



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2008

ENGLISH

**ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT
HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT**

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1. General Introduction

A revised syllabus for Leaving Certificate English was introduced in 1999 and first examined in 2001.

The examination consists of two written papers, each with an allocation of 200 marks. Paper 1 consists of two sections designed specifically ‘to test the comprehending and composing abilities of students’ (*English Syllabus*, DES, 7.3, p.19). Section I consists of three unseen texts: section II of a choice of seven composition assignments.

Paper 2 consists of three sections and is designed to test the students’ ‘knowledge of and response to a range of texts’ (*English Syllabus*, DES, 7.4, p.20). Section I consists of a range of texts from which one is chosen: section II focuses on comparative material: section III consists of unseen and prescribed poetry. The overall total of marks is 400.

Two hours and fifty minutes is allocated to Paper 1; Paper 2 has a time allocation of three hours and twenty minutes. The total time allocation is six hours and ten minutes. These papers were scheduled on consecutive days for the first time in 2008.

Four criteria are used to assess candidates’ work – Clarity of Purpose (P): Coherence of Delivery(C): Efficiency of Language Use (L) and Accuracy of Mechanics (M). These criteria are further glossed in Appendix 1 of the Marking Scheme 2008.

2. Ordinary Level

2.1. Introduction.

This section of the report deals with candidate performance at Ordinary Level. Exemplars of standard of achievement appear at the end of this report. It is advised that this material be read in conjunction with the Marking Scheme 2008 (available at: www.examinations.ie).

In general, candidates scored well under the first two criteria – Clarity of Purpose (P) and Coherence of Delivery (C) but some candidates scored less well under Management of Language (L) and Accuracy of Mechanics (M).

Paper 1 (200 marks)

Paper 1 contains two inter-related sections – **Comprehending** and **Composing**.

Section I: **Comprehending**. This section contains texts designed to test the candidates' abilities to comprehend the material and to write on a range of tasks arising from the texts.

Section II: **Composing**. This section contains a series of options (usually seven) designed to test the candidates' abilities to compose material that reflects language study in the areas of information, argument, persuasion, narration and the aesthetic use of language.

Each of these two sections carries 100 marks.

Section I (Comprehending, 100 marks)

In 2008, three texts were set on the general theme of LIFESTYLES. All texts contain visual material. Candidates must familiarise themselves with each of the texts before beginning their answers. A brief foreword to each text is included to facilitate this. Two questions, A and B, follow each text. Question A provides a short series of questions to probe the candidates' understanding of the particular text. Question B requires candidates to complete a short functional task arising in a general way from a text. Genres, purposes and audiences can be specified for these functional tasks. Candidates are required to answer *one* Question A on any of the three texts and *one* Question B on any other of the remaining two texts. Questions A and B carry an equal allocation of 50 marks.

Section II (Composing, 100 marks)

There is a range of composition titles. In 2008 seven composition titles were presented. Genre, purpose and audience were specified as appropriate. 100 marks are allocated to the composition.

Paper II (200 marks)

This paper consists of three sections: Section I: **The Single Text**, Section II: **The Comparative Study** and Section III: **Poetry**. This latter is divided into two sub-sections – Unseen Poetry and Prescribed Poetry. There are specific requirements (outlined below) for each section.

Section I (The Single Text: 60 marks)

The list of texts changes from year to year. In 2008, there were nine Single Texts prescribed. Candidates are required to answer on one text. There are both compulsory and optional questions set on each of the nine texts.

Section II (The Comparative Study: 70 marks)

Candidates are required to answer one of four questions in this section. These consist of two questions on each of two of the three comparative modes prescribed annually for study (see full list *English Syllabus* DES, 6.4). The following two modes were examined in 2008: Relationships and Social Setting.

Section III (Poetry: 70 marks)

Candidates are required to answer two short questions on an Unseen Poem (20 marks). They are also required to answer questions on one of four Prescribed Poems that are printed on the paper (50 marks). There are both compulsory and optional questions set on each of the four poems.

2.2 Performance of Candidates.

A total of 17,590 candidates sat the examination at Ordinary Level in 2008. The following table shows the breakdown of grades achieved by candidates at this level in the years 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Year	Total	A	B	C	C+	D	E	F	N.G	E-
2005	19,165	8.0	30.1	39.0	77.1	20.0	2.2	0.5	0.1	2.8
2006	17,961	8.2	32.5	38.8	79.5	17.9	2.0	0.4	0.1	2.5
2007	17,378	8.1	29.2	39.9	77.2	19.5	2.6	0.6	0.1	3.3
2008	17,590	8.0	29.0	39.3	76.3	20.1	2.7	0.6	0.2	3.5

2.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance.

General Comments.

In the examination in 2008, the majority of candidates followed instructions in relation to answering:

- (a) the correct number of sections and
- (b) the required number of questions from all sections.

A number of candidates failed to complete the requisite number of tasks. In these cases whole sections were sometimes omitted or the full requirement in one or more sections was not completed or invalid text choices for the **Comparative Study** on Paper II were presented. In a very few extreme cases, candidates attempted Paper 1 only. Candidates who attempt *all* questions A and B in Section 1 – **Comprehending** – on Paper I, leave themselves short of time for the completion of the composition in **Section II**. Candidates who followed instructions and who demonstrated consistent capacities to communicate their understandings, thoughts and feelings presented worthwhile work for assessment.

Paper 1 (200 marks)

SECTION I, COMPREHENDING (100 marks).

In Section I, Comprehending, questions A and B were well answered and candidates appeared to enjoy their engagement with the task. Text 2 - *What does the future look like?* - was the most popular choice, both as an **A** option and a **B** option. Responses to Text 1 – *Paradise* - were more frequent than those on Text 3. There was some improvement noted in dealing with visual literacy i.e. Text 3, but it remained the least

frequently answered. Responses to the set tasks for Text 3 tended to be less accomplished than those in the other two text options.

TEXT 1 *Paradise*

QUESTION A.

In A (i), candidates who identified aspects of modern life as captured in the story performed better than those who provided material from outside the text in their answers. Better responses to A(ii) were able to incorporate reference to the visual material and to use it to show an understanding of the story. There were many inventive suggestions made for an alternative title in A(iii) and the best work arose when candidates supported their suggestions by a range of convincing arguments.

QUESTION B

In writing their letters of complaint to the police, many candidates successfully referenced selected elements of Text 1 to assist them. The more successful were appropriately shaped, written in an authentic register and tone that showed the writer was keenly aware of the specified audience. There was a tendency for some candidates to overwrite in this section; some responses appeared as rather long and ill-shaped letters. In general, candidates showed they were able to use the customary rubrics appropriately. Examiners report that some of the best writing on Paper 1 appeared in answer to this question.

TEXT 2 *What does the future look like?*

QUESTION A.

As already indicated, Text 2 was the most frequently chosen option for Question A. It is clear from responses to (i) that the majority of candidates strongly identify with the world of technology. In the main, this question was succinctly answered. The best responses demonstrated how their chosen inventions had an impact on possible future lifestyles. In question (ii), candidates were able to show the positive and negative sides of their chosen invention in well-balanced responses before making a final declaration. There were several humorous and whimsical inventions suggested in answer to question (iii) as well as the more altruistic suggestions, dedicated to benefiting humankind in terms of health and the environment.

QUESTION B

Writing about an invention from the past in Question B, candidates demonstrated a capacity to engage with the task in a sustained manner and with a clear focus. A considerable number of responses were unsatisfactory as they dealt with contemporary inventions, such as those described in the passage. Better and more relevant responses referred back to such inventions as the printing press, the motorcar and the television.

TEXT 3 *Pictures of Irish Lifestyle 2008*

QUESTION A

As previously indicated, Text 3 was not as frequently answered as the other options. While all six photographs received attention, not all received equal attention. Images 1, 2, 5 and 6 attracted most interest. Commentary and description of the chosen photograph, rather than analysis and explanation of the decision to award, tended to dominate responses to (i). In (ii), successful candidates made good connections between their chosen image and their assigned month. Question (iii) facilitated some adventurous critical thinking resulting in writing that was sometimes both incisive and interesting.

QUESTION B

Few candidates attempted to write a talk to their peers encouraging them to take up photography. Those who accepted the invitation wrote in language that was idiomatic and relaxed. Many candidates included personal anecdotes to illustrate the pleasures of their hobby. A number of candidates had difficulty in making and sustaining persuasive arguments for others to get involved. Where candidates included the rubrics of the talk, most did so accurately and effectively.

SECTION II – COMPOSING (100 marks).

This section normally presents seven assignments in a range of genres. In 2008, these included the short story, the personal account, the speech, the article and the narrative account. The three most popular composition titles were - numbers 1, “Write a short story containing a given phrase” - 2, “Write a personal account of your idea of paradise” and 5, “Write a personal account of what friendship means to you”. Candidates should note that the composing assignment is specified in bold print in each instance on the examination paper.

In composition 1, “Write a short story containing a given phrase”, successful candidates demonstrated a clear capacity to manage elements of the short story genre to good effect. Being able to insert the given phrase judiciously at a climax or other important moment showed an understanding of the genre. Less competent material showed the given phrase inserted at random. In composition 2, “Write a personal account of your idea of paradise”, candidates expressed their own personal visions of paradise competently and with confidence. Composition 5, “Write a personal account of what friendship means to you”, was a popular choice. Some candidates failed to make a distinction between a personal account and a short story. Again, as in response to composition 2, those candidates who worked to make the writing their ‘own’ were more successful than those who presented material that was insufficiently personal.

Those candidates who chose composition 3, “Write an article for the school magazine in which you make suggestions on how to welcome newcomers in the school community”, demonstrated a keen awareness of the issues. While successfully creating the register of the school magazine, less successful material was characterised by an inability to

organise and shape the material purposefully as an article. Very few candidates attempted composition 4, “Write a short story based on the idea of robot servants or ‘house-bots’”. Composition 6, “Write the speech you would give to a group of young people on the importance of having a positive attitude towards life”, elicited some well-crafted speeches. There were few attempts at composition 7, “Write a narrative or short story based on one of the images in Text 3”. The sporting image was the most popular among the candidates who attempted this option. More imaginative examples were occasioned by images such as image 5, “In the net”, showing two children peering into a rock pool.

