

Layout and Timing – Leaving Cert English

Paper 1

Language Paper

Total marks: 200

Time allowed: 2 hours and 50 minutes

Question	Marks	Time	Length
Comp. Question A	50	40/45 minutes	3 pages
Comp. Question B	50	40/45 minutes	1 1/2 /2 pages
Composition (Essay)	100	75/80 minutes	4 pages

Paper 2

Literature Paper

Total marks: 200

Time allowed: 3 hours and 20 minutes

Question	Marks	Time	Length
Single Text	60	50/55 minutes	4 pages
Comparative Study	70	60/65 minutes	4/5 pages
Unseen Poetry	20	20 minutes	1 page
Prescribed Poetry	50	45/50 minutes	3/4 pages

Comprehension Questions A & B

You must answer Question A from one comprehension and Question B from another. It is a good idea to check all the Question Bs first and choose one that suits you, and then decide which comprehension you will use for Question A.

Question A is worth 50 marks. This is the same as the marks given for the prescribed poetry section, so it is well worth taking the time to prepare for this task.

➤ You must answer Question A from one comprehension text and Question B from another.

It is a good idea to check all the Question Bs first and choose one that suits you, and then decide which comprehension text you will use for Question A.

➤ There may be a visual element to the written text, so be prepared to discuss this.

➤ Remember that each year Paper One is centred around a different theme. In 2014, the theme was 'Influence'. Each of the texts will reflect this theme

Question B, the short writing task, is worth 50 marks. This is the same as the marks given for the prescribed poetry section, so it is well worth taking the time to prepare for this task. It is a relatively simple exercise to prepare for and students should be aiming for high marks here. Unfortunately, many students do not take this short writing task seriously enough, and fail to get a good grade.

Types of Composition – Past Trends

On the day of the exam, you will have **seven** titles from which to choose. There are a number of different types of essay set each year. Below is the list of essay types, along with the frequency with which they have come up in past papers.

Year	'14	'13	'12	'11	'10	'09	'08	'07	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	'01
Article	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Personal Essay	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Short Story	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓
Speech or Talk	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Letter														✓
Narrative				✓						✓				✓
Descriptive Essay	✓	✓		✓										
Guide					✓									

To break it down even further, you could say that your choices are divided between

- Opinion pieces (talks, speeches, articles)
- Personal essays
- Story writing

Be sure you have an idea which type of essay suits you best.

If you are torn between a couple of options, write a brief plan for each. This will show you whether you have enough material for all of them.

Single Text

Your single text is '*King Lear*'.

On the day of the exam, there will be two essay questions set on '*King Lear*'. You will have to answer one.

Below are the questions from the 2010 exam:

(i) 'In *King Lear* honour and loyalty triumph over brutality and viciousness.'

Write your response to this statement supporting your answer with suitable reference to the text.

OR

(ii) 'In *King Lear* the villainous characters hold more fascination for the audience than the virtuous ones.'

Discuss this statement with reference to at least one villainous and one virtuous character. Support your answer with suitable reference to the text.

Knowledge of the plot is not sufficient for Higher Level. The examiner knows the play and assumes you do too. You must be prepared to analyse and comment on the text.

You need to be prepared to discuss each of the following in detail:

- Characters and relationships between characters
- Themes
- Language
- Imagery
- Dramatic scenes

Comparative Study

This section is worth seventy marks.

You will (probably) study a play, a novel and a film from a list of prescribed texts.

You will be required to compare the texts under two comparative modes. Each year three modes are set, and two come up in the exam. You must answer one question only.

The Comparative Modes for Examination in 2016 are:

- (i) Cultural Context
- (ii) The General Vision and Viewpoint
- (iii) Literary Genre

Here are some sample questions from past papers:

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

1. “Various social groups, both large and small, (such as family, friends, organisations or community) reflect the cultural context in texts.”

Compare the extent to which one or more social groups reflect the cultural context in at least two texts on your comparative course. (70)

OR

2. “The cultural context within a text often dictates the crises or difficulties faced by characters and their responses to these difficulties.”

(a) Discuss to what extent this statement applies to at least one central character in one of the texts you have studied for your comparative course. (30)

(b) Compare the extent to which the above statement is applicable to at least one central character in each of two other texts you have studied on your comparative course. (40)

THE GENERAL VISION AND VIEWPOINT

1. “The general vision and viewpoint of a text can be shaped by the reader’s attitude to a central character.”

Compare the extent to which your attitude to a central character helped shape your understanding of the general vision and viewpoint of at least two texts on your comparative course. (70)

OR

2. “Various aspects of texts can provoke a range of emotional responses in readers which aid the construction of the general vision and viewpoint.”

(a) With reference to one text on your comparative course, what aspects of the text shaped your emotional response and helped you to construct the general vision and viewpoint of that text? (30)

(b) With reference to two other texts on your comparative course, compare the aspects of these texts that shaped your emotional response and helped you to construct the general vision and viewpoint of these texts. (40)

LITERARY GENRE

1. “Authors make use of a variety of techniques to shape memorable characters.”

Identify and compare the techniques used to shape one or more memorable characters in at least two texts you have encountered on your comparative course. (70)

OR

2. (a) With reference to one text on your comparative course, discuss the author’s use of setting (or settings) as an effective feature of good story telling. (30)

(b) With reference to two other texts on your comparative course, compare how the authors use settings as an effective feature of good story telling. (40)

Poetry

This is divided into Unseen and Prescribed.

The Unseen poem will have a choice of two questions: a twenty marker or two shorter ten markers. It is up to you which one you choose to answer on the day.

Prescribed Poetry:

Each year eight poets are selected for the Leaving Cert English syllabus.

The poets selected for 2016 are listed below:

BISHOP, Elizabeth

DICKINSON, Emily

DURCAN, Paul

ELIOT, Thomas S

LARKIN, Philip

NÍ CHUILLEANÁIN, Eiléan

PLATH, Sylvia

YEATS, William Butler

You are expected to study any five of these poets.

There are ten or twelve poems by each poet set for study, but you are only expected to cover six by each of your chosen poets.

On the day of the exam, there will be four essay-style questions set – each one on a different poet. You will be required to write an answer on one of these only. You may or may not have a choice, depending on which poets come up on the day.

Here is the Prescribed Poetry section from the 2014 examination:

B PRESCRIBED POETRY (50 marks)

Candidates must answer one of the following questions (1– 4).

1. William Butler Yeats

“Yeats uses evocative language to create poetry that includes both personal reflection and public commentary.”

Discuss this statement, supporting your answer with reference to both the themes and language found in the poetry of W. B. Yeats on your course.

2. Emily Dickinson

“The dramatic aspects of Dickinson’s poetry can both disturb and delight readers.”

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the above statement? Support your answer with reference to both the themes and language found in the poetry of Emily Dickinson on your course.

3. Philip Larkin

“Larkin is a perceptive observer of the realities of ordinary life in poems that are sometimes illuminated by images of lyrical beauty.”

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the above statement? Support your answer with reference to both the themes and language found in the poetry of Philip Larkin on your course.

4. Sylvia Plath

“Plath makes effective use of language to explore her personal experiences of suffering and to provide occasional glimpses of the redemptive power of love.”

Discuss this statement, supporting your answer with reference to both the themes and language found in the poetry of Sylvia Plath on your course.