THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

Subject

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COURSE: English Masterclass

ACADEMIC LEVEL: Higher Level

ACADEMIC YEAR: 5th Year

TOPIC



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CONTENTS



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LEAVING CERTIFICATE ENGLISH
CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

NB Two part comparative questions on P2 are marked thus: part (a) /30 and part (b) /40. Unseen poetry is marked /10 or/20 and Q.A on Paper 1 is marked /15 or /20. Be aware that the examiners will have PCLM uppermost in their minds even when they are not using the vertical grid in assessing answers.

Clarity of Purpose	Engagement with the set task	e.g. relevance, focus, originality, freshness, evidence of critical literacy (where appropriate), clear aim, understanding genre	30%
Coherence of Delivery	Ability to sustain the response over the entire answer	*Where appropriate:* Continuity of argument, sequencing, management of ideas, choice of reference, use of examples, engagement with texts, control of register and shape, creative modelling	30%
Efficiency of Language use	Management and control of Language to achieve clear communication	e.g. vocabulary, syntax, sentence patterns, punctuation appropriate to the register, use of lively interesting phrasing, energy, style, fluency *appropriate to the task*	30%
Accuracy of Mechanics	Spelling Grammar	e.g. appropriate levels of accuracy in spelling grammatical patterns appropriate to the register	10%

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RTFQ-RTFQ-RTFQ-RTFQ-RTFQ-RTFQ-RTFQ!!!

"This paper will be specifically aimed at testing the comprehending and composing abilities of students." (DES English Syllabus, 7.3)

Paper 1 has a different theme every year which links the texts. For example, in 2023 the theme was **BETWEEN TWO WORLDS.** The texts on the paper that year explored this idea via different genres. In 2024 text 1 was an edited extract from a novel, text 2 consisted of a blend of an extract from a text and a visual text (a photograph) and text 3 was two edited articles on the subject of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

PLEASE NOTE! 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.

A suggested approach to reading and answering the paper.

Section 1-Comprehending

- Read through the three texts relatively quickly paying attention to the bold type under the texts' headings-there may be useful information to glean from them. An alternative approach is to read the Questions A before reading the texts, this will give you an immediate idea of what the questions are looking for.

- Ask yourself which of the texts appealed to you most, which text were you most confident reading and processing.

- I suggest you choose the Q. A on the text you were most comfortable with on your first read through.

- Once you've chosen your Q. A, read through the text again, highlighting material in the text that you might find useful in answering the questions.

- Be sure to 'unpack' the question. You may well have more than one 'target' to hit in the question. If so, make sure you address **all** elements of the question **meaningfully though not necessarily equally.**

- Up until 2018 all the information necessary for your answers was to be found in the text. Lately, Q. A (ii) has taken the form of a 'what do you think' type task. Textual evidence is not necessary in these scenarios but if there is information on the text that might strengthen your answer you are free to use this. Whether or not the exam setters continue with this trend remains to be seen. It's something to be aware of as you go into the exam.

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- When approaching Q. A it is useful to think that a 15 mark question will demand three points (3X5=15) and for a 20 mark question think along the lines of developing four points (4x5=15) Lately the questions have specified this in their wording; see 2023 sample below. **NB**. Even if the wording of the question isn't specific one should approach these tasks with that idea in mind as a guide.

- A short brainstorm before launching into your answers will steady the nerves. An organised answer will garner a higher mark.

- Think, in the case of a 15 mark question, along the lines of three concise paragraphs using the **PIE** approach: Make your **P**oint in the opening sentence; **I**llustrate your point with evidence in the form of a quotation or reference to the text (where relevant) and finally **E**xplain how your evidence supports your point. If you follow this template, it means that you have control over structure which will lead to a coherent answer where the meaning is clear. See the accompanying sample answer.

- You have about 50 minutes or so to complete this task. This time includes reading and choosing your Q. A.

Sample Answer, Paper 1, 2023 Question A, Text 1.

Text 1 2023, BETWEEN TWO WORLDS: VILLAGE AND CITY

"This text is based on an edited extract from Gravel Heart, a novel by Abdulrazak Gurnah, 2021 Nobel Prize winner for literature. In this extract Salim, from a small island village in Zanzibar, comes to stay with his uncle in London to further his education. He doesn't know how to belong in this strange city and feels cut off from the world he has left behind."

The short intro or preamble at the beginning of each of the three texts often contains very useful information. **DO NOT IGNORE THE INTRO/PREAMBLE!** The preamble to Text 1 tells us a few important things: this is a **NOVEL**, thus **NARRATIVE WRITING** and its associated linguistic signifiers, eg. description, reflection, imagery, sensual language etc. can be expected. Knowing this allows us to make an informed decision on whether to do this text's Q. A. We can expect that there will be a question that will ask about elements of linguistic 'style' in the text, often part (iii). Your confidence with these elements will dictate the appeal for you of this text.

We can expect to see at least some of the following in a piece of narrative writing:

- Narrative Voice
- Tension
- Resolution
- Characterisation
- Dialogue
- Setting
- Atmosphere

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Additionally, this preamble tells us something about the NARRATIVE's **THEME** and **GENRE** – it is a "fish out of water" tale, remember, the theme for 2023, P.1 is **BETWEEN TWO WORLDS!** Expect lots of **observations, some reflection and detailed description** as the narrator describes his experiences in this 'new world' of London.

2023, TEXT 1.

When I went to live with Uncle Amir in London, it was his wish that I should study for a career in business. "In your circumstances, it is the perfect option and it will allow you to work anywhere in the world. Make money! Think of the outcomes: accountancy, management, consultancy, and at the end of it all plenty of money in the bank."

It would have sounded cowardly to tell him that I should have preferred to study literature. By the time I left for London, I had worked my way through most of my father's books, had made good progress through the school library shelves, had borrowed and exchanged books with friends, and I thought of myself as someone with proven credentials as a future student of literature. When I came to London I realised how unimpressive my credentials were, how much there was to read, how much there was to work through. Uncle Amir had different plans for me and I did not have the courage to say anything about how I might have preferred to proceed with my life.

