

Leaving Certificate Examination, 1997

ENGLISH - ORDINARY LEVEL - PAPER 1

Total Marks: 190

WEDNESDAY, 11 JUNE - MORNING, 9.45 - 11.45

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) My thoughts on the eve of the Leaving Certificate Examination.
- (b) This wonderful world.
- (c) Religion in my life.
- (d) A message from Mars.
- (e) Do we in Ireland really care for our environment?
- (f) Your experience (real or imaginary) of one of the following:
 - (i) Taking a risk.
 - (ii) Meeting a stranger.
 - (iii) A panic situation.
 - (iv) A family celebration.
 - (v) Witnessing a crime.
 - (vi) Feeling jealous.

II. UNPRESCRIBED PROSE - (90 marks)

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

1. During the past quarter-century, the power which man has acquired to alter the nature of his world has increased to an alarming degree. The most disturbing of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and seas with dangerous and even lethal materials. In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world - the very nature of its life.
2. Radiation, in the form of Strontium 90, released through nuclear explosions into the air, comes to earth in rain or drifts down as fallout, lodges in soil, enters into the grass or corn grown there, and in time takes up its abode in the bones of a human being, there to remain until death. Similarly, chemicals sprayed on croplands or forests or gardens lie for a long time in the soil, enter into living organisms, passing from one to another in a chain of poison and death. Or they pass mysteriously by underground streams until they emerge in new forms that kill vegetation, sicken cattle, and work unknown harm on those who drink from once-pure wells. As Albert Schweitzer has said, "Man can hardly even recognise the devils of his own creation".
3. It took hundreds of millions of years to produce the life that now inhabits the earth - a time in which evolving life reached a state of adjustment and balance with its surroundings. For the surroundings, while they supported that life, contained also elements that were destructive of it. Certain rocks gave out natural radiation - radiation with power to injure. Given time - time not in years but in millenia - life adjusted, and a balance was reached. Time was the essential ingredient; but in the modern world there is no time.

4. The rapidity of change and the speed with which new situations are created follow the hurried and heedless pace of man rather than the slow and deliberate pace of nature. Radiation is no longer merely the background radiation of rocks or the ultra-violet rays of the sun that have existed before there was any life on earth. Radiation is now the unnatural creation of man's tampering with the atom.
5. The chemicals to which life is asked to make an adjustment now are no longer merely the calcium and copper and all the rest of the minerals washed out of the rocks and carried in rivers to the sea; they are the creations of man's inventive mind, brewed in his laboratories, and have no counterparts in nature.
6. To adjust to these chemicals the world would require time on the scale that is nature's. It would require not merely the years of a man's life, but the life of generations. And even this, were it by some miracle possible, would be useless, for the new chemicals come from our laboratories in an endless stream. Almost five hundred of them annually find their way into actual use in the United States alone. The figure is staggering - five hundred new chemicals to which the bodies of men and animals are required somehow to adapt each year, chemicals totally outside the limits of the experience of living things.

(Adapted from *Silent Spring*, by Rachel Carson)

- A. Outline the main points made by the writer in this passage. (45)
- B.
 - (i) Why, according to the writer, are man-made chemicals more dangerous than natural chemicals? (15)
 - (ii) "Time was the essential ingredient; but in the modern world there is no time." (Paragraph 3). Explain this sentence in the context of the passage. (15)
 - (iii) From your reading of paragraph 6 do you think the writer is hopeful or despairing of the future of the environment? (15)
- C.
 - (i) From your reading of the passage what difference do you find between natural radiation and radiation resulting from "man's tampering with the atom"? (15)
 - (ii) "Man can hardly even recognise the devils of his own creation." (Paragraph 2). From your reading of the passage what do you think are the "devils" created by man? (15)
 - (iii) What, in your opinion, is the writer's attitude to "man's assaults upon the environment"? Support your answer by reference to the passage. (15)