



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2014

English – Higher Level – Paper I

Total Marks: 200

Wednesday, 4th June – Morning, 9.30 – 12.20

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



TEXT 1

AN INFLUENTIAL EVENT

In the novel, *Canada*, Richard Ford tells how a bank robbery committed by Bev and Neeva Parsons influenced the lives of their children, Dell and his twin sister, Berner, who were fifteen years old at the time of the crime. In this edited extract Dell remembers his escape to Canada with his mother's friend, Mildred Remlinger.

First, I'll tell about the robbery our parents committed. Then about the murders, which happened later. The robbery is the more important part, since it served to set my and my sister's lives on the courses they eventually followed. Nothing would make complete sense without that being told first.

Our parents were the least likely two people in the world to rob a bank. They weren't strange people, not obviously criminals. No one would've thought they were destined to end up the way they did. They were just regular – although, of course, that kind of thinking became null and void the moment they did rob a bank...

Mildred Remlinger drove up to our house in her battered old brown Ford, came straight up the walk, up the steps and knocked on the front door, behind which I was waiting alone. She came right inside and told me to pack my bag. She asked where my sister Berner was. I told her she'd left the day before. Mildred said we didn't have time to go and look for her. Juvenile officials representing the State of Montana would be coming soon to take us into custody. It was a miracle, she said, they hadn't come already. Then with me in the car seat beside her, Mildred drove us out of Great Falls that late morning of August 30, 1960, and straight north up the 87 highway.

Mildred didn't much speak at first, as Great Falls settled into the landscape behind us. Up on the benchland north and west of the Highwoods, it was nothing but hot yellow wheat and grasshoppers and snakes crossing the highway and the high blue sky, and the Bear's Paw Mountains out ahead, blue and hazy but with bright snow on their peaks. Havre, Montana, was the town farther north. Our father had delivered someone a new Dodge there earlier in the summer. He'd described it as a "desolate place, down in a big hole. The back of beyond". I couldn't imagine why Mildred would be driving

us there. On the map Havre was nearly as far north as you could go in Montana. Canada was just above it. But I felt I was doing what our mother had planned for me.

Mildred was a large square-hipped, authoritative woman, with short black curly hair, snapping small dark eyes, red lipstick, a fleshy neck, and powder on her face that masked a bad complexion, though not very well. She and her car both smelled like cigarettes and chewing gum, and her ashtray was full of lipstick butts and matches and spearmint wrappers, though she hadn't smoked while we were driving.

In Havre, we drove down the hill to the main street and found a sandwich shop. We sat at the counter inside, and I ate cold meat loaf and a soft roll with butter and a pickle and lemonade, and felt better. Mildred smoked while I ate and watched me and cleared her throat a lot and talked. She said she was forty-three, though I'd thought she was sixty or more. She said I should go to sleep in the back seat after lunch, and this was what let me know we weren't just going to Havre that day but were travelling farther on.

From Havre, we drove north, across a wooden railroad viaduct over the tracks and the muddy river and along a narrow highway that angled up the rimrock grade high enough to let me look back to the town, low and dismal and bleak in the baking sunlight. I was farther north than I'd ever been and felt barren and isolated, becoming unreachable. Wherever Berner was, I thought, was better than this.

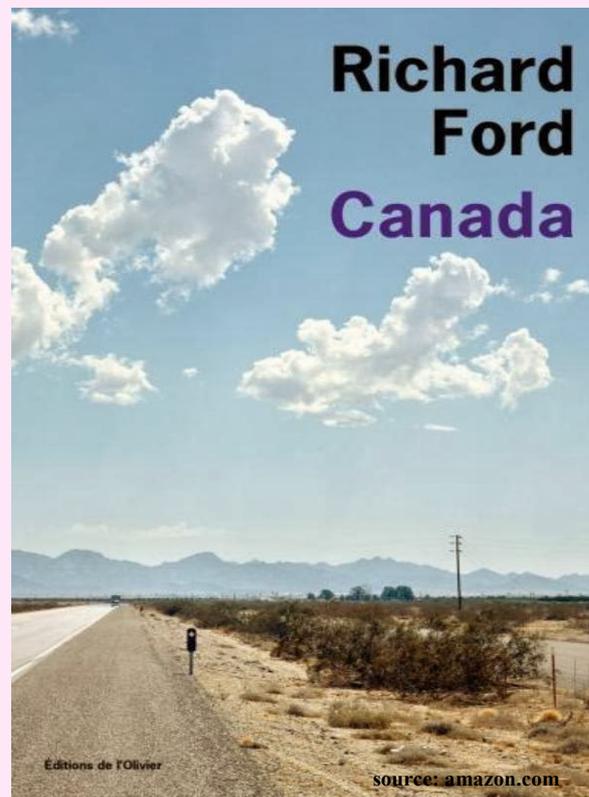
The land north of Havre was the same as we'd been driving through: dry, unchanging cropland – a sea of golden wheat melting up into the hot unblemished blue sky crossed only by electrical wires. There were very few houses or buildings. Low green hills lay far out ahead in the

shimmering distance. It was improbable we were going there, since I speculated those hills would be in Canada, which was all that lay ahead of us.