In general in relation to writing in Section II, Composing, the following points should be noted:

- Compositions can be overly reliant on narrative forms
- Candidates who want to write short stories successfully would benefit from a familiarity with the genre
- Although there is no intrinsic merit in writing at great length, some of the less successful compositions tended to be so short as to be little more than a token
- Sometimes material that is both creative and imaginative can be marred by candidates’ inability to correctly use language and mechanics
- The skill of ordering material into a coherent whole is an essential one, which can best be achieved by practice

Paper 2 (200 marks)

SECTION I: THE SINGLE TEXT (60 marks)

Nine texts are prescribed for study as single texts. The following table shows the frequency of response to each text.

<u>Group 1</u> Most popular texts	Lies of Silence, How Many Miles to Babylon? and The Plough and the Stars.
<u>Group 2</u> Less popular texts	Othello, Wuthering Heights and Death and Nightingales.
<u>Group 3</u> Least popular texts	The Remains of the Day, The Crucible and The Importance of Being Earnest.

It was apparent that candidates enjoyed the study of the single text. Worthwhile answering showed that candidates were able to recall material accurately and in considerable detail. Questions that demanded evaluation and explanation were handled with confidence and authority. Less successful responses occurred when candidates (i)

had some difficulty with recall (ii) were unsure as to the precise information asked for, or (iii) wrote extensive summaries of the plot.

The longer questions in this section continue to provide opportunities for candidates to respond to the texts in alternative ways such as by imaginative engagement. Questions of this kind can be seen in question 3(iii) *How Many Miles to Babylon?* for example, ‘Imagine that you are either Alec or Jerry....’ or, in question 3(ii) on *Lies of Silence*, ‘Imagine you are a reporter for a local television station...’ Candidates engage enthusiastically with these tasks and capably demonstrate an understanding of the material ‘from the inside’. Less accomplished work on these kinds of tasks shows candidates revealing their knowledge of the text rather than their ability to manage it in line with the set assignment.

SECTION II: THE COMPARATIVE STUDY (70 marks)

Schools have a list of up to forty texts from which to create their comparative grouping of three texts for study in any one year. This year the texts most frequently included in groupings were drawn from a relatively compact sub-list that included *My Left Foot*, *Philadelphia Here I Come!*, *How Many Miles to Babylon?*, *Strictly Ballroom*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, *Cinema Paradiso* and *Lies of Silence*. Candidates were presented with two comparative modes for answering: RELATIONSHIPS and SOCIAL SETTING. ‘Relationships’ was by far the more popular choice with question 1 being the more favoured choice of the two available.

In ‘Relationships’ question 1(a), candidates tended to recite their material rather than engage with the task of explaining *how* they viewed the relationship under consideration as being ‘complicated’. Those who chose 2(a), which asked for a brief description of two relationships, coped better overall in this section. In section 1(b) or 2(b), the issue of approaching the comparative element comes to the fore. In this kind of answer, the integration of texts throughout the answer in order to sustain the momentum of the argument is becoming a more frequent practice, and this is to be welcomed. Less successful material showed candidates merely setting their texts side by side. The capacity to put relevant knowledge to work in order to make comparisons is a more successful approach in these assignments.

Questions on ‘Social Setting’ were not as frequently answered as those on ‘Relationships’. In ‘Social Setting’ candidates dealt well with 2 (a) but the interpretation and treatment of the idea of “influence” proved challenging.

It is worth noting that the use of some texts is not permitted in the comparative section. Texts that are not permitted are:

- a text already answered on as a Single Text
- a text not on the prescribed list for the current year
- the use of two films.

SECTION III: POETRY (70 marks)

A UNSEEN POEM (20 marks)

The unseen poem presents an opportunity for the candidate to “...read poetry conscious of its specific mode of using language as an artistic medium” (DES English Syllabus, 4.5.1, p.14). Candidates who attempted to engage personally with the poem, generally responded successfully here. Some candidates were able to make effective use of concepts such as metaphor, alliteration and assonance in order to carry their point. A significant number of responses, however, showed that candidates were better able to describe and/or explain images, rather than to account for their appeal in any meaningful way. Candidates would benefit from exposure to as wide a range of unseen poetry in the classroom as possible.

B PRESCRIBED POETRY (50 marks)

The paper presents four poems for consideration. In order of answering preference – *Antarctica* by Derek Mahon was the most popular, followed by *Going Home to Mayo, Winter, 1949* by Paul Durcan. *Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers*, by Adrienne Rich and *Phenomenal Woman* by Maya Angelou were less popular, with Rich’s poem appealing to slightly more candidates.

Candidates who had a clear understanding of the poem and were able to write assuredly about the attractiveness of selected elements of the language handled this section well. This section continues to see some very brief answering. Sometimes responses can appear as a single statement without comment, without reference or without evoking any great evidence of previous engagement with the text.

Intervention questions (those questions that offer candidates an opportunity to view the poem from ‘the inside’) proved popular and also gave rise to excellent examples of candidates’ creativeness. Even though *Phenomenal Woman* was not a very popular choice a considerable number of candidates who chose it took the opportunity to write in the style of Maya Angelou.

2.4 Conclusions

- Candidates who followed instructions and who demonstrated consistent capacities to communicate their understandings, thoughts and feelings presented successful work for assessment
- In general, candidates scored well under the first two criteria – Clarity of Purpose (P) and Coherence of Delivery (C), but some candidates scored less well under Management of Language (L) and Accuracy of Mechanics (M)
- There was some improvement noted in dealing with visual literacy
- Candidates who want to write short stories successfully would benefit from a familiarity with the genre
- Although there is no intrinsic merit in writing at great length, some of the less successful compositions tended to be so short as to be little more than a token
- Sometimes material that is creative and imaginative can be marred by candidates' inability to use language and mechanics correctly
- The skill of ordering material into a coherent whole is an essential one which can best be achieved by practice
- Less successful responses to questions on the Single Text occurred when candidates (i) had some difficulty with recall (ii) were unsure as to the precise information asked for or (iii) wrote extensive summaries of the plot
- The capacity to put relevant knowledge to work in order to make comparisons is essential in responding to the comparative assignments. The integration of texts throughout the answer is becoming a more frequent practice and this is to be welcomed
- Candidates who engaged personally with the unseen poem generally responded successfully
- Candidates who had a clear understanding of the studied poetry and were able to talk assuredly about the attractiveness of selected elements of the language handled this section well. Some answers can appear as a single statement without comment, without reference or without evoking any great evidence of previous engagement with the text.

2.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

- Candidates should use the time available to familiarise themselves with the examination paper before starting to write
- Maintaining Clarity of Purpose (P) and Coherence of Delivery (C) in relation to the required tasks would do much to eliminate any tendency to overwrite
- Practice in writing across as wide a range of different genres as possible is to be encouraged. Such practice should not be confined to the requirements of Paper I only, since a range of different writing skills is also required for successful completion of tasks on Paper II
- Students would benefit from extensive practice in coherently shaping and ordering material
- It is essential that students develop a secure command of the basic skills of language and mechanics
- The attention of students is drawn to the instructions regarding the valid use of texts in the comparative section. Texts which are not permissible are: a text already answered as a Single Text; a text not on the prescribed list for the current year and the use of two films
- In the Comparative section students would benefit from practising approaches that would allow them move freely between texts in their responses
- Students would benefit from exposure to as wide a range of unseen poetry in the classroom as possible
- Students should have a clear understanding of the prescribed poetry and be able to respond to it in a personal way with confidence and coherence
- Teaching and learning approaches directed towards building students' capacity to respond personally to texts would benefit examination performance

2.6 Exemplars of standard – Ordinary Level

N.B. Candidates' work is typed as written, except where, because of ambiguity arising from the hand-written script, it has been edited to indicate the likely meaning. Square brackets are used to indicate where such editing has occurred.

A brief commentary on the item appears after each exemplar.

EXEMPLAR 1

Paper 1

Section 1 - Comprehending

Text 1, Question B

Noisy Neighbours

Imagine that you live beside the “neighbours from hell”.

Write the letter you would send to the police complaining about this problem. (50)

*Garda Station,
Cork*

Dear Inspector Murphy,

I am writing to you on behalf of the residents consil of Streamline Estate. Several times, myself and my neighbours have rung your station complaining of certain. ...can be felt two or three houses away, and all of our houses are detached! Parties are held most days and nights of the week and continue on into the early hours of the next day.

Many of the families in our small linked community have children who are very young and trying to get them to sleep is a nightmare. Also we have children in Junior and Leaving Certificate, which you can understand is a very stressful year, these childrens work and study are suffering over these wild antics of the neighbours.

Many residents have themselves called to eh “party house” and in return have been called unpleasant names or the music has been turned up a notch louder.

I believe there are regulations regarding to noise, or before certain hours. Please on behalf of my community, I am asking you to do something about this dreadful situation we have on our hands. I will be looking forward to hearing from you.

Lucida Bold, President of the residents council of Streamline Estate.

Commentary

- The writing is purposeful and coherent – it makes a reasoned case supported by pertinent examples
- It is shaped as a letter: the register is clearly one of complaint

	Ex	50
P	15	14
C	15	14
L	15	12
M	5	4
Tot:	44	

EXEMPLAR 2

Paper 1

Section 1 - Comprehending

Text 2 – Question B.

Write about an invention from the past which you think has had the greatest influence on our present-day lifestyle. (50)

I think the invention of electricity has had the greatest influence on our present-day lifestyle.

Electricity is such a simple and often overlooked thing. We automatically plug appliances into the sockets on our walls. We constantly have lights switched on in our houses. We even have lights for our back yards.

If we have a power-cut people find themselves lost without their electricity. If there is a power-cut in the city then most of businesses if not all have to close their doors for the duration of the power-cut. Important buildings such as banks and credit unions could not function without electricity for their computers and machines.

I think people forget about the simple days when they didn't have electricity and meals were cooked on gas cookers or even in a pot or pan over the fire. When people saw more of each other as they didn't have phones to keep in touch. Most importantly when families spent quality time together talking or playing games instead of staring at the television or fighting over the remote.

Electricity has definitely had the greatest influence on our present-day lifestyle. Almost every new invention requires electricity to function. Therefore It has a huge influence in our everyday lives.

Commentary

- Writing immediately establishes the issue and maintains focus
- Comparative references to the past in paragraph 4 help to make the case a more persuasive one

Ex		50
P	15	14
C	15	14
L	15	13
M	5	4
Tot:		45

EXEMPLAR 3

Paper 1

Section 2 - Composing

2. “It’s called Paradise ...” Write a personal account of your idea of paradise.

