

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2001

This paper should be handed to candidates on 4 May, 2001.

ART

IMAGINATIVE COMPOSITION AND STILL LIFE - HIGHER LEVEL

FRIDAY, 11 MAY - 9.30 - 12.00

100 marks are assigned to this paper.

INSTRUCTIONS

Write your Examination Number clearly in the space provided on the drawing paper. Write the title of the paper - "Still Life" or "Imag Comp" - on the drawing sheet immediately below your Examination Number. Your starting point must be stated on the reverse side of the drawing sheet. You may work on the reverse side of the paper if you wish. The use is allowed of tracing paper, coloured papers, texturing materials or other materials normally required to answer the question. A candidate who selects Still Life is required to bring appropriate objects of his/her own selection and set up his/her own group in time for the commencement of the examination.

ONE QUESTION ONLY TO BE ATTEMPTED

Select a starting point from the descriptive passage which follows and

1. Draw or paint a picture you have in mind after reading the descriptive passage.

or

2. Draw or paint a Still Life group of objects contained in or suggested by the descriptive passage.

or

3. Make an abstract composition suggested by the descriptive passage.

OVER→

DESCRIPTIVE PASSAGE

Sandra is driving home from town. On the back seat are two plastic supermarket bags, filled with food. A cardboard box, tied with string, a bulky brown-paper parcel and a newspaper lie beside a wicker basket in which is a carton of milk and a head of lettuce. Hanging up is a jacket which Sandra has just collected from the dry cleaners. She will be glad to get home and have an early lunch. As she drives, the wet road appears silvery in the clear light after the rain. The trees are turning to the yellow and gold tones of autumn. The chestnuts are falling on to a blanket of dry brown leaves. Their spiky pods litter the grass verge and the edge of the road. Some of the chestnuts have broken open. Inside the glossy brown nut is surrounded by white. The harvest is over and the stubble fields glimmer in the thin sunlight. Large bales of straw punctuate the emptiness of the flat fields. Rooks hover over tall trees and wood-pigeons forage in the stubble.

In Sandra's garden some flowers linger among the fading foliage. Dahlias still look as though summer has not passed so strong are their colours. Other types of flowers have seeded and withered, their stalks brown and dried up, their leaves shed or rotten.

Much later Tommy arrives back from work wearing biker's gear. He parks a powerful motorbike beside the back door of the house. The machine casts a long shadow over the ancient cobblestones. As he climbs the stone steps, his mobile rings. He answers it, leaning against the door jamb as he talks, his safety helmet left down on the top step. When Toby, the old black labrador, ambles out of the house and sits at his feet, Tommy absentmindedly strokes his ears while giving his full concentration to the conversation.

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Visualize this urban scene. The street is wide and the shops are small and pokey on either side. Most are extensions to modest Victorian houses. The original gardens have been built over, only the dormer windows and ridge tiles remind us of what must once have been. There are fruit, fish and butchers' shops interspersed with cafes and ethnic restaurants. The flashy, brightly lit corner shop glistens with shiny chrome freezers and glass delicatessen counters. The wet pavement and terracotta brick are interesting in themselves or as subtle backdrops to another picture depending, on your point of view. Then consider an industrial landscape, a medley of silos, roofs, pylons, pipes, chimneys and containers. Wasteland is another feature of such an environment, as are endless roadways, signage and factories residing side by side, unrelated visually to glass fronted offices and plush reception areas. Within these scenes there is constant movement, people work, traffic passes, there is wind, there is a never-ending flow of water and an endless cycle of growth and decay. There is inspiration for the artist wherever there is life within a landscape, townscape or seascape.

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In the grey room a man is sitting at the computer on his desk. He wears a crisp grey suit; his face is lined, grey with fatigue. The carpet is dark grey; a grey umbrella and a grey tweed coat hang on a stainless steel coat stand. The only accents of colour in this gloomy room are the computer screen, his garish tie and a glass paper-weight. Outside the window, a vista of grey, hard-edged buildings and offices stretch out along treeless avenues to the docks, where a lone grey tanker is moored, among the cranes and the warehouses. The sky is a mass of dense, soft grey clouds. Soon it will rain. He lifts the 'phone, and dials a number.

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One bright day, Charissa, her two friends Charlotte and Sophie, their father Ian, and I, set out across the bog to climb Mweelrea, the second highest mountain in Connaught. Not a cloud – Ian in shorts and all in gumboots except me, dolled up like Action Woman in the new climbing gear I have purchased with a view to scaling some rather more inaccessible peaks.

After a brisk two-and-a-half hour climb, we reach the bare, scoured clean saddle of the mountain, just beneath the summit. Ahead the Atlantic is bathed in light and sun. From the back of the mountain, a sudden hailstorm bears down, a funnel of stinging hailstones that pelt us as we squat down helplessly. We cannot move. Brevity is usually concomitant with a storm's force, but not now. It rains on, filling gullies like snow, blinding us. A crack of thunder and a bolt of lightning strike just above us. Simultaneously.

The old adage of counting the seconds between thunder and bolt in miles clearly strikes Ian and me as we seize the girls and try to aim downhill. A mass of mud and slate slips casually and eerily by a few yards away.

The mountain is like a waterfall as we skid down its rocky tussocks. Tiny streams have turned to torrents. It is almost as though the mountain has decided to put on a show of all its most existential talents. The children alternate between tears and terror. I try to tell them that they will be able to dine out on the adventure at school when they have to write about the most exciting day of the holidays. "Every step is one step closer to death", whimpers Sophie, disbelievingly.