At a certain point, Mildred took in a deep breath and let it out as if she'd decided something she'd been keeping silent about. She was staring firmly ahead. "I'm taking you to Saskatchewan to live for a little while with my brother, Arthur. It won't have to be this way completely forever. But right now it does. I'm sorry. It's what your mother wants."

"I don't want to do that." I said this with absolute certainty. Mildred's brother. Canada. I felt sure I didn't have to do any of that. I had a say-so.

Mildred drove on for a time without speaking. Finally she said, "Well, if I have to take you back, they'll arrest me for kidnapping you and put me in jail. They're looking for you to put you in an orphanage. You better think on that. I'm trying to save you here." The black road seemed to be my life shooting away from me at a terrible speed, with no one to stop it.



Canada by Richard Ford – book cover

This text has been adapted, for the purpose of assessment, without the author's prior consent.

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

Questions A and B carry 50 marks each.

QUESTION A

- (i) From your reading of Text 1 what impression do you form of the landscape in which the extract is set? In your answer you should refer to both the book cover and the written passage above. (15)
- (ii) The first two paragraphs above are the opening of Richard Ford's novel, *Canada*. In your view, is this an effective opening? Give reasons for your answer with reference to the first two paragraphs of the text. (15)
- (iii) Ford's writing is characterised by its engaging narrative, lyrical beauty and concrete realism. Based on your reading from paragraph three onwards of the above extract, to what extent do you think this statement is accurate? Refer to features of Ford's writing style evident in the extract in support of your viewpoint. (20)

QUESTION B

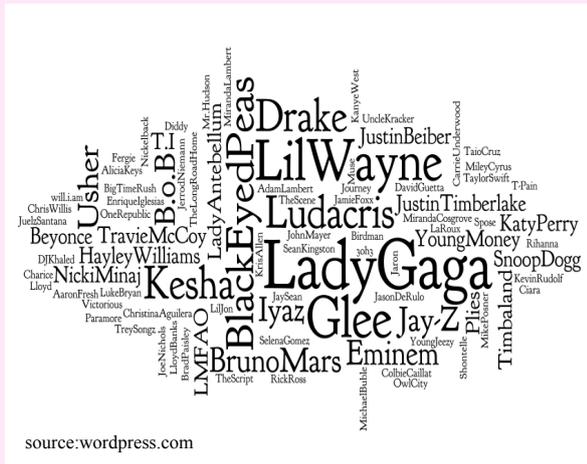
Imagine that the story of the disappearance of Dell Parsons, outlined in Text 1 above, has captured the public's imagination. You are a reporter with a national radio station. Write the **text of a news report**, on the Dell Parson's story, to be delivered on the station's main evening news bulletin. In your report you should communicate the facts of the case as known (based on Text 1) and further speculate as to Dell's whereabouts and possible developments in the story. (50)

TEXT 2

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

At an event entitled *The Joy of Influence*, organised by Andrew O'Hagan, six writers were asked to talk about an art-form, other than literature, that influenced them. This edited text, adapted from *The Guardian* newspaper, is based on the contributions of two writers, Alan Warner and John Lanchester.

1. Scottish novelist, Alan Warner explores the influence of POP MUSIC on his writing.



Calibrating how something as ubiquitous as pop music has influenced your writing feels similar to asking, “How has the weather influenced your writing?”

While I love all types of music, pop and rock certainly appear in some of my novels. I would only reference music on the page if it served some narrative function. The carefully indexed lists of song titles in my novel, *Morvern Callar*, enforced Morvern’s methodical approach to life. The individual timbres of the songs seemed appropriate to the mood. Morvern is listening to the music of her dead boyfriend on her old Sony Walkman. She is haunted and perplexed by this music, listening objectively but not necessarily with pleasure. So I may not always reference music I necessarily enjoy. It is just what fits the narrative requirements in this world so dressed in song.

