

Choir in Context Study Notes and Sample Questions from 2027

QUESTION STYLES

Bible Section

Candidates will be asked **two** short answer questions about the psalm they have sung in their exam. Whilst the exact wording of the question will depend on the psalm sung, the questions will, broadly, follow this format:

1. What is the psalm about/what is the mood/what is the main message of the psalm?
2. How does the Psalm show that ...? *(the question will direct to an aspect of the Psalm's meaning and message).*

Study notes on each Psalm are found later in this document.

Liturgy Section

Candidates will have studied **either** Easter Day **or** Pentecost. Please note that Christmas is **not** an option from 2027 in the Bronze award exam.

Candidates will be asked **four** short answer questions about their chosen Festival. Questions will follow the following format:

1. A short 'what happened' question about an aspect of the biblical story of their chosen festival
2. A 'why' or 'how' or 'what does it mean' type question asking candidates to show understanding
3. A question asking how the Liturgy for their chosen Festival reflects the Biblical story
4. Suggest a suitable hymn, psalm or anthem for their chosen festival (candidate choice as to which).

Ministry Section

Candidates will be expected to be familiar with and have studied/thought about the Choristers' Prayer.

They will be asked two short questions about it in the broad format/style:

1. What does the phrase.... mean?
2. How does the phrase apply to you/your ministry as a chorister?

Bible Section – Study Notes on the Psalms (STUDY ONE ONLY)

Psalm 53

Main ideas

- This psalm warns against living as though God does not exist.
- It teaches that God sees human behaviour clearly.
- Wrongdoing and selfishness are described as foolish.
- There is also hope that God will save and restore faithful people.

Mood and atmosphere

- Serious and thoughtful.
- A warning against evil behaviour.
- There is sadness about human wrongdoing, but also confidence that God can rescue His people.

Important themes

- Wisdom versus foolishness.
- God's awareness of human actions.
- Trust that God will help those who remain faithful.

Things to remember

- The psalm combines judgement with hope.
- The writer is upset by evil but still trusts God's power to save.

Psalm 114

Main ideas

- This psalm remembers the escape of the Israelites from Egypt.
- Nature itself reacts to God's presence and power.
- It celebrates God as ruler over creation.

Mood and atmosphere

- Triumphant and dramatic.
- Full of wonder and excitement.
- Creates a sense of awe at God's greatness.

Important themes

- God's saving power.
- God's control over the natural world.
- Remembering important events in Israel's history.

Key images

- Waters moving aside.
- Mountains and hills trembling.
- Nature responding to God.

Things to remember

- The psalm uses vivid pictures to show God's strength.
- Historical events are described in a poetic and powerful way.

Psalm 121

Main ideas

- This is a psalm of trust in God's protection.
- God is described as always awake and always watching over His people.
- The writer believes God guides and guards every part of life.

Mood and atmosphere

- Peaceful, calm, and reassuring.
- Full of confidence and trust.

Important themes

- God as protector and guardian.
- Constant care and guidance.
- Safety and reassurance in difficult times.

Key images

- Looking up for help.
- God never sleeping.
- Protection by day and night.

Things to remember

- This psalm is often used to comfort people.
 - It stresses that God is always present and dependable.
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Psalm 129

Main ideas

- The writer speaks about suffering and opposition from enemies.
- Even after hardship, faith remains strong.
- There is confidence that justice will eventually come.

Mood and atmosphere

- Strong, determined, and resilient.
- Honest about pain but hopeful about God's help.

Important themes

- Perseverance through suffering.
- Faithfulness during hardship.
- Trust in God's justice.

Things to remember

- The psalm shows courage in difficult circumstances.
 - Faith is presented as something that continues even when life is painful.
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Psalm 138**Main ideas**

- This is a song of thanksgiving and praise.
- The writer thanks God for love, care, and answered prayer.
- There is confidence that God's love lasts forever.

Mood and atmosphere

- Joyful, thankful, and confident.
- Warm and personal in tone.

Important themes

- Gratitude and praise.
- Trust in God's faithfulness.
- Publicly thanking God.

Things to remember

- The psalmist openly declares trust in God.
 - Praise is connected with personal experience of answered prayer.
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Liturgy Section – Study Notes on EASTER DAY and PENTECOST (STUDY ONE ONLY)

Easter

Main events

Early Morning at the Tomb

- Women followers of Jesus went to the tomb very early in the morning.
- Mary Magdalene is named in all Gospel accounts.
- They expected to find Jesus' body still there.