Paradise is a word that is used a lot nowadays. Some people on holidays would say that they are in paradise, some people who are very wealthy think they are in paradise. I have a different idea about what paradise is. It might be a bit different and unusual.

It is not a location on the planet or a way of describing your standard of living. I think that it is not a state of mind or a feeling. Most people will not realise what paradise is until they lose it. Someone who has been to prison will know that. In my opinion it is wherever home is. Wherever your family, friends and anyone you are close to are, that is paradise. You can go to the most beautiful place in the world but if you are not with these people, then it is not worth going to at all. There is nobody to share the experience with so it is worthless.

Any kind of experiences in your life are made better with friends and family. Christmas would not be Christmas if your family went on holidays and you stayed home. What would probably be your favourite time of year will turn into an average day when there is nobody with you. The movie “Home Alone” proves this. The same applies for birthdays, Easter or other special occasions during the year. Even on an ordinary day I know I’m a lucky person because I have a family and friends and I am not a parentless child in a poor country living everyday alone.

In another way, paradise can be the freedom you feel when you move out and become independent but at the same time keeping the same relationship with your parents. That feeling that the world is yours for the taking is another idea of paradise that I have. The fact that the rest of my life is completely in my control from now on is a great feeling but I am not forgetting who got me to where I am now. Starting a family and having children will probably be the best feeling in the world and then you can share that paradise all over again, with your own children and family.

Paradise isn’t where you are it’s who you are there with. That’s my definition for it.

Commentary

- Interesting exploration of the theme
- Sequencing of ideas nicely handled
- Good management of language and syntax

Ex 100	
P 30	27
C 30	27
L 30	27
M 10	9
Tot:	90

EXEMPLAR 4

Paper 2

Section 1 - The Single Text H – Othello

3. (i) At the very end of the play, Lodovico describes Iago as a *hellish villain*. Do you think this is a fair description of Iago? Support your answer with reference to the play. (30)

I think “hellish villain” is an excellent way of describing Iago. It is not just his manipulation of people which resulted in the deaths of many characters in the play that make this description fair. It is the complete lack of any convincing motivation for his actions which truly make him a villain.

Iago mentions briefly near the beginning of the play how Othello’s appointment of Cassio as lieutenant over him angered him but it was never spoken of again. This is not reason enough to hate Othello in the way that Iago does.

Iago uses his reputation that he has built up as an honest man to fool everyone he manipulates: “I am not what I say I am” “Honest” Iago, as Othello sometimes called him, did not care which puppet’s strings he had to pull to get what he wanted which was to ruin Othello. He manipulates Roderigo, his wife Emilia, Cassio, Bianca and of course Othello. His plan was to put Othello in a “jealousy so strong that judgement cannot cure”. Iago does this with no remorse for his actions. He uses Roderigo for money: “put money in thy purse”. He uses Cassio and Bianca to fool Othello into thinking that Cassio is having an affair with Desdemona and he uses Emilia to obtain the handkerchief which was Othello’s first gift to Desdemona.

He always seems to be lurking in the shadows when an important scene is taking place. For example, when Roderigo attempts to kill Cassio but only wounds him. Iago comes from the shadows to kill Roderigo. That shows that not only is Iago evil enough to manipulate someone but he will also kill that person without a moment’s notice.

Iago fits the description perfectly as a “hellish villain”.

Commentary

- Good knowledge of play evident
- Accurate and well structured answer
- Confident approach to text and language

Ex	30
P 9	9
C 9	9
L 9	9
M 3	3
Tot:	30

EXEMPLAR 5

Paper 2 - The Comparative Study

B. Relationships

2. (b) Write a piece in which you compare and/or contrast the two social settings described in (a) explaining why you found one social setting more appealing than the other. Remember to refer to both social settings in the course of your answer. (40)

[The texts chosen are: *My Left Foot* and *Reading in the Dark*]

In “My Left Foot” the relationship between Christy and his mother was good. Mother always talked to Christy although he was unable to talk in his early year. Such as when mother was having the baby she told Christy she will be gone for a few days. On the other hand in “Reading in the Dark” the relationship between the narrator and his mother was close relationship when he was younger, such as when mother told him not to go up the stair because of the ghosts.

“My left Foot” the relationship gets stronger with Christy and his mother. She is always encouraging him and when Christy was trying to write mother on the floor with chalk with his left foot Mother said “Make your mark Christy”. While in “Reading in the Dark” the relationship between the narrator and his mother change because the narrator finds out about Uncle Eddie (narrators father brother) that he was killed because the grandfather (narrator mother father) who was leader of the IRA believed he was a informer. The mother knew this and knew that the narrator knew this too. Since then there relationship went bad.

In “My Left Foot” after Christy gets rejected by Eileen he becomes depressed and wont paint so mother decides to build a room for Christy so he would have room to start painting again. This shows how much she cares for Christy. While in “Reading in the Dark” when the narrator throw a stone at a police car to stop himself and a friend from getting beaten up his mother instead of asking if he is ok she says that he should have taken the beating. This shows the change in there relationship.

“My Left Foot” Christy shows his apprecicition to his mother by giving her a gift the money he made by publishing his book. This shows love that Christy has for his mother. On the other hand in “Reading in the Dark” when the narrator asks his mother what gift does she want for her birthday she says for him to go away for a day and not to be looking over her all day. This shows how bad the relationship has gotten between them all because of the secret.

“My Left Foot” relationship between Christy and his mother was [more] successful than in “Reading in the Dark” relationship between the narrator and his mother.

Commentary

- Good use made of both texts
- Appropriate reference to key moments to support points made
- Some weakness evident in language and mechanics

<i>Ex</i>	40
P 12	10
C 12	11
L 12	10
M 4	2
Tot:	33

EXEMPLAR 6

Paper 2

Section 3 -Unseen Poem

1. In this poem the poet vividly describes the action and conduct of the seagulls. Choose two of these descriptions which appeal to you most. Explain your choices. (10)

The descriptions that appeal to me most is the image of the seagulls “mugging thrushes for bread crusts with a snap of our big bent beaks”. This description enables us to picture the larger, stronger, bullies of seagulls abuse their powers to take food from the thrushes who hunted for the food and leave them with nothing only fear. The simplest snap of their beaks deprive the thrushes of their food and the gulls can go along with their bellies full to their next prey.

Another image that I found appealing is the notion of the seagulls spread across the sea hunting for fish to swoop on like cops scavenging for a dead body at a crime scene. They don’t stop until satisfied. Their tenacity pays off to keep the oceans clear of dead fish like the streets are kept clean by the cops.

(See end of 2 below for overall Commentary)

<i>Ex</i>	10
P+C 6	6
L+M4	4
Tot:	10

**2. *We are the seagulls*
*We are the people.***

From your reading of the poem, what similarities do you think the poet draws between seagulls and humans? Explain your answer. (10)

The similarities drawn between seagulls and people are between their behaviour in everyday life.

The seagulls are seen as thieves at the beginning of the poem. They rise at dawn and deprive the helpless thrushes of their bread crusts and dare not stand up to the

bullies as they do not stand a chance and live in fear. This image can be linked to gangs of criminals who break into people's homes etc. and rob them and leave their victims in fear.

The image of the seagulls with their hooligan yells loud with gluttony relate to people when they come out of night clubs and pubs after drinking and cause riots around the streets as the seagulls bungee-jump around in the wind.

The seagulls like the people are careless to those around them and don't pay attention to how others feel.

Also the image of the seagulls spread across the sky like cops at a crime scene shows the similarity in determination and how seagulls kill fish and humans kill one another is barbaric and cruel.

Commentary

- Overall Total: 18/20
- Both answers maintain focus: they are purposeful and coherently presented.
- There are a few minor lapses in the management of Language and Mechanics.

	<i>Ex</i>	<i>10</i>
P+C	6	5
L+M4		3
Tot:		8

EXEMPLAR 7

Paper 2

Section 3 – Prescribed Poetry

C. Going Home to Mayo, Winter 1949.

2. (ii) Imagine that the poet keeps a diary. Write his diary entry at the end of his first day at his father's mother's house. (20)

Dear Dairy,

Hello again, Paul here. Once again I am spending time in my favourite place in the world, my father's mother's house in Turlough Co. Mayo. We left Dublin late last night. My father drove up again in his old Ford Anglia. I love the smell of the musky red leather seats.

When we arrived, as usual, my father's mother came out to greet us outside their pub. As well as my father's two brother's and two sister's...it was great to see them all again. Uncle Tom lifted me right up and I felt like a giant looking down on small tiny people. The smell of the open country fresh air hit my face as soon as I stepped outside

the car. It was a lot more refreshing than the smell of dust and car fumes that invades the air in Dublin city.

I felt like I was free as a bird when I sprinted along the field's next to where the sheep and cows were grazing.

At two o'clock, my father's mother called me in for dinner. My all time favourite dish had been made. The most traditional dish in Ireland, cornbeef and cabbage, one of God's greatest creations. This dinner always follows the lines "Eat it right up if you want to be big and strong" my father's mother said and Uncle Tom would follow up to say "That'll put hair on your chest". Both said [it] in the thickest Mayo accents, but I loved every bit of it.

After dinner my father and I took a stroll down by the water. I love going for walks with him, he always has a story to tell me. During the walk we wandered into a cow's field. They started walking slowly and carefully towards us. I began to panic but my father lifted me onto his shoulders. I felt a lot safer. When the cows were next to us, he started petting them. I began laughing, ha ha why was I so afraid my dad was there to protect me.

I'm now lying in bed with the yellow oil lamp glowing by my bedside. I can hear all the women chatting below and the men in the public house shouting and laughing.

Oh this place is a thousand million times more magical than that dusky dirty city of Dublin. I want to stay here for ever....gotta go my father's coming to check am I asleep.

Bye for now, Paul

	<i>Ex</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>P+C</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>L+M</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>6</i>
Tot:		17

Commentary

- After the early formalities, the writer establishes a convincing register for a diary.
- Writing is coherent: it maintains an imaginative engagement with the original text throughout.
- Minor lapses of Language and Mechanics.

3. Higher Level

3.1 Introduction.

This report deals with the Higher Level examination of 2008. Exemplar materials, demonstrating the standard applied in the different sections of the examination paper, are appended to the end of this report. These should be read in conjunction with the examination papers and marking scheme for 2008, which are available to download from the website of the State Examinations Commission at www.examinations.ie

Paper 1 (200 marks)

Paper 1 is divided into two sections – Section I **Comprehending** and Section II **Composing**.

