



COMPREHENSION QUESTION B COMPOSITION

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**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2020

English - Higher Level - Paper 1

Total Marks: 200

Duration: 2 hours 50 minutes

- This paper is divided into two sections, Section I COMPREHENDING and Section II COMPOSING.
- The paper contains **three** texts on the general theme of **EXPLORING GENRE**.
- 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.

THEME

- The theme is written in **block capitals** on the cover page of the exam.
- The theme will reflect an **aspect of life** that is **relevant** to young people.
- There is **no obligation to stick to that theme** in the Comp B or composition, but it can be an aid to your planning and can guide your reading of the texts.
- Don't waste time trying to predict the theme!
- The theme will never be controversial or specific. So, for example, 'Covid 19' will never appear, but you might see something like 'Challenges' or 'Uncertainty'.

THEMES – ON THE COVER PAGE OF THE EXAM WILL REFLECT AN ASPECT OF LIFE THAT IS RELEVANT TO YOUNG PEOPLE
THERE IS NO OBLIGATION TO STICK TO THAT THEME IN THE COMP B OR COMPOSITION, BUT IT CAN BE AN AID TO YOUR PLANNING AND CAN GUIDE YOUR READING OF THE TEXTS.

2015 - 2020

2020 – Exploring Genre

2019 – Feeding Our Imaginations

2018 – Young Writers

2017 – Different Worlds

2016 – Journeys

2015 – Challenges

2009 - 2014

2014 – Influence

2013- Story-telling

2012 – Memory

2011 – Mystery

2010 – The Future

2009 - Decisions

2003 - 2008

2008 – Identity

2007 – Change

2006 – Pretence

2005 – Ordinary lives

2004 – Work and Play

2003 – Journeys

TWO WRITING TASKS – SHORT AND EXTENDED

- Comprehension Question B
 - 50 marks – 12.5% of overall exam
 - Forty-five minutes
 - Equivalent to marks for prescribed poetry
 - Short, focused writing task
- Composition
 - 100 marks – 25% of overall exam
 - An hour and twenty minutes
 - Choice of seven titles
 - Four main areas: opinion pieces, personal essays, short stories, descriptive essays



TIP

- You can prepare for both the long and the short composition tasks at the same time.
- Speech writing and feature articles, for example, could be a Comp B or a Composition task.

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Leaving Certificate English
Higher Level Examination Paper



Written by Aoife O'Driscoll – www.aofesnotes.com

CONTENTS

2016 Reading Comprehension (Paper 1)	220
2015 Reading Comprehension (Paper 1)	232
2014 Reading Comprehension (Paper 1)	243
2013 Reading Comprehension (Paper 1)	254
2012 Reading Comprehension (Paper 1)	266
2011 Reading Comprehension (Paper 1)	279
2010 Reading Comprehension (Paper 1)	292
2009 Reading Comprehension (Paper 1)	305
Single Text (Paper 2)	319
Unseen Poetry (Paper 2)	323
Prescribed Poetry (Paper 2)	343

SAMPLE ANSWERS

- Sample answers for Comprehension Questions A and B (as well as Unseen Poetry, some Single Text and some Prescribed Poetry essays) can be found here: <https://educateplus.ie/free-exam-paper-solutions-pdf>
- There are both Higher and Ordinary Level sample answers.

COMPREHENSION QUESTION B



Choose your Comp B question first.



Have an idea which type of task suits you best.



Do you know what type of task this is? If not, maybe choose again...



When you have chosen your Comp B, cross out the Comp A questions from that text.



Read the text which accompanies the Comp B question. Sometimes this is essential (diary entry based on events in the text) but in all cases the text can give you ideas and tips.

'...that I am unable to follow you. How did you deduce that this man was intellectual?'

For answer Holmes clapped the hat upon his head. It came right over the forehead and settled upon the bridge of his nose. 'It is a question of cubic capacity,' said he: 'a man with so large a brain must have something in it.'

'The decline of his fortunes, then?'

'This hat is three years old. These flat brims curled at the edge were fashionable then. It is a hat of the very best quality. Look at the band of ribbed silk and the excellent lining. If this man could afford to buy so expensive a hat three years

further point, that his hair is grizzled, and that it has been recently cut, are to be gathered from a close examination of the lower part of the lining. The magnifying glass discloses a large number of hair-ends, clean cut by the scissors of the barber.'

'Well, it is very ingenious,' said I, laughing. 'But since, as you said just now, there has been no crime committed, all this seems to be rather a waste of energy.'

