

Exercise walk-through

1.1

Knowledge and the knower

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Theory of Knowledge

1. TOK at a glance

TOK at a glance

IB Theory of Knowledge: reflection on the nature, scope and limits of knowledge and the process of knowing. Assessed by the essay on one of six prescribed titles (two thirds) and the exhibition of three objects with commentaries (one third).

Must-know: the knowledge question (second-order, open, contestable); five areas of knowledge compared by method; the essay's unpack, argue, exemplify, weigh, imply; the exhibition's three objects, one prompt, three different links.

2. The knowledge question

The knowledge question

A question about knowing rather than about the thing known: not why did the wall fall, but how does the historian know why, and what would count as a better answer?
Open, general, contestable: the course's central question is how do we know that.

Worked: the school ranking list turns who came first into what does the rank measure, and what does it miss: measurement itself becomes a knowledge question.

Check yourself

Check yourself

Knowledge questions second-order and contestable.

Five areas compared by method.

The essay unpacked and argued in two areas.

The exhibition: three objects, three routes, one prompt.

Exercises 2.1-2.3

2.1 What makes a question a KNOWLEDGE question (three features)? [3]

2.2 Name the five areas of knowledge. [5]

2.3 Name the two assessment tasks and their weightings. [2]

Exercises 2.1·2.3

2.1 What makes a question a KNOWLEDGE question (three features)? [3]

2.1 Open (multiple plausible answers) (1); general (about an area or method, not one case) (1); contestable (worth arguing both ways) (1).

2.2 Name the five areas of knowledge. [5]

2.2 History (1); the human sciences (1); the natural sciences (1); the arts (1); mathematics (1).

2.3 Name the two assessment tasks and their weightings. [2]

2.3 The essay on a prescribed title (two thirds) (1); the exhibition of three objects (one third) (1).

Exercises 2.4·3.1

2.4 Name the three essay failure modes. [3]

2.5 What must every exhibition object carry, and how many objects? [2]

3.1 (*Second-order style.*) Turn the question “why did the bridge collapse?” into a knowledge question, and justify the turn. [3]

Exercises 2.4·3.1

2.4 Name the three essay failure modes. [3]

2.4 The patched summary (course notes stapled to a title) (1); the one-area essay (1); the example-free argument (1).

2.5 What must every exhibition object carry, and how many objects? [2]

2.5 A commentary linking it to the chosen prompt (1); three objects (1).

3.1 (*Second-order style.*) Turn the question “why did the bridge collapse?” into a knowledge question, and justify the turn. [3]

3.1 Knowledge question: what would count as KNOWING why the bridge collapsed, and how would engineering, regulation and witness differ in meeting that standard? (or equivalent) (2); justification: the turn moves from the event to the knowing of it (first-order to second-order) (1).

Exercises 3.2-3.3

3.2 (*Areas style.*) The same ranking list is read by a historian, a mathematician and a human scientist. Draft the three reads. [6]

3.3 (*Exhibition style.*) On the experts prompt, a student exhibits three objects that all show experts REPLACED. Diagnose the weakness, and recommend a fix. [4]

Exercises 3.2-3.3

3.2 (*Areas style.*) The same ranking list is read by a historian, a mathematician and a human scientist. Draft the three reads. [6]

3.2 Historian: the list as a trace, evidence only when asked a question about the past (2); mathematician: the ordering exact within its definition, empty of persons (2); human scientist: the rank as model output, the weights chosen and contestable (2).

3.3 (*Exhibition style.*) On the experts prompt, a student exhibits three objects that all show experts REPLACED. Diagnose the weakness, and recommend a fix. [4]

3.3 Weakness: three objects with one relation to the prompt explore a single route; the exhibition's range collapses (2). Fix: keep one replaced-expert object, add the expert made invisible (the app icon) and the expert translated (the label): three different relations, one prompt (2).

Local review guidance: (R1) 3.1 reaches second order; 3.2 names each area's method; 3.3 widens the routes. Authored guidance.