I was moved by the pleasure they took in my arrival. They both beamed smiles at me and Auntie Asha spoke to me as if I was a diffident younger brother who needed to be brought out of himself. I was too flustered to take in everything immediately, but I noticed the amplitude of space and the expensive furnishings. Auntie Asha took me upstairs to show me my room which was luxurious: a large bed, a dark wardrobe the depth of a coffin, a wide desk, a chest of drawers, a bookshelf, a comfortable reading chair, and still enough space in the middle for a rug. A whole family lived in a room of this size where I had come from. My suitcase, which I had bought new just before I left, looked cheap and flimsy and tiny on that rug, like a cardboard box. I sat on the bed when I was left alone, looking around the room, gazing out of the darkened window then at the clean bare desk with its angled lamp, and I smiled. That is the desk where I will sit and write to Mama about the wonders I encounter and I won't allow the thought of my ignorance to discourage me. I allowed this resolution to overcome the slight feeling of panic I sensed at the edge of my mind. What was I doing here?

Dear Mama, I hope you are well. It is now October and I started college last week. London is full of people from everywhere in the world. I just had not expected to see that, Indians, Arabs, Africans, Chinese, and I don't know where all the European people come from but they are not all English. When a double-decker bus goes by and you see the faces through the window, it is like a glimpse of a page in an illustrated children's encyclopaedia under the title People of the World. Everywhere you go, you have to push your way through crowds and hold on to your possessions. To be honest, I think I'm scared of that press of people. It gets so crowded on the underground that I feel as if I can't breathe. Trains that travel under the ground! We are so backward! You just cannot imagine how enormous the city is. Love, Salim.

London terrified me so much. The streets confused me. The buses and taxis and cars roared past and churned up my gut. The rush of people and vehicles muddled my sense of direction and panicked me. I felt as if the city despised me, as if I were a tiresome and timorous child who had wandered

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unwelcome out of the dust and rubble of his puny island shanty into this place where boldness and greed and swagger were required for survival.

Dear Mama, I stood on ice today. I woke up in the morning to a deep hush, and went to the window to look out at the back garden, and everything was changed. All the neighbouring roofs were covered with snow and everywhere looked so clean. The pavements were covered too, which was beautiful to walk on at first, crunchy and almost silent, but the snow soon became dirty and perilous from so many feet and from the wash of cars driving by. But that first moment when I stood on ice, I will never forget that. The crisp air made breathing easier. I think today was the happiest day I have had here. Love, Salim.

I learnt to live in London, to avoid being intimidated by crowds and by rudeness, to avoid curiosity, not to feel desolate at hostile stares and to walk purposefully wherever I went. I learnt to live with the cold and the dirt, and to evade the angry students at college with their swagger and their sense of grievance. I learnt to live with the chaotic languages of London which did not speak to each other. I tried but could not join in the city's human carnival. I feared the silent empty streets at night and always hurried home.

Question A-50 Marks

(i) Based on your reading of TEXT 1, explain three insights you gain into Salim's character. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)

Notes on answering: For 15 marks we need three full paragraphs with one insight per paragraph (3X5=15). The word "insight" indicates that we show a grasp of what the text beyond what is overtly stated – we must 'see inside' it. While this sounds profound, ultimately you are just giving a classification to certain details. For example, Salim uses phrases like "cowardly", "diffident", "terrified", "tiresome" and "timorous" to describe himself and so we can say that he is **NERVOUS, ANXIOUS, SHY,** or **INSECURE**. None of the latter words are given to you directly, but you are given terms that all point to that trait.

The marking schemes are rather generous in what constitutes an 'insight'. As long as you have evidence to support your claim, hence making **full paragraph structure essential** – it puts you in control of the validity of your answer.

Sample Answer:

MY FIRST INSIGHT into Salim's character is that he is a **nervous and insecure person**. The way he describes his interactions with his aunt and uncle, as well as his impressions of the city as a whole, reveal that he is deeply shy and somewhat insecure. We see this when he does not stand up to his Uncle's assertion that he must "make money", understanding that his failure to represent his true interests is cowardly. He's equally withdrawn when talking to his Aunt, describing himself as "diffident" even though he has been warmly welcomed into the home as they treat his arrival as a "pleasure". This lack of confidence also results in Salim believing that the "city despised me, as if I were a tiresome and timorous child who had wandered unwelcome out of the dust", despite it having no opinion of him at all. This belief that the world looks down on him, or that he ought not to express himself even when in loving company ***reveals that Salim struggles with a poor sense of self-worth and thus insecurity.***

My SECOND INSIGHT into Salim's character is that he is a **very determined person**. We see this in a number of ways but most notably ***in his determination to read everything he can and in his refusal to be defeated by***

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London. The former element is apparent early on as he discusses the great lengths he went to in order to secure his "credentials" stating that he "had worked my way through most of my father's books, had made good progress through the school library shelves, had borrowed and exchanged books with friends". **This takes time and focus and so we know he must be able to draw on a great motivational drive. Such a drive is also apparent as he quells his panic with a "resolution to overcome" the worrying disorientation of the city. While he confesses to being "terrified" and "confused" by the city we also see that he learns to "live in London" without being in a constant state of anxiety.** These elements show that Salim is a person who is very capable of setting a goal or target which he will pursue, even in difficult times, and thus I believe him to be an **impressively determined person**.

My FINAL INSIGHT is that he is very ***appreciative of the world around him, capable of finding joy and meaning in both straightforward and daunting settings.*** This is brilliantly displayed in his ability to **describe evocative details of locations and experiences** in a way that shows a keen interest in the world. When he first arrives at his aunt and uncle's home he is overwhelmed by the scale, the **"amplitude of space"** and the lavishness of the setting. He is fully aware how lucky he is to have access to such a place knowing that ***"a whole family lived in a room of this size where I had come from"***. His appreciation for the world is not only found in his account of his new opportunities but also new experiences like walking on ice. His language is exquisite as he writes about the pure white snow which "was beautiful to walk on at first, crunchy and almost silent". For most people this would be a banal moment but for Salim it is enchanting and he says: "I think today was the happiest day I have had here" showing just how magical and impactful it was on him. These appraisals of the world around him and things that many take for granted reveal that **Salim relishes these moments and thus is appreciative.**

(ii) To what extent do you agree with Uncle Amir's view that making money is an important consideration when choosing a course to study in college? Develop three points to support your response. (15)

Notes on answering: This is a standard **"what do you think question"** that draws on an element of the text. The marking schemes are very open in what is expected here as any well-presented position is acceptable. It is useful to note that the question uses the phrase **"to what extent"** which actively **invites nuance or degrees of agreement**. You do not need to adopt a binary 'yay or nay' mindset here – in fact **arguing, on balance, will probably be more useful to you**.