Sherlock Holmes had opened his mouth to reply when the door flew open, and Peterson rushed into the apartment with flushed cheeks, dazed with astonishment.

*Commissionaire – a uniformed hotel door attendant.

N.B. Candidates may NOT answer Question A and Question B on the same text.

QUESTION A – 50 Marks

- (i) Based on your reading of the edited extract above, explain three insights you gain into the character of Sherlock Holmes. Support your response with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) TEXT 2 is an example of writing in the genre, detective fiction. Explain why you think this genre has a wide and enduring appeal. Make three points in your response. (15)
- (iii) Identify four features of good storytelling evident in the extract. Discuss how the features you have identified add to your enjoyment of the extract. Support your response with reference to the extract. (20)

QUESTION B – 50 Marks

You have been asked to write **the introduction** to a new collection of contemporary detective fiction. In your introduction you should: outline the reasons why you think detective stories have enduring appeal, discuss some of the personal qualities you believe are essential in a memorable fictional detective, and explain why you recommend this particular collection of stories to readers.

TYPES OF TASK – COMP B

- In the next slide, you will see a table with all the HL Comp B tasks from the past papers.
- Be aware of the trends: introduction to a collection of essays/book has become popular in recent years.
- Opinion pieces – speeches and articles – are a firm favourite!
- Have a clear idea of the type of task that suits you best.

PLANNING YOUR ANSWER – FOUR QUESTIONS

- What is the task? Be clear on this. Is it a letter, blog post, article? If you are not sure, think again.
- What should the content be?
- Who is my audience? This will determine the level of formality and will affect the content.
- What language genre/genres should I use?

NB

In recent years, candidates have been asked to address THREE things in the Comp B task. You do not need to give them all equal treatment, but if you leave one out, you will be penalised.

DON'T TRUST YOUR MEMORY!

- of 12
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Task

①
②
③

Content – enduring appeal
– qualities of mem. f. detective
– why I recommend this coll.

- Number each thing you are asked to do.
- Write a very brief summary of each aspect of the question to ensure you remain focused.

BLOG POSTS



MORE INFORMAL
THAN AN ARTICLE
IN A NEWSPAPER



NOT
PROFESSIONALLY
EDITED, SO ARE
MORE PERSONAL
AND POSSIBLY
MORE BIASED
THAN AN ARTICLE.



MAIN FOCUS IS
USUALLY TO
EXPRESS THE
BLOGGER'S VIEW
ON A PARTICULAR
TOPIC.



LIKE ALL COMP B
TASKS, THIS IS AN
OPPORTUNITY TO
SHOWCASE YOUR
WRITING SKILLS,
SO AVOID BEING
TOO INFORMAL.



TIP

- Could a reader work out (a) what exact task this was and (b) what three aspects of the topic you were asked to address?
- If a reader could reverse-engineer your piece and come up with the exact question, you are on the right track.

STRUCTURE

OPENING

- Use a title and underline it to make it stand out.
- Write the blogger's name (it should not be your real name)
- Include the date and the time of posting the blog.

BODY

Make it clear that this is a blog post: 'Last week I posted about...'

