



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2018

English - Higher Level - Paper 1

Total Marks: 200

Wednesday, 6th 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 YOUNG WRITERS.
- 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 – ADVICE TO YOUNG WRITERS

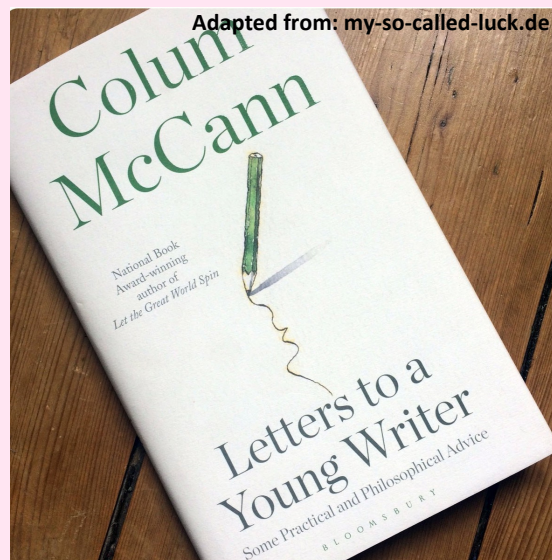
Award-winning writer, Colum McCann, teaches creative writing in Hunter College, New York. This text is based on edited extracts from Colum McCann's book, *Letters to a Young Writer*.

Why do we tell stories? Why do we need to lean across the table, or the fireside, or the fabulously intertwined wires of the Internet and whisper "Listen"? We do it because we're sick of reality and we need to create what isn't yet there. Literature proposes possibilities and then makes truth of them. Literature can be a stay, or a foothold against despair. Of course it's not enough, but it's all we've got.

A first line should open up your rib cage. It should reach in and twist your heart backward. It should suggest that the world will never be the same again. Guide your reader into your story. Your duty is to make the reader see and hear. With the right word, you will find the balance of imaginative richness and form. You have to drag the moment reluctantly from silence. As a writer, you are alive to every sentence. Your imagination is creating a reality. It is as if you are unpeeling time.

One of the great joys of fiction writing is discovering who your character truly is. There is little better than creating someone from the dust of your imagination. Your characters must be intricate, complicated, flawed. They need to step up and bear the weight of reality. They need to be a heart-breaking mess of flesh and bone.

For the purposes of good storytelling you must know your character in the most exact detail. The story will be nothing if the character is not part of a great human stew. We have to make them so utterly real that the reader can never forget them. Writing a character into being is like meeting someone you want to fall in love with. You don't care (yet) about the facts of his or her life.



Don't overload us with too much information. Allow that to seep out later. We are attracted by a moment in time – a singular moment of flux or change or collapse – not by grand résumés or curricula vitae. So don't generalise. Be specific.

Carry a notebook. Write in it when you get a chance. Images, ideas, snatches of street dialogue, addresses, descriptions, whatever might eventually make its way into a sentence.

Be a camera. Make us feel as if we are there. Colours, sounds, sights. Bring us to the pulse of the moment. See the whole landscape at first, then focus in on a detail, and bring that detail to life. There is no harm in trying all angles. Try first person, second person, third person. Try from the viewpoint of your main character, then try it from the perspective of the outsider. Sometimes the outsider is the one who makes absolute sense. Eventually – if you persevere – you will hear the right voice, and you will see the right form, and you will uncover the right structure, and it will unfold from there.

Our stories rely on the human instinct for architecture. Structure is, essentially, a container for content. The shape into which your story gets placed is a house slowly built from the foundation up. Stories are agile things. They're elusive. So the containers they go into should be pliable. You should have a grand vision, of course, an eventual end-point, but you must be prepared to swerve, chop and change direction at the same time. The best journeys are those where we don't exactly know what road we will take: we have a destination in mind, but the manner of getting there should be open to flux. So, write and rearrange, write and rearrange, write and rearrange, and eventually you will begin to see the structure emerge.