The Empty Tomb

- The stone had been rolled away from the entrance.
- Jesus' body was no longer in the tomb.
- Peter and another disciple ran to the tomb to investigate.
- The empty tomb surprised and frightened the visitors.

The Message Given

- Angels, or a messenger dressed in white, announced that Jesus had risen.
- The women were told that Jesus was alive.
- They were asked to tell the disciples the news.

Jesus appeared

- Jesus appeared alive to his followers, who recognised him and knew he had risen

Important Themes and Meanings

Victory Over Death

- Christians believe the resurrection shows that death was defeated.
- Easter Day is the centre of Christian hope.

Fulfilment of God's Promise

- The resurrection confirmed Jesus' teaching and promises.
- Followers understood that God's power was greater than suffering and death.

Hope and Joy

- Fear and sadness changed into joy and confidence.
- The resurrection gave courage to the disciples.

Faith and Belief

- Some followers believed immediately; others needed proof.
- The empty tomb and appearances of Jesus strengthened their faith.

Liturgy

- Celebrates the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
- Readings focus on Jesus rising and appearing to his disciples.
- "Alleluia" returns in the liturgy as a sign of joy and celebration.
- Church atmosphere is joyful, reflecting the excitement of the resurrection.
- Symbols (e.g. light, Easter candle) represent Jesus as the light of the world.

Pentecost

Main Events

Who was there

- The disciples and followers of Jesus were gathered together in one place.
- They were waiting after Jesus had ascended into heaven.

The arrival of the Holy Spirit

- Suddenly there was a sound like a strong rushing wind.
- Something like tongues of fire appeared and rested on each person.
- The Holy Spirit filled all the believers present.

What happened immediately after

- The disciples began speaking in different languages.
- Visitors from many countries could understand what was being said.
- This surprised and amazed the crowd.

Important Themes and Meanings

On the disciples

- They became bold and confident.
- They were no longer afraid to speak about Jesus.
- They began preaching to large crowds. They were able to speak in ways that reached many people.

The Holy Spirit

- Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is God's presence in the world.
- The Spirit helps, guides, and strengthens believers.

On the early Church

- Many people believed the message about Jesus.
- The group of believers began to grow quickly.
- This is why Pentecost is often called the "birthday of the Church."

Liturgy

- Commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit on the disciples
- Readings describe wind, fire, and speaking in different languages
- Main message: the Church is empowered to spread the Gospel
- Red vestments used to symbolise fire and the Holy Spirit
- Prayers ask for the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit
- Liturgy focuses on mission and the birth of the Church.

Ministry Section – Study Notes on The Choristers’ Prayer

The Choristers’ Prayer (full text)

Bless, O Lord, us thy servants who minister in thy temple;
 Grant that what we sing with our lips we may believe in our hearts,
 And what we believe in our hearts we may show forth in our lives;
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

What the prayer is about

The Choristers’ Prayer is a prayer asking God to help choristers serve Him well through music in church. It focuses on singing, belief, and behaviour.

“Bless, O Lord, us thy servants who minister in thy temple”

Meaning

- Choristers are described as “servants” who serve God.
- “Minister in thy temple” means taking part in worship in church.
- It shows that singing in church is a form of service to God, not just a performance.

What this means for choristers

- Choristers are helping lead worship.
 - They have an important role in church services.
 - They should treat their role with respect and care.
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“Grant that what we sing with our lips we may believe in our hearts”

Meaning

- The words sung in church should be genuinely believed.
- Singing should not be empty or just routine.
- Faith should be sincere and thoughtful.

What this means for choristers

- Understand the words being sung.
 - Sing with meaning, not just sound.
 - Try to connect feelings and belief with the music.
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“And what we believe in our hearts we may show forth in our lives”

Meaning

- Beliefs should affect everyday behaviour.
- Faith is not only for church services.
- Actions should reflect what is believed.

What this means for choristers

- Be kind, respectful, and honest in daily life.
 - Show Christian values at school, home, and in the community.
 - Let actions match beliefs.
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Overall message of the prayer

- Choristers serve God through singing.
- Worship should be sincere and meaningful.
- Belief in God should shape behaviour outside church.