Sample Answer:

I do think that **the ability to earn money is an important consideration when approaching college education,** however **it must only be part of a variety of considerations based on context.** While many of us have heard the old adage that "money can't buy you happiness" this only really warns against the pursuit of purpose and meaning in the acquisition of money. **For example, a lonely, melancholic person is not substantively cured of their conditions by the purchase of a Rolex. However, having access to money provides security, allowing people to have access to food, shelter and health care.** These are things whose absences causes great pain, suffering and despair. Money cannot buy happiness but it can hold off some of the most devastating causes of human despondency and indignity, thus I think those looking to truly invest in their futures through education should be mindful of how they might

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ensure the provision of such essentials. Understanding that access to these basic needs lays the foundation for our happiness is essential, but they do not constitute the totality of what we need in order to flourish.

It is essential that financial viability is also weighed against the lived experiences of the individual and their interests. MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS SHOWS US THAT ONCE THE BASICS ARE SECURED PEOPLE SEEK A SENSE OF COMMUNITY, CONNECTION AND FULFILMENT. Considering that there are many ways to cover the basic costs without third-level education, considering what non-financial reward is gained from the degree is essential. **Someone studying medicine might anticipate a high salary but be unable to balance the toll of the career with the emotion burden of being surrounded by illness, pain and the death.** If the desire to heal or to help is not greater than the desire for wealth, then it is likely that a detrimental situation of doctor and patient arises. All careers will involve struggles and challenges, but if someone does not value what they do beyond the provision of income then it strikes me that this person may find themselves caught on the horns of a moral dilemma.

Ultimately, **I believe** that there can be no single prescriptive position on this matter as third level education holds different opportunities for different people. For many, education is how they break out of a cycle of poverty, often improving the lives of their parents while also securing a brighter future for later generations. In the case of this text Uncle Amir, like Salim, is an immigrant to London from the same "puny island shanty". Amir's career has granted him the ability to extend opportunities to his family, like Salim, something he seems keen to do. Even if Salim does study literature in London, the chance to do so is facilitated by Amir's economic status. For Amir security and helping family are likely what brings him a sense of satisfaction and achievement, both of which are enabled by his "money in the bank". It strikes as callously idealistic FOR ME TO CONDEMN THIS POSITION in pursuit of a romantic vision of study and careers. While I personally don't have the same value as Uncle Amir, **I also don't have the same circumstances and so the extent to which I agree with his is really a balanced, respectful, ambivalence.**

Observations on the above sample answer to (ii):

- These are just three sample points and should only be viewed as guidelines. You are free to adopt a more ardent stance on either side. My aim in the answer is to show that in these moments it is possible to strike a considered balance. I use the paragraph structure to my advantage by using each to express a different factor at play in the consideration: needs, wants, opportunities. By separating each out and giving them space for discussion I have created an answer that demonstrates thought and consideration.

- Additionally, note how two paragraphs draw upon non-text material for the answer, one drawn from culture, the other from economics. It is fine to do so in these questions.

(iii) **Features of both narrative writing and descriptive writing are used effectively by Abdulrazak Gurnah to capture the world Salim encounters in this passage. Discuss this statement, supporting your response with reference to four language features in the text. You may include features of narrative writing, features of descriptive writing, or both in your discussion. (20)**

Notes on answering: This type of question should be expected and prepared for. The question is rather generous in allowing you to decide your preferred combination of techniques being discussed.

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This will not always be the case. If the question lists two styles and says "and" but does not specify that you may focus on only one, you must do both. They do not need to be dealt with equally but it is essential to address both elements: narrative and descriptive writing in the extract.

Finally, it is vital that you say **what** these techniques add to the experience – the question says "effectively" after all, so what is the desired effect. They are testing your ability to not only spot the presence of technique but to explain the value and purpose of that presence. This type of insight is expected of any student hoping to score well in this exam.

Sample Answer:

The first feature of narrative writing that Gurnah effectively employs is THE NARRATIVE VOICE. This piece is written in a 1st Person perspective as the story is narrated through Salim's eye. ***This is immediately apparent as the text opens with a clear statement of the personal pronoun with "when I went to live…".*** Elsewhere we have immediate access to Salim's emotions, even if they are not stated out loud, due the privileged insights that the 1st Person Narration allows. We know that he does not agree with his Uncle's philosophy on education but is too timid to express it. We also hear of his mental states like the "feeling of panic I sensed at the edge of my mind" or how the traffic "churned up my gut". This choice of narrative voice thus very successfully makes Salim real for us. He is easier to identify with and feel for as his emotional journey is woven into the very narration of the piece and thus, we find ourselves more effectively engaged with the story.

Another feature of narrative writing that Gurnah brilliantly deploys is tension. In particular, tension is created as we see Salim struggle to come to terms with his new city as he is a 'fish out of water'. We already know that there is tension between Salim and his uncle as to what he should study and this creates a concern for which path he will take: passion or profit? **However, the piece truly emphasises Salim's struggle to make sense of the cacophony of London where "the rush of people and vehicles muddled my sense of direction and panicked" him.** Indeed, he even ponders if he has the necessary swaggering self-assuredness "required for survival" in London. This **creates a sense of threat and risk** for the vulnerable Salim which invests us in his story. We are invested in Salim's story due, partly to the effective use of tension as a technique. We want to find out if Salim will ever find peace and a sense of belonging in the city. The excerpt concludes with him learning to "live in London" but we do not get a sense that he is thriving yet, merely coping. **THIS TENSION THUS MAKES US WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS NEXT AND THUS IS AN EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUE TO KEEP THE READER RIVETED AND INVESTED IN THE TALE.**

Additionally, Gurnah combines a narrative's need for setting with **careful description to create an evocative sense of place in the reader's mind.** This was particularly apparent to me as Salim describes his new room in London. **Gurnah's forensic description of the bedroom and the "amplitude of space" brilliantly conveys the strangeness and shock Salim feels at the luxury of his new lodgings.** That Salim considers what are often standard pieces of furniture "luxurious" tells us a lot about the difference his home and London such that that one word is **brilliantly suggestive** of both settings in Salim's mind. The description of the wardrobe as being "the depth of a coffin" is atmospheric and macabrely evocative, thus describing Salim's fear and trepidation in this new place. These adroitly selected descriptive phrases not only

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help us picture the room in question but also the significance of this place for the character and thus plot. This imagery makes the scene more immersive and thus effective in fascinating the reader.