Plot takes the backseat in a good story because what happens is never as interesting as *how* it happens. And how it happens occurs in the way language captures it and the way

our imaginations transfer that language into action. Listen for the quiet line. Anyone can tell a big story but not everyone can whisper something beautiful in your ear. In the end, what plot must do is twist our hearts in some way. It must change us. It must make us realise that we are alive. One thing leads to the next. And the issues of the human heart unfold in front of us. Such, then, is plot. Anything can happen, even nothing at all. And even if nothing happens, the world still changes, second by second, word by word. Perhaps this is the most astounding plot of all.

In the end it is only the well-chosen word that is capable of dealing with truth. Only that language which is capable of reaching the poetic will be able to stand in opposition to that which is wrong. In other words, nothing short of your best work will do. Language is a great weapon. You do owe allegiance to that elusive notion of truth. You should write so as not to fall silent.

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 above, what skills or qualities do you think a young writer would need in order to follow the advice offered by Colum McCann? Refer to three skills or qualities in your answer, supporting your response with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) Colum McCann tells us that sometimes in writing, "The issues of the human heart unfold in front of us." From the texts you have studied for your Leaving Certificate course*, identify a moment in a text where you feel an issue of the human heart unfolded in front of you. Explain in detail what this moment revealed to you about the human heart.

* Texts specified for study for Leaving Certificate English in 2018, including poetry, single texts and texts (including films) prescribed for comparative study. (15)

- (iii) Based on your reading of TEXT 1, do you find Colum McCann's approach to advising young writers appealing or unappealing? Discuss the elements of Colum McCann's writing style that make his approach to advising young writers appealing or unappealing. Support your answer with reference to the text. (20)

QUESTION B – 50 Marks

Young people are often the recipients of unwanted advice. Write **an open letter*** to all those who have ever offered you unwanted advice. In your letter you should identify some nuggets of unwanted advice you have received, describe your response to receiving such advice, and share your opinion on how and when advice could be appropriately offered. Your letter may be amusing or serious or both.

* A letter intended for a wide audience often published online or in the print media.

TEXT 2 – A SUCCESSFUL YOUNG WRITER

This text is based on edited extracts from Fiona Mozley's debut novel, *Elmet*. Fiona Mozley was the youngest writer nominated for the Man Booker Prize in 2017.

We arrived in summer when the landscape was in full bloom and the days were long and hot and the light was soft. I roamed shirtless and sweated cleanly and enjoyed the hug of the thick air. The sun set slowly and the evenings were pewter before they were black, before the mornings seeped through again.

Now pocked with clutches of trees, once the whole county had been woodland and the ghosts of the ancient forest could be marked when the wind blew. The soil was alive with ruptured stories that cascaded and rotted then found form once more and pushed up through the undergrowth and back into our lives. Tales of green men peering from thickets with foliate faces and legs of gnarled timber. The calls of half-starved hounds rushing and panting as they snatched at charging quarry. Robyn Hode and his pack of scrawny vagrants, whistling and wrestling and feasting as freely as the birds whose plumes they stole. An ancient forest ran in a grand strip from north to south. Boars and bears and wolves. Does, harts, stags. Miles of underground fungi. Snowdrops, bluebells, primroses. The trees had long since given way to crops and pasture and roads and houses and railway tracks and little wooded copses were all that was left.

Daddy and Cathy and I lived in a small house that Daddy built with materials from the land here about. He chose for us a small ash copse two fields from the east coast main line, far enough not to be seen, close enough to know the trains well. We heard them often enough: the hum and ring of the passenger trains, the choke and gulp of the freight, passing by with their cargo tucked behind in painted metal tanks. They had timetables and intervals of their own, drawing growth rings around our house with each journey, ringing past us like prayer chimes.



On the day we arrived an old squaddy [soldier] drove up the hill in an articulated lorry filled with cracked and discarded stone from an abandoned builders' yard. The squaddy let Daddy do most of the unloading while he sat on a freshly cut log and smoked cigarette after cigarette. He talked all afternoon about the army and the fighting he had done in Iraq and in Bosnia and how he had seen boys as young as me slashed open with knives. There was little darkness in him when he told us this. Daddy worked on the house during the day and in the evening the two grown men went down the hill to drink some of the cider the squaddy had brought in a plastic pop bottle. Daddy did not stay long. He did not like drinking much and he did not like company save for me and my sister.