We cannot ford the torrent. Its boulder-hurling force, depth and breadth are un-negotiable. Nor can we wait for calm, as the girls are sodden and freezing. Then, two figures appear from nowhere. I had never met anyone on previous climbs. They produce chocolate and insist that we attempt the torrent together. He, Paul, is nearly knocked over by the brown flood, but, one by one, neck deep and assaulted by the current, we make it. We arrive home to tea and a turf fire. Neighbours say it is more than twenty-five years since the mountain behaved quite so uproariously.

Two days later, Merci, Charissa and I set off around the headland, my rucksack warmed by its foil parcel of omelette of onions, floury Irish potatoes and a verdant layer of basil and chives, all set and browned in slow-cooked eggs. This time, if the elements defeat us, it will be on a full stomach.

When we get to the deserted cove Merci challenges us: "No swim, no lunch." We dance into the Atlantic breakers, willing warmth out of their freezing depths. The rain begins, but, undeterred, we sit on the rocks and open our precious package. The whole warm circle of omelette is devoured, as there is no hunger like the sea's. The ritual of food and the memory of what one eats is always heightened by the power of the occasion.

(adapted from an article by Tamasin Day-Lewis/The Spectator)

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Alan is painting in the ruined abbey, surrounded by stone walls, some restored, some crumbling and tumble-down, and bound with ivy. He has set up his easel under a blossoming elder tree which has sprung up among the debris of collapsed walls. From this shadowy vantage point the lush countryside is framed through a Gothic arch – distant oak woods, flocks and herds, a stone bridge with round arches over the swift brown river edged with tall rushes and green willows. He also has a view of the cloister, its carvings in near-perfect condition despite their great age. Wood-pigeons pick around in the grassy cloister, or flutter high above Alan's head to their nests in crevices and on ledges out of sight in the lofty towers and the silent belfry. Alan is painting quickly and confidently; he observes the shadows cast by the walls in enclosed spaces, and the patches of sky that he can see through damaged walls, tiny slit windows and more elaborate curved pointed windows. Beside him is a messy still-life of paint tubes, squeezed paint, a palette of mixed colours, a cloth stained with colour, palette knives and brushes, and an open sketch book. For a long time nothing disturbs him in this haunt of ancient peace. At noon he stops work and eats his lunch – tea from a flask, sandwiches from a crumpled foil package, biscuits, a pear and some kiwi fruit. Then he takes a walk around the abbey. A hawk hovers over the rushy field between the river and the ruin.

In the grounds a team of archaeologists are painstakingly excavating the site. Centimetre by centimetre they clear the debris of centuries from over a carved effigy of the last abbot. Right now a serene face and a mitre, along with part of an inscription, are emerging from their timewarp of six hundred years of fallen leaves.

When he gets back to his easel Alan finds it hard to concentrate. A large group of tourists have arrived. They photograph and film, talk and point; a few stop to look at Alan's painting.

OVER→



Angela is making omelettes. In a small basket, usually used for bread, are brown and white eggs, and there are a couple more in an egg carton beside the basket. Angela breaks the eggs into a clear glass bowl. The broken empty shells litter the worktop, casting small shadows. The sunlight streams through the window, illuminating the glistening egg-whites and yellow yolks. On a wooden chopping board are a bunch of spring onions and some cloves of garlic. A glass jug half-full of milk, a pepper-mill and a bowl of sugar cubes are next to three mugs, all a different shape and with a different decorative design. Angela picks up an egg-whisk and begins to beat the eggs. A half-used pound of butter, still in its crumpled foil wrapping, lies beside a jar in which wooden spoons and other kitchen tools are standing.

The dining table is set. It is neat and tidy compared with the messy worktop. A flower arrangement on the table is composed of three different shapes of leaves and only a few large, bright flowers. Wine glasses and a half-full bottle of wine are on a tray. A pineapple, a melon, red and green apples, grapes, and brown-spotted bananas are arranged in a bowl. At every table setting is a napkin which has been folded into an elegant sculptural shape. On the wall are abstract paintings; one is entitled "Here Comes the Night"; another combines static areas that contrast with areas that suggest movement. Both paintings are strongly textured in parts, and this contrasts with smoother areas.



'The Song of Wandering Aengus'

I went out to the hazelwood,
Because a fire was in my head,
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,
And hooked a berry to a thread.
And when white moths were on the wing
And moth-like stars were flickering out,
I dropped the berry in a stream
And caught a silver trout.

When I had laid it on the floor
I went to blow the fire aflame,
But something rustled on the floor,
And someone called me by my name.
It had become a glimmering girl
With apple blossom in her hair
Who called me by my name and ran
And faded through the brightening air.

When I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk amongst the dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.

(W. B. Yeats)



After driving on the new motorway for about an hour Jason sees a filling station in the distance, its signs lit brightly, an oasis of colour in the stark black of the winter's night. The dials and controls on the dashboard of his car glow luminously. He pulls into the forecourt of the filling station. A huge lorry, a van and a shiny new sports car take up the space around the petrol pumps, so Jason has to wait. It's busy, with cars and people coming and going. Alongside his car is a four-wheel drive vehicle. In the back seat a baby sleeps peacefully in a baby-chair beside his older sister. Their mother sits at the steering wheel, adjusting her make-up with deft, expert movements with the help of the rear-view mirror. She pulls a comb through her long black hair. Her husband comes out of the shop carrying two striped plastic carrier bags; once inside the jeep he gives the little girl a colourful ice-pop. For his wife and himself he opens a bar of dark chocolate. The silver foil of the wrapping catches the lights of the forecourt as they drive out again on to the motorway.

