. Bringing dancing to an audience (both domestic and international) also helps distinguish the culture of the Torres Straits from Aboriginal culture, which is still the culture that many people think of when Indigenous people are mentioned. Furthermore, the continuing emphasis on dance as expressions of a particular island's culture also helps aid understanding that the islands are not and have never been a homogenous group, and that there are unique cultural differences that continue today. Finally, dancing will always remain a part of Torres Strait Islander life, a unique blend of cultures and customs that demonstrates resilience in every movement.

Note:

Criterion: Considering, organising and creating [4–5]

Throughout the response the following characteristics are evident:

- a variety of primary and secondary sources is used effectively in response to the hypothesis
- succinct, with ideas conveyed logically in relation to the hypothesis devised
- genre, language (spelling, grammar, punctuation) and recognised referencing conventions are generally adhered to, but with some errors evident throughout the response.

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