



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2015

English – Higher Level – Paper I

Total Marks: 200

Wednesday, 3rd 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 CHALLENGES.
- 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.

TEXT 1

BECAUSE WE CAN, WE MUST

This edited text is based on a speech delivered by U2 front man and well-known humanitarian, Bono, to students graduating from the University of Pennsylvania.

My name is Bono and I am a rock star. I've got a great rock and roll band that normally stands in the back when I'm talking to thousands of people in a football stadium. I never went to college. I studied rock and roll and I grew up in Dublin in the '70s; music was an alarm bell for me; it woke me up to the world. I was seventeen when I first saw the band *The Clash*, and it just sounded like revolution. *The Clash* were like, "This is a public service announcement – with guitars." I was the kid in the crowd who took it at face value. Later I learned that a lot of the rebels were in it for the T-shirt. They'd wear the boots but they wouldn't march. For better or worse that was my education. I came away with a clear sense of the difference music could make in my own life, in other people's lives, if I did my job right.

If members of the faculty are asking what on earth I'm doing here, I think it's a fair question. What *am* I doing here? More to the point: what are *you* doing here? Four years in these historic halls thinking great thoughts and now you're sitting in a stadium better suited for football, listening to an Irish rock star. What are you doing here? For four years you've been buying, trading, and selling everything you've got in this marketplace of ideas. The intellectual hustle. Your pockets are full, even if your parents' pockets are empty, and now you've got to figure out what to spend it on.

Well, the going rate for change is not cheap. Big ideas are expensive. So my question I suppose is: what's the big idea? What's *your* big idea? What are you willing to spend your moral capital, your intellectual capital, your cash, your sweat equity in pursuing outside of the walls of the University of Pennsylvania?

There's a truly great Irish poet; his name is Brendan Kennelly, and he has this epic poem called the *Book of Judas*, and there's a line in that poem that never leaves my mind. It says: "If you want to serve the age, betray it." What does that mean – to betray the age? Well to me, betraying the age means exposing its conceits, its foibles,



its phony moral certitudes. It means telling the secrets of the age and facing harsher truths.

Every age has its massive moral blind spots. We might not see them, but our children will. Slavery was one of them and the people who best served that age were the ones who called it as it was – which was ungodly and inhuman. Ben Franklin called it what it was when he became president of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society. There was another one. Segregation. America sees this now but it took a civil rights movement to betray their age.

Fast forward fifty years. What are the ideas right now worth betraying? What are the lies we tell ourselves now? What are the blind spots of our age? What's worth spending your post-Penn lives trying to do or undo? It might be something as simple as our deep down refusal to believe that every human life has equal worth. Could that be it? Each of you will probably have your own answer, but for me that is it. And for me the proving ground has been Africa.

Equality for Africa is a big idea. It's a big expensive idea. Wishing for the end to AIDS and extreme poverty in Africa is like wishing that gravity didn't make things so damn heavy. We can wish it, but what the hell can we do about it? Well, more than we think. We can't fix every problem – corruption, natural calamities are part of the picture here – but the ones we can, we must. The debt burden, unfair

trade, sharing our knowledge, the intellectual copyright for lifesaving drugs in a crisis, we can do that. And because we can, we must. Because we can, we must. Amen.

The fact is that this generation – yours, my generation – we're the first generation that can look at poverty and disease, look across the ocean to Africa and say with a straight face, *we can be the first to end this sort of stupid extreme poverty, where in the world of plenty, a child can die for lack of food in its belly*. It might take a while, but we can be that generation that says no to stupid poverty. For the first time in history we have the know-how, we have the cash, we have the lifesaving drugs, but do we have the will? I'm not a hippy; I do not have flowers in my hair; I come from punk rock; *The Clash* wore army boots not Birkenstock sandals. I believe that this generation can do this. In fact I want to hear an argument about why we shouldn't.