Section I (Comprehending, 100 marks)

The paper contained three texts on the general theme of *Identity*. Candidates were instructed to familiarise themselves with each of the texts before beginning their answers. Two questions, A and B, followed each text. The Question A tested the candidates' comprehension of the particular text and the Question B required candidates to manage a functional task that was purpose and audience specific. Candidates were required to answer a Question A on one text and a Question B on a different text. In this paper the Questions A and B carried an equal mark allocation of 50 marks.

Section II (Composing, 100 marks)

Candidates were required to write one composition from a choice of seven titles. 100 marks were allocated to the composition.

Paper II (200 marks)

This paper was divided into three sections, Section I **The Single Text**, Section II **The Comparative Study**, and Section III **Poetry**. Each of these sections was to be attempted. Candidates were required to answer on Shakespearean Drama, either as a Single Text or as an element in the Comparative Study.

Section I (The Single Text, 60 marks)

Five Single Texts were prescribed for study. Candidates were required to attempt a question on one of these Single Texts. Two questions were set on each of the texts.

Section II (The Comparative Study, 70 marks)

Candidates were required to answer one question from this section. Four questions were set: two on Theme or Issue, and two on Literary Genre.

Section III (Poetry, 70 marks)

Candidates were required to answer one question from a choice of two set on the Unseen Poem. The mark allocation was 20 marks. Candidates were required to answer one question on Prescribed Poetry. One 50-mark question was set on each of four poets.

3.2 Performance of candidates.

A total of 31,790 candidates sat the examination at Higher Level. The following table shows the breakdown of grades achieved by candidates in the years 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Year	Total	A	B	C	C+	D	E	F	N.G.	E –
2005	32,344	10.3	26.8	39.2	76.3	22.0	1.6	0.1	0.0	1.7
2006	30,445	10.4	27.7	38.7	76.8	21.8	1.2	0.1	0.0	1.3
2007	31,076	10.5	28.6	37.7	76.8	21.5	1.6	0.2	0.0	1.8
2008	31,790	10.2	27.4	39.4	77.0	21.7	1.1	0.1	0.0	1.2

3.3 Analysis of Candidate performance.

Criteria for Assessment

In the course of the examination candidates were required to engage with a number of language tasks in a variety of genres. Assessment sought to reward efficient and energetic language use in a variety of contexts and styles. To this end, discrete criteria for assessment were employed in the evaluation of the responses to the set tasks. The same criteria were employed in assessing candidate output in both Paper 1 and Paper 2. Therefore, the efficiency of the candidates' handling of language was of significance in both the Language Paper and the Literature Paper. This reflects the aims of the Leaving Certificate syllabus, which are to develop in students: "a mature and critical literacy... a respect and appreciation for language used accurately and appropriately... a competence in a wide range of language skills..." and "an awareness of the value of literature."¹

Four generic criteria for assessment, either applied discretely or in combination, were applied to each task set in the examination papers.

As outlined in the Marking Schemes, the four criteria were:

- Clarity of Purpose (P) 30% of the marks available
- Coherence of Delivery (C) 30% of the marks available
- Efficiency of Language use (L) 30% of the marks available
- Accuracy of Mechanics (M) 10% of the marks available

¹ *Leaving Certificate Syllabus, English*, 1998, Department of Education & Science, downloadable from its website www.education.ie

In one important sense this arrangement of the criteria could be said to be hierarchical, i.e. a piece of work written by a candidate, which lacked a clear sense of the task in hand or which was so poorly sustained or developed, scored poorly in the areas of language use. Efficiency and accuracy of language use were rewarded only in so far as they were *appropriate to the delivery of the task*.

Paper 1 (200 marks)

Section I, Comprehending (100 marks)

Text 1, *Teenage Identity*

Question A

This popular choice was generally well answered.

(i) *Give three pieces of evidence to demonstrate that teenage culture is not a modern phenomenon.*

Most candidates succeeded in identifying relevant evidence to support the idea that teenage culture is not new. While less successful responses merely transcribed from the extract, the majority engaged well with the question and demonstrated good comprehension skills.

(ii) *Comment on three features of style that make this an interesting and informative text.*

This question proved more challenging for some candidates whose responses were vague or lacking in analysis. Better answers showed how features of style (such as definitions, examples, tone, images, etc.) enhanced the interesting and informative nature of the text.

(iii) *Is the writer sympathetic to the modern teenager?*

The most successful candidates used their analytical skills to identify clearly the writer's attitude towards teenagers. A sizable minority had difficulty understanding the term "sympathetic" and how the language used in the text revealed the writer's attitude.

QUESTION B

Letter responding to the extract and giving personal views on today's teenage culture...

This was not as popular as the other Question B options. In general, the letter format and sense of audience were in evidence. Some candidates engaged enthusiastically with the task, showing a lively interest in popular youth culture and raising interesting discussion points. Less successful answers failed to address both aspects of the question while a minority of answers failed to employ the register of a letter.

TEXT 2, *False Identity?*

This was the most popular Question A option.

QUESTION A

(i) *Give three pieces of evidence to show that Eva was about to make the biggest mistake of her life.*

This was generally well handled by candidates, most of whom had no difficulty finding a wide range of apt illustrations from the extract to support their views.

(ii) *What impression of Eva Tyne’s character is created?*

Overall, there was evidence of enthusiastic engagement with Eva’s character. Successful candidates based their answers on an informed analysis of events, relationships and language in the text.

(iii) *Do you think that the novel ‘Tenderwire’ is a compelling and well-written thriller?*

There was general agreement that the novel was exciting and fast-moving. While some candidates had difficulty understanding the terms “compelling” and “thriller”, the majority identified tension and suspense in the sequence of events, settings, atmosphere, and characters.

QUESTION B

Diary entries by Alexander and Zach...

This was a popular choice. Most candidates seemed to enjoy using the diary format and choosing a style that reflected the distinctive personalities of Alexander and Zach. The text generally inspired a great many lively and imaginative responses.

TEXT 3, *Clues to Identity*

QUESTION A

The visual text question was more popular than in previous years.

(i) *The impression of the three writers' personalities based on the written texts.*

Candidates used the sources to extract interesting elements of the writers' personalities. The majority used textual information effectively to perform very well in this question.

(ii) *Which one of the rooms would you choose to study in?*

Many candidates delighted in laying claim to a particular location. John Banville's room was a popular choice, usually because of its sense of order, light and space.

(iii) *Write a detailed description of one of the other two images. You might consider the use of colour, light, details or objects.*

The specific guidelines encouraged a clear appreciation of the image. Nicola Barker's room was a popular choice because of the richness of the image. Less successful answers were lacking in descriptive detail. A minority of candidates lost focus and drifted into general criticism, particularly of Russell Hoban's room.

Question B

Write a website article entitled: "We are what we wear"...

This was the most popular of the B questions. Candidates engaged genuinely and enthusiastically with the task. Chavs, Emos and Goths featured prominently. There was also some animated discussion about hoodies. Some excellent answers acknowledged the website aspect of the task. Less successful answers wandered from the focus of the title and explored fashion in very general terms.

Section II, Composing (100 marks)

Most examiners were positive about the candidates' engagement with their chosen titles. Many compositions were very impressive – intelligent, informed, imaginative and entertaining. Unlike previous years, there seemed to be less reliance on prepared material – particularly in the short story options. However, some of the less successful candidates appeared to focus more on the lead-in to the task (i.e. a quotation from one of the three texts) rather than on the actual rubric of the question (i.e. the written task offered in bold print on the paper). Some candidates also displayed poor control of the more formal aspects of language such as syntax, punctuation and spelling.

1. Magazine article giving advice to adults on helping teenagers through adolescence

This popular choice allowed many candidates to take an informative and/or discursive approach. Less successful attempts focused on adolescence in general without any clear sense of direction or audience. While there were many amusing and well-written pieces, some lapsed into cliché.

2. Speech about national cultural and identity

Not a popular choice. The most successful attempts presented spirited arguments in support of national culture – particularly the Irish language and Gaelic games. Many used persuasive techniques effectively and had a very good sense of audience. However, a minority focused on the prompt alone and discussed the modern global society in general terms.

3. Short story in which the central character is a rebellious teenager

This was by far the most popular choice. The better stories were original and even inspiring, with good development of plot and character. Less successful attempts struggled with credible characterisation and revealed limited awareness of narrative shape.

4. Personal essay describing a beautiful place

This was quite a popular option, with the quality of responses ranging from insightful reflection to less engaging narrative. The most successful attempts avoided sentimentality and expressed genuine affection for particular places. Examiners noted some confusion in relation to the personal essay genre.

5. Appearances can be deceptive... a talk

Relatively few candidates chose this. However, some of the more successful attempts combined a clear thematic approach with an appropriate “talk” register. Shakespeare’s Iago proved a useful starting point for a small number of candidates.

6. School magazine article on aspects of life that make you happy

This was not a popular choice. Personal narrative dominated and examiners reported marking a number of heartfelt pieces. The better essays conveyed a strong sense of personality and engaged well with the reader – often through the use of self-deprecating humour.

7. A short story in which setting/location is a significant feature

Some candidates lacked confidence in handling the setting/location element. While there were fine examples of creative narrative writing, other attempts relied on adapting unconvincing stories to satisfy the requirements of the task.

PAPER 2 (200 marks)

SECTION 1, THE SINGLE TEXT (60 marks)

As in previous years, the great majority of candidates chose the Shakespeare question as their single text. Examiners reported a very small number of candidates failing to answer on Shakespeare at all (i.e. in Section 1, The Single Text, or Section 11, The Comparative Study). For an account of the assessment procedure followed in such cases, please see Appendix 4 of the Marking Scheme for Leaving Certificate English published on the website of the State Examinations Commission, www.examinations.ie

Examiners reported that candidates generally seemed well prepared for answering on Single Text questions. Although most answers displayed a close knowledge of the studied texts, unfocused narrative remained a feature of the less successful attempts.

Of the other Single Texts, *Wuthering Heights* and *The Crucible* were most popular. Very few candidates chose to answer on *Death and Nightingales* and *The Remains of the Day*.

A WUTHERING HEIGHTS – Emily Brontë

(i) *Heathcliff – the most appealing character despite his horrifying passion for revenge...*

The majority of candidates demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the novel. Most answers argued in Heathcliff's defence. Examiners noted very good use of textual references. However, less successful attempts relied on general character sketches.