When Daddy came back he told us that he had an argument with the squaddy. He had clouted the squaddy about the head with his left fist and now had a bloody nick in his skin just by the thumb knuckle.

Our house was laid out like any bungalow on the outskirts of any smallish city where old people and poor families live. Our house was stronger than others of its type though. It was built with better bricks, better mortar, better stones and timber. I knew it would last many dozen seasons longer than those houses we saw on the roads into town. And it was more beautiful. The green mosses and ivies from

the wood were more eager to grip at its sides, more ready to pull it back into the landscape.

On the clearest evenings we stayed out until morning. Years ago, Daddy had bought me a wooden recorder and Cathy a violin. We had had free lessons when we were still at school. We were not experts but made a decent sound because of the instruments we played. Daddy had chosen well. He knew nothing of music but a great deal about fine objects.

Before the house was built, in those few hot, dry months when we camped and sang, Daddy talked to us properly. He used few words but we heard much more. He spoke of the men he had fought and the men he had killed, in the peat fields of Ireland or that black mud of Lincolnshire that clings to the hands and feet like forensic ink. Daddy boxed for money with bare knuckles

far from gymnasiums or auditoriums but the money could be big and men whose cash came from nowhere arrived from across the country to lay their bets on him to win. Anyone was a fool not to back my Daddy.

Yes, it was during this summer in the woods that Daddy told us these stories, confided in us, and Cathy and I listened like we were receiving precious heirlooms. Daddy's eyes became wide when he spoke to us, flecked, light blue, like worn denim, and he would lean in and open them generously then pinch them closed ever so slightly when he reached for a memory that was not quite clear. He sat forward in his chair with his long, thick legs apart, his elbows resting above his knees and his cavernous chest bearing broad, weighted shoulders.

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 above, what do you learn about Daddy's character? Refer to three aspects of Daddy's character in your answer, supporting your response with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) In the above text, Fiona Mozley has created a place that grips the reader's imagination. From the texts you have studied for your Leaving Certificate course*, identify a place that gripped your imagination. Explain in detail why this place gripped your imagination.
* Texts specified for study for Leaving Certificate English in 2018, including poetry, single texts and texts (including films) prescribed for comparative study. (15)
- (iii) Based on your reading of TEXT 2, do you agree that Fiona Mozley displays superb narrative skills, including the effective use of aesthetic language, which enable her to craft an atmospheric and occasionally disturbing story? Support your answer with reference to the text. (20)

