



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2011

ENGLISH - HIGHER LEVEL - PAPER 1

180 marks

WEDNESDAY, 8 JUNE - MORNING, 9.30 - 12.00

**YOU MUST ATTEMPT ALL 4 SECTIONS
ON THIS PAPER**

**IT IS SUGGESTED THAT YOU SPEND ABOUT
HALF AN HOUR ON EACH OF SECTIONS
1, 3, 4, AND ABOUT ONE HOUR ON
SECTION 2**

Read carefully the following passage and then answer the questions that follow.

The following edited extract is adapted from *The Maeve Binchy Writers' Club*. The book arose from a writing course, which aimed to help aspiring writers start and finish a book. Each week successful writer, Maeve Binchy, wrote a letter to the students on the course sharing her thoughts on a different aspect of writing. In the adapted extract below, Maeve gives advice on telling a story.



Dear Writers' Club members,

1. I can't tell you what story to write. Nobody can do that except you. There is no point in telling anyone else what to write about. But I can share with you some of the advice I got along the way from wise editors, men and women whose job it is to know what people like and to keep us writers somehow on the rails.
2. They say that when beginning a story you should always try to catch people at some interesting juncture of their lives, like when they have to make a choice or decision, or when someone has betrayed them, or at the start of love or the end of love. It's better to come across them at some kind of crisis than in the middle of a long, lazy summer where nothing happens.
3. The notion of change is important in a story. It would be a dull tale indeed if the hero took no notice of the disintegration of his family, if he was the same unaltered dullard after four hundred pages. The reader would feel fairly short changed.
4. They told me that we must be interested in the hero or heroine – that doesn't mean making the person into a walking saint or goody-goody, but it does mean giving them a strong and memorable personality. There is no point whatsoever in spending pages and pages describing someone who is a dithering, dull kind of person without purpose, views or motivation. We have to care enough about the people to follow them through to the last page. When I heard this I began to panic a bit and asked humbly what kind of person might be interesting enough to hold the reader's attention. I wouldn't be able to create Captain Ahab, the man who pursued Moby Dick, or Rhett Butler who didn't give a damn in *Gone with the Wind*. But I was told that writing wasn't a matter of painting by numbers. They couldn't just create some formula leaving me to join up the dots. I had to think, and work out the kind of people whose lives and adventures I would be interested in myself. This way I might be on the way to make others interested in them too.
5. In my case I was interested in people who were told that if they were good they would be happy, and therefore disappointed when it didn't always turn out like that. So I worked out that, in a way, people create their own happiness not just by being good, whatever that is, but by seeking opportunities, taking chances, taking charge of their own destiny. It interested me for a start, and then kept me going. It could work for you too, if you found a theory around which to base a story.
6. Another good piece of advice I got was to think of the story as a journey. Something happens to the main character at the start, and we follow him or her dealing with it, or not dealing with it, or ignoring it, or making it worse. Whatever. Now I don't mean a literal journey, they don't even have to leave home. But they have to progress, be different people for better or worse at the end. The man who thinks his son is on hard drugs, his colleagues in the office on

the take or his own gambling out of control, has to do something. You can't leave him static in the same plight at the end of chapter fourteen as he was at the outset. The woman who has had a bad medical diagnosis, a faithless friend, an unjust accusation of shoplifting or proof that her brother is a murderer must have taken steps of some sort over whatever it is. She can't just sit there page after page letting it all wash over her.

7. They also say that pace is important when you are telling a story. Again, nobody can hold your hand over this, but I have found that at the beginning it helps to make a kind of chart of the book chapter by chapter, giving myself orders like, 'By the end of chapter two we must know that she cannot afford to pay the rent and will be evicted', and then, 'By the end of chapter three we must know that her rent will be paid for her, but at a price.' If you do this in advance it stops you dawdling about till you're ready and generally dragging the thing out and making it endless. There is no right or wrong pace, it's up to you. A gentle lyrical story will call for one kind of speed, a fast moving action thriller another. But there's no harm being aware of it.
8. I hope it's all going well for you and that you are getting your ten pages a week done.

Maeve

Answer the following **four** questions:

1. What elements of story writing does Maeve Binchy offer advice on in this extract? (10)
2. As a regular reader of books, which element of story writing, identified by Maeve Binchy, do you consider to be the most important? Explain your choice. (10)
3. Explain in your own words, what you think the writer means when she says in paragraph 4, '...writing was not a matter of painting by numbers.' (10)
4. From reading this extract, what impression do you form of the writer, Maeve Binchy? (10)

Write a prose composition on any **one** of the following titles. Except where otherwise stated, you are free to write in any form you wish e.g. narrative, descriptive, dramatic, short story, etc.

1. The best advice I was ever given.
2. Things that fill me with wonder.
3. Write a story that features a most unlikely hero or heroine.
4. My recipe for happiness.
5. Write a speech for **OR** against the motion, “Social networking sites have had a predominately negative impact on the lives of teenagers”.
6. Write a story beginning, “I knew I would need a lot of courage to get through the day ...”
7. Write a composition including **at least 5** of the following words or phrases:
 - Oddly shaped
 - little red car
 - only another 800 to go
 - silver key
 - storm-laden clouds
 - without stopping to think
 - the smallest one imaginable
 - black then purple then green
 - with a deafening pop
 - invincible
 - it shimmered and floated
 - a single earring

Answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.

You will be rewarded for:

- Well-structured answers
- Clarity of expression
- An appropriate tone
- Good grammar, spelling and punctuation.

1. Read the letter on **Page 2** of **Paper X** written by the broadcaster, John Kelly, to his younger self. This letter is adapted from *With Love from me ... to me. A Letter to my Sixteen-Year-Old Self* edited by Joseph Galliano.

Write **a letter** to your imaginary future son or daughter offering him or her advice on some significant milestones in his or her life. You might include such events as: first day at school, first disco, sitting the Junior Certificate examinations, etc.

OR

2. Write **a review** of one of the following for your school magazine: a mobile phone, an MP3 player, a games console or an electronic reader.
Your answer should include an introduction, description, evaluation and recommendation.

Answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.

1. Look at the information about newsworthiness that appears on **Page 3** of **Paper X** which accompanies this examination paper.
- (a) Think of a major news story which has captured your attention in the last twelve months. Briefly identify the story. Explain how this story meets any three of the criteria for newsworthiness set out in the information on **Paper X**. (20)
- (b) Major news stories are generally covered across a variety of media. Outline the advantages and disadvantages of following a news story using at least two of the media listed below:
- newspapers
 - radio
 - television
 - internet.
- (20)

OR

2. (a) Write the text of an advertisement to be broadcast on your local radio station. Your advertisement should aim to convince more young people to use their local library. (20)
- (b) In addition to the radio commercial you have already written, how else could you use various media to effectively promote their local library to young people? You should refer to at least two other forms of media in your answer. (20)

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