Major Themes of the Qur'an

The fifteen set passages grouped under God in himself, God's relationship with the created world and God's Messengers, with the theme of each passage and why it matters to Muslims today.

How the passages are set

Paper 1, Question 1 sets **three passages** (one from each group below) and you answer **two** of them. For each you are asked about the **major theme or themes** in the passage and about the **importance of those themes in the lives of Muslims today** (8 marks in all: 4 + 4). You study the passages in an English translation with reference to the **Arabic**, because the passage is printed in both.

NOTE

In your answers it is respectful to write **(pbuh)** ("peace be upon him") after the Prophet's name, and to use "Allah" or "God" for the Creator. These notes put the **meaning** of each passage in their own words. Learn the **sura and verse numbers** and quote short phrases from the translation you use.

Group	Theme	Passages (sura and verses)
1	God in himself	2:255 · 6:101–103 · 41:37 · 42:4–5 · 112
2	God's relationship with the created world	1 · 2:21–22 · 96:1–5 · 99 · 114
3	God's Messengers	2:30–37 · 6:75–79 · 5:110 · 93 · 108

Group 1: God in himself

Key idea: Tawhid, the oneness of God. God is one, living, eternal, all-knowing and all-powerful. He has no partner, no son and no equal, and nothing can fully comprehend him.

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Passage	What it says	Main theme
2:255 (*Ayat al-Kursi*, "the Throne Verse")	There is no god but Allah, the **Living, the Self-subsisting**. Neither slumber nor sleep seizes him. All that is in the heavens and on earth belongs to him. No one can **intercede** without his permission. He knows what is before and behind people, and his **Throne** (knowledge and authority) extends over the heavens and the earth. Guarding them does not tire him. He is the **Most High, the Supreme**	God's **oneness, life, knowledge and power**; he alone can grant intercession
6:101–103	God is the **originator** of the heavens and the earth. He cannot have a son because he has no consort, and he created everything. He is the Lord, there is no god but him, he is **Creator of all things**, so he alone should be worshipped. **No sight can grasp him, but he grasps all sight**: he is subtle and fully aware	God as **Creator**, **no son or partner**, beyond human understanding, and the duty to worship him alone
41:37	Night and day, the sun and the moon are among God's **signs**. Do **not bow to the sun or moon**: prostrate to **Allah**, who created them, if it is him you worship	Creation as **signs of God**; worship belongs to the Creator, not to created things
42:4–5	Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to God, who is **Most High and Most Great**. The heavens are almost torn apart by his majesty; the **angels glorify him** and **ask forgiveness for those on earth**. God is the **Forgiving, the Merciful**	God's **greatness and ownership**, the role of the angels, and God's **forgiveness and mercy**
112 (*al-Ikhlas*, "Sincerity")	*Qul huwa Allahu ahad.* God is **One**, the **Eternal, Absolute** (*as-Samad*: he needs nothing, everyone needs him); he **neither begets nor is begotten**; and **none is like him**	The **purest statement of Tawhid**: unity, self-sufficiency and uniqueness

Importance today. These passages are the basis of Muslim **belief and worship**. They remind Muslims that God is always aware of them (so they should be honest and conscientious), that **shirk** (setting up partners with God) is the greatest sin, that no person, wealth or power deserves worship, and that people can pray to God directly. *Sura 112* is recited daily in prayer and is said to be equal in reward to a third of the Qur'an. *Ayat al-Kursi* is recited for protection and trust in God.

Group 2: God's relationship with the created world

Key idea: God is the Lord who creates, sustains, guides and will judge his creation.

Note Academy

Passage	What it says	Main theme
Sura 1 (*al-Fatiha*, "the Opening")	In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. Praise belongs to Allah, **Lord of the worlds**, Master of the **Day of Judgement**. "You alone we worship and you alone we ask for help." **Guide us along the straight path**, the path of those you have blessed, not of those who earned your anger or went astray	**Praise, mercy, worship, judgement and guidance**; the central prayer of every salat
2:21–22	People are called to **worship their Lord** who created them and those before them, so that they may become **God-fearing** (*taqwa*). He made the earth a resting place and the sky a canopy, and sent down **rain** to bring out fruits as provision. So do not set up rivals to him	God as **Creator and Provider**; creation as a sign; **no rivals**
96:1–5	The **first revelation**: "**Read** in the name of your Lord who created, created man from a clot. Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the **pen**, taught man what he did not know"	**Knowledge and learning**; God as Creator and Teacher; the beginning of revelation
99 (*az-Zalzalah*, "the Earthquake")	When the earth is shaken with its violent quake, it throws out its burdens, and people ask what is happening. The earth tells its news, as its Lord commanded. Then people come out in groups to be shown their deeds. Whoever has done an **atom's weight of good** will see it, and whoever has done an **atom's weight of evil** will see it	**The Last Day and accountability**: every deed counts, however small
114 (*an-Nas*, "Mankind")	"I seek refuge with the **Lord, King and God of mankind**, from the evil of the **whisperer** (*al-waswas*) who slips away, who whispers in people's hearts, from jinn and from people"	**Seeking God's protection** from evil, temptation and doubt; God as Lord, King and God