I have learned there is real danger listening to music while I’m writing. The moving, dynamic power of great pop songs can soon fool you into believing what you are writing is also dynamic and emotionally powerful.

Pop music functions as this huge repository of personal emotion because it is among these songs

and sounds, on radio and at dances and on television, that our young hearts come alive. All this music continues to live for us as a vital thing, both linking us to our past but able to energise us in the future – and a growing library of new songs is added as life goes along.

While I am aware of this personal emotional heritage, as a writer I have to construct the emotional architecture of my characters – you can’t just chuck in a few so-called “popular cultural references” for effect. When I was fifteen and even more daft, I tried to give up rock music and listen only to orchestral – so-called “classical” music. I was always a real sucker for self-improvement (still am) and I thought I could only become a refined writer if I censored aspects of the real world. I did develop a love for Bartók, Stravinsky and Ravel but I kept coming back to rock and pop music. Heavy metal was the real folk music of the small Scottish town I grew up in. All the guys in our town pipe band practised drums and chanter but listened to Deep Purple; it was simply my culture and I became weary of denying it.

Of course some pop music is not popular at all and it doesn’t try to be. After punk, bands showed a healthy disregard for audience approval. I was mesmerised by that mocking arrogance and such conviction. I wanted to write like that. It was pop music that helped me decide that great writers could come to me on my own terms alone.

2. Journalist and novelist, John Lanchester reflects on a new art form: VIDEO GAMES.

What’s exciting and interesting about video games is their newness. Video games are the first new artistic medium since television. They are more different from television than television was from cinema. They are the newest new thing since the arrival of the movies just over a century ago. That automatically

TEXT 3

THE INFLUENCE OF THE PAST

Seamus Heaney is best remembered as a poet but he also enjoyed a distinguished career as an academic. This edited text is based on an essay by Heaney entitled *The Sense of the Past*. It appeared in the journal *History Ireland*. In it he reflects on the influence of the past on our lives.

‘The Garden Seat’ by Thomas Hardy

Its former green is blue and thin,
And its once firm legs sink in and in;
Soon it will break down unaware,
Soon it will break down unaware.

At night when reddest flowers are black
Those who once sat thereon come back;
Quite a row of them sitting there,
Quite a row of them sitting there.

With them the seat does not break down,
Nor winter freeze them, nor floods drown,
For they are as light as upper air,
They are as light as upper air!

Hardy’s poem embodies a way of feeling and thinking about the past. It is about the ghost-life that hovers over the furniture of our lives, about the way objects can become temples of the spirit. To an imaginative person, an inherited possession like a garden seat is not just an object, an antique, an item on an inventory. It becomes a point of entry into a common emotional ground of memory and belonging. It can transmit the climate of a lost world and keep alive in us an intimacy with realities that might otherwise have vanished. The more we are surrounded by such objects and are attentive to them, the more richly and connectedly we dwell in our own lives. Our place, our house, our furniture are present then not just as backdrops but become influential and nurturing; our imagination breathes their atmosphere as rewardingly as our lungs breathe the oxygen of the air.

It could even be maintained that objects which have been seasoned by human contact possess a kind of moral force. They insist upon human solidarity and suggest obligations to and covenants with generations who have been silenced. Consider, for example, this passage by the Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda. He is not as concerned as Hardy was with the object as a capsule of the past, but he is testifying nevertheless to the power of the inanimate.

It is well, at certain hours of the day and night, to look closely at the world of objects at rest. Wheels that have crossed long, dusty distances with their mineral and vegetable burdens, sacks from the coal bins, barrels and baskets. From them flow the contacts of man with the earth – the used surfaces of things, the wear that the hands give to things, the air, tragic at times, pathetic at others, of such things – all lend a curious attractiveness to the reality of the world that should not be underprized. (Pablo Neruda).



The cupboards we open as toddlers, the shelves we climb up to, the boxes and albums we explore in reserved places in the house, the secret spots we come upon in our earliest solitudes out of doors – it is in such places and at such moments that ‘the reality of the world’ awakens in us. And it is at such moments that we have our first inkling of ‘past-ness’. This is an unconscious process at the time. It has to do with an almost biological need to situate ourselves in our instinctual lives as creatures of the race and of the planet.