Most blogs are written in the first person

Make sure you have addressed all elements of the question

Including underlined, fake hyperlinks can add authenticity

Engage your audience emotionally

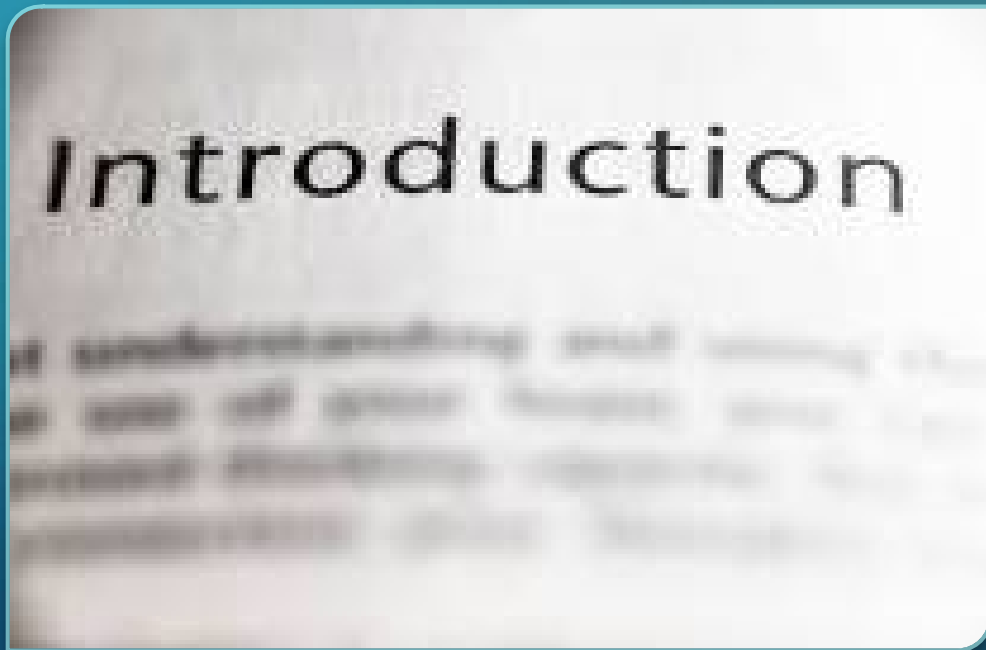
ENDING

End with a call to action

You might like to ask the readers to sign an online petition

Keep reinforcing the idea that this is a blog and not an article

INTRODUCTION TO A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS OR STORIES OR POEMS



- Popular task in recent years
- **2020:** You have been asked to write the introduction to a new collection of contemporary detective fiction. In your introduction you should: outline the reasons why you think detective stories have enduring appeal, discuss some of the personal qualities you believe are essential in a memorable fictional detective, and explain why you recommend this particular collection of stories to readers.

INTRODUCTION TO A BOOK

- Presents something new to an audience
- Stimulates curiosity and interest in the book
- Endorsement by a celebrity or expert can add credibility and put a stamp of approval on the work
- Tone can be informative, persuasive, encouraging etc.
- Title
- Hook
- Benefits of reading this book
- Discusses the content
- Invites the reader to enjoy the book
- Sign-off



TIP

- How will you make it clear that this is the introduction to a book?
- Could you mention fictional parts of the book?

Example: Kevin Nolan, in his touching poem 'Marking Time' (page 75), highlights the effect a grandparent's death can have on a young person.

- In the next slide, you will see a table with all the HL Composition tasks from the past papers.
- You should know what type of composition suits you best.
- Don't have 'a story' you use no matter what!

TYPES OF TASK

COMPOSITION

PERSONAL ESSAYS AND OPINION PIECES

THE TOPICS WILL ALWAYS BE BASED ON ASPECTS OF LIFE TO WHICH TEENAGERS CAN RELATE. HERE IS A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TOPICS COVERED IN RECENT YEARS:

- Important lessons learned in life / Significant moment in life to date / Time when you achieved something important / Moment of uncertainty
- How to enjoy teenage years
- Views on music, money, happiness, music, sport, drama, books
- Problems of our age and how to address them: scientific advances, social media etc.
- People you admire and why you do so / Celebrity status in this day and age / Important people in your life / Someone who has inspired you
- A time you felt left out or ignored
- Romance

OPINION PIECES

- Speeches
- Talks
- Articles
- Discursive essays



SPEECHES AND TALKS

- Your audience only has one opportunity to take in what you are saying and react to it. You have one chance to win them over.
- Your audience makes value judgements about you, the people you represent and your message in the first thirty to sixty seconds of your presentation.
- Speeches must, therefore, be well-organized and easily understood.
- Audience awareness is hugely important.

THE AUDIENCE

- Age?
- Interests?
- Gender?
- Are they already **informed** about the subject?
- What level of **detail** will be appropriate for them?
- What **tone** will be most effective in conveying your message? Be consistent!
- What might **offend, alienate or confuse** them?





TIP

- There is a difference between a speech and an article, although you might be expressing similar ideas in both. Show audience awareness throughout your speech. It is not enough to do so at the beginning and the end.
- Try **rewriting** your speech as an article and vice versa. What **changes** did you have to make to content and style, and why?

PURPOSE

- What do you want your audience to **learn or do**?
- You must have a **call to action**. When they have finished listening, do you want them to vote differently, recycle, read more...
- If you are not clear on the purpose, they will not be clear.
- How can your audience **benefit** from what you have to say?



THE HOOK

- You want to **appeal** to the audience and for them to **relate** to you.

- Anecdote
- Shocking statistic
- Direct question
- Quotation
- Humour



PITFALL

- Don't start with a definition. "What is freedom? The dictionary defines 'freedom' as..."
- This is a common error. Everybody knows what the title means!

