



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2011

English – Higher Level – Paper I

Total Marks: 200

Wednesday, 8th 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 MYSTERY.
- 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

This text is taken from *An Irishwoman's Diary* by journalist, Lara Marlowe. She was *Irish Times* correspondent in Beirut and Paris, and is now based in Washington. Here she responds to an article critical of cats written by her friend and fellow journalist, Rosita Boland.

I have venerated cats since early childhood. For more than two decades, Walter the Beirut Puss and now Spike the Irish Moggy, have enriched my life. There are people and possessions I could live without. But a cat is indispensable.

Rosita Boland is a cherished friend and colleague but I could not allow her attack on the feline species, in a recent article, to go unanswered. Reading it here in Washington, I relived the disappointment – not to say sense of betrayal – that I felt years ago, when on a pilgrimage to Edith Wharton's home in Massachusetts, I discovered that the novelist regarded cats as “snakes in fur”.

I cannot say why reading a book is more pleasurable with a cat sitting in teapot mode at one's side or why I sleep better with Spike curled up at the foot of the bed, but it is so.

I understand why the ancient Egyptians worshipped cats, and why medieval man burned them as witches. Something in cats surpasses their status as household pets: they are a mystery that eludes us. Victor Hugo wrote that “God invented the cat to give man the pleasure of petting a tiger”. Every day Spike makes me laugh. I recall on the day my furniture arrived here from Paris, ten months ago, Spike purred triumphantly from the top of the sofa and rolled on his back on the living room carpet.

Now we enjoy watching the sparrows and doves that cavort in the magnolia trees surrounding our third-floor terrace in Georgetown. The pastime has its perils; when birds land on the balustrade, Spike's haunches quiver as he prepares to leap. I clap and scream to break his launch into the void.

When I work, I recall the 8th-century Irish monk who hunted words while his cat, Pangur-Ban, hunted mice. The mouse in our apartment is attached to my computer, and

Spike has an unfortunate habit of walking on the keyboard and obscuring the screen, just when I'm most desperately seeking the right phrase.

Consider how much felines have given to art and literature. Foujita and Steinlen immortalised them on canvas. Ernest Hemingway kept 30 of them. Baudelaire's *The Cat*, as translated by Ulick O'Connor, explains how humans identify with felines: “He returns my gaze, careless what I discover and what do I find there, I find myself.” Like me, Spike loves the feather duvet and fireside in winter. But like me, he's chronically restless. We zig-zag between boundless energy and exhaustion, and we share the journalist's most important characteristic, curiosity.



IMAGE 1

Juliet Manet with Cat by Renoir

Years ago, Zeinab, my Arabic teacher in Beirut, glanced at her Siamese cat Feyrouz who liked to sit in on my lessons. “Sometimes, you'd almost think they were thinking,” Zeinab said. “Of course they are thinking!” I blurted out. I never doubted it for a moment.

Last week, I attended a Bloomsday celebration where actors read excerpts from *Ulysses*. I love the passage where Leopold Bloom prepares breakfast for Molly. “I never saw such a stupid pussens as the pussens,” Bloom says. “Silly cat. You silly cat,” I tell Spike several times daily.

Joyce wrote of cats, “They understand what we say better than we understand them.” If I was sad or discouraged, my previous cat, Walter, would sit quietly nearby. Perhaps it’s his gender (Walter, despite her name, was female), but Spike is a good-time cat who has no patience for brooding. When I’m cheerful, his eyes light up. He performs celebratory leaps, makes a gurgling sound from the throat, and runs to the toy basket in the hope of a game of mousing.

My favourite T-shirt bears a cat face drawn by Jean Cocteau, and the words “Friends of the cat”. It’s true; we cat-lovers recognise one another and exchange news of our moggies. Back in Paris, my relations with a stern administrator at the Élysée Palace improved after I ran into her in the pet food section of a supermarket one Saturday morning.

