



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2010

English – Higher Level – Paper I

Total Marks: 200

Wednesday, 9th June – Morning, 9.30 – 12.20

- This paper is divided into two sections, Section I COMPREHENDING and Section II COMPOSING.
- The paper contains **three** texts on the general theme of THE FUTURE.
- Candidates should familiarise themselves with each of the texts before beginning their answers.

- Both sections of this paper (COMPREHENDING and COMPOSING) must be attempted.
- Each section carries 100 marks.

SECTION I – COMPREHENDING

- Two Questions, A and B, follow each text.
- Candidates must answer a Question A on one text and a Question B on a different text. Candidates must answer only one Question A and only one Question B.
- **N.B.** Candidates may NOT answer a Question A and a Question B on the same text.

SECTION II – COMPOSING

- Candidates must write on **one** of the compositions 1 – 7.

SECTION 1

COMPREHENDING (100 marks)

TEXT 1

A Personal Future

This text is a short extract adapted from *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney* by Dennis O’Driscoll in which Heaney reflects on the impact of his childhood on his future life as a poet.

Was there any real prospect that – as the eldest son – you might follow in your father’s footsteps as farmer or cattle dealer?

Once I went to secondary school I suppose there was the presumption all round that whatever I did at the end of my time there, I wouldn’t be back on the farm. I was being “educated”, and that meant being set apart. In spite of enjoying work on the farm during the summer, I never had a desire to get involved in any serious way in cattle dealing. I was familiar with the environs of fair hills and cattle pens and I knew men in the trade and enjoyed the banter and the bidding and bargaining, slapping hands, throwing up the hands, walking away, pretending you were at your limit – it was terrific theatre and I didn’t feel out of it; but I still didn’t have an ambition to grow up and do it.

How did your father feel about the educational path you chose as your future?

There was a strong streak of fatalism in my father. For a start, he didn’t talk much about our future – or about anything: the notion that there were options, that a future could be projected, that a change might be effected, I don’t think he took that in. He was out on the road, earning a living. He would have regarded himself as more lord than labourer. There was a touch of the artist about him, I suppose. A certain pride, a certain freedom that came from being on the road, among the cattle people. He would have seen himself endowed with a definite position because of that, different from the neighbours who just farmed the land. To put it another way, he would have seen dealing as a calling and would have known that I hadn’t been called.

Were you the kind of pupil whose essays were held up by the teacher as a shining example to the rest of the class?

I remember a moment early in my secondary schooling when we were asked to write on the topic “A Day at the Seaside”. In the middle of the list of usual, expected activities such as diving and swimming, neither of which I could do, I wrote about going into an amusement arcade to escape from a shower and being depressed by the wet footprints on the floor and the cold, wet atmosphere created by people in their rained-on summer clothes. This had actually happened to me, so the image and recording of it had a different feel. Something in me knew that I was on the right track – but it took me years to follow up, the writer-in-waiting if you like. Early-in-life experience has been central to me. It’s like a culture at the bottom of a jar, although it doesn’t grow, I think, or help anything else to grow, unless you find a way to reach it and touch it. But once you do, it’s like putting your hand into a nest and finding something beginning to hatch out in your head.

A blind musician, Rosie Keenan, is mentioned in your poetry. What made this neighbour so special to you?

The blindness itself was the wonder. The Keenans lived only a couple of fields away from us, in the country equivalent of ‘the next block’. Rosie would often be out on the road, sometimes on her own, sometimes with her sister. This was the Broagh Road, a side road, and in those days the traffic amounted to no more than a few locals on bicycles and the occasional horse and cart, so she was safe enough, walking tall and straight, her white stick in her hand, her pale face looking straight ahead, unwavering and unseeing.

She came home for the school holidays – she worked in Belfast, in some capacity in a school for the blind. When I first knew her she would have been in her late thirties or early forties, a contemporary of my mother’s, who had been in school with her. So there was great ease between them and always a sweet atmosphere when she came to the house.

Were you and your siblings pressed into service as her guides?

We were not. The pressure was to perform for her, to sing a school song or say a school poem. She would often bring her violin because my mother loved her to play and sing: Irish dance tunes mostly, jigs and reels, Thomas Moore songs.

So her visit would turn into a little home concert. She made that musical dimension a living thing for us.