(ii) *Powerful imagery and symbolism contribute to our appreciation of the novel...*

Although chosen by a small minority, candidates performed very well, displaying a sound understanding of the text and a genuine appreciation of the atmospheric nature of the novel as evoked through key images and symbols.

B THE REMAINS OF THE DAY – Kazuo Ishiguro

(i) *Personal assessment of the character of Stevens...*

This was not a popular choice. Less successful answers drifted away from “dignity” into a general list of Stevens's mistakes.

(ii) *The novel offers a fascinating insight into the lives of the wealthy and ordinary people in 1930s England...*

This question was rarely attempted. However, candidates who chose it seemed well able to explore relevant issues, such as social class and work.

C DEATH AND NIGHTINGALES – Eugene McCabe

(i) *The world of the novel – beautiful excepting mankind...*

Few candidates attempted this option. The standard varied, with the better responses avoiding general summaries.

(ii) *Beth Winters – the heroine of the novel...*

This was the more popular of the two options. There were some very perceptive answers, which analysed Beth's status as the novel's "heroine" rather than listing her main character traits.

D THE CRUCIBLE – Arthur Miller

(i) *Judge Danforth versus John Proctor – where do your sympathies lie?*

This was not a particularly popular choice and the quality of answers varied greatly. Some candidates engaged clearly with both the text and the question in a focused manner while others ignored Danforth and the central focus of the question.

(ii) *Compare the characters of Elizabeth Proctor and Abigail Williams...*

This was the more popular option. Although the two characters were addressed clearly and illustrated well, the comparative approach was often missing. Repetition and unfocused narrative were features of less successful answers.

E OTHELLO – William Shakespeare

(i) *Othello's foolishness rather than Iago's cleverness leads to the tragedy...*

This very popular option produced some excellent responses, which demonstrated a keen knowledge of the play. While candidates readily recognised Iago's cleverness, some overlooked Othello's role in causing the tragedy. Successful candidates avoided simple character sketches and wrote cogently, using focused narrative, on both aspects of the question. Quotations were used liberally, but not always accurately or judiciously.

(ii) *The play demonstrates the weakness of human judgement...*

This proved to be a less popular option than (i). Most candidates knew the play well and were able to identify instances of flawed judgement, using apt and judicious reference to the text. The more thoughtful responses also analysed the incorrect judgements of the main characters. However, less successful answers read like a list of examples rather than a focused discussion of a theme

SECTION 11, THE COMPARATIVE STUDY (70 marks)

Examiners noted that, in the main, candidates appeared well prepared for answering on the comparative study. Most seemed able to engage with the similarities and differences between texts. There was a clear preference for the global 70-mark questions in both modes. **Theme or Issue** was the more popular of the two modes. A film was included as a comparative text by the great majority of candidates.

The better answers made insightful comparisons and addressed the nuances within the wording of questions. A small minority of less successful candidates experienced some difficulty with forming a clear concept of **Literary Genre**. This led to superficial responses, which simply outlined broad similarities/differences between texts.

Since candidates are offered such a broad choice of material in this section, teachers might find it refreshing to vary the combination of texts used.

A THEME OR ISSUE

1. (a) *Describe the viewpoint on a chosen theme or issue from one text. (30 marks)*

The quality of answers varied greatly. While most candidates were clear as to the theme or issue, some found it more difficult to articulate in a lucid fashion the viewpoint or perspective offered or extracted from a study of their texts.

(b) *Compare the viewpoints on the same theme in the other two texts. (40 marks)*

Some candidates delivered a very narrow vision of this mode without responding effectively to the demands of the question. The best answers considered the viewpoints gleaned from their study of theme/issue in an analytical fashion.

2. *Compare how key moments brought a theme or issue into sharp focus. (70 marks)*

This was the more popular option in this mode, with many worthwhile answers offering a focused analysis of texts in the light of the wording of the question. However, some candidates lost sight of the “sharp focus” element and took a very general approach.

B LITERARY GENRE

1. (a) *With reference to a key moment in one text, show how great emotional power was created. (30 marks)*

Although this was not a very popular choice, there were some excellent responses, which not only identified emotional moments but also addressed how the emotional power was achieved.

(b) *Compare how emotional power was created in key moments from the other two texts. (40 marks)*

The better answers dealt clearly with the various techniques used by authors to create emotional intensity. Less successful responses failed to focus on the way such moments were created.

2. *Compare the ways in which memorable characters were created and contributed to your enjoyment of studied texts. (70 marks)*

There were some admirable answers, with many candidates displaying an impressive level of flexibility in dealing with different elements of the question. However, while most candidates dealt with the creation and development of characters in their chosen texts, some failed to address how characterisation “contributed to your enjoyment”.

SECTION III, POETRY (70 marks)

A UNSEEN POETRY (20 marks)

Examiners reported that candidates generally found this year’s Unseen Poem accessible and stimulating. As well as interacting on a personal level, most candidates also referred to both the pattern of thought and the use of language in the poem. While the majority of answers engaged with the text in a positive way, some merely paraphrased the poem or offered undeveloped responses.

1. (a) *The impression of the father-son relationship in the poem. (10 marks)*

Most answers engaged well and used apt illustration effectively. However, specific reference was often absent in less successful responses.

(b) *Choose an impressive phrase or line and explain your choice. (10 marks)*

Although candidates found it easy to select an interesting line or phrase, some had difficulty in justifying their choice.

2. *A personal response to the poem... (20 marks)*

There was some excellent engagement with the poem on a personal level. Many of the more successful candidates responded very well to their interaction with the language, imagery and rhythm of the poem as a literary text.

B PRESCRIBED POETRY (50 marks)

Examiners reported that most candidates continued to engage on a personal level – and very often enthusiastically – with the prescribed poems. In the most successful answers, candidates made effective use of the text to reinforce their own views or personal responses. Attempts that were not rooted sufficiently in the content and language of the poems were less successful.

1. *Reasons for liking/not liking Larkin’s poetry...*

Although this was not a particularly popular option, there were some very incisive answers, which engaged well with Larkin’s poems. A minority of candidates ignored the poet’s own assessment of his work.

2. *Donne’s startling imagery and wit in exploring relationships...*

This was the least popular choice. Most candidates demonstrated some appreciation of Donne’s imagery, but there was little direct focus on the poet’s “wit”. Less successful answers were often a series of outline summaries of the poems.

3. *Mahon explores people and places in his own distinctive style...*

This was a very popular choice. Candidates were more assured in their handling of “people and places” than of Mahon’s “distinctive style”. The most perceptive candidates adapted their knowledge to produce good quality responses.

4. *Does the poetry of Rich speak to you? A personal response...*

This was the most popular question, with candidates demonstrating a warm appreciation of Rich’s work. Less successful answers did not interact convincingly with the poetry and tended to rely on biographical information at the expense of analysis. However, there were some excellent responses based on good personal engagement with particular poems.

3.4 Conclusions

- Examiners report that this year's examination encouraged candidates to respond enthusiastically to a wide range of texts and tasks
- The theme of Paper 1, *Identity*, provided material that candidates found engaging and challenging
- The better candidates displayed a fluent and efficient use of language. Deficiencies in candidates' knowledge and level of control of the more formal aspects of language had a detrimental impact on a number of performances
- There were many fine examples of creative writing in the Composing Section but a substantial number of candidates lacked the necessary awareness of central elements of genre
- Answering on Shakespeare's tragedy (this year, *Othello*) as the Single Text is still almost universal
- Examiners noted that the best answers in the Single Text Section were anchored in a careful and assured examination of all aspects of the question. While unfocused narrative remains a minor problem, most candidates displayed an admirable flexibility in adapting their knowledge to the demands of the question
- In the Comparative Section, examiners were impressed by evidence of strong textual knowledge and also the variety of approaches to the analysis of texts. Weaker responses tended to be characterised by an over-rehearsed formulaic approach
- Candidates responded well to this year's Unseen Poem and many candidates were able to unlock meaning by paying close attention to the subtle patterns of language
- The Prescribed Poetry was answered in an enthusiastic fashion and there was ample evidence of candidates being sensitised to the particular demands and nuances of individual questions

3.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

- Students' knowledge and control of the formal aspects of language should be given particular attention. This will aid students to be assiduous in their attention to paragraphing, syntax, spelling and punctuation
- It is advisable to encourage students to refine their knowledge of a wide range of genres. All students might be encouraged to read as widely as possible and to practise writing in these genres in a considered fashion
- While the quality of answering in the Composing Section was generally of a high standard, students should be encouraged to be more confident about their own abilities to write in an original and creative fashion
- Students need to reflect on the particular demands and nuances of questions to achieve a clear focus and structure. They should be encouraged to be flexible in adapting their knowledge to the specific requirements of the question
- Students should be aware of the dangers of unfocused narrative particularly in their response to a Single Text question. It is important to move beyond mere description of content
- Teachers and students might usefully explore the diverse nature of the list of texts offered for examination in the Comparative Section. Fresh combinations of texts in this section can enhance students' understanding of comparative modes
- It is advisable to encourage students to pay particular attention to the detail of key moments in their study of comparative modes
- Students might be reminded that a personal response to a literary text should be central and that it can take many forms. It is often useful to stress the importance of recognising and exploring different approaches to texts or the ambiguity of a line of poetry
- In responding to poetry questions, students should consider the poet's style ('how' the poem is written) as well as the interpretation of his/her subject matter ('what' is being addressed).

3.6 Exemplars of standard – Higher Level

N.B. Candidates' work is typed as written, except where, because of ambiguity arising from the hand-written script, it has been edited to indicate the likely meaning. Square brackets are used to indicate where such editing has occurred.

A brief commentary on the item appears after each exemplar.

EXEMPLAR 1

Paper 1

Section 1 – Comprehending

Text 2, Question A

(i) “A game of high risk!” Give three pieces of evidence from the text which suggest that Eva was “about to make the biggest mistake” of her life. (15)

There is ample evidence from the text to suggest that Eva was “about to make the biggest mistake” of her life. The three most prominent pieces of evidence are undoubtedly the mysterious nature of the violin and its owner, the friendly advice Eva receives against buying such a violin and the large sum Eva is willing to spend on the violin without being guaranteed either “documents of identity” or “rightful ownership”.

It is certain that there is “high risk” involved as Eva does not know any personal information regarding the current owner of the violin. Eva admits that the origins of the violin are “suspicious at best” and that she was offered it by a man who she “at least” thought was Russian. Eva is clearly in a situation where she is relying on and trusting a stranger to be completely honest. The use of “he told me” shows how little control Eva has over the selling of the violin. In my opinion her lack of knowledge and trusting nature leave her in a vulnerable position which is “high risk”.