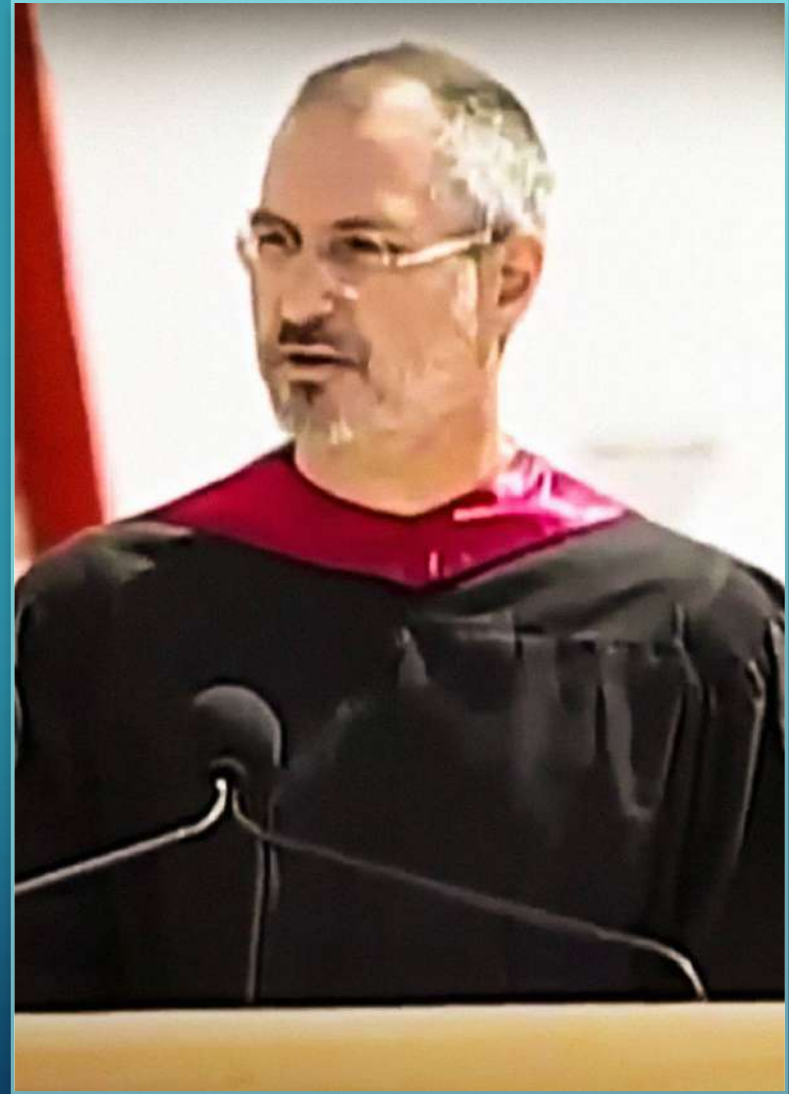


STEVE JOBS – COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Truth be told, I never graduated from college, and this is the closest I've ever gotten to a college graduation. Today, I want to tell you three stories from my life. That's it, no big deal – just three stories.

The first is about connecting the dots. I dropped out of Reed College after the first six months, but then stayed around as a drop-in for another eighteen months or so before I really quit. So why did I drop out? It started before I was born.

- ✓ Anecdotal
- ✓ Relaxed tone
- ✓ Self-deprecating



JANE FONDA – TED TALK

- There have been many revolutions over the last century, but perhaps none as significant as the longevity revolution We are living on average today thirty-four years longer than our great-grandparents did. Think about that: that's an entire second adult lifetime that's been added to our lifespan.
- Statistic
- Made relatable
- Directly addressing the audience: 'Think about that'.
- 'We are living'... engages the audience



QUOTES



- Don't overuse them.
- Two should be plenty!
- This is a great site, and you can search by topic: <https://www.brainyquote.com>
- Build up a little notebook of useful quotes by topic. Here's an example: <http://www.aofesnotes.com/leaving-cert/ordinary-level/Paper-One/docs/composition/Quotes%20for%20use%20in%20compositions.pdf>

MAKE YOUR SPEECH EASY TO FOLLOW

VERBAL CLUES - STRUCTURE

- Let the audience know where your speech is going.

'I want to talk to you today about three things..'

'I've already mentioned...'

- Repeating crucial words, using the triadic pattern (rule of three) and anaphora (repeating a word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences) is helpful.

'Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.' (Martin Luther King Jr.)

USE STRONG LINKS BETWEEN POINTS

- Help the listener to relate what you are saying now to what they have heard so far.

'Another crucial element is...'

'But this argument does not hold up when you consider...'

