



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2026

English - Higher Level - Paper 2

Total Marks: 200

Thursday, 4 June – Afternoon, 2.00 – 5.20

Candidates must attempt the following:

- **ONE** question from SECTION I – The Single Text
- **ONE** question from SECTION II – The Comparative Study
- **ONE** question on the Unseen Poem from SECTION III – Poetry
- **ONE** question on Prescribed Poetry from SECTION III – Poetry.

N.B. Candidates must answer on Shakespearean Drama.

They may do so in SECTION I, The Single Text (Macbeth) or in Section II, The Comparative Study (Macbeth, The Merry Wives of Windsor).

INDEX OF SINGLE TEXTS

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SECTION I

THE SINGLE TEXT

(60 marks)

Candidates must answer **one** question from this section (A – E).

A THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL – Anne Brontë

- (i) “A variety of factors determine whether the complexity of the plot of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* limits or enhances a reader’s engagement with the novel.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to Brontë’s novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

OR

- (ii) “We gain many fascinating insights from Brontë’s exploration of the theme of damnation and salvation in her novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to Brontë’s novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

B THE CRUCIBLE – Arthur Miller

- (i) “Miller employs a variety of dramatic techniques, in a powerful way, to craft the characters in his play, *The Crucible*.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to at least two characters from Miller’s play, *The Crucible*.

OR

- (ii) “We gain many fascinating insights from Miller’s exploration of the conflict between the desires of the individual and the needs of the community in his play, *The Crucible*.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to Miller’s play, *The Crucible*.

C HAMNET – Maggie O’Farrell

- (i) “A variety of factors determine whether the complexity of the plot of *Hamnet* limits or enhances a reader’s engagement with the novel.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to O’Farrell’s novel, *Hamnet*.

OR

- (ii) “We gain many fascinating insights from O’Farrell’s exploration of the impact of mortality and grief in her novel, *Hamnet*.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to O’Farrell’s novel, *Hamnet*.

D MACBETH – William Shakespeare

- (i) “Shakespeare employs a variety of dramatic techniques, in a powerful and effective way, to heighten the audience’s feelings of sympathy for the central character Macbeth.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to at least two dramatic techniques employed by Shakespeare in his play, *Macbeth*.

OR

- (ii) “We gain many fascinating insights from Shakespeare’s exploration of the theme of order and disorder in his tragedy, *Macbeth*.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to Shakespeare’s play, *Macbeth*.

E DRACULA – Bram Stoker

- (i) “A variety of factors determine whether the complexity of the plot of *Dracula* limits or enhances a reader’s engagement with the novel.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to Stoker’s novel, *Dracula*.

OR

- (ii) “We gain many fascinating insights from Stoker’s exploration of the relationship between science and religion in his novel, *Dracula*.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to Stoker’s novel, *Dracula*.

SECTION II THE COMPARATIVE STUDY (70 marks)

Candidates must answer **one** question from **either A** – Cultural Context **or B** – General Vision and Viewpoint **or C** – Literary Genre.

In your answer you may not use the text you have answered on in **Section I** – The Single Text.

All texts used in this section must be prescribed for comparative study for this year's examination. Candidates may refer to only one film in the course of their answers.

Please note:

- Questions in this section use the word **text** to refer to all the different kinds of texts available for study on this course.
- When used, the word **reader** includes viewers of films and theatre audiences.
- When used, the term **technique** is understood to include techniques employed by all writers and directors of texts.
- When used, the word **author** is understood to include all writers and directors of texts.
- When used, the word **character** is understood to refer to both real people and fictional characters in texts.

A CULTURAL CONTEXT

1. (a) In the case of **one** text on your comparative course, discuss the extent to which social mobility, between different social positions in the society of this text, is possible.

Develop your response with reference to your chosen text. (30)

- (b) In the case of **two other** texts on your comparative course, compare the extent to which social mobility, between different social positions in these societies, is possible.

Develop your response with reference to your chosen texts. (40)

OR

2. In the case of **at least two** texts on your comparative course, compare the extent to which a patriarchal and male-dominated society is nurtured and maintained in these texts.