Finally, Gurnah uses **SENSORY IMAGERY TO PAINT A MARVELLOUS PICTURE WITHIN OUR MINDS**. The description of the first steps on snow combine **TACTILE AND AURAL IMAGERY**, "crunchy and almost silent", to perfectly capture the experience that will be familiar to many. The phrase "crisp air", helps the reader better envisage the clean, serene clarity of that moment. By including these sensory details, **we are invited to draw upon our own experiences and envisage the scene as a real embodied person within it would**. This makes the piece so much more immersive and enthralling as we find ourselves relishing the same moments as Salim. ***These details make scenes more concrete and graspable to us, as well as effectively transporting us into the world of Gurnah's "Gravel Heart".***

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Question B. {50 marks, c. 40 minutes}

Question B gives you your first opportunity to "make" a text from scratch. The exam paper itself is meant to be used as a resource by the student. What this means is that you can take ideas, statistics, quotes, stylistic techniques etc. from the texts on the paper if you feel they're going to help you in Q. B and the Composition.

What you cannot do is plagiarise, that is copy long tracts directly from the texts and incorporate them in your answer.

Where Q. B is concerned it is important to be aware of the register (words), tone, audience and shape of your answer. See RAFT approach below

With most Q. B tasks you'll be using our old, familiar friend the paragraph as the basic unit of construction although if your writing task is to write the text of an interview or a radio broadcast that might change, taking the form of a question and answer setup on the page. It'll depend on the task. There follows a list of previous Q. B tasks from 2024 to 2015.

2024:
Text of a dialogue
Proposal for the tidy towns committee
A series of diary entries

2023:
Personal Letter
Personal Reflection
Article for your school's website

2022:
Open Letter
Podcast
Editorial

2021:
Feature Article-Monumental Matters-*The Story of Statues*
Open Letter-'to be shared on social media'
Verbal Pitch-Applying to position of Editor of Graduation Yearbook

2019:
Opinion piece-National Broadsheet
Journal entry-for "future generations"
Introduction to a collection of essays

2018:
Open letter-online or print media
Opinion piece-National Newspaper
Article for a school website-online text

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2017:
Article-school website-online text
Opinion piece-National Newspaper
Text for a radio broadcast

2016:
Speech
Competition entry
Blogpost-online text

2015:
Letter to your school principal
Website Article-online text
Introduction to a literary anthology

The Q. B task is a bit of a sheep in wolf's clothing, so to speak. Too many candidates in the white heat of the June exam fail to read the question properly and give incomplete and irrelevant answers.

Reading the questions slowly and carefully we'll identify the following pattern: You are given an "umbrella task"… "write an open letter", " write an opinion piece", "Write an article for your school's website" etc.

Beneath that umbrella task you are given three targets to hit or elements to address. It is good practice to number these targets in the exam and cross them out as you address them. The SEC Marking Schemes say that "Candidates should engage with all aspects of the question, **although not necessarily equally.**"

The advice is missing one important word, in my opinion. It should really read: "Candidates should engage with all aspects of the question, ***meaningfully*** **although not necessarily equally.**"

In effect, what this means is that you must address all the components of the question in a meaningful way. You do not have to whip out your ruler and assign a third each of your answer to each of the three tasks. As you'll see from the sample, I spend one paragraph on one element and maybe two paragraphs on another but I engage in a meaningful way with all three elements/aspects of the question. Examiners can't award what isn't there on the page so make sure you've addressed all elements of the task if you want to maximise your marks.

In the sample answer below please take note of the shape of the 'made' text, the awareness and understanding of the task shown and the relevance of the material to the task assigned. Think RAFT!

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Sample Question B answer

Paper 1 2022, Text 2 Question B-PODCAST

'You have been invited to contribute to a podcast series entitled, *The Music Playing in Me*. The series will explore the importance of music in the lives of individuals. Write **the text for the podcast** in which you: reflect on the importance of music in your life, discuss some of the particular pieces of music (songs, albums, etc.) that make up the soundtrack of your own life and share the thoughts and feelings this music evokes in you.'

Using **RAFT** as a guide, we first and always **BRAINSTORM**:

Reason for writing: This is a podcast so we need to be aware of our audience and the format. You might decide to be the sole deliverer of the broadcast or you may wish to use the scenario of the 'guest speaker' and this approach would entail an 'interview', question and answer type scenario. The former...delivering the podcast yourself to your 'followers' or 'listeners' might be a simpler option because there will be less dialogue involved but of course the decision is yours on the day!

Audience: Your 'audience' will be the listeners you are addressing in your podcast...probably a varied group of people who might listen in to your podcasts regularly. The tone of podcasts is often informal and this particular task lends itself to the personal reflection angle where you might think along the lines of your audience being familiar with you so the informal tone, in this instance would be appropriate.

Format: While there are no hard and fast rules for podcasting, an acute awareness of your audience and a conversational approach fits the bill with the scenario given in the 2022 Question B task. For the sake of authenticity, 'technical touches' can be effective. Eg. you might wish to include 'stage directions', so to speak: a sponsor's message/opening jingle/music/an intro that would show an affinity with the audience etc. (See sample)

Tone: Strive to be inclusive and informal in your approach. The use of questions and personal reflection and appealing to the emotions of your listeners will ensure that the tone of your response will be fitting to the task.

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SAMPLE ANSWER-(It is a first draft-I left it as I wrote it-excuse errors, if any!)

Paper 1 2022, Text 2 Question B.

'You have been invited to contribute to a podcast series entitled, *The Music Playing in Me*. The series will explore the importance of music in the lives of individuals. Write **the text for the podcast** in which you: reflect on the importance of music in your life, discuss some of the particular pieces of music (songs, albums, etc.) that make up the soundtrack of your own life and share the thoughts and feelings this music evokes in you.'

Answer:

(Opening music plays and fades out)

Well, listeners, Paul Murphy here again! Welcome along to this week's episode of 'The Music Playing in Me' and I trust the past week has been good to all our listeners. As ever, I'll be exploring the central role music plays in our lives but this week I will indulge myself and explore pieces of music that illicit strong emotional responses in me, Paul, your very own musical maestro!!

Kahlil Gibran, the Lebanese-American poet and writer once said that "music is the language of the spirit"... one could sing that one!!
Songs and music help us navigate the highs and the lows and I believe, become embedded in the marvellous tapestries that we call our lives and provide us with a backtrack, a set of go-to places where we can bathe in nostalgia and remember the good the bad and the ugly! When words fail us in the interpretation of our lives, music takes over and in some deep and mysterious way it allows us into a space in our souls that is both silent and thundering; at times calming and at other times energizing and challenging.