I know idealism is not playing on the radio right now, you don't see it on TV; irony is on heavy rotation, the knowingness, the smirk, the tired

joke. I've tried them all out but I'll tell you this, outside this campus – and even inside it – idealism is under siege, beset by materialism, narcissism and all the other 'isms' of indifference.

Every era has its defining struggle and the fate of Africa is one of ours. It's not the only one, but in the history books it's easily going to make the top five, what we did or what we did not do. But whether it's this or something else, I hope you'll pick a fight and get in it. Get your boots dirty, get rough, steel your courage, have one last primal scream and go.

You know I used to think the future was solid or fixed, something you inherited like an old building that you move into when the previous generation moves out or gets chased out. But it's not. The future is not fixed, it's fluid. The world is more malleable than you think and it's waiting for you to hammer it into shape. This degree of yours is a blunt instrument. So go forth and build something with it. This is the time for bold measures. This is the country, and you are the generation. Thank you.

This text has been adapted, for the purpose of assessment, without the copyright holder's prior consent.

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) Outline, in your own words, three of the challenges Bono issued to students at the University of Pennsylvania when he spoke at their graduation ceremony. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) Identify, and give your personal response to any two observations made by Bono in the above passage that made an impact on you. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (iii) Based on what you have read in the extract above, do you agree that Bono is both engaging and inspiring in his address to the graduating students? Support your answer with reference to both the content and style of the extract. (20)

QUESTION B

Your school Principal has decided not to hold any graduation ceremony for the Leaving Certificate Class of 2015. The school's Student Council disagrees with this decision. As Chairperson of the Student Council you have been asked to write a **letter** to the Principal, in which you express the students' dissatisfaction with this decision and make a case for holding a graduation event. Write the letter you would submit to the Principal. (50)

TEXT 2

GHOSTS DON'T SHOW UP ON CCTV

This edited text is based on an article which appeared in the Review Section of *The Guardian* newspaper in July, 2014. In this article, author Joanna Briscoe discusses the challenges faced by writers of ghost literature in an age of reason.

We don't believe in ghosts, so writing ghost literature for a modern readership presents particular challenges. How does one write for an audience that is cynical, yet still wishes to be terrified? What exactly is a ghost, anyway?

We live in an age of reason, a more secular culture than that of those great ghost writers, the Victorians. We rely on the proofs and disproofs of science, psychology and medicine, on the digital recording of much of our lives. We live in brightly illuminated rooms, on streets devoid of the terror of something moving just outside the lamp light. Ghosts don't tend to show up on CCTV cameras and holograms are explicable phantoms. Ghosts should not be visible – at least not in any straightforward way.

While writing my ghost novel, *Touched*, it felt important to me that unexplained presences were not the walking dead, but were just perceived as sounds, scents or misidentifications; at most, they are reflections, or reported sightings or something captured in the split second of a film still. As Roald Dahl boldly claimed: "The best ghost stories don't have ghosts in them." And, as author Susan Hill says: "Less is always more".

The contemporary writer must trade on the power of anticipation, on the unnerving aspects of less obvious settings than candlelit wrecks in fog. I sought brightness for my unease: brilliant green grass and relentless sunshine, so the glimmer in the trees, the hint of eyes in a window, were all the more unexpected. Perfection can be eerie. The power of a ghost story lies in what is feared beneath the surface of the narrative, terrors glimpsed or imagined in the cracks, rather than what leaps out of the shadows.

Form is an issue. There are very few full-length ghost novels because of the difficulties of sustaining suspension of disbelief. Even in ghost writing's heyday, it was the short story – by Dickens, H.P. Lovecraft, Charlotte Riddell – that was the dominant form, while the longer classic of the genre, *The Turn of the Screw*, is only 43,000 words. Readers need to be in a state of

tension for the unfathomable to prey on fearful minds, yet this can be maintained by the writer for a limited time without risking nervous exhaustion.