I don’t discriminate against non-cat lovers, though I must admit I had second thoughts about a recent visitor whom Spike hissed at. Tactful friends greet Spike with respect on arrival. Nothing so elaborate as, “Hail Majesté”; “Hello Spike” is sufficient.



IMAGE 2

Summer: Cat on a balustrade
by T.A. Steinlen

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 reading this article what impression do you form of both the personality and lifestyle of Lara Marlowe? Support your view with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) Identify and comment on at least two stylistic features within the passage which you think add to the appeal of this text. (15)
- (iii) Do you think that the two visual images effectively capture the different characteristics attributed to cats by Marlowe and others in the text? Explain your answer with detailed reference to both visual images. (20)

QUESTION B

Places one has never visited often hold a certain mystery or fascination. Write a **feature article** for a travel magazine about a place you have never been to but would like to visit. In your article explain what you find fascinating about this place and why you would like to go there. (50)



TEXT 2

This edited extract is adapted from Colum McCann's award-winning novel *Let The Great World Spin*. The novel's opening is based on the true story of Philippe Petit's tight-rope walk between the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York on August 8th 1974. The extract captures the mysterious presence of the tight-rope walker high above the city.



Those who saw him hushed. It was a silence that heard itself, awful and beautiful. Some thought at first it must be a trick of the light, something to do with the weather, an accident of shadowfall. Others figured it might be the perfect city joke – stand around and point upwards, until people gathered, tilted their heads, nodded, affirmed, until all were staring upward at nothing at all. But the longer they watched, the surer they were. He stood on the very edge of the building, shaped dark against the grey of the morning. A window washer, maybe. Or a construction worker.

Up there, at the height of a hundred and ten storeys, utterly still, a dark toy against the cloudy sky.

He could only be seen at certain angles so that the watchers had to pause at street corners, find a gap between the buildings, or meander from the shadows to get a view unobstructed by cornicework, gargoyles, balustrades. None of them yet made sense of the line strung at his feet from one tower to the other. Rather, it was the man-shape that held them there, their necks craned, torn between the promise of doom and the disappointment of the ordinary.

Around the watchers, the city made its everyday noises. Car horns. Garbage trucks. Ferry whistles. The thrum of the subway. The M22 bus pulled in against the sidewalk, braked, sighed down into a pot-hole. A flying chocolate wrapper touched against a fire hydrant.

Taxi doors slammed. Bits of trash sparred in the darkest reaches of the alley-ways. The leather of briefcases rubbed against trouser legs. A few umbrella tips clinked against the pavement. Revolving doors pushed quarters of conversation out into the street.

The watchers found themselves in small groups together beside the traffic lights on the corner of Church and Dey streets; gathered under the awning of Sam's barbershop; in the doorway of Charlie's Audio; a tight little theatre of men and women against the railings of St. Paul's; elbowing for space at the windows of the Woolworth Building. Lawyers. Elevator operators. Doctors. Cleaners. Traders. Deliveryboys. Sandwichboard men. All of them reassured by the presence of one another.

Sure, there were some who ignored the fuss, who didn't want to be bothered. Up they came from the subway stations, from limousines, off city buses, crossing the street at a clip, refusing the prospect of a gawk. Another day, another colour.

The man above remained rigid, and yet his mystery was mobile. He stood beyond the railing of the observation deck of the south tower – at any moment he might just take off.

Down in the foyer of the World Trade Centre the cops were sprinting across the marble floor. The undercover were whipping out badges from beneath their shirts. The fire trucks were pulling into the plaza, and the redblue dazzled the glass.

The security guards were shouting into their walkie-talkies, and the whole August morning was blown wide open.

Way above there was a movement. In the dark clothing his every twitch counted. He folded over, a half-thing, bent as if examining his shoes, like a pencil mark, most of which had been erased. The watchers stood silent. High above, the man had unfolded upwards from his crouch, and a new hush settled over the cops above and the watchers below, a rush of emotion rippling among them, because the man had risen from the

bend holding a long thin bar in his hands, jiggling it, testing its weight, bobbing it up and down in the air, a long black bar, so pliable that the ends swayed. His gaze was fixed on the far tower.