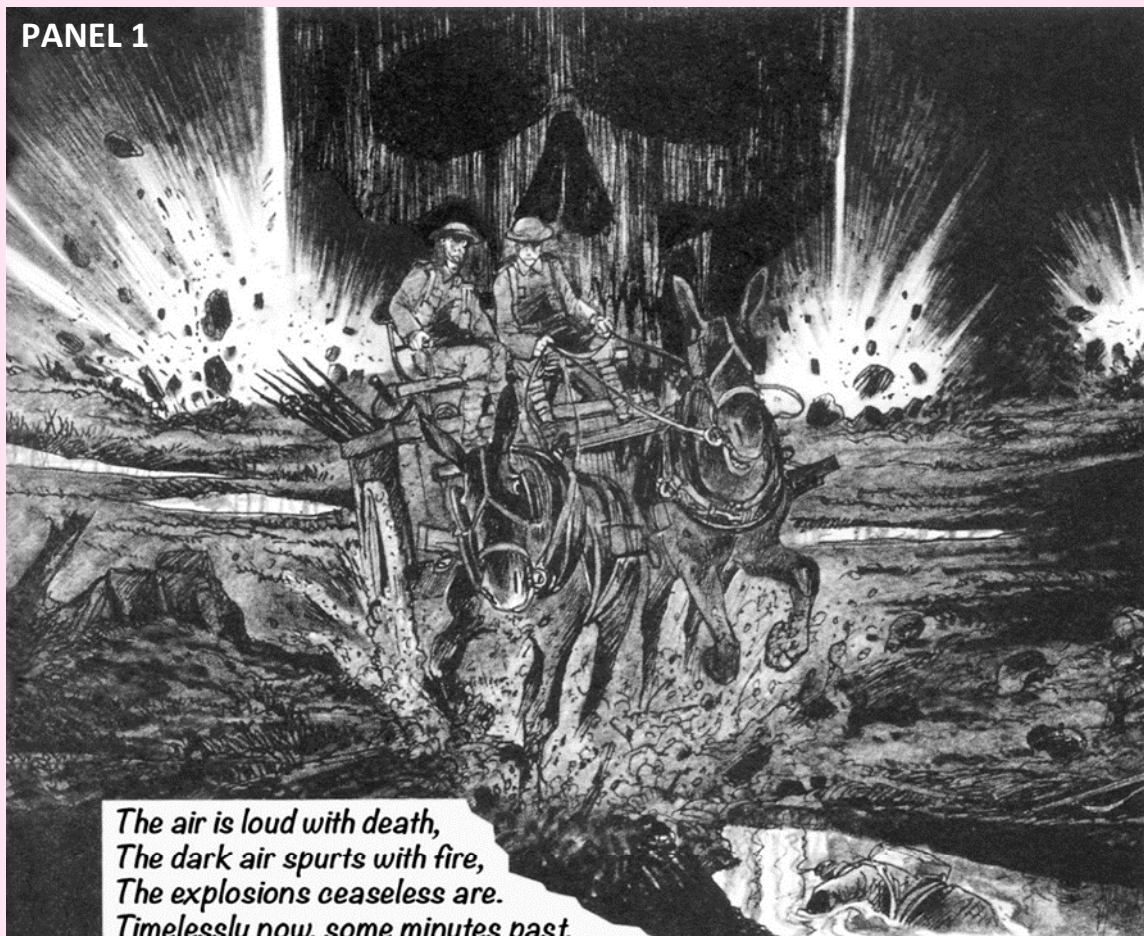
QUESTION B – 50 Marks

The children in TEXT 2 experience an unconventional education. Based on your experience of second level education, write **an opinion piece, suitable for publication in a national newspaper**, in which you acknowledge what you see as the strengths of the education you have received, criticise what you see as its weaknesses and make suggestions for its improvement.