There is a fine balance between the psychological and the spectral. Ghost writing must involve a blurring between reality and madness or projection. The modern ghost writer inherits a tradition of unreliable narrators, vastly ramped up by later psychoanalytic thinking. I found it interesting to subvert this by writing about apparent madness, in a girl who insists on dressing as a shabby Victorian, while the real chaos lies where no one is looking.

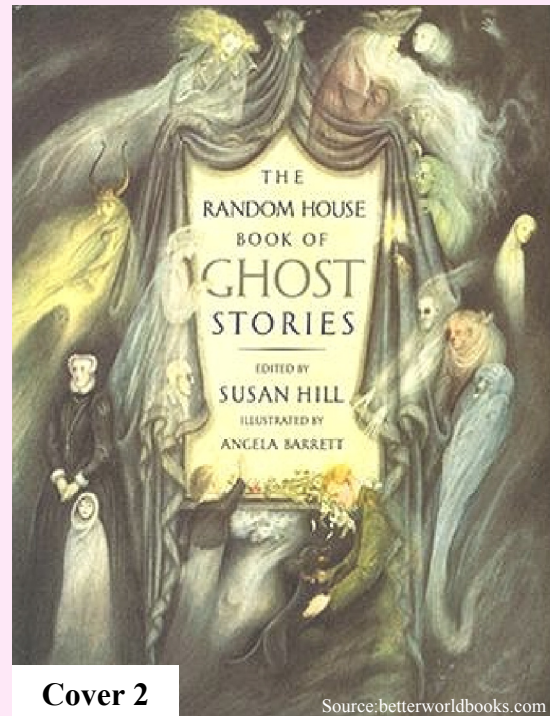
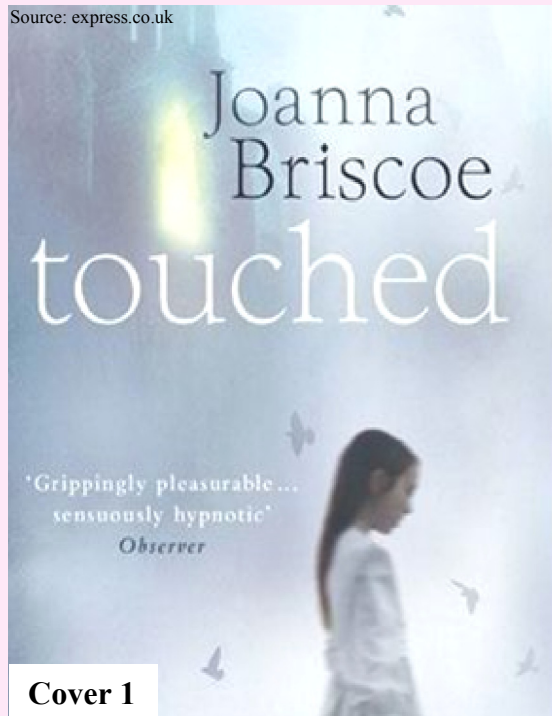
Endings can be a problem. It is paramount that narrative demands are satisfied, yet what explanation can there be? Ghost writing is in many ways the opposite of crime or detective fiction, whose worlds are more logical than real life – you find out who did it – whereas the supernatural can have no straightforward point of revelation to work towards. So there is a necessary ambivalence. I firmly believe in tying up narrative strands, so while every human story must be followed to its conclusion, the reader must be left plot-satisfied but intentionally uneasy, the paranormal at play in the margins.

If visions and voices are rationally explained, it's not a ghost story; if they're not, incredulity can set in. If a ghost is a mere psychological delusion, the gleam of the supernatural is dulled. Apparitions cannot be mere symbols, metaphors or projections: the characters, however warped, must experience them as hauntings, the reader on side. The conventions of traditional ghost stories are there to play with, and, for the modern writer, there is pleasure to be had in hidden rooms, with resistant houses and barely heard sounds. Chilling child patterings and mysterious stains are an enticing part of what Henry James called "the strange and sinister embroidered on the very type of the normal and easy".

