

Religious Fundamentalism Perspectives - Answer Key

Perspective #1: The Privileged Youth

Who: Upper-class teenager from a wealthy family during the Iranian Revolution (late 1970s)

When: 1978-1979

Where: Iran (likely Tehran)

Key Clues:

- **"Oil money flowing through our country"** - Iran's massive oil wealth under the Shah
- **"Marble floors imported from Italy," "French dresses," "embassy parties"** - The westernized lifestyle of Iran's elite under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi
- **"Planning to study engineering in London"** - Common for wealthy Iranian families to send children to Western universities
- **"Foreign devils," "purifying our land," "true path of the Prophet"** - Language of the Islamic Revolution
- **"Religious teachers who had been quietly ignored for years suddenly had thousands"** - Rise of clerical opposition led by figures like Ayatollah Khomeini

Historical Context:

The Shah's modernization program (the "White Revolution") brought Western influence, women's rights, and secular education, but also created enormous wealth inequality and cultural displacement. Many Iranians felt their Islamic identity was being erased. The 1979 Revolution began as a broad coalition against the Shah's authoritarianism but was ultimately led by Shia clerics who established an Islamic Republic.

Perspective #2: The Religious Teacher

Who: Islamic scholar/teacher (likely a mullah or religious instructor)

When: 1978-1979, reflecting on previous 30 years

Where: Iran

Key Clues:

- **"Sacred texts," "Quran," "sayings of the Prophet," "Arabic"** - Islamic religious education

- **"Oil money flowed," "foreign teachers," "Western music"** - Iran's rapid modernization under the Shah
- **"Rulers seemed more interested in pleasing foreign powers"** - The Shah's close ties to the U.S. and Britain
- **"Shopping centers and nightclubs"** - Western-style modernization in Iranian cities
- **"Islamic law," "truly faithful society should be organized"** - Vision of Islamic governance (later implemented as the Islamic Republic)
- **"Corrupt government that sold our souls for Western approval is crumbling"** - Fall of the Shah's regime

Historical Context:

Traditional Islamic education declined as Iran modernized. Many clerics felt marginalized by secular education and Western cultural influence. The revolution gave them an opportunity to reassert Islamic values and create a government based on Islamic law (Sharia). The new regime implemented strict Islamic codes for dress, behavior, and social organization.

Perspective #3: The Middle-Class Woman

Who: Educated urban woman living under the Islamic Republic

When: Early 1980s (after the revolution)

Where: Iran (likely Tehran or another major city)

Key Clues:

- **"Revolution we all cheered for—the one that was supposed to free us from a corrupt king"** - The 1979 Iranian Revolution that overthrew the Shah
- **"Government imposed by foreign powers"** - Reference to how the U.S. and Britain helped restore the Shah to power in 1953
- **"New rules about how I must dress, how I can work"** - Islamic Republic's mandatory hijab laws and restrictions on women
- **"Pray five times a day," "respect the Prophet's teachings"** - Islamic religious practices
- **"Music I used to love is banned," "books...removed from libraries"** - Cultural restrictions under the Islamic Republic

- **"Rigid interpretations of our own faith, enforced by men"** - Critique of how Islamic law was implemented

Historical Context:

After the revolution, the Islamic Republic implemented strict Islamic codes. Women were required to wear hijab, many Western cultural products were banned, and new textbooks emphasized Islamic values. Many middle-class Iranians who had supported the revolution found themselves caught between their desire for authentic national identity and their loss of personal freedoms they had enjoyed under the Shah's regime.

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U.S. Christian Fundamentalism (1980s)

Perspective #4: The Mainline Protestant

Who: Long-time member of a traditional Protestant church (Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, etc.)

When: Mid-1980s

Where: United States (likely suburban or small-town America)

Key Clues:

- **"Grandfather built this church...in 1923," "coming here every Sunday for forty-seven years"** - Establishes timeline (1980s) and traditional denominational background
- **"During the Depression...During the war...civil rights movement"** - References to how mainline churches engaged with social issues throughout 20th century
- **"New church out by the highway...television studio...parking lot bigger than our downtown"** - Description of evangelical mega-churches that boomed in the 1980s
- **"Take back America," "biblical values," "abortion, homosexuality, prayer in schools"** - Language of the Religious Right/Moral Majority movement
- **"Contemporary music, dynamic preaching, simple answers"** - Characteristics of evangelical worship style vs. traditional liturgy

Historical Context:

The 1980s saw the rise of the "Religious Right" and evangelical mega-churches. Traditional mainline Protestant denominations (Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal) began losing members to more dynamic evangelical churches. The Moral Majority, founded by Jerry Falwell in 1979, mobilized conservative

Christians politically around issues like abortion, school prayer, and "traditional family values," helping elect Ronald Reagan.