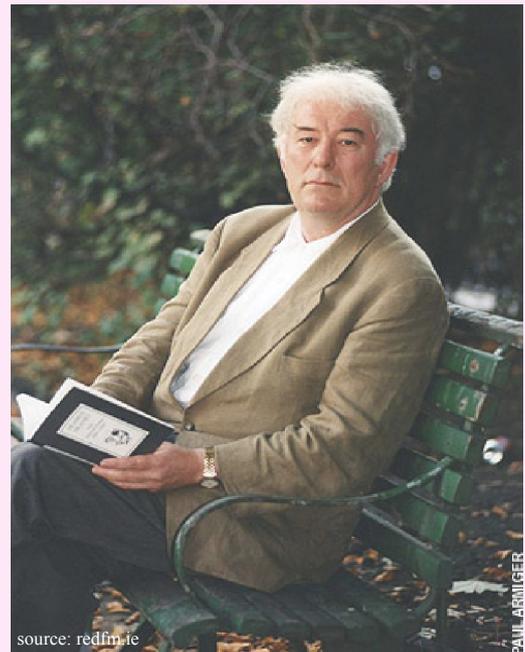
In my own case, the top of the dresser in the kitchen of the house where I lived for the first twelve years of my life was like a time machine. This was where all the old nails and screwdrivers and putty and lamp-wicks would end up. When I managed to climb up there, the yellowing newspaper, the bent nails, the dust and stillness and rust all suggested that these

objects were living a kind of afterlife and that a previous time was alive in them. They were not just inert rubbish but dormant energies.

The sense of history can also derive from special objects in the everyday surroundings. In our house there was an old double-barrelled pistol, like a duelling piece, fixed on a bracket above a door in the kitchen. It was a completely exotic item in that ordinary world of dressers, churns, buckets, statues and Sacred Heart lamps. It did not belong and it was never explained. Yet when I began to get comics and to read adventure stories, this pistol linked our kitchen to stagecoaches and duels at dawn in the woodlands of great estates. There it perched, unnoticed and ordinary in the eye of the adult, but for me radiant with an eighteenth-century never-never land.

Sensitivity to the past contributes to our lives in a necessary way. It is a fundamental human gift that is potentially as life-enhancing and civilising as our gift for love. Indeed it can be

said without exaggeration that the sense of the past constitutes what the poet William Wordsworth would have called a ‘primary law of our nature’.



This text has been adapted, for the purpose of assessment, without the copyright holder's prior consent.

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

Questions A and B carry 50 marks each.

QUESTION A

- (i) Outline, in your own words, three of the reasons given in the above text to support the view that objects from the past are important. (15)
- (ii) Identify and give your personal response to any two observations from the above text that made an impact on you. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (iii) ‘One of Heaney’s gifts as a writer was his ability to make complex and profound ideas accessible to the general reader.’ To what extent do you think this statement can be applied to the above passage? Support your answer with reference to features of Heaney’s writing style evident in the extract. (20)

QUESTION B

Inspired by Seamus Heaney’s essay about the importance of objects from the past, your class has decided to organise an exhibition celebrating the significance of objects from childhood in the lives of well-known people.

Write the **letter** you would send to a well-known person, inviting him or her to contribute an object from his or her childhood and a written explanation regarding its personal significance. In your letter, you should explain the inspiration for the project and include, as an example, a piece you have written about an object from your childhood that is of significance to you. (50)

Write a composition on **any one** of the following.

Each composition carries 100 marks.

The composition assignments (in **bold print** below) are intended to reflect language study in the areas of information, argument, persuasion, narration, and the aesthetic use of language.

1. “It is about the ghost-life that hovers over the furniture of our lives...” (TEXT 3)
Write a short story in which a ghostly presence plays a significant part.
2. TEXTS 1, 2 and 3 are linked by the theme of influence.
You are representing Ireland in the final of the World Youth Public Speaking Championships. Write a passionate speech in favour of the motion: “Young people should exert their influence by actively engaging with important current issues.”
3. In TEXT 1 we meet the feisty Mildred Remlinger.
Write a personal essay about your encounters with a variety of interesting or unusual people and the impact they made on you.
4. “It was a completely exotic item in that ordinary world ... ” (TEXT 3)
Write a descriptive essay about what you find beautiful or exotic in everyday life.
5. “How has the weather influenced your writing?” (TEXT 2)
Write a feature article for a magazine, which may be light-hearted or serious, about Irish people’s obsession with the weather.
6. In TEXT 1, Dell’s future is very uncertain.
Write a personal essay about one or more moments of uncertainty you have experienced.
7. **Write a short story for inclusion in a collection of Science Fiction writing inspired by the following quotation from TEXT 2, “ ...a new beast, slouching towards us... the beautiful mutant”.**

Blank Page

Blank Page

Blank Page

Blank Page