Now the cable at his feet made sense to everyone, and whatever else it was, there would be no chance they could pull away now; the waiting had been magical, and they watched as he lifted one dark-slippered foot, like a man about to enter warm grey water.

Out he went.

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) What responses did the tight-rope walker provoke on the morning described in the extract? Refer to the text in support of your answer. (15)
- (ii) In your opinion, what aspects of the tight-rope walking event are captured in the three images (A, B and C) that accompany this extract? Refer to all three images in your answer. (15)
- (iii) Identify and comment on the effectiveness of at least three features of Colum McCann's writing style in this extract. (20)

QUESTION B

Write **a talk**, to be delivered to your School Book Club, on the enduring appeal of the mysterious in books, films, etc. You might refer to some of the following aspects of the mystery genre in your answer: setting, tension, suspense, dialogue, characterisation, atmosphere, music, special effects, etc. (50)

TEXT 3

This text is adapted from a short story, *The Wintersongs*, in Kevin Barry’s award-winning collection, *There are Little Kingdoms*. In this extract an old woman has a mysterious insight into the life of a young girl, Sarah, whom she meets on a train.

The train pulled into a country station and they piled on board with country groans and country winces. They carried raw November on the breath. They carried phones, food, magazines. They asked were the seats taken, for form’s sake, but they didn’t wait for an answer. The girl tried to project belligerence or even menace but the old woman sat opposite just the same. She was bony and long and turkey-necked, ancient but with a fluency in the features, a face where age surfaces and then recedes again. She wasn’t at all shy.

“Good morning, miss,” she said. “*It was touch and go whether I’d make it. Anyway I’m here and I’m in the one piece, just about. What time have we? Nine o’clock? What did you say your name was?*”

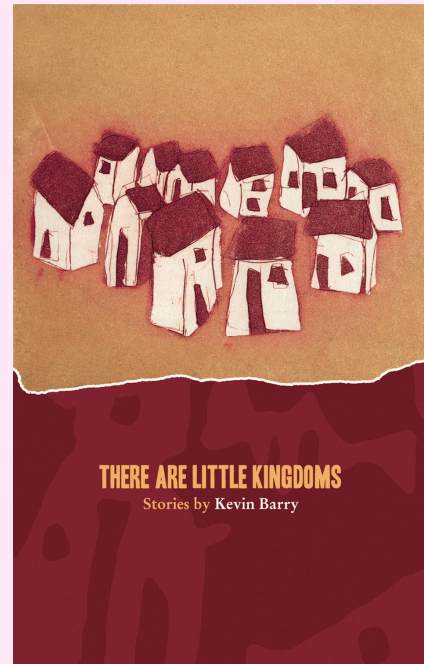
A slow rumbling, then the sullen build of momentum, and the countryside was unpeeled, image by image: an old house with its slate roof caved in; magpies bossing a field; on higher ground, a twist of grey trees in the grudging light. The girl made a broad mime of adjusting her iPod, and assumed a dead-eyed glaze, but the old woman smiled and shuffled to rearrange her bony body for comfort.

“*What age did you say you were? Hah! So you were born – I’ll do the maths – you were born in 1988? The Seoul Olympics; I lost a kidney in 1988. Here, above, watch – the new road. This is the by-pass they’re after putting down. Look! Look! They’re to cut out Nenagh altogether. No harm.*”

The girl took out a book and made a display of it. She peeled a clementine and looked to the passing skies. She tried to put a fence up, but the old one was a talker.

“*What if I told you,*” she said, “*that I can see how it’ll work out? What if I said it’s written all over your face? Pay no attention. I’m rambling.*”

Through and on, North Tipperary, weary hedgerows, and chimney pots, and the far-out satellite towns; all of it stunned-looking with the



onslaught of winter, as if winter was a surprise to the place; and there were frequent apparitions – heavy-set men rolling tyres and twirling wrenches, stepping down from lorries, giving out to phones. The haggard verges of a town put in an appearance: light industry, new-building schemes, the health centre, an Aldi.