Develop your response with reference to your chosen texts. (70)

B GENERAL VISION AND VIEWPOINT

1. (a) In the case of **one** text on your comparative course, discuss whether your perception of the general vision and viewpoint was formed predominantly by your emotional or by your rational response to elements of this text.

Develop your response with reference to your chosen text. (30)

- (b) In the case of **two other** texts on your comparative course, compare the extent to which your perception of the general vision and viewpoint was formed predominantly by your emotional or by your rational response to elements of these texts.

Develop your response with reference to your chosen texts. You may refer to the same or different elements of each of your chosen texts. You may refer to the same or different elements to those you referred to in 1 (a) above. (40)

OR

2. In the case of **at least two** texts on your comparative course, compare the extent to which human intervention, as a catalyst for change, influenced your perception of the general vision and viewpoint.

Develop your response with reference to your chosen texts. (70)

C LITERARY GENRE

1. (a) In the case of **one** text on your comparative course, explain how effectively the author of this text employed a variety of literary techniques to create an engaging opening in this text.

Develop your response with reference to your chosen text. (30)

- (b) In the case of **two other** texts on your comparative course, compare how effectively the authors of each of these texts employed a variety of literary techniques to create an engaging opening in these texts.

Develop your response with reference to your chosen texts. You may refer to the same or different literary techniques in relation to each of your chosen texts. You may refer to the same or different techniques to those you referred to in 1 (a) above. (40)

OR

2. Compare how effectively at least one literary technique is employed, by the authors of **at least two** texts on your comparative course, to convey a psychological or an emotional conflict experienced by a central character.

Develop your response with reference to your chosen texts. You may refer to the same or different literary techniques in relation to each of your chosen texts. (70)

SECTION III

POETRY

(70 marks)

Candidates must answer **A** – Unseen Poem **and** **B** – Prescribed Poetry.

A UNSEEN POEM (20 marks)

Read the following poem by Alvy Carragher carefully. Answer **either** Question **1** **or** Question **2** which follow.

Library

Sometimes I wonder why she brought us there
so religiously. She was young and thwarted
but she knew to do that much, to show us books
full of lives other than the one we were living.
Maybe all some people can give you is a way out.
Maybe forgiveness is understanding that's enough.

Look, I read for thirty years and ended up here.
A life built from books. I've turned myself
inside out and nobody died or pricked a finger.
Imagine this, I was once so scared I wouldn't speak;
there was a wall between what I felt and others heard.
I couldn't translate until I pressed pen to paper.

Here was my mother tongue. I put down my life
and walked through the covers to another.

Alvy Carragher

1. (a) Give two reasons why you think the poet values books in this poem.
Support your response with reference to the poem. (10)
- (b) How would you describe the tone of this poem?
Support your response with reference to the poem. (10)

OR

2. Do you find the language used by Alvy Carragher, in her poem 'Library', engaging?
Give reasons for your answer, supporting your response with reference to the poem. (20)

B PRESCRIBED POETRY (50 marks)

Candidates must answer **one** of the following questions (**1 – 5**).

1. Elizabeth Bishop

“Bishop’s precise and measured style enables her to explore a mood that is often troubling and unsettling.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop on your Leaving Certificate English course.

2. Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin

“Ní Chuilleanáin’s unique narrative style reveals multiple meanings and enigmatic perspectives.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to the poetry of Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin on your Leaving Certificate English course.

3. W.B. Yeats

“Yeats’s powerful language charts his frustrating pursuit of both personal and political ideals.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to the poetry of W.B. Yeats on your Leaving Certificate English course.

4. Paula Meehan

“Meehan uses language skilfully, to modulate and control the harshness of her critical observations.”

Discuss this statement developing your response with reference to the poetry of Paula Meehan on your Leaving Certificate English course.

5. John Donne

“Donne utilises language that is both cryptic and entertaining in order to explore the complexities of relationships.”

Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to the poetry of John Donne on your Leaving Certificate English course.

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Leaving Certificate – Higher Level

English

Thursday 4 June

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