



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

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 **THRILLING EXPERIENCES**.
- 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.

This document must be handed up at the end of the examination

TEXT 1 – THE THRILL OF THE TIGRESS

This text is based on edited extracts adapted from Maggie O’Farrell’s novel, *The Marriage Portrait*. In it, we find a young child, Lucrezia de’ Medici, a daughter of the Duke of Milan, alone with a magnificent tigress during a late-night excursion to her father’s private underground zoo.

The cage had iron bars, running up, running down. Lucrezia looked at the slab of darkness. It seemed to pulse and hum. She was gazing into the depthless black, searching for movement, for colour, anything, but her eyes were too weak or she must have been looking the wrong way because there was a flicker of movement next to the stone wall and, by the time she turned her head to see, the tigress was almost upon her.

Liquid was her motion, like honey dropping from a spoon. She emerged from the shadow of her cage as if she had the whole stretch of the jungle at her command, the filthy mud floor of Florence, rolling under her paws. No pussycat, she. She simmered, she crackled, she seethed with fire, her face astonishing in its livid symmetry. Lucrezia had never seen anything so beautiful in her life. The furnace-bright back and sides, the pale underbelly. The marks on her fur, Lucrezia saw, were not stripes, no – the word was insufficient for them. They were a bold, dark lace, to adorn, to conceal; they defined her, they saved her.

Closer and closer she came, allowing the triangle of light to fall upon her. Her eyes were locked on Lucrezia. For a moment, it seemed as if she would pass her by. But the tigress paused, stopping in front of the girl. She had noticed her; she was there, with Lucrezia; there was much the two of them needed to say to each other. Lucrezia knew this, the tigress knew this.

Lucrezia eased herself forward, coming to her knees. The tigress’s flank was there, beside her: repeating incisions and ellipses of black in the amber. She could see the breath entering and leaving her body; she could see where the torso sloped away into her tender underside, the



soft spread of her paws, the quivering in her limbs. She saw how the animal lifted her lustrous muzzle, nosing the air, sifting it for all it could tell her.

Lucrezia could feel the sadness, the loneliness, emanating from her, the shock of being torn from her home, the horror of the weeks and weeks at sea. She could feel the sting of the lashes the beast had received, the bitter longing for the vaporous and humid canopy of jungle and the enticing green tunnels through its undergrowth that she alone commanded, the searing pain in her heart at the bars that now enclosed her. Was there no hope? the tigress seemed to be asking her. Will I always remain here? Will I never return home?

Lucrezia felt tears welling in her eyes. To be so alone in such a place! It wasn’t fair or right. She would ask her papa to send the animal back. They could take it on to the ship, and sail to wherever they had found her, open the bars of her cage and watch her dive back into the lichenous towering trees.

Slowly, slowly, Lucrezia put out her hand. She snaked her fingers through a gap in the iron

bars and stretched, spreading her fingers, reaching out of her shoulder socket, straining forward, her face pressed close to the cage. The tigress's fur was pliant, warm, soft as down. Lucrezia eased her fingertips along the animal's back, feeling the quiver of her muscles, the flexing beads of her spine. There was no difference between the orange fur and the black, no join, as she thought there might be. The two colours overlapped and merged without trace.

The tigress swung her vivid, complex face around, as if to examine the person behind such a caress, as if to ascertain its meaning. To look into her

eyes was to behold the visage of an incandescent, forbidden deity.

Lucrezia and the tigress regarded each other, for a stretched moment, the child's hand on the beast's back, and time stopped for Lucrezia, the turning world stilled. Her life, her name, her family and all that surrounded her receded and became void. She was aware only of her own heart, and that of the tigress, pulsing inside the ribs, drawing in scarlet blood and shooting it out again, flooding their veins. She barely breathed; she didn't blink.

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 TEXT 1, explain three insights you gained into the character of Lucrezia de' Medici. Support your explanation with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) The theme of this examination paper is "Thrilling Experiences". Explain what you believe are some of the characteristics of a truly thrilling experience. Support your explanation with reference to one experience that you found truly thrilling. Your example may be drawn from real-life or from any novel, play or film. In your response you may not refer to any of the texts that appear in this examination paper. (15)
- (iii) Identify four stylistic elements, evident in TEXT 1, and discuss how these stylistic elements enable the writer to effectively convey the dramatic and moving nature of Lucrezia's encounter with the tigress. Support your answer with reference to the text. (20)

QUESTION B – 50 Marks

You are the director of a short film based on the extract from Maggie O'Farrell's novel, *The Marriage Proposal*, that appears in TEXT 1. Your film has been chosen for screening at a film festival and you have been asked to submit a note about the film for inclusion in the festival programme. Write **the note** you would submit in which you: indicate the title of the film you have made and explain why this title was chosen, discuss the aspects of the extract that, in your opinion, made it suitable for film-making and describe the thrill of working with a real tigress.