The advice Eva receives from her friend Zach, “manager of the orchestra” she plays in is also evidence that she is about to make a big mistake. Zach warns her that it is either “fake, or worse – it’s the real thing and the Russian doesn’t have a rightful claim on it”. This shows the possibility that Eva may be risking a huge amount on the violin which could end in her being “arrested”. The fact that Eva considers Zach to be “logical, reasonable and right!” leaves the impression that his views are correct and Eva is, in fact, making a big mistake.

Eva is placing a huge amount of money, all that she has, on the hope that she will acquire the violin in legitimate circumstances. She exclaims “everything my father had left me and more for a violin”. This means that Eva has an incredible amount to lose which makes it extremely high risk to enter into a deal where she fears nothing will prevent Alexander from “grabbing it and making off”.

Overall these pieces of evidence show that this could very well be the “biggest mistake” of Eva’s life.

Marks awarded ex 15: 15²

² Marks for P, C, L, M are shown discretely only when marking ex 50 marks or higher. In all other cases a combined mark taking the discrete criteria into account is awarded.

Comment

- Clear engagement with the question
- Excellent points, aptly supported with relevant illustration
- Competent, controlled expression

(ii) What impression of the character of Eva Tyne is created in this extract? Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)

This extract gives a clear impression of the character of Eva Tyne. From reading it I gathered that Eva is spontaneous, a little naïve and also very adventurous.

It is evident that Eva is a very spontaneous person as she immediately jumps at the chance to purchase the violin. “That name was all it took and I was in the passenger seat of a battered car driving at speed over the East River to Alexander’s apartment”. This shows how Eva puts little thought into her actions beforehand as she takes no time to stop and consider the consequences of her actions. Eva is completely acting on impulse as she races to Alexander’s apartment and I feel this is proof of her spontaneous character.

I also think the extract gives the impression that Eva Tyne is a very naïve character. The piece gives clear evidence that Eva knows little to nothing about both the violin or its background and yet once she was “promised” its identity she starts “agreeing there and then to pay 600,000 dollars”. By not asking any follow up questions and her obvious lack of consideration for possible pitfalls, the extract gives the impression to the reader that Eva is a very naïve individual who takes things at face value.

Eva Tyne is also shown to be an adventurous character in this extract. She seems to enjoy the high risk experience and is excited by the fact that she is not sure of what the outcome may be. Eva describes the feeling as “like sitting in a darkened cinema waiting for a horror movie to begin”. In my opinion this gives the impression that she enjoys taking risks and has a highly imaginative adventurous personality.

It is clear from this extract that Eva Tyne’s character acts on impulse, is slightly naïve and unquestioning and enjoys the thrill of risks.

Marks awarded ex 15: 15

Comment:

- Sustained focus on characteristics of Eva’s character
- Effective use of quotation throughout

(iii) One reviewer of the novel *Tenderwire* described it as “a compelling and well-written thriller”. From your reading of the extract, do you agree with this view? Refer to the text in support of your answer. (20)

Yes, I agree with the view that the novel ‘Tenderwire’ is both a “compelling” and “well-written” novel. The extract clearly shows the thrilling and suspenseful style of the novel which [was] created by a number of different techniques used.

Firstly, the author employs the use of rhetorical questions throughout the passage. This technique is used to focus the reader on the story and also to bring the reader into the mind and thoughts of Eva Tyne. By using rhetorical devices the author is able to build anticipation and suspense by explicitly creating an atmosphere of tension. Eva constantly reassesses her actions and possible outcomes which gives the writing suspense. “How was I to transport it to Tompkins Square Park where I had arranged to meet Alexander?” “You might be arrested?” These questions contribute to the overall effect which makes it a compelling and well-written extract.

The author also employs the use of dialogue as a dramatic device. The well-written dialogue between Eva and both Zach and Alexander makes this extract compelling as it makes the reader feel as though they are witnessing the action. “It’ll be seized within days of your performance”. The dialogue also adds to the thriller genre as the words of Zach are conflicting with the promises of Alexander. “It is the real thing, I promise you!” In my opinion this enhances the quality of the extract and makes it more interesting.

The author uses similes and metaphors along with well-written descriptive narrative to make the extract intriguing. The author describes the violin in a majestic way to emphasize its importance “holding it out like a cushion on which a crown is placed”. This, in turn, presented the thrilling “high risk” atmosphere of the story as Eva decides whether or not to purchase it. In my opinion, the authors use of excellent similes such as “flicker like fire” and “like two dead puppies” added greatly to the extract and made it compelling to read as it appealed to the imagination and was very cinematic. It is this cinematic quality which makes the story come alive and become so thrilling.

In my opinion these aspects contribute to what is, undoubtedly a thrilling and well-written novel.

Marks awarded ex 20: 19

Comment:

- Very good focus on relevant features of the writer’s style
- Structured response well supported by textual reference
- Expression slightly repetitive

EXEMPLAR 2

PAPER 1

SECTION 1 – Comprehending

Text 3 Question B

Students in your school have been invited to contribute articles to the school website on issues relevant to young people. This week’s issue is “We are what we wear”. Write an article for the website expressing your views on the topic. (50)

Fellow students, and the wider world, today I am going [to] try something different. I am going to ask to you to listen. No! Not to pretend to listen to what I have to say, but to really acknowledge my views. No! Don’t scroll down, don’t click ‘x’. I am not a religious fanatic or an unleashed environmentalists. I do not wish to preach or to profess to have a spiritual insight into the social workings of the world. However I do have something that you don’t, I have managed to escape the demon that clouds human vision – conformity.

Let me begin with a simple exercise. I am going to list a number of social groups and identities and I want you to visualise the clothing you associate with them. “Goths”, “emo’s”, “Jocks”, “Chavs”, “preppy kids”.

Done? Well wasn’t that simple? Society has conditioned us to conform. To conform not only to certain codes of behaviour and dress, but also to certain ways of thinking and of judging others. We really have reached a pinnacle in our social development where yes, we really do seem to be what we wear.

Our dress and our appearance have come to symbolise who we are (Or who we aspire to be in many cases!) Our dress codes have evolved to demonstrate to the greater world our moods, our outlook, our culture, and we have allowed them to. To such an extent that people are often judged solely on their appearance.

Dress codes have become a mechanism for conformity, a means of belonging to certain social groups or identities. Instead of being maximised to express individuality and freedom, they are being used as a means of identifying with anonymous masses of likeminded, complacent individuals. They are being used to formulate prejudices against others, and to categorise and to label.

Do not let conformity rule our lives, do not let yourselves be demoted to the status of anonymous members of an army of clones, and do not let your views of others be dictated solely by their outward appearances. Together we can take a positive step towards creating a school environment in which freedom of expression becomes an intrinsic component of everyday lives.

P 15	15
C 15	14
L 15	12
M 5	04

Total marks awarded ex 50: 45

Comment:

- Good sense of the task
- Lively, persuasive writing
- Some flaws in syntax and mechanics

EXEMPLAR 3

Paper 1

Section 2 – Composing

“...advised adults to treat adolescents with sympathy, appreciation and respect...” (TEXT 1)

Write a magazine article (serious and/or light-hearted) in which you give advice to adults on how to help teenagers cope with the “storm and stress” of adolescence.

As we well know, our teenage years can be a life shaping period in our life and is quite difficult at the best of times. Teenagers themselves, treat these important times as a popularity contest. To see who is stronger, smarter, better looking or just generally ‘cooler’. These years consist of countless moments of trying to prove yourself or live up to expectations, which cannot be easy. And on top of all this, theres the whole issue of puberty, which I will NOT go into detail in.

There are a lot of variable factors that can make teenage life easier or much, much harder. And one of these of course are the very reason for the childs very existance, the parents! One part of extremely valuable information is that teenagers are naturally moody, not to mention pests! So the best thing to do is not to take these mood swings personally, no matter how minor or major.

As a teenager myself, the single most important bit of advice I can give to parents is not to be too inquisitive. This will turn your darling little son or daughter into a mental patient. There is nothing worse than walking in the door and being quizzed and asked to give a detailed report of your night, including facts such as where you were exactly, naming every single person that was present, and what they were wearing and of course the old classic, “Why are you so late”. Such questions can often be a rookie mistake. These questions are garaunteed to drive teenagers mad and if asked, you are most likely to get a dishonest answer.

But in all seriousness, teenagers do need a certain amount of love and care from their parents, even if they dont admit it. What most teens do not realise is that their parents were, believe it or not, young once. All of this love however, must be done in moderation. Teenagers must learn from first hand experiences and mistakes rather than be told not to do something. You can be told to do something one hundred times but its not the same as doing it yourself.

On a final note, it is important to remember that teenagers will not be teenagers forever and one day will be normal so ultimately patience is the key to a good relationship with a teenager.

P 30	16
C 30	14
L 30	14
M10	9

Total marks awarded ex 100: 53

Comment:

- Some attempt to offer advice to adults
- Points are not always focused or developed
- General weakness in management of language
- Punctuation and mechanics are flawed

EXEMPLAR 4

Paper 1

Section 2 – Composing

“...the new global society.”

Write a speech in which you argue for or against the necessity to protect national culture and identity.

All that is Left

In the space of one hundred years, Ireland has gone through and overcome a substantial number of significant events and battles. From the treaty negotiations to the Eucharistic Congress; the Belfast bombings to the Celtic Tiger; the election of the first female president (and then a second!) to the Bertie Ahern Tribunal; the change to the euro and the joining of the European Union; we have gained many new faces and almost an entirely new way of living. Ladies and gentlemen, it seems to me that our natural culture and identity are indeed, all that is left.

Once upon a time our culture identity was something we lived for, fought for, and died for. Our great leaders Pádraig Pearse, Michael Collins, James Connolly gave their lives in search for the freedom to be Irish – with conviction and without compromise. The idea of ‘blood sacrifice’ stemmed from the willingness of great men to support their national culture and their own cultural identities. Should we not have the same level of passion and pride today? As they stood on the steps of the GPO Dublin and read our declaration of Independence they were pleading for the right to have that identity. Now that we have it how can we throw it away? We must work to ensure that we keep it, protect it and cherish it.