Picture the scene: it is the 1980s and Queen are at their peak. They provide the soundtrack to the film 'Highlander', a strange fantasy film that I fell in love with...not because of Sean Connery's fantastic outfits but because of a wonderful track from the film that spoke deeply to me at that time. I had just lost someone very close to me and I will admit that I was struggling emotionally with grief and loss. For some odd reason the song *'Who wants to live forever?'* from the soundtrack touched me and certainly assisted me through that period in my teenage years. It is not a particularly outstanding Queen song but it came, for me, at the right time. It helped my teenage brain reconcile with the idea of mortality and the idea that all is transient. We are given one life to live, we need to live in the moment and cherish each day-even when we feel angsty. How many of you have such a song or piece of music such as this? One that gives us comfort in the darkness and shows us towards the light? I think it is fair to say that many of us will have that special comfort track in the playlist of our minds.

From grief to affirmation, my friends! The recent release of the film 'Barbie' engendered various reactions...not all positive but there is one song in particular in the film that lifts my spirit every time I hear it. It is a bit of a left-fielder, this one but the 'I'm just Ken' number from the film never

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fails to put a smile on my face. When I hear it I think of the life-affirming idea that we are 'kenough' (!) that we, each one of us, are sufficient in our lives and that we should accept ourselves for what we are, not what we own or what other people perceive us to be. We spend so much of our time trying to please others…the song says to me that we can be happy and content in our own being and suggests, at least to me, that we should block out the noise of life sometimes and listen to the music of our souls!

Finally, for peace, serenity and yoga-calm I listen to Samuel Barber's Adagio for Strings. This piece of music is transcendent. When I listen to this music I am transported to a different place altogether. I will confess that it is often the case that my tears quietly flow with the power of this piece of music; not tears of grief but tears of wonderment at the capacity of music and humankind to provide us with such moments of beauty in our lives.

Well, dear listeners, that's all for this week. Be sure to message or email me via the links on our radio website with your own musical favourites. Next week Bono will be in with us to discuss his own fave pieces of music and their importance to him.

Remember, you can access this podcast by going to the Music FM website and clicking on the appropriate tab.

Mind yourselves and be sure to close the door behind you on your way out!

'If music be the food of love…play on'!

(Outro: Podcast closes to the strains of 'I'm just Ken'.)

C.700 words. C. 40 minutes.

The response scores well on all criteria…in other words, it hits the RAFT targets effectively throughout and addresses the three elements effectively and in a meaningful and coherent manner. The tone and format are appropriate and there are no 'L' or 'M' errors.

P=15
C=15
L=15
M=5

50

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SECTION II-COMPOSING (100 MARKS)

Circa 80 minutes.

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.

N.B. "The general functions of language outlined here will continually mix and mingle within texts and genres. So, there can be an aesthetic argument, a persuasive narrative, or an informative play." (DES English Syllabus, 2.5)

The composition titles refer back to individual texts. However, the examination paper itself is constructed around a single theme and **all the texts on the paper are intended to be a resource for the candidates.** Therefore, even though a composition title is linked to one of the texts, in shaping their compositions candidates are free to refer to, quote from, or draw ideas from **any or all of the texts and their accompanying illustrations.**

Candidates may refer formally to the text to which the composition is linked or they may complete the composition assignment with reference to their own store of knowledge/ reference/ experience.

In the event that a question or doubt arises as to the relevance of material or the approach adopted by the candidate you should consult your Advising Examiner.

SEC Marking Scheme 2024.

YOU SHOULD HAVE c. 80 MINUTES TO SPEND ON THE ESSAY-THIS INCLUDES PREP/BRAINSTORM TIME.

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The Composition

Four Composition Genres regularly appear on the exam paper: Personal Essay, Discursive (speech/article/talk etc.) Essay, Short Story, Descriptive Essay (does not always appear as an option). There is no pattern but the Personal Essay, Short Story and Discursive type task have appeared every year. The descriptive essay appears less frequently. Some years there can be a different genre thrown into the mix.

Sample Personal Essay:Composing, Question 6, 2019.

Write a personal essay in which you reflect on some of the places that have helped to shape and define you, and the significance of these places in your life.

It has taken a long time for me to become the person I am today. 18 years in fact. When I think back on all of the places which have shaped me over the years there are four standout candidates: the local library, school, the local athletics track and my bedroom. The order of importance of these places has changed with time, but to say that they define me is as true a statement as they come.

To begin with the library is fitting because it is where I undoubtedly spent the most time in my youth (technically I spent more time in my bedroom, but I was reading library books in there!) As a child I had an unquenchable appetite for fantasy and science fiction, which I hold onto to this day. Not a Christmas or birthday goes by without a trip to my local bookstore. Reading to me was a safe haven, an escape from real life when times were tough and I was unhappy. By age 10 I had finished with the local library's children's section and moved on to the young adult' section. I had an adult membership at that stage which enabled me to borrow more books for a longer time. This suited me down to the ground. I visited the library at least once a week. This desire to have my mind blown by these amazing books, which were really doors into other worlds encouraged my inquisitive side and I firmly believe this was a formative experience which still influences me today. I now have a very open mind and am curious about many topics. I can confidently assert that the library helped to form me into the philosophical, open-minded young man I am today. I will be forever grateful for the free access to books the library gave me. To say my love of books and libraries defines me is an understatement. It's only a pity that so few of my peers don't feel the same way!

Next on the list is a rather obvious one but none the less extremely significant: school! Education is of utmost importance in our lives. I have one or two free-spirited friends who would be inclined to disagree. However, there is more to our school education than simply learning facts and sitting exams; school is the battleground where we test our peers, are tested by our peers and strive to find a way to find ourselves and our place in this world. One might argue that one's time in school, more than any other influence, makes us who we are.

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It wasn't always easy. I preferred the company of books above the company of other children when I was younger. I was shy-but not anymore! Thanks to the social aspect of school I came out of my shell and learned to enjoy and appreciate the company and friendship of others. Another significant school influence were the teachers who often gave me sound advice and told me to 'chill' when they saw that I was getting over-anxious about my work. Between the influence of the teachers and my friends I have matured greatly and become more extrovert. I enjoy a healthy social life at the weekends and I feel it's important to strive to achieve a good 'work-life balance' in order to maintain good mental wellbeing. My time in school certainly helped me to discover this! I will always cherish the significant friendships I have made in school. They are now a part of me.

I know you're all wondering 'what's next'? For me, the third place which has had a huge moulding significance in my life is my local athletics track and club. From an early age I was encouraged to try different sports until I found the one I loved. My favourite sport is athletics and my favourite distance is the 800 and 1500 metres. I train regularly and watch what I eat. I am currently hoping to represent Leinster in the inter-provincial athletics competition later in the summer.