She also had a piano at home and, in the middle of the day, we’d often hear her playing as we passed by Keenans’ house – which I always found strange, because in our experience the daytime was when grown-ups were out working.

But as the years have gone by, I’ve begun to think of her as the one who first made time and space in our lives for art. Our blind Rosie, like Blind Raftery – ‘playing music to empty pockets’.

N.B. Candidates may NOT answer Question A and Question B on the same text.

Questions A and B carry 50 marks each.

QUESTION A

- (i) It has been said that a strong sense of the place and community in which Heaney grew up emerges from this interview. Do you agree? Support your view with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) Based on your reading of this extract, suggest **three** appropriate images you could use to illustrate this text. Briefly explain your selection in all three cases. (15)
- (iii) What impression of Seamus Heaney do you form from reading this interview? Refer to the text (content and style) in support of your answer. (20)

QUESTION B

“Early-in-life experience has been central to me.”

Imagine yourself fifty years from now. You have achieved great success and public recognition in your chosen career. Write the text of **an interview** (questions and answers) about the experiences and influences in your youth that contributed to your later success. (50)

TEXT 2

A Global Future

This text is adapted from Al Gore's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech delivered in Norway in 2007.



Your Majesties, Honourable members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I have a purpose here today. It is a purpose I have tried to serve for many years. The distinguished scientists with whom it is the greatest honour of my life to share this award have laid before us a choice between two different futures – a choice that to my ears echoes the words of an ancient prophet: “Life or death, blessings or curses? Choose life, so that both thou and thy seed may live”.

We, the human species, are confronting a planetary emergency – a threat to the survival of our civilization that is gathering ominous and destructive potential even as we gather here. But there is hopeful news as well: we have the ability to solve the crisis and avoid the worst – though not all – of its consequences, if we act boldly, decisively and quickly. We must act.

Our world is spinning out of kilter. Major cities in North and South America, Asia and Australia are nearly out of water due to massive droughts. Desperate farmers are losing their livelihoods. Peoples in the frozen Arctic and on low-lying Pacific islands are planning evacuations of places they have long called home due to rising sea-levels. Unprecedented wildfires, and stronger storms in the Pacific and Atlantic, have threatened whole cities.

Millions have been displaced by massive flooding in South Asia, Mexico and Africa. As temperature extremes have increased, tens of thousands have lost their lives. We are recklessly burning and clearing our forests and driving more and more species into extinction. The very web of life on which we depend is being ripped and frayed.

We never intended to cause all this destruction, just as Alfred Nobel never intended that dynamite be used for waging war. He had hoped his invention would promote human progress. We shared that same worthy goal when we began burning massive quantities of coal, then oil and methane. But unlike most other forms of pollution, CO₂ is invisible, tasteless, and odourless – which has helped keep the truth about what it is doing to our climate out of sight and out of mind.

We also find it hard to imagine making the massive changes that are now necessary to solve the crisis. And when large truths are genuinely inconvenient, whole societies can, at least for a time, ignore them. Yet, as George Orwell reminds us: “Sooner or later a false belief bumps up against solid reality, usually on a battlefield”. Indeed without realising it, we have begun to wage war on the earth itself. As the American poet, Robert Frost, wrote, “Some say the world will end in fire; some say in ice”. But neither need be our fate. It is time to make peace with the planet.

There is an African proverb that says, “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”. We need to go far, quickly.

The world needs an alliance – especially of those nations that weigh heaviest in the scales where earth is in the balance. The outcome will be decisively influenced by two nations that are now failing to do enough: the United States and China, the two largest CO₂ emitters will need to make the boldest moves or stand accountable before history for their failure to act.

These are the last few years of decision, but they can be the first years of a bright and hopeful future if we do what we must. No one should believe a solution will be found without effort, without cost, without change. The way ahead is difficult. We have to expand the boundaries of what is possible. In the words of the Spanish poet, Antonio Machado, “Pathwalker, there is no path. You must make the path as you walk”.

We are standing at the most fateful fork in that path. So I want to end as I began, with a vision of two futures – each with a palpable possibility – in the hope that we will see with vivid clarity the necessity of choosing between those two futures, and the urgency of making the right choice now.

