



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2017

English - Ordinary Level - Paper 1

Total Marks: 200

Wednesday, June 7th – 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 SCHOOL DAYS.
- 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 – DONAL RYAN'S SCHOOL DAYS

The following text is based on edited extracts from an article by award-winning writer, Donal Ryan. The original article appeared in the *Irish Independent* newspaper.

1. I was lucky when it came to school. Some people have their wonder quenched, their way darkened. Some people have a flame lit and are given the tools to succeed in all aspects of their lives. My parents, Anne and Donie Ryan, were my first teachers. I learned to read very early. I was encouraged and praised at home and in school, and my bit of a thing for words was noticed and fostered. Youghalarra National School in Newtown, Co. Tipperary, was where I was first told I was a writer. St Joseph's Christian Brothers School in Nenagh was where I was told I'd be a waster if I didn't use the talent God gave me. Home was where my light was lit; school was where I first got a sense of myself and what my place in the world could be.

2. I laughed my way through secondary school. I thought I was a howl. I thought everything was hilarious. I loved writing essays for English and spent most of my study time working on them, pacing and mumbling, testing the sounds of sentences, drafting and re-drafting in painstaking handwriting. My Leaving Cert English teacher would read them out and photocopy them for the other English classes and the lads would tease me good-naturedly in the corridors.

3. I saw myself as a mix of famous writers such as W.B. Yeats and John B. Keane and Stephen King – only better, of course, and cooler. I managed somehow to simultaneously maintain a belief in my own genius and a huge burden of shyness. I wrote poetry in my bedroom and read book after book and mimed to AC/DC and Led Zeppelin and the Pixies with my string-less guitar. I grew my hair long and I couldn't figure out why girls weren't flinging themselves at me. I thought I was the bee's knees. I must have looked like a right wally.



4. I didn't do much extra for the Leaving Cert. I thought I'd sail through it. I saw no stormy waters ahead. I didn't think I knew everything, but there was very little I didn't think I knew. I'd had some amazing teachers. Sometimes some of them frightened the life out of us, but they were mostly kind and intuitive and boy did they know their stuff. They could teach pigs to fly. But still I didn't listen closely enough and thought I knew a lot more than I actually did. I did okay, but nowhere near as well as I could have.

5. I worked for a vet and a fruit wholesaler and a meat factory and an electronics factory and a salon supplier and two hotels. I studied civil engineering and marketing and law and landed finally in the civil service where I still work. I regret not one moment of the time that led me to here. I'm now married to Anne Marie. She's my inspiration, she's very funny, she's perfect for me. I have two beautiful children. I have a wonderful family and fantastic friends. I run twice a week in the early mornings. I try to always eat fruit and not to smoke. I work all day every day and I'm never sick. And try to stay off the internet. Looking for trouble is all that is.

6. I was always writing: poems that you wouldn't recite to an animal; short stories that

led nowhere and said nothing; plays with no structure or timing. I started novel after novel all through my 20s and always tripped myself up. No sentence I wrote pleased me. There's a box in my parents' attic, guarded by spiders, full of early writing. I'd say I wrote a half-million words before I wrote one sentence I was happy with. I still read parts of my own books and no sentence pleases me. But I've come to terms with this. There is no perfect sentence. Perfection exists only as a fleeting sense of something, a momentary impression, a feeling in one's gut. Young writers, forget all your heroes, read them and love them and leave them behind, just for the time you're creating your own sentences.

Tell the truth, even while you're making things up. Keep it simple, be yourself, be happy.

7. Here's the most worthwhile thing I've learnt in my first 38 years of life: always check your motives. Before you do a thing, or say a thing, or write a thing, ask yourself why you're doing it or saying it or writing it. Be honest with yourself. If you realise that your motive is to cause pain to another person, then don't do it. Turn around, walk away, hang up, stay quiet, log off. Why make the world a darker place? Ask yourself all the time why you're doing what you're doing. Try to never hurt anyone.

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

N.B. Answer ONLY ONE Question A and ONLY ONE Question B.

Question A – 50 marks

- (i) From your reading of the passage above, what impression do you form of Donal Ryan? Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) In your opinion, which of the following word or words best describe(s) Donal Ryan's experience in secondary school? Relaxed Studious Enjoyable. (15)
Explain your answer with reference to the text.
- (iii) (a) Donal Ryan offers readers lots of advice in the final two paragraphs above. Identify one piece of advice he offers and give reasons why you do or do not think that it is good advice. (10)
- (b) Identify one piece of good advice you have received from a friend or family member and explain how you benefitted from receiving this advice. (10)

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

Question B – 50 marks

Students can benefit from advice when choosing which subjects to study for their Leaving Certificate course. Your school Principal has asked you to give a **talk** to Third Year students who are about to choose their senior cycle subjects. In your talk you should explain to the students why it is important to make good decisions when choosing subjects for their Leaving Certificate course and suggest what you think they should consider when making these decisions.