TEXT 2 – THE THRILL OF THE GAME

This text is based on edited extracts adapted from the prologue of Duncan Hamilton's book, *Going to the Match*, an homage to football. In it, we learn of the writer's youthful enthusiasm for the game of football that blossomed into a career and a life-long devotion to the sport.

Factory chimneys were to the artist, L.S. Lowry, what daffodils were to the poet, Wordsworth. So were back-to-back houses and tiled roofs, sombre curls of smoke and matchstick men and women, scraggy dogs on spindly legs and hulking buildings. In painting the ordinary and giving the mundane its due, he ennobled it somehow.

One Lowry work above all others was hypnotic and I repeatedly went back to it. Each time I found something new in it. The tall slither of a distant chimney. A man carrying a cane. A boy not much older than me. A tiny blank window. The painting was *Going to the Match*. I came across it, aged ten, in a book celebrating British landscape art, which was half hidden in the reference section of the local library. Beneath a downcast sky, I saw Lowry's trademark figures lean into the wind on their way into Bolton Wanderers' Burnden Park. The rise of a stand behind one of the goals reminded me of a ship about to sail out of dock. It was transfixing.

I was already obsessed with football. I was always kicking a ball about the back garden. Or collecting [football] stickers, as if each was a piece of treasure. I read every newspaper that came into the house, starting them at the back page. I hadn't yet been to a proper game but I began to imagine what three o'clock on a Saturday afternoon could really look like – and be like – primarily from *Going to the Match*. Lowry took me there before I actually experienced it for myself.

I gazed at *Going to the Match* so intently that I could almost hear the tramp of 10,000 or more feet towards the gates, and also the restless stir of those already banked inside, the kick-off looming. I reached the conclusion



that it could not possibly have been painted by someone who wasn't wholly smitten with football, who hadn't felt the frisson of afternoons just like it.

Going to the Match was painted in 1953. It endures because of what the painting evokes. For a football fan the phrase 'going to the match' is redolent of so much and consequently is as evocative as any sentence in the English Language. For the boy that's still in me, it captures the ritual pleasures of match day, every one different but also essentially the same: a bus ride, the first glimpse of the ground; the shuffling queue and the banter traded in it; the familiar faces around you for football fans are determinedly territorial.

It is almost half a century since I saw my first match as a fan. Being one persuaded me to become a sports reporter, thus receiving a wage for watching what I'd gladly have paid to see. Eventually I stopped covering football, believing I'd had my fill of it. I divorced myself almost entirely from matches and results, the carousel of transfers and particularly the utterances of managers. I put it all behind me, never intending to go back. But I sorely underestimated the pull of football and also

the place it held in my life. With hindsight I know why this happened. Making the game my business, turning it into a plain job of everyday work, leached the deepest pleasures out of it. I no longer saw football the way a supporter did.

It is difficult to fasten down exactly when and how the romance was rekindled, but major things can start in minor moments. A crucial factor was the sight of the pitch on which I used to watch our village team play, and also where I played myself as a boy. A memory can be exhausted by reflection, but as I stood there our knockabout games came back to me as clearly as watching them spool past me on a screen, the picture in glorious colour. The surface was already more mud than grass, a churned and lonely looking patch of earth. But the sight of it, and also of the bleached white goals, took me

back to the beginning of those first stirrings of interest in football. The goal posts, though one of them was a little crooked, had a strange and moving beauty about them that can only be experienced rather than explained. Each of our games had lasted hours, the score only guessed at and darkness signalling the final whistle.

You know you've lost your heart to football when you swoon over the sound the ball makes ripping against a net, thumping against the woodwork or twanging off the outside of a boot, or when the sight of a long pass spinning in easeful flight seems supremely sublime to you, or when a goalmouth scuffle counts as the highest pulse-racing drama. All of this is a kind of gentle madness, which amongst fans counts as a virtue.

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 TEXT 2, explain three insights you gained into the personality of Duncan Hamilton. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) The theme of this examination paper is “Thrilling Experiences”. Explain what you believe are some of the characteristics of a truly thrilling experience. Support your explanation with reference to one experience that you found truly thrilling. Your example may be drawn from real-life or from any novel, play or film. In your response you may not refer to any of the texts that appear in this examination paper. (15)
- (iii) Identify four stylistic elements, evident in Text 2, and discuss how these stylistic elements enable the writer to create an engaging and evocative celebration of the game of football. Support your answer with reference to the text. (20)

QUESTION B – 50 Marks

In TEXT 2, Duncan Hamilton shares some of his experiences as a football fan. You have been asked to present the first episode in a podcast series entitled “FAN-tastic”, which explores the phenomenon of contemporary fandom in areas such as sport and music. Write **the text for the podcast**, which may be serious or humorous or both, in which you: introduce the concept of contemporary fandom, explore the positive aspects of being a fan and consider some of the disturbing consequences of extreme fandom.