This is an era conversant with extreme horror

and increasingly successful crime genres, with console games that scatter images of blood on the screen. Yet we still seem to desire less definable hauntings in the form of the gothic, vampiric and ghostly. The truth is an audience can be deeply scared by the very phenomena they don't believe in.

Above all, ghost writing is about atmosphere. The mood and resonance, the sounds, scents and tense awareness that here is a place where anything could happen. What has always appealed to me is the modern gothic, the unsettling and even the unsavoury in literature. It's the glimmer of another presence that lies just outside our normal understanding that intrigues.



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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) Outline, in your own words, three of the challenges facing contemporary writers of ghost literature, identified by Joanna Briscoe in the text above. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) Based on what you have read in the above extract, do you agree that this article is both an informative and engaging piece of writing? Refer to at least two features of the writer's style in support of your viewpoint. (15)
- (iii) In your opinion, how effectively do the book covers illustrate what Joanna Briscoe has to say about ghost writing in the written text above? Support your answer by detailed reference to both of the book covers and to the written text. (20)

QUESTION B

The writing group, to which you belong, has decided to develop a website, aimed at aspiring young writers. You have been asked to contribute an article on one of the following genres: detective fiction; travel writing; humour; romance; autobiography; the short story. Write the **article** you would contribute, discussing at least two important characteristics of your chosen genre and offering advice to young people wishing to engage in this type of writing. (50)

TEXT 3

A LIFE IN TIME

This edited text is based on *Ammonites and Leaping Fish*, a memoir by award-winning novelist, Penelope Lively. In the text she reflects on youth and age and explores the challenges of ageing.

Old age is in the eye of the beholder. I am eighty, so I am old, no question. The extent of the challenge depends on when and where you experience old age. There is anthropological evidence that in a hunter-gatherer society the old are valued simply for experience, their bank of hunter-gatherer knowledge. Things aren't quite like this in a world powered by technology; just as well that increased affluence means that nobody disposes of the aged just because they can't cope with a computer or a mobile phone.

Old age is the new demographic. We are the pioneers, as an established social group, gobbling up benefits and giving grief to government agencies. Before the sixteenth century few people saw fifty, let alone eighty. Scroll back, and average life expectancy diminishes century by century; two thousand years ago, it stood at around twenty-five. By 2030 there will be four million people over eighty in the United Kingdom – out of a population of around sixty million. Suffice it that we are too many. That's one way of looking at it: the administrative point of view, the view perhaps sometimes of the young, who have inherited the world, quite properly, and may occasionally find themselves guilty of ageist sentiments.

I haven't much come up against ageism. There was an occasion, a few years ago, when a teenage granddaughter was advising on the acquisition of a mobile phone and the salesman's enthusiastic attention turned to disdain when he realised that the purchase was not for her but for the old granny, who had no business with any mobile, let alone the latest Nokia. But more usually I find that age has bestowed a kind of comfortable anonymity. We are not especially interesting, by and large – waiting for a bus, walking along the street; younger people are busy sizing up one another, in the way that children in a park will only register other children. We are not exactly invisible but we are not noticed, which I rather like; it leaves me free to do what a novelist does anyway, listen and watch, but with the added spice of feeling a little as though I am some observant time-traveller, on the edge of things, bearing witness to the customs of another age.



Old age is forever stereotyped. Years ago, I was a judge for a national children's writing competition. They had been asked to write about 'grandparents'; in every offering the grandparent was a figure with stick and hearing aid, knitting by the fireside or pottering in the garden. The average grandparent would then have been around sixty, and probably still at work. We are too keen to bundle everyone by category; as a child I used to be maddened by the assumption that I would get along famously with someone just because we were both eight. All that we have in common, we in this new demographic, are our aches and pains and disabilities. For the rest of it, we are the people we always have been – splendidly various, and let us respect that. We do not wish to have assumptions made about our capacities and tastes.