Importance today. *Fatiha* is recited in every unit (*rak'ah*) of prayer, so it shapes Muslim worship and the belief that **God alone is worshipped and asked for help**. *Sura 96* encourages **education and the pursuit of knowledge** for men and women. *Sura 99* teaches **accountability**, which affects honesty and kindness in daily life and work. *Suras 114* (and 113) are recited for protection and remind Muslims to trust God against **temptation and anxiety**. *Sura 2:21–22* teaches gratitude for creation and care for the earth God has provided.

Group 3: God's Messengers

Key idea: God has guided humanity through prophets, who are human, chosen and supported by God.

Note Academy

Passage	What it says	Main theme
2:30–37 (**Adam**)	God tells the angels he will place a **khalifa** (successor or steward) on earth. The angels ask whether he will cause mischief and bloodshed, but God knows what they do not. He **teaches Adam the names** of all things, and Adam shows knowledge the angels lack. The angels are told to **bow to Adam**; they do, except **Iblis**, who refuses out of pride. Adam and his wife live in the Garden but are told not to approach one tree. **Satan** makes them slip. They are sent down to earth, but Adam receives words from his Lord, **repents** and is forgiven	**Humanity's role** as God's steward, **knowledge**, **pride and temptation**, and **repentance and forgiveness**; Adam as the first prophet
6:75–79 (**Ibrahim**, Abraham)	God shows Ibrahim the **kingdom of the heavens and the earth** so that he may have certainty. He sees a **star**, then the **moon**, then the **sun**, and says "this is my Lord", but when each sets he says he does not love things that set. He turns his face to the **Creator** and is free of **shirk**	**Tawhid through reasoning**; rejecting the worship of created things; Ibrahim as a model of **seeking the truth**
5:110 (**Isa**, Jesus)	On the Day of Judgement God reminds Isa of his favours: he strengthened him with the **Holy Spirit** so he spoke in the cradle and as an adult; taught him the Book, Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel; let him make a bird from clay by God's leave; and healed the blind and the leper and raised the dead **by God's permission**. Those who disbelieved called it magic	Isa as a **prophet and servant of God**, his **miracles** all happened **by God's permission** (he is not divine)
93 (*ad-Duha*, "the Morning Light")	By the morning light and the night when it grows still: your Lord has **not abandoned you** or grown displeased. The future will be better than the past. God will give you until you are content. He found you an **orphan** and gave you shelter, found you **lost** and guided you, found you **in need** and enriched you. So do not oppress the orphan, do not turn away the beggar, and **speak of your Lord's blessings**	**Comfort and reassurance** for the Prophet (pbuh); God's care; **kindness to orphans and the poor** and gratitude
108 (*al-Kawthar*, "Abundance")	God has given you **al-Kawthar** (abundance, a river in paradise). So **pray to your Lord and sacrifice**. It is the one who hates you who will be cut off	God's **generosity** to the Prophet (pbuh); **prayer and sacrifice**; the victory of the Prophet over his enemies

Importance today. The passages teach that all prophets brought the **same message of Tawhid**. Muslims honour **Adam, Ibrahim and Isa** as prophets (but not as divine), which helps respect between **Muslims, Christians and Jews**. Adam's story teaches **repentance**: no one is beyond forgiveness. Ibrahim's story encourages **thinking and questioning** to reach faith. *Sura 93* teaches **kindness to orphans and the**

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poor, important in Muslim charity and welfare work, and comfort in hardship. *Sura 108* is the shortest sura, and it is linked to **prayer and the sacrifice at Eid al-Adha**.

Background and importance of each passage

Examiners expect you to say **where and when** a passage was revealed, its **theme**, and then **why it matters** in daily life. Revelation circumstances below follow the usual accounts.