They went slowly through and on, at a creaking rumble, then the engine built up on a straight stretch, and there was a descent to the midland plain. The trolley went past – teascoffees, lads, ladies, teascoffees?

“*I’ve been meaning to ask, actually, have you a boyfriend on the scene? No? Who are you trying to kid? With your beauty? No?*”

The arcs of a weak sun swung across the waiting fields and woodland. The girl considered changing seats but she didn’t want to be rude.

“*Trees,*” said the old woman. “*Trees! Calming, apparently! But they can give you a sore throat. Something in the sap, I think. Put me near trees and I find the throat goes septic.*”

The old lady’s face seemed to slip, her features came loose, disintegrated, and then rearranged. She was slippery. It was clammy on the train, and the old woman opened her coat and loosened the collar of her blouse and there was a cheap chain and cross on her neck – it flashed with a trinket menace. For a while she was silent; then she hummed to herself. They were by the last stretch of countryside, above the surging drag of the motorway.

“What about yourself?” she said. “I wouldn’t go so far as to call you the chatty type. What’s your own situation? Do you want me to take a guess at it?”

She made as though to sketch in the air and drew broad strokes with bony fingers. “Let’s see what we’ve got: the eyes are outside your head so you were up early; you got dressed in the dark, didn’t you? The case was packed since last night; you had it hid under the stairs; you opened the front door, stepped out into the street and pulled the door after you. You’d be mistaken for angelic. But there’s awful distance in you. There’s coldness, isn’t there, Sarah? You were going to get out as soon as you could and not a word to anyone about it.”

The world around withdrew from them. The woman reached across the table and took the girl’s slate-cold hands in hers. There was no way to reverse from this, or to pull back.

“Listen,” she said, “I have news for you. Brace yourself, child, because here it comes. Everything has a consequence. Years later you’ll still have to answer the question: was the right thing done?” The girl looked away, abruptly, into the steel glimmer of the morning. She bit on her lip, so prettily.

Then it was the Clondalkin yards, mostly disused, and the dust and seep of the city had fallen on them. The train stopped to take on maintenance workers. The old woman went out through the yards. She threw no shadow in the white sun. She went past the rusted trailers and in among the carriage-building sheds and vanished, left no trace. She became light, air, dust.

Now it is Heuston Station and a thin girl in a pencil skirt, pulling a case behind her, flips the key-guard of her phone and scrolls her texts. She moves on again, straight-backed and hard-eyed, with world-class invulnerability.

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 this extract, what impression of the old woman do you form? Refer to the text in support of your answer. (15)
- (ii) In your opinion, how does Sarah’s behaviour on the train reveal her attitude towards the old woman she encounters? Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (iii) How does Kevin Barry succeed in creating the experience of the train journey in the above extract? Refer to the text (content and style) in support of your answer. (20)

QUESTION B

Imagine you are Sarah, the young girl in Text 3 above. Based on your reading of this extract, write **two diary entries**, one shortly before and one shortly after your journey to Dublin. (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. “There are people and possessions I could live without. But a cat is indispensable.”
(TEXT 1)

You have been asked to speak to your class about what you think is indispensable in your life. Write the text of the talk you would give.

2. “I don’t discriminate...” (TEXT 1)

Write an article for a serious newspaper or magazine on the twin issues of discrimination and tolerance.

3. “...the waiting had been magical...” (TEXT 2)

Write a story to be included in a collection of modern fairytales.

4. “...a thin girl...flips the key-guard of her phone and scrolls her texts.” (TEXT 3)

Write an article for a popular magazine in which you outline your views about the impact of technology on the lives of young people.

5. “My favourite T-shirt...” (TEXT 1)

Write a personal essay about your clothes, what they mean to you and what they say about you.

6. “...the dust and seep of the city...” (TEXT 3)

Write a descriptive essay about twenty-four hours in the life of a town or city.

7. “The man above remained rigid, and yet his mystery was mobile.” (TEXT 2)

Write a short story in which a mystery is solved.

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