Today we are in a rapidly evolving and changing world that is a far cry from the harsh times of 1916. Yet, we must not lose our sense of pride or the factors which identify Ireland as a nation and separate it from all others. The loss of the Irish pound to new Euro, although perhaps economically viable was, in fact, a loss of our heritage. We are constantly tempted to abandon what is unique to our nationality in favour of a collective, more universal system. The Lisbon Treaty is an example of this. Although there are some who will tell you it is the best way for Ireland to advance, I can assure you, it is not. By agreeing to the Lisbon Treaty we will not only lose our effective position in Europe but we will lose even more of our national identity. To join this Treaty is to give up the basis of our constitution, one which marks our nation as a whole. In every respect, I feel it necessary to avoid such blatant disregard to our nation’s identity.

This blatant disregard can be seen in a number of circumstances across Ireland today. Even in recent events, a group of students in the Gaelteacht have brought their school to court in order to insist that they must be taught through Irish. It has come to light that ninety percent of the students pursuing the case are foreign nationals. Some might argue that we must accept the influx of foreign workers and students into our country, and this statement has merit. However, it is unacceptable that we compromise our national identity, our national language to suit the needs of incoming populations. We cannot surrender our heritage for the benefit and ease of those who wish to live in our country.

The roots of the Irish language and Irish culture stem from Irish history. The use of the Irish language was used to promote and protect the idea of “Irish Ireland”. Should we not keep the same view today? It is vital that we continue to protect it, regardless of outside pressures, because it is what makes us our own nation. The Irish culture extends to music, poetry, dance,

literature and language from all ages. DP Moran and WB Yeats created a boom of Irish culture which still lives on today. However, with increasing foreign influence our cultural background seems to be dwindling in the balance. Only 15 percent of students will take their examinations in Irish and even less will continue to use the language in everyday life. The solid structures music and poetry seem to be faltering as there are less Irish music schools today than ever before. We need to work to promote our culture to young people and protect its future so that we will be able to recognize Ireland in twenty years.

The Irish identity is clearly recognised all over the world. The Irish have travelled and emigrated to parts all over the world. I recently travelled to New York to visit a dear friend of mine and to my surprise the first three people I met were able to understand my accent and said “Dia dhuit!” or “Cead mile failte”. Such small turns of phrase and yet I felt instantly welcomed. For this reason it is absolutely critical that we protect the far reaching identity of Ireland around the world. Ireland has become an increasingly provocative and respected voice around the world and we must protect this voice in order to secure our own identity.

Although we have been faced with both hardships and struggles it seems that we have always been able to protect one thing – our cultural identity. It is what unifies us as a nation and separates us from our European counterparts. We must not let it go. We must protect it and keep it alive so Irish Ireland will exist for centuries to come. It is truly all that is left and yet, I believe it is all that we need.

P 30	30
C 30	27
L 30	27
M10	9

Total marks awarded ex 100: 93

Comment:

- Lively persuasive writing
- Wide-ranging illustrations
- Some lapses in expression and mechanics.

EXEMPLAR 5

Paper 2

Section 1 –The Single Text - Othello

“Othello’s foolishness rather than Iago’s cleverness leads to the tragedy of Shakespeare’s Othello”.

Personally I feel that it is Othello’s foolishness more so than Iago’s cleverness that leads to the tragedy of the play, and also the fall of the eponymous hero. Many factors added to Othello’s foolishness, especially that fact that he is an outsider in both Venice and Cyprus. Fundamentally Othello is a good and honest character who in his naivety does not expect others to betray him. It appears as if Othello is somewhat blind to the world around him and also to his own traits and characteristics.

Othello is one of the most noble and honest characters in the play. He bears respect for those who rule Venice referring to them as “most noble signors”, and is aware that his “rude” speech may not please the Duke and Senators. Despite the fact that Othello deceived Brabantio by eloping with his daughter, Desdemona he now offers the senate an “unvarnished” tale of their relationship. Othello’s use of the first and third person when making reference to himself only further serves to highlight his nobility. Only when his mind has been poisoned by the “demi-devil” (Iago) do we see his speech begin to degenerate into vulgar and beast-like language: “as hot as goats”. It is ironic how Othello’s best traits lead to his downfall, but because of the hero’s honesty and good character he is foolish in believing that everyone is as good and noble as he is.

Othello is of the opinion that “men should be as they seem”, he wholeheartedly believes that “honest Iago” is exactly that. Even as Iago feeds him lies and plants seeds of doubt in his mind regarding his wife’s fidelity Othello never once questions his motives. Throughout the play Othello calls Iago honest, even at the end when Iago’s scheme is unravelling we hear him say “honest, honest Iago” and earlier on he reveals that Iago is “exceedingly honest”. It is curious that Othello did not make Iago his lieutenant in the first place since he has such blind faith in his words and actions. Iago’s bitter hatred towards Othello for promoting Cassio ahead of him and for having an affair with Emilia leads to his concoction of this “pestilence”. How does Othello not realise what is taking place? It never crossed his mind that jealousy might be at the root of this plot, instead he foolishly allows Iago to guide him blindfolded towards his own demise.

A weakness within Othello’s character is that he cannot bear uncertainty. He is not able to handle doubt and must have clear cut evidence either against or in support of Iago’s story. Nowhere is this more evident than in the temptation scene (Act III Scene 3) when he pesters Iago for “ocular” proof and declares “away at once with love or jealousy”. Othello’s need for certainty is also seen when, after the brawl he demands to know what happened and makes the quick and rash decision of dismissing Cassio after only hearing the account of one man, “honest” Iago. The uncertainty that Othello suffers from leads to him making quick and uninformed decisions based on the word of Iago, he is foolish in basing his whole revenge against Desdemona on the flimsy evidence of a handkerchief and even more foolish to believe the lies and “poison” which Iago “pours...into her ears”.

Othello is an outsider in both Venice and Cyprus and so is unaware of the rituals, habits of Venetian life and nuances of relationships. Othello at first is confident that his position as a foreigner is not of great importance for Desdemona “has eyes and chose” him. However as time goes by he becomes more and more paranoid and believes that his race may have had a part in

Desdemona's accused betrayal: "haply for I am black". Fearing that this may have been the case Othello once again foolishly turns to Iago. Iago cannot resist this temptation and attempts to increase Othello's fear by informing him that "in Venice they do not let heaven see the pranks they dare not show their husbands." Othello no longer has self confidence as it has been shattered by Iago.

Othello is a character of emotional extremes which leads him to fervently loving Desdemona one moment and despising her the next. He reveals that he loves his wife, but when he does not "chaos is come again". This links with Othello's unbearable need for certainty. For him there is no middle ground, Desdemona is either guilty or innocent, she is the love of his life or the "fair devil". Othello himself admits that he "loved not to wisely", he is unable to differentiate between the intense emotions he has and therefore he loves and hates with the same intensity. His blindness to this flaw is what allows him to make foolish decisions.

Overall it is Othello's blind trust in Iago and complete lack of self knowledge which create situations that are ultimately treacherous for him. He begins to make foolish and ill advised decisions which leads to the tragedy of Shakespeare's Othello and the downfall of the eponymous hero.

P 18	13
C 18	11
L 18	13
M 6	5

Total marks awarded ex 60: 42

Comment:

- Unbalanced approach; at times a character sketch
- Some effective, well-supported points
- Flaws in quotations and mechanics

EXEMPLAR 6

Paper 2

Section 2 – The Comparative Study

B. Literary Genre

“The creation of memorable characters is part of the art of good story-telling.”

Write an essay comparing the ways in which memorable characters were created and contributed to your enjoyment of the stories in the texts you have studied for your comparative course. It will be sufficient to refer to the creation of one character from each of your chosen texts.

Literary genre is the manner in which the text is told. The texts which I have studied as part of my comparative analysis are the romantic satire “Strictly Ballroom”(SB), a film by Baz Luhrmann, the gothic bildungsroman “Wuthering Heights” (WH) a novel by Emily Bronte, and the modern dram [drama] “Philadelphia Here I Come” (PHIC) a play by Brian Friel. All three of my texts make use of genres such as romance and drama, however, no two authors use the same methods in creating these genres. Through the clever creation of memorable characters and diverse plots the authors all display the art of good story-telling.

In my answer I wish to focus on the aspects of narration and narrative techniques, imagery and symbolism and character creation. In my opinion these aspects greatly contribute to and enhance each of my texts.

Narration and narrative techniques play a vital role in the successful creation of characters and development of plot in each of my texts and add to my overall understanding and enjoyment of each text. All three of my texts employ different methods of narration to tell their story. In SB, Luhrmann utilises omniscient narration by using the camera and showing all points of view instead of focusing on the view of one particular character. Similarly, Friel employs omniscient narration to allow us to witness many of the characters viewpoints in PHIC by using stage directions. Unlike my other two texts, Bronte uses a much more complex and multi-layered type of narration in WH which allows her to develop a more intricate plot.

In each of my texts the type of narration chosen by the author is effective in creating both the characters and the storyline. Luhrmann uses the camera in SB to his advantage as he can create characters by using high or low angle shots. Luhrmann can, therefore, influence how a character is portrayed. For example, Barry Fife is shown in a darkened office as there is an extreme close up on his mouth. This clearly establishes him as the evil villain within the story. Similarly, Friel also uses omniscient narration to develop his plot. Like Luhrmann, Friel uses omniscient narration, however he also employs the use of dual character in Private Gar and Public Gar. This gives added depth and humour to an otherwise banal plot as eccentric Private Gar can mock the characters around him ‘Screwballs’ and also show deep emotional feeling. In the same way, Bronte’s narration complements her plot as it allows her to develop complex characters. Unlike the other two texts, Bronte is completely reliant on the written word so she must depend on passionate description to accentuate her characters. Through descriptive narrative we see Heathcliff is a “fierce, wolfish, pitiless man”.

All of my texts employ the use of flashback as a narrative technique to enhance their storylines. In SB, we witness the 1967 flashback and the Waratah Dance Championship so that we become aware of the characters’ past and can, therefore, better understand their present situation. Friel

uses flashback in the same way as Luhrmann as he portrays flashbacks of Kathy Doogan and of Aunt Lizzie's visit, both events which are essential to understanding the present circumstances of Gar's departure for America. Although both texts employ flashback, I feel that Friel does so much more naturally. Friel makes use of the fluid areas of the stage to present flashbacks which are provoked often by Gar's music. Unlike Friel, Luhrmann uses the camera to jump back in time effortlessly and without warning. In the initial mockumentary scene, we are unaware that we are witnessing flashback until we are brought back to the present day. Unlike these two texts, *WH* does not employ a number of consequential flashbacks but instead makes her narrative one continuous flashback which begins when Lockwood arrives at *Wuthering Heights*.

