

**ENGLISH - HIGHER LEVEL - PAPER I**

WEDNESDAY, 9 JUNE - MORNING 9.45 - 12.15

Total Marks: 160

BOTH SECTIONS of this paper (Composition and Unprescribed Prose) must be attempted.

**I. COMPOSITION - (100 marks)**Write a prose composition on **one** of the following subjects:

- (a) Role Models.
- (b) Friendship.
- (c) I have the right to be different.
- (d) Ambition.
- (e) Stress – a feature of modern-day society.
- (f) We are the cause of our own downfall.
- (g) Write a speech for or against the motion that: "Ireland should forget the past and concentrate on the future."
- (h) Poetry – an outdated art form?

**II. UNPRESCRIBED PROSE - (60 marks)**

Read this passage carefully, and then answer the questions which follow it.

1. I went out into the backyard and the usually roundish spots of dappled sunlight underneath the trees were all shaped like feathers, crescent in the same direction, from left to right. Though it was five o'clock on a summer afternoon, the birds were singing goodbye to the day and their merged song seemed to soak the strange air in an additional strangeness. A kind of silence prevailed. Few cars were moving on the streets of the town. Of my children, only the baby dared come into the yard with me. She wore only underpants, and as she stood beneath a tree her bare skin was awash with pale crescents. It crossed my mind that she might be harmed, but I couldn't think how.
2. The eclipse was to be over ninety per cent in our latitude and the newspapers and television for days had been warning us not to look at it. I looked up, a split-second Prometheus, and looked away. The bitten silhouette of the sun lingered redly on my retinas. The day was half-cloudy and my impression had been of the sun struggling, amid a furious knotted huddle of black and silver clouds, with an enemy too dreadful to be seen, with an eater as ghostly and hungry as time. Every blade of grass cast a long bluish-brown shadow, as at dawn.
3. My wife shouted from behind the kitchen door that as long as I was out there I might as well burn the waste-paper. She darted from the house, eyes downcast, with the wastebasket, and darted back again, leaving the naked baby and me to wander up through the strained sunlight to the wine trash barrel. After my forbidden peek at the sun, the flames dancing transparently from the blackening paper seemed dimmer than shadows, and in the teeth of all the warnings I looked up again. The clouds seemed bunched and twirled as if to plug a hole in the sky, and the burning after-image was the shape of a near-new moon, horns pointed down. It was gigantically unnatural, and I lingered in the yard under the vague apprehension that in some future life I might be called before a cosmic court to testify to this assault. I seemed to be the sole witness. The town around my yard was hushed, except for the singing of the birds, who were invisible.

4. Then I saw my neighbour, a widow, hunched dismally on her porch steps in the shade, which was scarcely darker than the light. I walked towards her and hailed her as a visitor to the moon might salute a survivor of a previous expedition. "How do you like the eclipse?" I called over the fence that distinguished our holdings on this suddenly insubstantial and lunar earth.
5. "I don't like it," she answered, shading her face with a hand. "They say you shouldn't go out in it." "I thought it was just you shouldn't look at it." "There's something in the rays," she explained, in a voice far louder than it needed to be, for silence framed us. "I think it'll pass," I told her. "Don't let the baby look up," she warned, and turned away from talking to me, as if the open use of her voice exposed her more fatally to the rays.
6. *Superstition*, I thought, walking back through my yard, clutching my child's hand as tightly as a good-luck token. There was no question in her touch. Day, night, twilight, noon were all wonders to her, unscheduled, free from all bondage of prediction. The sun was being restored to itself and soon would radiate influence as brazenly as ever and in this sense my daughter's blind trust was vindicated. Nevertheless, I was glad that the eclipse had passed, as it were, over her head, for in my own life I felt a certain assurance evaporate forever under the reality of the sun's disgrace.

1. How, in the first paragraph, is the sense of the strange and the unusual conveyed by the writer?

2. Answer EITHER (a) OR (b)

(a) Explain the contrast drawn between the writer and the child in paragraph 6.

OR

(b) Explain, in their contexts, the sentences underlined in paragraphs 2 and 3.

3. What, do you think, is the dominant mood/atmosphere of the passage? Support your answer by accurate reference to the passage.

4. How would you describe the writer's prose style as illustrated in the above passage? Support your description of his style by reference to the passage.