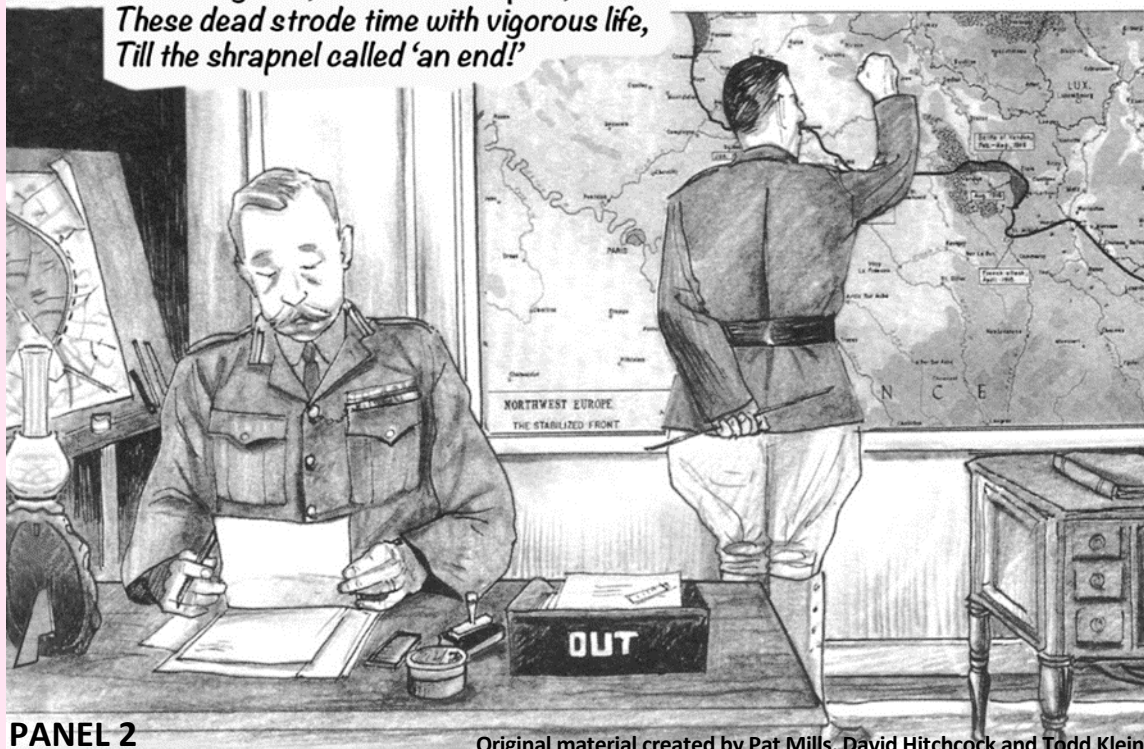
TEXT 3 – A TRAGIC YOUNG POET

TEXT 3 is adapted from *Above the Dreamless Dead*, a collection of illustrated songs and poems from World War 1. The poetic extract which forms part of the text is from “Dead Man’s Dump”, a poem by Isaac Rosenberg, a young poet killed in action in 1918.

PANEL 1



*The air is loud with death,
The dark air spurts with fire,
The explosions ceaseless are.
Timelessly now, some minutes past,
These dead strode time with vigorous life,
Till the shrapnel called ‘an end!’*



PANEL 2

Original material created by Pat Mills, David Hitchcock and Todd Klein

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

QUESTION A – 50 Marks

- (i) Compare and contrast the pictures in PANEL 1 and PANEL 2 that appear on Page 6. Support your answer with reference only to the visual elements of the text. (15)
- (ii) TEXT 3 presents a poetic extract in a visual format. From the poems you have studied for your Leaving Certificate course*, identify a poem, or an extract from a poem, which you think is particularly suited to presentation in a visual format. Specify the type of visual format in which you would choose to present it (e.g. painting, photographic image, video clip, etc.) and explain in detail why you think this poem, or poetic extract, would be suitable for presentation in this way. (15)
- * Poems specified for study for Leaving Certificate English in 2018.
- (iii) Based on your reading of the material on Page 6 of TEXT 3, do you agree that the combination of poetry and illustration, found in the text, is extremely effective in amplifying and extending the meaning of the poem and adding to the overall impact of the text? In your answer you should make detailed reference to the combination of poetry and illustration found in the text and consider the overall impact the text makes on you. (20)

QUESTION B – 50 Marks

Write **an article for your school website**, in which you consider the experience of reading a text and watching a film adaptation of the same text. In your article you should identify at least one written text which has been adapted as a film. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of each of these formats, and explain which format you would recommend as the way in which to experience the text(s) for the first time. You may refer to any text(s) of your choice in your answer.

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 2 Fiona Mozley writes “it was during this summer in the woods, that Daddy told us these stories”.

Write a descriptive essay in which you capture how the landscape reflects the transition of the seasons. You may choose to include some or all of the seasons in your essay.

2. Fiona Mozley’s characters in TEXT 2 are outsiders who “arrived in summer”.

Write a short story in which the central character’s status as an outsider has a direct influence on the plot.

3. TEXTS 1, 2, and 3 relate to young writers.

Write a personal essay reflecting on what you perceive to be the pleasures particular to youth.

4. TEXT 3 offers a thought-provoking depiction of soldiers and their leaders.

Write a discursive essay in which you consider the subject of leaders and leadership.

5. In TEXT 1, Colum McCann tells us that “Literature proposes possibilities”.

Write a short story, for inclusion in a collection of detective fiction, about a character who explores various possibilities in order to solve a crime.

6. In TEXT 1, Colum McCann tells young writers to “Listen for the quiet line”.

Write a personal essay in which you reflect on the value of personal space and quietness in the modern world.

7. TEXT 1 contains the statement: “Language is a great weapon”.

You are competing in the final of a national public speaking competition. The topic to be addressed is: *Language is a great weapon*. You are free to agree or disagree. Write the speech you would deliver.

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Leaving Certificate – Higher Level

English

Wednesday 6 June

Morning 9.30 – 12.20