Overall it may be said that all three texts use excellent narrative structures to bring their memorable characters to life. Bronte, like Friel employs two main narrators, Nelly and Lockwood to give both a realistic and relatable quality to her plot. By studying these types of narration I have been able to fully enter and enjoy each of my texts.

Imagery and symbolism is used by each of my authors to clearly depict the lives of characters and the obstacles which they face. All three of my texts employ the use of two different houses to depict the clearly different ways of living within the texts. In *SB*, Luhrmann creates a clear distinction between the home of Scott and Fran. Scott's home is pink, flamboyant and covered in trophy which show a clear obsession with winning and no evidence of filial love. Opposite to this is Fran's home which is more subdued and humble but much more loving. Fran's home is both literally and symbolically on the 'wrong side of the tracks'. Comparatively, Bronte also illustrates two completely different homes, families and ways of living. Thrushcross Grange is a "splendid dwelling" which is "carpeted with crimson" and echoes the class, education and sophistication of the Lintons. On the other hand, *Wuthering Heights*, like Fran's home, is much more dark and seems to represent a family which is much more free-spirited, it is a "perfect misanthropists heaven". Unlike my other two texts, Friel does not create two polar homes in *PHIC*. Instead Friel juxtaposes Gar's current life in the isolated town of Ballybeg with the prospects and vitality he will face when he reaches America.

In all three texts the different ways of living become emblematic of the memorable characters which the author creates in their stories. Fran in *SB* is paralleled by her home as she is initially timid and shy a "beginner dancer" who falls victim to the much more domineering and manipulative Shirley Hastings. Bronte uses the same technique as Luhrmann and mirrors her characters with their homes. The Lintons of Thrushcross Grange are much more well-mannered and sophisticated while Heathcliff and Cathy from *WH* are wild and free-spirited and often very domineering. Similarly, Friel contrasts characters within Ballybeg with those outside. The O'Donnells are said to be "like to peas in a pod" while the Gallagher girls of Bailtefree are the exact opposite as they are "always laughing or crying ...you know, sorta silly".

The window is also a symbol utilised by my authors to show isolation and separation. In *SB*, we are shown in the opening sequence a group of women 'caged' behind a glass window. This symbol, therefore, immediately creates the idea that the woman's role is subservient to the man's in Ballroom dancing. Doug is also panned down with the camera and shown through a window which shows his isolation and separation from the dancing world which has stifled his creativity. In the same manner, Bronte successfully uses the window symbol to portray the separation of Cathy and Heathcliff and Heathcliff's ultimate isolation. As Cathy is welcomed into the Linton home, Heathcliff is left outside to look upon their family through a window. In contrast, Friel does not employ the symbol of the window directly. However, a comparison may be drawn as by the use of Private Gar, Friel offers us a 'window' into the mind and thoughts of Gar. Just as in my other two texts Friel shows the explicit isolation of a character as Gar pleads with his father silently to "make one unpredictable remark".

By analysing the use of imagery and symbolism within my three texts I have come to realise that authors can use similar symbols in many ways to effectively create memorable characters and so successfully tell their story.

Character creation is pivotal to the overall development of any plot and my three texts use diverse methods of character creation in order to complement their individual stories. Each of my texts employs a number of dramatic characters within their plot. Characters such as the hot-tempered Cathy in WH are comparable to Shirley Hastings in SB as both authors make them extremely flamboyant and eccentric. This is paralleled by Friel in PHIC as Private Gar proves an extremely dramatic character. The text is more minimalistic than the other two, however it is no less dramatic because of the use of the highly-strung and intriguing character we see in the mind of Private Gar.

Each of my texts also employs the use of somewhat exaggerated characters in their story-telling. In SB, Luhrmann creates over-the-top characters which stem from the fairytale genre who are sometimes very unbelievable. For example, when Ken Railings glids in and asks Liz to be his dance partner because his partner has “broken both her legs”. Similarly, Bronte’s narrators may be said to be exaggerated characters that are somewhat unbelievable. Nelly Dean, who is a servant living in poor conditions outlives many of the other wealthier characters in the novel who would have had better health and homes. Unlike my other two texts, Friel maintains a sense of realism in his characters which compounds both his themes and characters.

All three of my texts employ thought-provoking antagonists. In SB, Luhrmann immediately establishes Barry Fife as “evil villain” and does not dwell on motives as he stays within the cliché fairytale genre. Contrastingly, Heathcliff is a much more complex antagonist. Unlike Luhrmann, Bronte explores the motives behind the actions of Heathcliff. We are inclined at time to sympathise with him, however, his actions towards the younger generation make him a true villain. “We’ll see if one tree wont grow as crooked as another with the same wind to twist it”. In contrast, Friel shows no outright antagonist however it seems that Gar himself (Public) seems to repeatedly stifle and disregard the wishes of Private by his total lack of communication with his father and he is, therefore, an antagonistic force to the progression of the plot.

From studying the Narration, Imagery and Symbolism and Character Creation of my three texts, I have gained a better understanding of Literary genre. The creation of memorable characters by each of my authors is testament to their unique and outstanding ability as excellent story-tellers. I feel by studying Literary Genre it has enriched my experience of each text and the techniques and methods which the authors used to create it.

P 21	21
C 21	21
L 21	21
M 7	6

Total marks awarded ex 70: 69

Comment:

- Sustained engagement with the task
- Focused points supported by detailed reference
- Comparative approach throughout
- Some flaws in mechanics

EXEMPLAR 7

Paper 2

Section 3 – Prescribed Poetry

Derek Mahon

“Derek Mahon explores people and places in his own distinctive style.”

Write your response to this statement supporting your points with the aid of suitable reference to the poems you have studied.

The concept of Mahon’s poetry which I engaged with and enjoyed most is his exploration and obvious interest in people and places. He expresses himself in his own personal and unique style, which allows him to explore the subject matter in his poems with a language that is rich and memorable.

“Grandfather” is a poem which offers an insight into the background and personality of Mahon’s own grandfather. I enjoyed the lively description of the old man “up at six, with a block of wood or a box of nails, discreetly up to no good, or banging round the house like a four year old”. I found the language that Mahon uses in his description of his grandfather as “cute” and “shrewd” to be endearing, and it is clear from lines such as “wounded but humourous” that Mahon has great affection and high respect for this man. It is not in Mahon’s style to write a poem without a setting, and even this one, which is clearly focused on his grandfather as a person, gives us a setting of “row upon row of gantries.” The “landscape” of this man’s childhood is given in order for us to appreciate the hard, physical nature of the work he did in the Belfast shipyards.

Mahon seems particularly drawn to people from history, as is evident in “Antarctica” and “After the Titanic”. In these poems, unlike “Grandfather”, Mahon is not the observer, but enters into the mind of the characters, and presents what he imagines their thoughts and feelings to have been. Mahon uses repetition to great effect in “Antarctica”, with regard to the lines, “I’m just going outside and may be some time” and “At the heart of the ridiculous, the sublime.” This constant repetition echoes the final words of Lawrence Oates before he sacrificed his own life to help speed up the return of his fellow explorers. Mahon shows great interest in what the reaction of his companions may have been (“the others nod, pretending not to know”). By describing this event as both “ridiculous” and “sublime” Mahon conveys his incredulity at the selflessness and courageousness of Oate’s decision to give his life for the sake of his companions, the trait which probably attracted Mahon to this character. In “After the Titanic”, the speaking voice is that of Bruce Ismay, a character who contrasts strikingly with the courageous Oates. In this poem, Mahon explores the outcome of the remainder of Ismay’s life after he fled from the sinking Titanic. This poem is full of memorable imagery, from the metaphorical image, “I sank that night as far as any / Hero”, to that of a man who “takes his cocaine and will see no-one”. The final line of the poem, “Include me in your lamentations” invites us to contemplate on whether or not Ismay really deserves to be treated with disdain, or whether he has paid the price for his selfishness.

Like Mahon, I have an interest in Ireland, which contributed to my enjoyment and appreciation of the poems “Kinsale” and “Rathlin”. Mahon uses contrast between past and present in both of these poems, to convey the difference between the oppression and suffering linked with Ireland’s past and the peace and prosperity we enjoy today. Again, these issues are made all the more interesting by the distinctive style in which Mahon writes about them. He makes use of

alliteration in “Kinsale” when he speaks of the rain of the past – “deep-delving, dark, deliberate”. This thudding “d” sound resounds in our minds, echoing the dark depression and suffering of Ireland throughout her past. I found the image of the “sky-blue slates, steaming in the sun” to be a clever link with the previous image, in that the rain that pervaded the past is now evaporating away in the sun. “Rathlin” is a poem in which Mahon uses sound to great effect to compare past and present. He contrasts the “screams of the Rathlin women” to the present day “cry of the shearwater” and “roar of the outboard motor”. It is clear that Rathlin has been free of war and bloodshed for some time, but the line “bombs doze in the housing estates” suggests that Mahon is contemplating whether or not his hometown of Belfast will ever experience a similar peace.

Mahon’s cultural frame of reference does not simply stop at Ireland. The poem, “A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford” refers to places worldwide where “a thought might grow”. He speaks of abandoned, forgotten people and places such as “Peruvian mines”, “Indian compounds” and “lost people of Treblinka and Pompeii.” The metaphor of the mushrooms left to rot in a shed in Co. Wexford is a representation of all the victims of tragedies who are soon forgotten by the world, as it “waltzes in its bowl of cloud”. Mahon is clearly deeply affected by the injustice in the world and expresses this in a distinctive and memorable way at the end of the poem when he pleads on their behalf “let the god not abandon us/ we too had our lives to live/ you with your light meter and relaxed itinerary/ let not our naïve labours have been in vain!” Mahon’s clear regard for humanity is shown as he gives these people a speaking voice, the reference to “the god” emphasising the universality of what Mahon is speaking about.

Mahon’s treatment of people and places in a style which is so unique and creative is the most outstanding feature of his poetry, and the one which, for me, made the study of poetry all the more enjoyable.

P 15	15
C 15	15
L 15	15
M 5	5

Total marks awarded ex 50: 50

Comment:

- Well structured response focusing directly on the task
- Effectively developed points on Mahon’s themes and style
- Convincing personal engagement with the poems