TEXT 3 – THE THRILL OF STORY

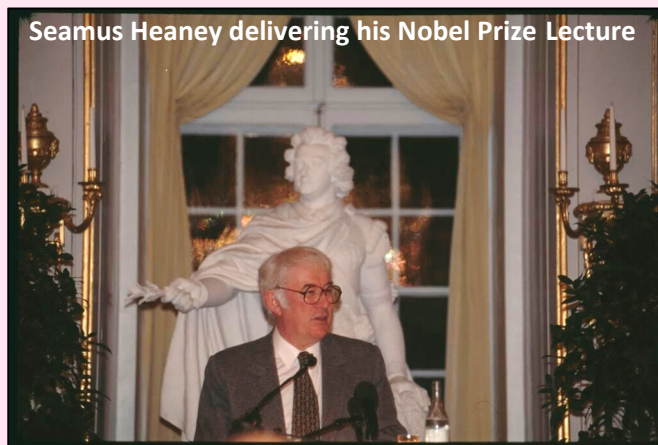
Nobel Prize winners are required to give a lecture on a subject connected with the work for which the prize has been awarded. Text 3 is adapted from the opening section of the lecture Seamus Heaney delivered in Stockholm in 1995, the year in which he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. In these edited extracts, the poet recalls memories from his youth in rural Co. Derry.

When I first encountered the name of the city of Stockholm, I little thought that I would ever visit it, never mind end up being welcomed to it as a guest of the Swedish Academy and the Nobel Foundation. At the time I am thinking of, such an outcome was not just beyond expectation: it was simply beyond conception.

In the nineteen forties, when I was the eldest child of an ever-growing family in rural Co. Derry, we crowded together in the three rooms of a traditional thatched farmstead and lived a kind of den-life which was more or less emotionally and intellectually proofed against the outside world. It was an intimate, physical, creaturely existence in which the night sounds of the horse in the stable beyond one bedroom wall mingled with the sounds of adult conversation from the kitchen beyond the other.

We took in everything that was going on, of course – rain in the trees, mice on the ceiling, a steam train rumbling along the railway line one field back from the house – but we took it in as if we were in the doze of hibernation. We were as susceptible and impressionable as the drinking water that stood in a bucket in our scullery: every time a passing train made the earth shake, the surface of that water used to ripple delicately, concentrically, and in utter silence.

But it was not only the earth that shook for us: the air around and above us was alive and signalling too. When a wind stirred in the beeches, it also stirred an aerial wire attached to the topmost branch of the chestnut tree. Down it swept, in through a hole bored in the corner of the kitchen window, right on into the innards of our



wireless set where a little pandemonium of burbles and squeaks would suddenly give way to the voice of a BBC newsreader. That voice too we could hear in our bedroom, transmitting from beyond and behind the voices of the adults in the kitchen.

We could pick up the names of neighbours being spoken in the local accents of our parents, and in the resonant English tones of the newsreader the names of bombers and of cities bombed, of war fronts and army divisions, the numbers of planes lost and of prisoners taken, of casualties suffered and advances made; and always, of course, we would pick up too those other, solemn and oddly bracing words, “the enemy” and “the allies”. But even so, none of the news of these world-spasms entered me as terror. And if there was something culpable about such political ignorance in that time and place, there was something positive about the security I inhabited as a result of it.

The wartime, in other words, was pre-reflective time for me. Pre-literate too. Pre-historical in its way. Then as the years went on and my listening became more deliberate, I would climb up on an arm of our

big sofa to get my ear closer to the wireless speaker. But it was still not the news that interested me; what I was after was the thrill of story, such as a detective serial about a British special agent called Dick Barton or perhaps one of Capt. W.E. Johns's adventure tales about an RAF flying ace called Biggles. Now that the other children were older and there was so much going on in the kitchen, I had to get close to the actual radio set in order to concentrate my hearing, and in that intent proximity to the dial I grew familiar with the names of foreign stations, with Leipzig and Oslo and Stuttgart and Warsaw and, of course, with Stockholm.