The great Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen, wrote, “One of these days, the younger generation will come knocking at my door”. The future is knocking at our door right now. Make no mistake, the next generation will ask us one of two questions. Either they will ask: “What were you thinking; why didn’t you act?” Or they will ask instead: “How did you find the moral courage to rise and successfully resolve a crisis that so many said was impossible to solve?”

We have everything we need to get started, save perhaps political will, but political will is a renewable resource. So let us renew it, and say together: “We have a purpose. We are many. For this purpose we will rise, and we will act”.

N.B. Candidates may NOT answer Question A and Question B on the same text.

Questions A and B carry 50 marks each.

QUESTION A

- (i) Al Gore asserts that we are “confronting a planetary emergency”.
In your own words outline the argument he makes in support of this view. (15)
- (ii) Al Gore includes several quotations in his speech.
Select the quotation that made the greatest impact on you. Give reasons for your choice. (15)
- (iii) Identify and comment on **four** elements of effective speech-writing evident in this text. (20)

QUESTION B

“So I want to end as I began, with a vision of two futures ...”

Write **a letter** (dated June 2010), intended to be read by future generations, in which you express your hopes for planet Earth in the year 2050. (50)

TEXT 3

An Imagined Future

Ray Bradbury's science fiction novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, describes a future in which books, considered to be the source of all unhappiness, are forbidden. In this extract adapted from the novel, Guy Montag, a professional book-burner, has an unusual encounter with a young woman, Clarisse McClellan.



He turned the corner. The autumn leaves blew over the moonlit pavement in such a way as to make the girl who was moving there seem fixed with her head half bent to watch her shoes stir the circling leaves. Her face was slender and milk-white, and in it was a kind of gentle hunger that touched over everything with tireless curiosity. Her dress was white and it whispered. The girl stopped and looked as if she might pull back in surprise, but instead stood regarding Montag with eyes so dark and shining and alive, that he felt he had said something quite wonderful. But he knew his mouth had only moved to say hello.

“Of course,” he said, “you’re a new neighbour, aren’t you?”

“And you must be” – she raised her eyes from his professional symbols, – “the fireman.”

She turned to face the sidewalk going toward their homes. “Do you mind if I walk back with you? I’m Clarisse McClellan. I’m seventeen and I’m crazy. My uncle says the two always go together. Isn’t this a nice time of night to walk? I like to smell things and look at things, and sometimes stay up all night, walking, and watch the sunrise.”

They walked on in silence in the warm-cool blowing night. Her face, turned to him now, was fragile milk crystal with a soft and constant light in it. It was not the hysterical light of electricity but the strangely comfortable, rare, and gently flattering light of a candle.

Finally she said, thoughtfully: “Do you ever read any of the books you burn?” He laughed. “That’s against the law! Monday burn Millay, Wednesday Whitman, Friday Faulkner, burn ‘em to ashes, then burn the ashes. That’s our official slogan. A book is like a loaded gun in the house next door.

Burn it and you take the shot from the weapon. Who knows who might be the target of the well-read man who makes others feel inferior? We are custodians of our peace of mind. We’re the Happiness Boys.”

They walked still further and the girl asked if long ago firemen put fires out instead of going to start them. She had heard that once houses used to burn by accident and they needed firemen to stop the flames. He laughed again dismissively and she changed the subject. He felt she was walking in a circle about him, turning him end for end, shaking him quietly, and emptying his pockets, without once moving herself. Then she continued: “I sometimes think drivers don’t know what grass is, or flowers, because they never see them. My uncle drove slowly on a highway once at forty miles an hour and they jailed him for two days. Isn’t that funny, and sad, too?”