TEXT 2 – NUJEEEN'S SCHOOL DAYS

This text is based on edited extracts from *Nujeen*, by Syrian refugee Nujeen Mustafa and Christine Lamb. Nujeen fled to Germany from war-torn Aleppo. Due to a crippling medical condition, Nujeen made the journey in a wheelchair pushed by her sister, Nasrine. Unable to attend school in Syria due to her disability, we learn about Nujeen's experiences in school in Germany.

1. My name is Nujeen which means new life. My mum and dad already had four boys and four girls by the time I came along on New Year's Day, 1999. My sisters are so pretty, particularly Nasrine with her long glossy mahogany hair and fair skin. But me – my front teeth are big and goofy, my eyes roll around and go cross-eyed and my glasses are always falling off my nose. And that's not all. I was born too soon. My brain didn't get enough oxygen and something happened that means the balance part doesn't work and it doesn't send proper signals to my legs. A specialist said I had something called balance deficiency, which is a kind of cerebral palsy. So when I was four we moved to Aleppo where I could get medical help. I kept getting asthma attacks, anything seemed to set me off. In my country there are almost no facilities for disabled people, and the asthma attacks happened so often I couldn't go to school in Syria.

2. The first day I ever went to school was in Germany. I was just one month shy of my seventeenth birthday. I was nervous but also happy, for finally I could say I've done something normal in my life. I was a schoolgirl at last. Of course it wasn't like in my dreams, where I thought I'd look like a girl in an American movie, walking along carrying my books, hair swinging and chatting with friends about boyfriends or movies. I would like to be the smart girl, the nerdy girl in the group. That's what I imagine. Then I look down and see I am surrounded by these wheels and it's back to reality. Yes, I am in a wheelchair and my school is a special school, not something out of *High School Musical*.

3. A bus comes and picks me up at seven o'clock every morning to take me to the school in Bonn, which runs from 8 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. The school is a big cream two-storey building



Nujeen and Nasrine travel to Germany

and as you enter, instead of bikes and scooters, there are piles of wheelchairs and walkers. I am in a class of ten fifteen-year-olds, so I am the oldest and feel like an old woman. All have different ways of being 'special'. Some have no physical problems but are autistic, a couple don't speak and use iPads to communicate, like Stephen Hawking. One just has red and yellow buttons to push which play recorded messages to indicate what she wants.

4. The first day was hard as of course. I hardly spoke any German. We have three teachers for my class and they teach us German, maths, history, English and science. To start with I had a lot of difficulty. In maths I couldn't keep my work on the lines in the exercise book. But I am a fast learner and I just do the only thing I am good at which is listening, listening, listening. When I get frustrated because I can't do something, I reassure myself that a lot of famous people were refugees – Albert Einstein, Gloria Estafan, even Steve Jobs was the son of a Syrian refugee.

5. The teachers complain that I don't socialise, but I want to spend the time learning and, as I tell them, I am not really a social person. All my life I just stayed in a circle I felt comfortable with and I grew up among adults. It's not that I don't like the others, but they have different interests. I like biology and of course physics because I want to be an astronaut. The point of this school is to train us to be as independent as possible, and when we finish here at eighteen, we do training in what they call vocational work. We have no facilities like this in Syria and I know I am very lucky.

6. I know that I didn't confront my disability in Syria because I didn't go out and so avoided people looking at me. The teachers here think I need to be realistic and accept how I am and

get on with it, learn to eat by myself and move my chair, not keep talking about being an astronaut and walking. But after all that has happened in my life, I think anything is possible. My sister, Nasrine, pointed out that some of my classmates are much more disabled than me yet much more independent. They can move around on their own and get their own drinks and meals so now I am trying to be more independent. I just wish that my mother and father, still in Syria, could come and see me going to school with my rucksack full of subject folders. Our own journey to Germany seems long ago. Though it was born of tragedy, I remember it as the biggest adventure in my life, a story to tell my grandchildren.

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

N.B. Answer ONLY ONE Question A and ONLY ONE Question B.

Question A – 50 marks

- (i) From your reading of the passage above, what impression do you form of Nujeen? Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) In your opinion, which of the following word or words best describe(s) Nujeen's experience of education in Germany? Difficult Enjoyable Disappointing.
Explain your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (iii) (a) Nujeen dreams of being an astronaut. Would you always encourage your friends to follow their ambitious dreams? Give reasons for your answer. (10)
- (b) Identify one piece of good advice you have received from a friend or family member and explain how you benefitted from receiving this advice. (10)

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

Question B – 50 marks

Nujeen Mustafa, who features in TEXT 2 above, was not able to go to school in Syria because of the difficulties posed by her physical disability. Write **an article for your school website or magazine** in which you suggest what your school could do to make the school building more suitable and the school community more welcoming for students with physical disabilities.



TEXT 3 – SCHOOL DAYS IN THE PAST AND IN THE FUTURE

This text consists of two items, *School Days in the Past* on Page 6 and *School Days in the Future* on Page 7. The text on Page 6 is based on information from the following sources: C. K. Byrne (donegal genealogy.com) and *The Hedge Schools of Ireland* by P. J. Dowling.