I also got used to hearing short bursts of foreign languages as the dial hand swept round from

BBC to Radio Eireann, and even though I did not understand what was being said in those first encounters with the gutturals and sibilants of European speech, I had already begun a journey into the wideness of the world beyond. This in turn became a journey into the wideness of language, a journey where each point of arrival – whether in one's poetry or one's life turned out to be a stepping stone rather than a destination, and it is that journey which has brought me now to this honoured spot. And yet the platform here feels more like a space station than a stepping stone, so that is why, for once in my life, I am permitting myself the luxury of walking on air.

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 TEXT 3, explain three insights you gained into the personality of Seamus Heaney. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) The theme of this examination paper is “Thrilling Experiences”. Explain what you believe are some of the characteristics of a truly thrilling experience. Support your explanation with reference to one experience that you found truly thrilling. Your example may be drawn from real-life or from any novel, play or film. In your response you may not refer to any of the texts that appear in this examination paper. (15)
- (iii) Identify four stylistic elements, evident in TEXT 3, and discuss how these stylistic elements would have helped to make Seamus Heaney's lecture both accessible and captivating for his listeners. Support your answer with reference to the text. (20)

QUESTION B – 50 Marks

The family wireless (i.e. radio) played an important part in opening up the world to Seamus Heaney in his youth. Your local radio station has been threatened with closure due to a combination of falling listenership and rising costs. Write **an opinion piece**, for publication in your local newspaper, in which you: argue that having its own radio station is essential to the life of the local community, give your views on what could be done to increase the station's listenership and explain why, in your opinion, local organisations and businesses must do more to support this important community asset.

SECTION II

COMPOSING

(100 marks)

Write a composition on **any one** of the assignments that appear in **bold print** below.

Each composition carries 100 marks.

The composition assignments are intended to reflect language study in the areas of information, argument, persuasion, narration, and the aesthetic use of language.

1. In TEXT 3, Seamus Heaney permits himself the luxury of walking on air.

Write a personal essay in which you reflect on some of the moments in your life when you felt you were “walking on air”, and consider what those moments mean to you now.

2. In TEXT 2, the writer explains how L.S Lowry ennobles the ordinary and the mundane in his painting, *Going to the Match*.

Write a feature article that explores and celebrates the joy that can be found in the more mundane and ordinary aspects of life. The article should be suitable for publication in the magazine section of a weekend newspaper.

3. In TEXT 2, the writer observes that “major things can start in minor moments”.

Write a short story in which a minor moment or event precipitates a major development in the life of a central character.

4. In TEXT 3, we read an extract from the Nobel Prize Lecture delivered by Seamus Heaney in 1995. Nobel Prizes are currently awarded for Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature, Economics and Peace.

Write a discursive essay in which you consider arguments both for and against awarding an additional Nobel Prize, or prizes, in one or more of the following areas: Sport, Music, Art.

5. The theme of this examination paper, “Thrilling Experiences”, is vividly conveyed in Text 1 when Maggie O’Farrell writes of Lucrezia, “She barely breathed; she didn’t blink.”

Write a gripping short story, based on a thrilling experience, which includes the words: “She barely breathed; she didn’t blink”.

6. In TEXT 1, the tigress has been denied her fundamental right to freedom.

Write a personal essay in which you identify some of the rights that you consider to be fundamental to your life and reflect on how your life would be impacted if these rights were denied.

7. In TEXT 1, we read that Lucrezia had never seen anything as beautiful as the tigress she encounters in her father’s private zoo.

Write a speech, to be delivered at the final of a national public speaking competition, on the necessity of having beauty in our lives.

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Acknowledgements

Images and texts that appear on this examination paper were sourced as follows:

Text 1: O'Farrell, M. *The Marriage Portrait*, Tinder Press (An Imprint of Headline Publishing Group), London, 2022

Image: Detail from a photograph by Janusz Sollbolewski

<https://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/articles/entry/tiger-king-conservation-lessons/> Accessed 07/04/2024

Text 2: Hamilton, D. *Going to the Match*, Cornet (An imprint of Hodder & Stoughton), London, 2018

Image: Laurence Stephen Lowry, R.A. (1887-1976), *Going to the Match*, 1953. <https://www.christies.com/en/stories/going-to-the-match-lowrys-vanished-england-0b092ce105f448a186628c2f52ba088b> Accessed 07/04/2024

Text 3: Seamus Heaney – Nobel Lecture. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Prize Outreach AB 2023. Sun. 31 Dec 2023

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1995/heaney/lecture/> Accessed 07/04/2024

Image: Photo from the Lars Åström archive <https://www.nobelprize.org/images//90195-landscape-x-large.jpg>

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Leaving Certificate – Higher Level

English

2 hours 50 minutes