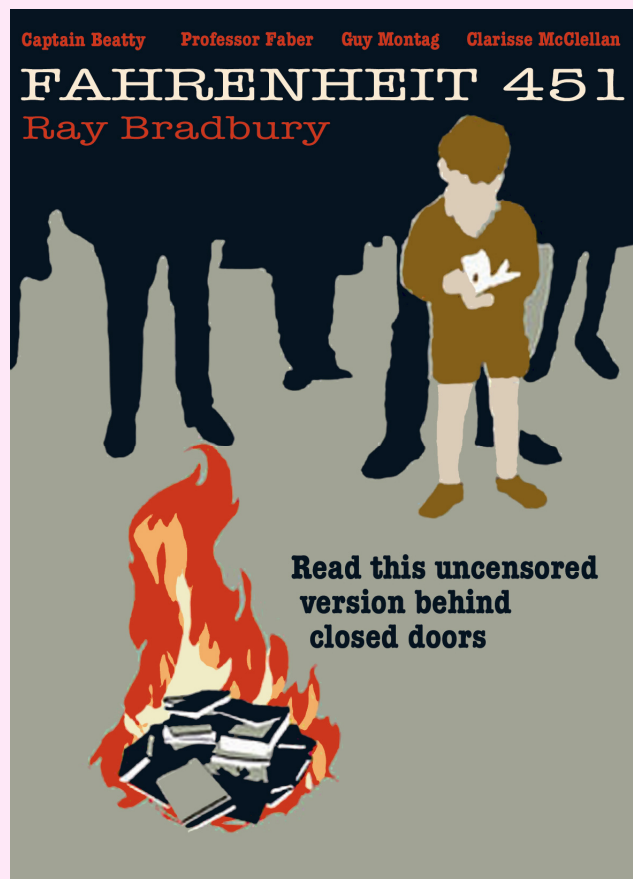
“You think too many things,” said Montag, uneasily.

“Bet I know something else you don’t. There’s dew on the grass in the morning,” she said. He suddenly couldn’t remember if he had known this or not, and it made him quite irritable. She had a dandelion, one of the last of the season, in her hand and she touched her chin with the flower, laughing: “If it rubs off it means I’m in love,” she claimed. Before he could move she had put the dandelion under his chin. “What a shame,” she said, “you’re not in love with anyone.”

They walked the rest of the way in silence, hers thoughtful, his a kind of clenching and uncomfortable silence in which he shot her accusing glances. When they reached her house he was shocked to find all its lights were blazing. “My uncle says that once there used to be front porches and gardens and people sat around outside at night talking or thinking things over. Good night!” she declared as she started up her driveway.

Then she seemed to remember something and came back to look at him with wonder and curiosity. “Are you happy?” she asked. “Am I what?” he cried, but she was gone – running in the moonlight. What a strange meeting! How long had they walked together? Three minutes? Five? Yet how large that time seemed now!

“Happy! Of all the nonsense!” But he was not happy. He said the words to himself. He wore his happiness like a mask and the girl had run off across the lawn with the mask and there was no way of going to knock on her door and ask for it back.



N.B. Candidates may NOT answer Question A and Question B on the same text. Questions A and B carry 50 marks each.

QUESTION A

- (i) From your reading of the text what qualities do you find appealing in Clarisse’s character? (15)
- (ii) Which of the above book covers for *Fahrenheit 451* do you find more interesting? In your response, compare and contrast **both** of these images. (15)
- (iii) Bradbury’s style of writing has been described as **both dramatic and descriptive**. Discuss this view with reference to the above extract. (20)

QUESTION B

“books are forbidden...”

Write the text for a **short radio talk** where you explain the importance of books in your life and in today’s world. (50)

SECTION II

COMPOSING (100 marks)

Write a composition on **any one** of the following.

Each composition carries 100 marks.

The composition assignments below are intended to reflect language study in the areas of information, argument, persuasion, narration, and the aesthetic use of language.

1. "... it was terrific theatre ...” (TEXT 1)

Write a personal essay about your experience (as performer and/or audience member) of the dramatic arts: plays, musicals, concerts, comedy, etc.

2. “You’re a new neighbour, aren’t you?” (TEXT 3)

Write an article (serious and/or light-hearted) for a popular magazine on being a good neighbour.

3. “Isn’t that funny, and sad, too?” (TEXT 3)

Write a short story suggested by the above quotation.

4. "... a certain freedom ...” (TEXT 1)

Write a personal essay about your understanding of freedom and why you think it is important.

5. “But there is hopeful news as well ...” (TEXT 2)

You have been elected by your classmates to deliver a speech at your school’s graduation ceremony. Write the text of the speech you would give, encouraging your audience to be optimistic about the future.

6. “We have everything we need to get started ...” (TEXT 2)

Write a practical Guide for Young People containing helpful advice and useful information for life after school.

7. “What a strange meeting!” (TEXT 3)

Write a short story in which two unusual or eccentric characters meet for the first time.

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