For me there is nothing better after a hard day's slogging at the books than slipping on a pair of running shoes and taking off on a long run. The mind is freed. The body is limber and flexible. As you get into the rhythm of the run you almost go into a trance, aware only of the sound of your breathing and the rhythmic footfall of your shoes on the tarmac. Pure bliss. Through running I have expanded my circle of friends and found that I am quite a competitive individual. I push myself to be the best I can be. Running has also instilled in me an appreciation for the benefits of hard work and dedication.

My bedroom is the last place I want to talk about. When I am not at running, in school or in the library I can guarantee that you're likely to find me in my bed having a nap! I think I am fundamentally lazy and even though I am active most of the day-I do appreciate the odd sneaky 'powernap' in my bed when my parents think I'm studying diligently! Ah no! All joking apart lying on my bed allows me to daydream but also to reflect on any day's events. It is very important to reflect and process things because that is how we learn and improve: no reflection-no progression!

These are the places that have made me.

(910 words, c. 85 minutes)

Marking Scheme advice to examiners for this essay:

Candidates should write a personal essay in which they reflect on some of the places (literal and/or metaphorical) that have helped to shape and define them, and the significance of these places in their lives.

Mark ex 100 by reference to the criteria for assessment.

P: Focus – a personal essay in which the candidates reflect on some of the places that have helped to shape and define them, and the significance of these places in their lives understanding of genre – the effective use of some elements of personal writing e.g. written in the first person, reflective insights, confessional tone, individual observation(s), use of personal anecdotes, etc. relevance originality and freshness, etc.

C: The extent to which the personal approach is successfully shaped, developed and sustained sequencing and management of ideas, etc.

L: Quality and control of language e.g. style, vocabulary, syntax, punctuation, etc.

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M: Accuracy of mechanics Etc.

This sample essay is an example of an H1 grade essay. It has very few flaws…maybe a wobble or two on 'L' but is somewhere over the 95%.

Sample Discursive Essay.

We are a self-obsessed generation.

We are certainly a self-obsessed generation. Good afternoon, my name is Jessica and I am here to discuss the type of generation we are. We are the type of generation that won't get accolades for giving homeless people food, the type of generation that wants gratification for the way we look, the type of generation that is so focused on our wants and needs, we rarely take the time to wonder how world hunger will end, or, the effects of climate change. I am sorry to say we are that kind of generation.

We live in an era where social media dictates most of our actions. As a young person, it would be ignorant of me to disregard the role social media plays in my life. On Instagram, we have a whole profile dedicated to ourselves. Posing and pouting for cameras, actively looking for people to stroke our egos. We rarely take the time to send messages to ask how people are feeling, we just use social media to get people to focus on us. We are so fixated on ourselves we find it hard to not to check a new notification, saying we just. got a like on our new photo. We constantly feel the need to stay plugged in so that we know people notice us, so that we know what people think of us, because that all who we truly care about-ourselves. Did you know it is said that when you get a new notification on Instagram it triggers the same response drugs like cocaine trigger? We are addicted to people paying attention to us. We are so obsessed with ourselves that we want other people to be, it just isn't healthy.

A social-media platform that I resent with all my heart is Snapchat. In my eyes, the main reason for the application is to show how you are, to show how your life is, it doesn't help anyone, in any shape or form. Snapchat, can, yes, be a way for people to connect with each other but nowadays, it is a tool to keep people focused on us. I am totally guilty of constantly checking the amount of views I get or my story within seconds of posting. No good can come from snapchat, as I see it, we already have places to connect with people, but to have a live documentary about your life just isn't logical. People posting daily about them going to school, lunch, or even a romantic date is the height of self-obsession. I believe you just want people to be jealous and long for a life like yours.

Imagine a world without world-hunger, racism or porverty. Many people can't because they are so infatuated with their own problems. 'First-world-problems' are a pain to witness and reinforce the idea that self-obsession is progressing rapidly. Some people just can't see past their own problems. How many of you have complained about having exams, having to do jobs around the house or annoying brothers and sisters? I'm sorry but all of these problems are mice in comparison to elephants-compared to the problems people in developing countries have to face on a daily basis. While we complain about having to eat our veg there is a Ugandan woman out there wondering where the nearest source of clean drinking water is. She might well have to walk miles in the baking sun to find a well, to get life-giving water-to save her dehydrated infant. While we sit stewing and muttering about exams and homework there is a Mexican teenager trying to work out how to avoid

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becoming a member of or a victim of the drug cartels. While we grumble about tedious siblings a Syrian girl mourns the loss of her entire family in an airstrike. Ladies and gentlemen, we are so busy thinking about our problems that we don't even take the time to think of others, and, exercise cultivating an attitude of gratitude.

Gratitude and self-obsession, I believe, are on two different ends of a spectrum. Gratitude means you have a well-rounded view as to what you have and don't have, but, you still appreciate it because you know it's better than nothing, Now, if you ask anyone if they are truly happy with what they have, they probably lie and shrug, saying their happy. This couldn't be further from the truth. As a self-obsessed generation, we have a small voice at the back of our heads telling us we are entitled to more, entitled to bigger cars, more followers, more money. We are an insatiable species. Contentment is scarce due to the self-obsession the generation has now subscribed to. We start to believe the world is unfair if it doesn't favour us. From a very young age "mine" is one of the words that we say rentlessly, exclaiming how things belong to us. No one taught us this, it was just our selfish nature manifesting. The gratitude we should express is constantly overshadowed with this repulsive selfishness dwelling inside us, as we believe everything is ours, should be ours, and will be ours.

I have a confession to make, when I am hungry, I am hungry. I don't care about anyone else's hunger. My hunger is the only thing that matters. I couldn't care less about being happy because I ate a couple of hours previously, all I care about is satisfying my hunger pangs right now. I can admit to being obsessed with myself as many people can relate as well. My hunger will be satisfied and no-one would have to deal with my attitude when 'hungry', it is a win-win situation. So, wait, what if it was a good thing to be self-obsessed?