Am I envious of the young? Would I want to be young again? I would like to have back vigour and robust health, but that is not exactly envy. Having known youth, I'm well aware that it has its own traumas, that it is no Elysian progress, that it can be a time of distress and disappointment, that it is exuberant and exciting, but it is no picnic. I don't particularly

want to go back there. And in any case I am someone else now.

All of the discussion of how to confront old age focuses on physical and mental activity. Over the last years, I've had surgery and treatment for breast cancer. My sight is dodgy. There is a shoulder problem. As for the rest of my continuing ailments, they seem more or less par for the course for an eighty year old. You get used to it. And that surprises me. Acceptance has set in, somehow, which is just as well, because the alternative – perpetual rage and resentment – would not help matters. The body may decline, may seem a dismal reflection of what went before, but the mind has a healthy continuity. Most people, it seems to me, retain an essential persona, a cast of mind, a trademark footprint. A poet's voice will alter and develop but young Wordsworth, Tennyson, Larkin are not essentially adrift from their later selves. There is this interesting accretion – the varieties of ourselves – and the puzzling thing in old age is to find yourself out there as the culmination of all these, knowing that they are you, but that you

are also now this someone else.

I can remember falling in love, being in love; life would have been incomplete without that particular exaltation, but I wouldn't want to go back there. I still love – there is a swathe of people that I love – but I am glad indeed to be done with that consuming, tormenting form of the emotion.

I am as alive to the world as I have ever been – alive to everything I see and hear and feel. Spring was never so vibrant; autumn never so richly gold. People are of abiding interest – observed in the street, overheard on a bus. It is an old accustomed world now, but invested with fresh significance. What we have been still lurks – and even more so within. This old age self is just a top dressing, it seems; early selves are still mutinously present, getting a word in now and then. The day belongs to the young. I wouldn't in the least want to reoccupy the centre stage. I don't remember being any more appreciative of life then than I am now.

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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) Outline, in your own words, three of the challenges posed by old age, identified by Penelope Lively in the text above. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) Identify, and give your personal response to any two observations the writer makes about young people and youthfulness generally, in the course of the above passage. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (iii) Based on what you have read in the above text, do you agree that this extract from Penelope Lively's memoir is both skilfully written and perceptively observed? Support your answer with reference to both the content and style of the extract. (20)

QUESTION B

Write the **introduction** for a collection of writing (e.g. poems, stories and articles) by young people about older people. In it you should discuss the importance of older people, such as grandparents, in the lives of young people today and the contribution made by older people to society in general. (50)

Write a composition on **any one** of the assignments that appear in **bold print** below.

Each composition carries 100 marks.

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

1. TEXTS 1, 2 and 3 deal with the theme of challenges.
Write a short story in which the main character is transformed when faced with a daunting challenge.
2. In TEXT 3, Penelope Lively remembers falling in love.
Write a feature article for a magazine, about the importance of romance in our lives. The article may be light-hearted or serious.
3. In TEXT 1, Bono talks about some of the defining struggles faced by people through the ages.
Write a thought-provoking speech, to be delivered at a United Nations Youth Conference, in which you consider some of the causes and possible solutions to what you see as the defining struggles of our age.
4. In TEXT 2, Joanna Briscoe, writing about fiction, tells us that “Endings can be a problem.”
Write a personal essay about your response to an ending, or endings, in your life that you consider significant.
5. In TEXT 3, Penelope Lively writes that she sometimes feels like an “observant time-traveller”.
Write a descriptive essay which captures life in Ireland in 2015 from the point of view of an observant time-traveller. The time-traveller may be from the past or from the future.
6. Bono refers to “... telling the secrets of the age ...” in TEXT 1.
Write a short story in which a closely guarded secret is gradually revealed.
7. The writer alludes to “... the digital recording of much of our lives” in TEXT 2.
Write a discursive essay, in which you discuss the importance of privacy in people’s lives and the challenges to privacy in the modern age.

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