USE SHORT, SIMPLE SENTENCES WHERE POSSIBLE

- You want the audience to immediately understand and remember what you said.
- Avoid too many subordinate clauses.

This product, which was invented in 1976 by Francis Weston in Durham, England and was available for sale only a year later, still sells well today.

BETTER VERSION

Francis Weston invented the product in 1976 and introduced it into shops shortly afterwards. It still sells well.

LIMIT PRONOUNS

The Irish government has failed to protect us from the scourge of so-called reality television, which exploits sex, violence and petty conflict and calls it human nature. It cannot continue.

BETTER VERSION

The Irish government has failed to protect us from the scourge of so-called reality television, which exploits sex, violence and petty conflict and calls it human nature. This **failure** cannot continue.

CONCLUSION

Restate your main points if you like, but don't repeat them: 'I asked earlier why we should rethink our approach to recycling. Now I hope it's clear that...'

End with a call to action. Show the audience how they can realistically effect a change. Be positive and encouraging. Let them know what you want them to do.

RHETORICAL DEVICES



- Think of a recipe.
- Have the ingredients ready and to hand!
- Make a list of devices you will use.
- Rhetorical questions, quotes, statistics, anecdotes etc. Make sure you use them but don't overdo any one rhetorical device.

DISCURSIVE ESSAYS

Type One

- Argue strongly in favour of or against a given topic
- More persuasive tone

Type Two

- Take a more balanced approach: weigh up both sides of the argument
- More argumentative tone

STRUCTURE



Introduction, clearly stating your point of view



Main body of the essay which builds towards your conclusion



Strong conclusion



INTRODUCTION – SOURCE – BBC BITESIZE

- Some examples of different styles that could be used in an introduction are:
- provocative
- balanced
- quotation
- illustrative
- anecdotal
- An example of a **provocative** introduction is - "It is difficult to see how anyone can approve of fox hunting."
- An example of a **balanced** introduction is - "Fox hunting is a subject about which people hold strongly contrasting views."
- An example of a **quotation** introduction is - "Oscar Wilde once described fox hunting as 'The unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable.'"
- An example of an **illustrative** introduction is - "On a glorious autumn morning a terrified, exhausted animal is savaged to death by a pack of baying dogs while a group of expensively dressed humans encourage the dogs in their bloody work."
- An example of an **anecdotal** introduction is - "I have always detested fox hunting since I was almost physically sick while watching a television film of the kill at the end of a hunt."

BODY – WHAT ARE THEY LOOKING FOR?


- Aim to give relevant facts, sources, theories.
- You can, of course, make up facts and figures but they should be credible.
- Analyse the material as you present it. Critical thinking is required.

LINKING IDEAS

Type of link	Example
Linking similar ideas	Likewise, in addition, similarly, moreover, also etc. Do not use subheadings and do not number your points. Saying, 'Firstly ... secondly' is a little dull and best kept for debate speeches
Be definite!	Undoubtedly, absolutely, definitely, unquestionably
Definite stat	without question, without doubt, unquestionably, absolutely
Linking contrasting ideas (think of your comparative study)	However, on the other hand, on the contrary, conversely, nevertheless
Concluding a train of thought	Therefore, consequently, thus, as a result

CONCLUSION

Justify your opinion
Come to a strong conclusion



Make sure that your conclusion is consistent with the arguments in your essay. Sometimes you may get carried away and end up concluding the opposite of your thesis, especially if you do not plan well. Do not let such inconsistency happen.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND GOOD EXAMPLES?

- <https://www.theguardian.com/profile/editorial>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/commentisfree>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/section/opinion/editorials>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/section/opinion>
- <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/opinion-analysis>





FEATURE ARTICLES

There is no set structure for a feature article, but there are a few tips that can help you to plan your composition.

Begin with an observation, a question, an anecdote or a mention of a recent news story.

Comment on the broader implications of the observation, anecdote or story

Give your analysis of the broader implications

Provide an example or examples which support your analysis

Consider the implications of the problem (if there is one) not being addressed

Suggest ways in which the problem might be solved if applicable

End with a short, powerful sentence



PERSONAL ESSAY

There is no set structure, but this may help


Begin with an anecdote/observation

Reflect on the wider implications – what does this tell us about the human condition?

Move from the personal to the universal

Draw conclusions

Return to the anecdote and examine it with newfound understanding



DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A FEATURE ARTICLE AND A PERSONAL ESSAY

Feature article – Focus on the universal / the wider world. May also contain personal anecdotes.

Personal essay – Focus is on you, although you may also discuss the universal/the wider world.

Both types of composition look at the human condition.