1. For many young people in Ireland, Hedge Schools were the only source of schooling available until the middle of the nineteenth century. Despite their title, these schools did not always take place outdoors but often in houses or barns. Some schools even had names, such as the Moate Lane School where Edmund Rice, founder of the Irish Christian Brothers, received his education. These illegal schools were often set up in remote mountainous districts in order to avoid detection by the authorities. Initially teaching and learning was mostly conducted through Irish but by the beginning of the nineteenth century instruction mainly took place through English.

2. During the Penal Laws, Hedge School teachers risked prosecution for their work and could be jailed or even executed. Classes were taught by travelling teachers, who might set up school in a cabin or in the open air for a few weeks, sometimes receiving temporary accommodation and a few potatoes in payment for their work. Those teachers who were paid, earned very little and their income depended on the number of students that attended their classes. In the winter time attendance could fall dramatically and this affected the teachers' earnings. The rates students paid varied by subject, with Latin the most expensive and spelling costing the least. A report from 1826 shows the average wage earned by teachers was nine pounds per year. Female teachers were often paid less than half of what their male counterparts earned. A teacher, called Mary White, who taught thirty-nine pupils in a cow-house in County Donegal earned only four pounds per year. After the priest, the school master was the most respected figure in the community.

3. The subjects taught varied from school



Source: askaboutireland.ie

to school, depending on the teacher. Reading, writing and arithmetic were taught in even the most humble schools. A wider range of subjects were taught in some schools including Latin, Greek, science, geography and astronomy. Discipline was not generally severe, rather the opposite. Although one teacher, James Nash, is reported to have said, "I flog the boys every morning to teach them to be Spartans". Many different age groups took part in the classes. The schools were quite basic with limited facilities. Children often sat on stones and used a wooden block as a desk. In the winter, students were required to bring fuel for heating, often sods of turf for the fire.

4. Teachers used chapbooks, also known as penny books, which were sold at fairs. Typically these were filled with exciting stories of well-known adventurers and outlaws. Textbooks in the Irish language were rare and expensive. Where books and writing materials were too expensive for the children to purchase lessons were learnt off by heart, often by the class repeating the lesson aloud together. Students wrote on paper, slate or even sand. Teachers were sometimes assisted by monitors. These were often senior students who had excelled at their studies and helped with instructing more junior students. The Hedge Schools declined in Ireland when the National School system was established the 1830s.

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IMAGE 1



Source: intersection4learning.blogspot.ie

IMAGE 2



Source: static.ddmcdn.com

The teacher in this Japanese classroom is a robot

N.B. Answer ONLY ONE Question A and ONLY ONE Question B.

Question A – 50 marks

- (i) Explain, in your own words, what you learn about the life of a Hedge School teacher from reading the text on Page 6. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) In your opinion, which of the following word or words best describe(s) what it was like to be a Hedge School student? Enjoyable Difficult Uncomfortable.
Explain your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (iii) (a) Look at both of the images of robot teachers above. If robot teachers were introduced in Irish schools, do you think they should be made to look like the teacher in IMAGE 1 or the teacher in IMAGE 2? Give reasons for your answer. (10)
- (b) Explain why you would or would not like to be taught by a robot teacher. (10)

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

Question B – 50 marks

Imagine it is proposed that all of the teachers in schools in Ireland will be replaced by robots. Write a **letter** to the Editor of a national newspaper giving reasons why you do or do not support the proposed change to robot teachers.

Write a composition on **any one** of the following composition assignments 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 1, Donal Ryan tells us that he laughed his way through secondary school.

Write a short story which features a character who gets into trouble because of his or her sense of humour.

2. The theme of TEXTS 1, 2 and 3 is School Days.

Imagine that you have been selected as the Student of the Year in your school and have been asked to deliver a speech to the staff and students at a school assembly. The topic for your speech is "My School Days". Write the speech, which may be serious or humorous or both, that you would deliver.

3. In TEXT 1, Donal Ryan tells us about the box in his parents' attic that contains his early writing.

Imagine you find a box of items from your childhood in your parents' attic. Write a personal essay in which you identify what you find in the box and describe the feelings and memories these items evoke for you.

4. In TEXT 3, we see two images of robots.

Write a short story in which a family comes to regret adopting a robot.

5. In TEXT 2, Nujeen Mustafa writes about how she would rather study than socialise.

You have been asked to write an article for a magazine popular with young people. In your article you should give advice to Leaving Certificate students on how to develop their study skills, maintain a healthy lifestyle while preparing for exams, and balance study with the more social aspects of life.

6. In TEXT 1, Donal Ryan writes about the importance of praise and encouragement in his development as a writer.

Write a personal essay giving your views on the importance of praise and encouragement as we go through life.

7. Images of robot school teachers can be seen in TEXT 3.

Imagine you are a robot teacher. Write at least three diary entries in which you record your impressions of humans in general, write specifically about your work as a teacher and give your views on the behaviour of the students that you teach. Your diary entries may be humorous or serious or both.

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