



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2006

ENGLISH - HIGHER LEVEL - PAPER 1

180 marks

WEDNESDAY, 7 JUNE - MORNING, 9.30 - 12.00

**YOU MUST ATTEMPT ALL 4 SECTIONS
ON THIS PAPER**

**IT IS SUGGESTED THAT YOU SPEND ABOUT
HALF AN HOUR ON EACH OF SECTIONS
1, 3, 4, AND ABOUT ONE HOUR ON
SECTION 2**

Read carefully the following passage and then answer the questions that follow.

This passage is an edited version of what was originally broadcast on the RTE Radio One programme, 'Sunday Miscellany'.

In Praise of Goldfish

There is a lot to be said for goldfish as childhood pets – especially when the care and feeding of a pet reverts to parents, as so often happens. Compared to a dog, which needs walking, or a cat, which needs to be let out-and-in-and-out-again, a goldfish is very much a low maintenance affair.

I know of what I speak as our goldfish, Guinny – short for Guinevere, has been in my charge for several years now. To be fair, our daughters looked after Guinny and her consort Lancelot when the couple first came to us, inherited from a younger cousin who had lost all interest in them at home. But now every time she visits us she asks eagerly, “Can I feed the fish?” And it was our elder daughter who named them Guinevere and Lancelot, inspired by the Arthurian legends she was reading that summer.

Lancelot passed away a year after he came to us, but Guinny’s still going strong, somewhere into her fifth year, we reckon. Though whether it’s actually *her* and not *his* fifth year isn’t absolutely clear, as Guinevere and Lancelot were named according to size with Lancelot, being the larger. Although now solo in her bowl, Guinny is not our only family pet; she shares that pleasure with our playful cat, Esmerelda. Traditionally, cats and fish have been portrayed as enemies. However, unlike the animosity between cats and mice, the entertainment potential of cats versus goldfish has never been exploited. It is easy to see why. What hope would there be for a cartoon series where a cat relentlessly pursued a goldfish with the aim of eating it? In its own element of water the goldfish could disdainfully take refuge in an underwater castle or under a fake treasure chest. But who would find that entertaining? What chance for a thrilling chase around the cramped interior of even the most spacious fish tank? The alternative, with the conflict taking place in the cat’s element of air, is worse still, with the goldfish hopelessly outclassed and capable only of flopping about helplessly making wheezing noises. Tom and Jerry have nothing to fear from Tom and Goldie!

Goldfish have evolved a long way from the freshwater carp first domesticated by the Chinese over a thousand years ago. The novelty of golden fish was first reserved for the aristocracy but by the 14th century few Chinese households were so poor that they could not afford a few goldfish. The transfer of the species from Asia to Europe by slow sailing ships is testimony to the endurance and adaptability of these animals. The exact date of this dispersal is uncertain, but it was early in the 18th century. By mid-century there were many European goldfish devotees, and, over time, breeders have developed countless varieties: ones with bulging eyes, double and triple fins, strange tails, and vivid colours - although most so-called goldfish are actually orange. These graceful creatures are now among the most popular pets in the world, though the exotic colours of today’s varieties makes it is hard to imagine their origins in the dull-brown domestic carp.

It is said that the goldfish has a memory span of three seconds, though I sometimes wonder how ichthyologists – scientists who study fish – measure for memory. Or, for that matter, for IQ, given that goldfish are also said to be highly intelligent and able to recognise who in a household feeds them, greeting their friend upon sight by swimming briskly about the bowl. Certainly that’s true for our Guinny, who lashes about whenever she sees me pass by. What’s more, we have developed a neat routine in which she (or is it he?) rises to the top of the bowl to accept the massive pellet of fish food I’ve rolled between my fingers.

It seems goldfish can live for up to fifteen years, sometimes developing such a bond with humans that their piscine passing can be quite traumatic for all concerned. A neighbour recently told me of the morning his pair expired and swam off to that great fishbowl in the sky. He related how his wife immediately sent him into town for an identical pair before their son awoke, only for the four-year-old to meet his father coming in the gate, a plastic water-filled bag in his hand. “What are you doing with those fish, Dad?” the little lad shouted all amazed.

“Oh, just taking them for a walk, son,” my neighbour calmly replied!

Answer the following **four** questions:

1. Why does the writer recommend a goldfish as a pet? Support your answer with evidence from the **first** paragraph of the passage. (10)
2. What historical facts about goldfish do you learn from reading this passage? (10)
3. The author is dismissive of the idea of a cartoon based on the traditional animosity between cats and fish. Do you agree with him? Give reasons for your answer, based on the **third** paragraph of the passage. (10)
4. Did you find this passage entertaining? Give reasons for your answer. (10)

SECTION 2:**PERSONAL WRITING****[70]**

Write a prose composition on any **one** of the following titles. Except where otherwise stated, you are free to write in any form you wish e.g. narrative, descriptive, dramatic, short story, etc.

1. The pet (real or imaginary) that I would most like to keep.
2. The talking goldfish.
3. Fictional characters I would like to meet.
4. A day in my life that I would like to relive.
5. Write a composition including the line, “It had been a lot of hard work and had taken ages but, in the end, it was worth the effort.”
6. Everyone deserves a second chance.
7. Look at the picture on **Page 1** of **Paper X**, which accompanies this examination paper, and write a composition inspired by it.
8. Write a speech for or against the motion: ‘Having a job during the school year is bad for Second Level students.’

Answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.

You will be rewarded for:

- Well-structured answers
- Clarity of expression
- An appropriate tone
- Good grammar, spelling and punctuation.

1. A national newspaper has organised a ‘Person of the Year’ award. Write a letter to the editor nominating the person you think is most deserving of this award. You should explain why you think this person deserves the award.

OR

2. Most books and DVDs have a short blurb on the outside of the back cover. Typically this is a brief text which describes and praises the plot, characterisation, acting, etc. Write such a blurb for any book or DVD of your choice.

Examine carefully the advertisement that appears on **Page 2** of **Paper X**, which accompanies this examination paper.

1. (a) This advertisement - for the 1999 National Ploughing Championships - provides the reader with very little written text. Much of what the advertisers want to communicate is conveyed visually. What do you think is communicated about the event by the picture? (20)

- (b) Do you think this advertisement is effective in promoting the event? Explain your answer with reference to the advertisement. (20)

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