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Passage	Revealed	Background and theme	Importance for Muslims today
2:255	Madina	The Throne Verse: God's life, knowledge, power and authority; no one intercedes without leave	The Prophet called it a great treasure; recited for protection; removes any idea of partners with God
6:101–103	Makka	God is creator without help; he cannot have a son; nothing can see him fully but he sees all	Avoids shirk; remembering that God knows even secret deeds makes people honest
41:37	Makka	The sun and moon are signs, not gods; signs invite reflection (3:190)	Teaches worship of the Creator alone, and thought about nature
42:4–5	Makka	God owns everything; the heavens almost split at his majesty; the angels glorify him and ask forgiveness for believers	Humility before God; hope in forgiveness; forgiving others
112	Makka	Revealed when the Quraysh asked the Prophet about his Lord's lineage: God is one, eternal and unique	Recited in prayer; equal to one third of the Qur'an; guards against shirk
1	Makka	The Opening: praise, mercy, judgement, worship, help and guidance	Recited in every rak'ah; "no prayer without Fatiha"; a prayer for guidance
2:21–22	Madina	God created and provides (earth, sky, rain) and must not be given rivals	Gratitude, and care for the earth God has given
96:1–5	Makka	The first revelation: God as creator and teacher, the pen and knowledge	Value of learning for all; reading and writing as worship
99	Often listed as Madinan	The earthquake and the accounting; an atom's weight of good or evil	Accountability; small acts count; do not be distracted by this world
114	Makka (and later Madina, with Sura 113)	Refuge with the Lord, King and God of mankind from the whisperer	Recited for protection; trust in God against temptation and anxiety
2:30–37	Madina	Adam as God's successor on earth; angels bow and Iblis (a jinn) refuses out of pride; Adam repents	Humanity's role and responsibility; avoid pride; God forgives (7:23)

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Passage	Revealed	Background and theme	Importance for Muslims today
6:75–79	Makka	Ibrahim reasons from the stars, moon and sun to one Creator (see 6:81)	Faith is reached by thought; reject worship of created things
5:110	Madina	God recalls his favours to Isa: miracles "by my leave"; Isa as a prophet and servant	Belief in Isa as a prophet; all power belongs to God
93	Makka	Revealed after a pause in revelation when the Quraysh mocked the Prophet; God had not forsaken him: orphan sheltered, lost guided, poor enriched	Hope in hardship; kindness to orphans and the poor (76:8); gratitude
108	Makka	Revealed after the death of the Prophet's son, when Abu Lahab called him *abtar* ("cut off"): God gave him abundance (a river in paradise) and told him to pray and sacrifice	Trust in God when mocked; the link with Eid al-Adha; the shortest sura

Sample reasons for the [4] questions about themes.

- **Why should Muslims understand God's attributes?** The better they know God, the better they understand their purpose and are protected from shirk.
- **How can men and women serve God as his "representatives on earth" (2:30)?** By worship, gratitude, honest work, charity, learning and teaching, and looking after the provisions and environment God has given.
- **Why does the Qur'an stress knowledge?** The first command was "Read", and without learning people would not know their duties and potential.
- **"Hardship brings a person closer to God": agree or disagree?** Agree: the prophets were tested and stayed steadfast, which strengthened faith. A reasoned disagreement is also possible: not everyone reacts the same way.
- **"The Qur'an teaches responsibility towards the environment"?** Agree: earth and rain are for people's benefit and on the Last Day the earth will bear witness to how people treated it (99:4).

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Major themes of the Qur'an (summary)

Theme	Where it appears in the passages
Tawhid (God's oneness)	112, 2:255, 6:101–103, 6:75–79
God as Creator and Sustainer	2:21–22, 41:37, 96:1–5, 6:101
God's mercy and forgiveness	1, 42:5, 2:37
Worship and trust in God	1, 114, 41:37
Accountability and the Last Day	99, 1 (Master of the Day of Judgement)
Guidance and prophethood	1, 2:30–37, 6:75–79, 5:110, 93
Knowledge	96, 2:31–33
Care for the weak	93

For the 8-mark question: (a) name the theme and give two or three points from the passage with the sura number; (b) explain how it affects Muslims today, for example in prayer, honesty, education, respect for other prophets, or charity.

TRY IT

Choose a passage from Group 2 (for example Sura 99) and explain (a) its major theme and (b) why the theme matters to Muslims today.

Outline. *(a)* The theme is **accountability on the Last Day**: the earth quakes, people are shown their deeds, and even an **atom's weight** of good or evil is seen. *(b)* It makes Muslims **careful about every action**, encourages **honesty, charity and small acts of kindness**, and reminds them that wealth or power will not help on the Last Day, only deeds done for God.

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