

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 1996

ENGLISH - ORDINARY LEVEL - PAPER 1WEDNESDAY, 5 JUNE - MORNING, 9.45 - 11.45

TOTAL MARKS: 190

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:

- (a) The beauty that surrounds me.
- (b) Sport is no longer sport. What do you think?
- (c) The happiness and sadness of family life.
- (d) It is your last day at school. Write the speech you would like to make to the assembled students and teachers.
- (e) What my home town means to me.
- (f) Your experience (real or imaginary) of one of the following:
 - (i) An interesting travelling companion.
 - (ii) A row with your best friend.
 - (iii) Feeling lonely.
 - (iv) A wish fulfilled.
 - (v) A journey back in time.
 - (vi) A momentous occasion.

II. UNPRESCRIBED PROSE - (90 marks)

Read the following passage carefully, and then answer question A and either B or C.
(Questions A, B, and C carry 45 marks each.)

1. *The splitting of the atom has changed everything except our way of thinking and thus we drift towards unparalleled catastrophe. Albert Einstein*

Head against the fogged-up window which couldn't be opened because of the fear of radiation dust; numbed, sweating, terrified underneath my radiation protection suit, I began to question my very sanity. What in the hell was I doing in the world's most radioactive environment? Inner cries of 'Help!' rushed to the surface. I felt engulfed by a strong sense of panic. I couldn't breathe. My heart raced and felt as if it might burst. I looked at the geiger counter in my hand and - my God! - I saw the needle rise beyond what it was capable of registering. My fear was overwhelming. Feelings of sinking deep into a black hole rushed forth like a torrent of evil. I screamed silently. I was in my own private world of terror. I had just entered 'Death Valley', the exclusion zone surrounding Chernobyl.

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2. What had brought me here was 16 years of working for peace and justice. Working for a world which could embrace the dreams and visions of our children, encompassing the needs and aspirations of us all. A belief that I could help to change the minds and hearts of others. A belief in the sanctity of life and in the holiness of the earth. My mind was grappling with the ethos of what had carried me to Chernobyl, but the fear was rising high. My words of 'wisdom' began to dim and fail me in this place of strange evil. As our van raced along the dusty, radioactive roads, I felt chilled to my very marrow, under armed escort, facing the reality of man's destructive capabilities. The strangeness of our 'escorts' added to my unease. Men whose sole function was to guard the exclusion zone so that no one could now enter it.

Looking at my companions - an Irish film crew sent with the task of filming a documentary which would tell the world the truth about the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident - I felt ill with the weight of responsibility. The bravery we had felt earlier had evaporated. Each of us was now afraid to divulge our inner horror. We stayed locked in our private worlds. I felt as if I was in a state of suspension between two worlds. My mother's promise to light a church candle daily failed to ease me. Frantically my mind fled into its darkest recesses to find something to sustain me. Images of my parents and closest ones flashed in and out. Prayers and words of laughter squeezed their way in between the blackness. With all of this rush of emotion my personal story of Chernobyl unfolded.

4. The strength and optimism of the Belarussian poet Ouladzimir Dubovka came to mind and encouraged me:

*Oh Belarus, my wild rose,
A green leaf, a red flower
Neither whirlwind will ever bind you
Nor Chernobyl will ever cover.*

Today Chernobyl is beating in the hearts of all Belarussians. It beats with radioactive particles registered in geiger counters, in their fields, streets, cities and towns. It is in the deceptively tranquil beauty of the forests, rivers and streams that no one may now enter. As I looked around the lifeless fields, I thought of the despair of the peasant farmer who was now unable to cultivate the land on which his ancestors had grown crops for centuries. I thought of the grief and helplessness of a mother watching her children die. Driving through deserted villages, I thought of the silent sorrow of old people who had to leave forever the native places they held sacred, places where they had spent their lives and where they left the graves of their loved ones.

The prophetic words of Albert Einstein rolled around my head with the sudden recognition that he had foreseen the nightmare which we had just entered. Locked in this unreal yet real world, we drove on into what had become a living hell. (From *Children of Chernobyl*, by Adi Roche.)

- A. Outline, in about 180 words, what we learn from this passage about the kind of person the writer is. (45)
- B. (i) From your reading of paragraph 4 what do you learn about the effects of the Chernobyl explosion? (15)
- (ii) "I felt engulfed by a strong sense of panic."
How is this sense of panic created in paragraph 1 ? (15)
- (iii) What point, in your opinion, does the writer wish to make by the use of the quotation from Albert Einstein at the beginning of the passage? (15)
- C. (i) State, in your own words, how the writer and her companions were affected on their journey to Chernobyl, as seen in paragraph 3. (15)
- (ii) "... he had foreseen the nightmare which we had just entered." (Paragraph 5)
How is the sense of nightmare created in this passage? (15)
- (iii) Why, in your opinion, does the writer quote the lines of the Belarussian poet, Ouladzimir Dubovka, in paragraph 4 ? (15)