Our self-obsession can manifest in various ways but it doesn't always have to be negative. Ever heard of the saying 'no one is you, and that's your superpower'? You see, another form of self-obsession can be determination to achieve one's goals without comparing yourself to anyone else. Our self-obsession can be expressed in the manner because at that point in time, you are only thinking about making yourself a better person and nothing else. I have heard countless number of times that 'comparison is the thief of joy'. Doesn't this reinforce the idea to just concentrate on yourself? In this generation we are obsessed. Obsessed with progress. Obsessed with change. Obsessed with love. We work hard to progress in terms of our career. We help to change gender roles and other things. We love ourselves. Self-love equally as important to have the ability to love others. So maybe it's necessary to be obsessed with ourselves before we reach out to help other people or try to solve global issues. As the saying goes, 'charity begins from home', the only way to make a change outside is to make a change inside, and I believe, as a generation, we try our very best to do this daily.

Ladies and gentlemen, self-obsession is complicated. It can be portrayed in both negative and positive ways. As we all know, 'too much of anything is bad'. Having an excessive amount of self-obsession will only lead to selfishness. And on the flip side, having it in moderation can lead to your progression. As discussed previously, we are undoubtedly a self-obsessed generation but I implore you to use it moderately.

Thank you for listening. (1235 words-about four A4 pages.)

P 26

C 24

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L 25

M 10

85

Examiner's comments:

Elements of discursive genre very present

Candidate understands genre and composition is sustained and focused overall.

There is a salient and convincing quality to the arguments.

Effective use of humour

Fresh and lively language

There is a lack of control of thought in parts

The passage on the benefits of self-obsession is weaker than the rest of the essay

C-control is lacking in parts

L- suspect in parts, eg. The mice V elephants comparison doesn't work.

Lacks the 'flourish' an H1 composition would have.

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Approaching Paper 2 Questions

The Single Text

A word on Single Text Leaving Certificate Questions.

Leaving Certificate questions on the Single Text are frequently drawn from three areas: Characters and their relationships, Themes and the last area is Dramatic Techniques. Sometimes they might blend two of these areas, eg. Linking a character or characters to a specific theme etc.

The Dramatic Techniques area of study, when it appears on the paper can be dressed up in language that doesn't include the words 'Dramatic Techniques'. You might be asked a question worded thus: 'Macbeth' has all the ingredients of compelling drama' or 'Four hundred years after 'Macbeth' was first staged, it is still relevant to modern audiences.'

In both of the above scenarios the question challenges the scholar to explore the reasons why Shakespeare's play is still relevant/compelling/interesting/entertaining etc. The examiners will look for a discussion of the stylistic/technical aspects of the play that continue to enthrall audiences to this day. The list below contains some of the devices/dramatic techniques that Shakespeare uses:

Compelling Characterisation-Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Banquo.

Eternal and Universal Themes-Ambition, Good Vs. Evil/Order Vs. Disorder, Poison/toxicity, Appearance v Reality etc.

Unexpected Plot Twists

The play within the play

Soliloquies

Imagery/Symbolism/Language patterns

Dramatic Irony elicits audience 'buy-in'-think pantomime…audience has knowledge the characters don't…we are invested in the characters' fates

Grandstand Final Scene Etc.

If you choose three/four from this list and explore how and why they make Shakespeare's play compelling/relevant/interesting etc that will be enough

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1. **Characters**:

The aspects of **Macbeth's** character you need to be familiar with:

- External factors that contribute to his downfall -Lady Macbeth and Witches.
- Internal factors that precipitate his downfall – ambition and self-interest.
- Macbeth's soliloquies
- The audience's reaction to and levels of sympathy for Macbeth.
- His relationship with his wife Lady Macbeth.
- His behaviour as King / tyrant!

Other characters:

- **Lady Macbeth** – her central role in the initial stages of the play-sympathy? Motivation?
- **Duncan** – a Godly king but is he a poor judge of character?
- **Banquo** – as a person in his own right and as a "foil" to Macbeth… his level of guilt? Macbeth is guilty by commission (what he does) Banquo is guilty because of omission (what he does not do)
- **The Witches** – their role in the play and influence on Macbeth…their equivocation
- **Minor characters** – Macduff, Malcolm, Edward

2. Themes:

- **Kingship**
- **Power**
- **Good vs. Evil**
- **Justice vs Injustice**
- **Appearance vs. Reality**
- **Equivocation**

3. Style:

- **Imagery** – blood, animal, clothing imagery
- **Relevance to a modern audience**
- **Compelling use of the supernatural**
- **Soliloquys**
- **Vivid Characterisation**
- **Sub-plot and unexpected plot twists**
- **Dramatic Irony**
- **Grandstand Finale**

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Past Exam Questions

2014

(i) "Macbeth's relationships with other characters can be seen primarily as power struggles which prove crucial to the outcome of the play."
Discuss the above statement in relation to at least two of Macbeth's relationships with other characters. Support your answer with suitable reference to the play, *Macbeth*.

OR

(ii) "Throughout the play, *Macbeth*, Shakespeare makes effective use of a variety of dramatic techniques that evoke a wide range of responses from the audience."
Discuss this view with reference to at least two dramatic techniques used by Shakespeare in the play. Support your answer with suitable reference to the text.

2013

(i) "The variety of significant insights that we gain into Macbeth's mind proves critical in shaping our understanding of his complex character."
Discuss this view, supporting your answer with suitable reference to the play, *Macbeth*.

OR

(ii) "Shakespeare makes effective use of disturbing imagery in the play, *Macbeth*."
Discuss this statement, supporting your answer with suitable reference to the text.

2009
(i) "Macbeth's murder of Duncan has horrible consequences both for Macbeth himself and for Scotland."
Write a response to this statement. You should refer to the play in your answer.

OR

(ii) "*Macbeth* has all the ingredients of compelling drama."
Write a response to this statement, commenting on one or more of the ingredients which, in your opinion, make *Macbeth* a compelling drama.

2007
(i) "The relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth undergoes significant change during the course of the play."
Discuss this statement supporting your answer with the aid of suitable reference to the text.

OR

(ii) "Essentially the play *Macbeth* is about power, its use and abuse."
Discuss this view of the play, supporting your answer with the aid of suitable reference to the text.

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2004
(i) "Shakespeare's *Macbeth* invites us to look into the world of a man driven on by ruthless ambition and tortured by regret."
Write a response to this view of the play, *Macbeth*, supporting the points you make by reference to the text.

OR

(ii) "The play, *Macbeth*, has many scenes of compelling drama."
Choose one scene that you found compelling and say why you found it to be so. Support your answer by reference to the play.

2003
(i) "We feel very little pity for the central characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's play."
To what extent would you agree with the above view? Support your answer by reference to the play

OR

(ii) "In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare presents us with a powerful vision of evil."
Write your response to the above statement. Textual support may include reference to a particular performance of the play you have seen.