Perspective #5: The Born-Again Evangelical

Who: Recently converted evangelical Christian

When: Mid-1980s

Where: United States (likely suburban area with growing evangelical church)

Key Clues:

- **"Three years ago," "drinking a bottle of wine every night"** - Personal transformation narrative common in evangelical testimony
- **"Grown up Catholic but hadn't been to mass in years"** - Many evangelicals came from mainline or Catholic backgrounds
- **"Contemporary songs," "not like the old hymns"** - Evangelical worship style with modern Christian music
- **"Gave my life to Christ," "personal relationship with Jesus"** - Classic evangelical conversion language
- **"Building a new sanctuary," "Christian schools," "supporting candidates who share our values"** - Rapid growth and political engagement of evangelical churches in 1980s
- **"Culture wars and political battles"** - Reference to increasing political activism of evangelical movement

Historical Context:

The 1980s evangelical movement attracted many people seeking personal transformation and community. Mega-churches grew rapidly, offering contemporary worship, strong community support, and clear moral guidance. The movement increasingly entered politics, supporting conservative candidates and causes, leading to the "culture wars" over social issues.

Perspective #6: The Jewish Parent

Who: Non-Christian parent concerned about evangelical influence in public education

When: Mid-1980s

Where: United States (small town or suburb with growing evangelical population)

Key Clues:

- **"School board meeting," "books in the school library," "science curriculum," "evolution...taught as fact instead of theory"** - Battles over education that intensified in 1980s
- **"Moment of silent prayer"** - School prayer was a key issue for the Religious Right
- **"Organized, passionate, and they vote"** - Recognition of evangelical political mobilization
- **"Raised Jewish, though we're not particularly observant," "David grew up Methodist"** - Interfaith/secular family perspective
- **"Schools should be places where all children can learn and grow, regardless of their family's religious beliefs"** - Defense of religious pluralism in public education

Historical Context:

The 1980s saw increased evangelical activism in local school boards, challenging textbooks, curricula, and library books they viewed as conflicting with Christian values. Issues included evolution vs. creationism, sex education, school prayer, and book censorship. Non-evangelical families often found themselves defending pluralism and academic freedom in their communities.

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## Hindu Nationalism in India (1980s-1990s)

### Perspective #7: The Hindu Nationalist Supporter

**Who:** Hindu Indian supporting the rise of Hindu nationalism

**When:** Late 1980s-1990s

**Where:** India (likely northern India where Hindutva movement was strongest)

### Key Clues:

- **"Our family has farmed this land for eight generations, long before the British ever arrived"** - Establishes deep roots and anti-colonial sentiment
- **"After independence," "secular" and "modern," "special privileges to minorities"** - Criticism of Nehru's secular nationalism and minority protections
- **"Ramayana and Mahabharata"** - Hindu epic texts central to cultural identity
- **"Contested site where a mosque stands on what many believe was once a great temple"** - Clear reference to Ayodhya and the Babri Masjid controversy
- **"Carried bricks, sang devotional songs"** - Description of the 1989 Ram Janmabhoomi movement

- **"Learning Sanskrit again," "politicians quoting our scriptures"** - Cultural revival aspects of Hindu nationalism

### **Historical Context:**

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and affiliated organizations like the RSS mobilized Hindus around the belief that secular policies favored minorities at the expense of the Hindu majority. The Ayodhya movement (1980s-1990s) claimed the Babri Masjid mosque was built on the birthplace of the Hindu god Rama. The movement culminated in the mosque's destruction in 1992, leading to communal riots.

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### **Perspective #8: The Muslim Indian**

**Who:** Indian Muslim whose family stayed during Partition

**When:** Late 1980s-1990s

**Where:** India (could be anywhere but possibly northern India)

### **Key Clues:**

- **"1947," "great migrations," "new borders," "newly created country where people of our faith would be the majority"** - References to Partition and creation of Pakistan
- **"Trainloads of refugees crossed the new borders"** - Description of Partition's massive population exchange
- **"Forty years" of peaceful coexistence** - Period from 1947 to late 1980s
- **"Saffron scarves," "real Indians," "foreign invaders"** - Hindu nationalist symbols and rhetoric
- **"Appeasing minorities"** - Common BJP/Hindu nationalist criticism of secular policies
- **"Ancestors were destroyers of temples"** - Hindu nationalist narrative about Muslim rulers

### **Historical Context:**

During Partition (1947), millions of Muslims migrated to Pakistan while others chose to remain in India. For decades, India's secular constitution protected religious minorities. However, the rise of Hindu nationalism in the 1980s-90s increasingly portrayed Muslims as outsiders, despite many families having lived in India for centuries.

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## **Perspective #9: The Hindu Academic**

**Who:** University professor specializing in ancient Indian history and philosophy

**When:** Late 1980s-1990s

**Where:** India (likely at a major university)

### **Key Clues:**

- **"Upanishads," "Gita," "ancient astronomers and mathematicians"** - Hindu philosophical and scientific texts
- **"As many faiths, so many paths"** - Reference to Hindu philosophical concept of religious pluralism
- **"Politicians quote sacred texts they clearly don't understand"** - Critique of political appropriation of religion
- **"Building a 'pure' nation"** - Reference to Hindu nationalist vision of Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation)
- **"University colleagues are increasingly nervous"** - Academic freedom concerns under rising Hindu nationalism

### **Historical Context:**

Hindu nationalism drew on genuine pride in India's ancient civilization but often simplified complex philosophical traditions into political slogans. The movement promoted the idea of Hindutva (Hindu-ness) as the basis for Indian national identity, which concerned secular intellectuals who valued India's pluralistic traditions and worried about academic freedom under religious nationalism.