

An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta

M.9

43110

Leaving Certificate Examination, 1998

ENGLISH - ORDINARY LEVEL - PAPER 1

Total Marks: 190

WEDNESDAY, 10 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) Life for me after the Leaving Certificate Examination.
- (b) Ireland is changing too quickly. Do you agree?
- (c) "He who hesitates is lost". Discuss this statement or treat it as the central theme of a short story.
- (d) Sport in my life.
- (e) In spite of the pressure, schooldays are still great fun.
- (f) Your experience (real or imaginary) of one of the following:
 - (i) Having to make an important decision.
 - (ii) Coming into contact with the supernatural.
 - (iii) Learning to do something useful.
 - (iv) A serious illness or injury.
 - (v) Being a leader.
 - (vi) A most unusual person.

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. Today was the day. As I lay in my hospital bed, I deliberately dampened down the excitement rising within me. Was I to see again? As the eye pads came off, a greyish-white haze surrounded me.
2. I heard the smiling voices of the hospital staff as they awaited my reactions. With her soft lilting accent, a Jamaican nurse asked me if I could see anything. I sat up a little more and stared at the cloudy space in front of my eyes. Something blue? For the first time in 15 years, my eye and brain were directing my touch rather than the other way around. My finger reached out. "Yes!" the nurse prompted. "What? Can you see it?" "My towel", I said in wonderment, and felt a surge of joy that might have been measured equally if I had touched the Christ child.
3. After 15 years of total blindness, I had been given a tiny window in my right eye. Clear sight did not arrive instantly. The months that followed were a journey filled with emotion and revelation. I felt pure joy at seeing colour and shape again, becoming aware of human behaviour that revealed so much, and which I had been unaware of for years.
4. Nature filled me with wonder. How fascinated I was at my first sight of a daffodil, so perfect and clean, or when I stood in front of a tree in spring and wondered just how many leaves were hanging there! Before I regained my sight, my memories of a tree were only of the general shape and colour. Despite having had sight at one time, the details of bark texture and the number of leaves were a thing of distant and fuzzy recollection, having evaded my inner picture. It was not just sight that had been restored to me, but a second chance to witness the wonder of life and the gift of light.

OVER→

5. Every day became a daily emotional rollercoaster with both excitement and worry for me. I had not seen my face or body for many years. Now shock after shock assailed my limited sight and ill-informed memory. I had had reddish brown hair. Why was it now very fair? I certainly had not known of the change and nobody thought of telling me. And was I really that small?
6. I was not the only one grappling with changes. Years later I found out that my husband had been very worried about what his own role in my life would become. Up to now a voice and loving arms. Now what? - it had been 15 years since I had seen his face. As he explained shyly, he had grown old and wondered if I would still love him when I could see him. This human need to be liked and found desirable became a fascinating and often surprising discovery in the coming years for me.
7. More or less without exception, people now treated me differently. Before, I was sought out as a good listener and confidante. They knew I could not judge on looks. A person's voice was all I needed, with its fascinating ability to give away inner feelings through nuance. This gave me a jump-start on relationships and I found out more about the inner person in a few weeks than most find out in years. They were comfortable with me and I with them.
8. This particular aspect of my life changed markedly after I regained some sight. Now that I swam in the same sea as everyone else, the people in my life took on a different hue. Many of them seemed nervous as to what I thought of them now I could see them. Generally, it made no difference to me, but a great deal to them. I discovered a very human trait: to tell little white lies as to what they looked like. How was I to have known that a man with such a wonderful sense of humour and kindness was much fatter than I had imagined? Or that the lady who always talked of make-up and suchlike was at least 60 and rather wrinkled?
9. Now seven years later it is I who am nervous, for I am moving into a life of midway sight. In other words, I too care what I look like. I find myself judging people on sight, and have to stop and remind myself not to. I do not listen as well as I used to, for I am distracted with the trivia around me and not immune to the fads and fancies of modern society.

(Adapted from an article by Barbara Holme in "The Tablet".)

- A. Write a summary of this passage, confining your answer to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page of your answer-book. (45)
- B.
 - (i) What were the writer's emotional responses to her experience on the day when the bandages were removed from her eyes? (15)
 - (ii) Does the writer deal with people differently now that she has regained her sight? Give reasons for your answer. (15)
 - (iii) From your reading of the passage, do you think the writer is a sensitive person? Give reasons for your answer. (15)
- C.
 - (i) What difference(s) do you note between the writer's awareness of the physical world during and after her period of blindness? (15)
 - (ii) How have people changed in their treatment of her, now that she has recovered her sight? (15)
 - (iii) Do you think the writer in any way regrets that she has regained her sight? Give reasons for your answer. (15)