1995
(i) Discuss the course and nature of the resistance to Macbeth's rule in the play.
Support your answer by quotation from or reference to the play.

OR

(ii) "Kingship, with all its potential for good or evil, is a major theme in the play, *Macbeth*."
Discuss this view, supporting your answer by quotation from or reference to the play.

1991
(i) "The eternal struggle between good and evil – a struggle in which evil comes very close to victory – is the central theme of the play *Macbeth*."
Discuss this view and show how the struggle is illustrated in the imagery of the play. Support your answer by reference or quotation.

OR

(ii) "While there are redeeming features in the character of Macbeth, Lady Macbeth is portrayed as a ruthless opportunist whose ambition for her husband supersedes all moral considerations."
Discuss this view, supporting your answer by reference or quotation.

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Approaching the Comparative Question



Nil desperandum !

Although the comparative is often perceived as being the most complex and confusing of the compositions in critical literacy on the second paper of your Leaving Cert. English examination, with a careful and thoughtful approach feelings of panic can be kept at bay. The aim of this set of notes is to give you a kind of a roadmap that should help you organise your thoughts in an effective manner both while you study and when you attempt to answer comparative questions.

It is vital to remember that in this section of Paper 2 the marks go on the structure of your answer and how consistently and clearly you are addressing the question in a comparative manner. The task does not expect a single text, in-depth knowledge of the texts. It is good practice to see the texts as a series of key moments pertaining to the particular modes you are studying at the time.

The modes we are concentrating on for 2024 are:

- **Literary Genre-how the story is told**
- **Vision & Viewpoint-the commentary the text makes on the human condition**
- **Cultural Context-'the way we do things around here'**

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A Word on Key Moments

Key moments often involve significant events, conversations, happenings. They might be found in a dramatic event or action-the breaking of Myrtle's nose in GG (an example of male aggression subjugating female 'defiance' CC/Relationships) for example or it might be a less dramatic but none-the-less significant event such as the conversation between 'man and wife' as in the key conversation in ADH where Helmer suggests the it is mothers who corrupt their children (this sets in motion Nora's sometimes frantic implosion in the face of Helmer's dominance…ultimately leading to the dramatic conclusion-CC/Relationships). It can be more subtle too, for example in WB when Ree is touching her father's clothes and holds his banjo tenderly (this silent scene conveys powerfully the love she has for her father and how much his absence has affected her-CC/Relationships). Often the same moments can illustrate an aspect of more than one mode-we might call these 'shared' KMs.

My point is that if you see a moment/episode/sequence in the text as significant you need to add it to your notes-qualifying it with WHY you see it as a KM under whatever mode you are studying. The SEC directives to examiners urge them to award **"awareness of themselves (ie you) as readers, their reactions/responses/involvement."** Most candidates will focus on the common key moments. If you can add **"originality and freshness"** by having a key moment that others don't have, your marks will be boosted-providing it's relevant to the question and gainfully employed by you in your answer.

I would strongly urge you to select *several key moments* (KM) from each text that illustrate the ideas you have around the mode you are studying. You might think about selecting a number of KMs from the exposition, the body of the text and the conclusion as you study for the exam. One way in which to think about the KM conundrum is to draw up a three column grid , examples of which are to be found below. At home it might be better to use A3 paper rather than A4 as it gives more room for your KMs and analysis. Your answer in June will be based on the LINKED BUT QUALIFIED COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THESE key moments.

See below for ideas on how to study comparative effectively.

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Sample Comparative Grid

	Text1	Text2	Text3
KM Exposition			
KM Body of Story			
KM Conclusion/ Resolution			
Analysis/ Commentary			

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Sample Completed Grid- Mode: CC. Topic-violence in the CC.

NB-This sample is using the texts the classes studied for the 2020 LC but the principle and technique is the same

	GG	**ADH**	**WB**
KM Exposition	Daisy-bruised finger-Tom's 'cruel body' (ch. 1) Ch.2-Myrtle's broken nose. Physical violence/threat of present early on-foreshadowing?	Not as obvious as other two texts. Psychological violence? air of intimidation in Thorvald's infantilization of N. indicates overwhelming power of men in this CC-Krogstad's threats	Marching practice in school-Teardrop-verbal violence towards Victoria followed by physical assault on Ree-loading pistol at table-constant presence of guns
KM Body of Story	Gatsby-criminality-Wolfsheim's human molar cufflinks-psychological violence-Tom v G in ch. 7	Act 2-vindictiveness of K's threats-Helmer's reaction to being called 'petty' he rages and roars at N. Non-physical but disempowering for N. N's suicide?	Ree's beating-administered by Merab and the ugly sisters at the bequest of Thump-the grim reality of Jessop's death-Teardrop smashes truck-implicitly threatens Sheriff
KM Conclusion/ Resolution	Myrtle's violent death-Gatsby and Wilson's death	Thorvald physically restrains N in final scene after reading the 1st letter. N struggles to break free. Violence mostly	Ree's journey into darkness-chainsaw moment-she brings Jessop's arms to sheriff in a plastic bag-Teardrop knows who killed J-WB

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		psychological in this CC but present.	concludes but violence not over…

Answering the question.

Comparative Studies:

Candidates will be required to answer on one mode. The internal question choice within modes will remain the same.

Single questions (marked out of 70) will require candidates to refer to **at least two texts** in their response. **The same criteria for assessment will apply to candidates irrespective of whether they refer to two texts or to three texts when responding to 70 mark questions in Section II of Leaving Certificate Higher Level English Paper 2, The Comparative Study.**

Two-part questions (marked out of 30 and 40) will require candidates to refer to ONE TEXT in answer to part (a) and to TWO OTHER TEXTS in answer to part (b). The reference requirements outlined above are exemplified in Section II of the 2013 examination paper.

A Golden Rule which applies to the entire of Paper II!
ALWAYS endeavour to fit your material to the question:
NEVER attempt to fit the question to your material!

The guidelines in the SEC Marking Scheme (see Appendix 2) make it clear that marks are awarded on 'P' where candidates take on board the targets they need to 'hit' in the question and where they consistently and in a sustained and supported manner engage in a comparative way with the task set. In other words **ATFQ**!

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Your 'personal engagement' with the texts is what the examiners are after. If you can show in your answer that you have engaged with the stories, that you have thought about characters and their journeys in the context of the modes you have studied and if you stay on task and answer the question in a structured and comparative way the examiner will reward you.

Take your time as you read through the questions and choose the question that suits you best. **Don't ignore the two part option**. It has been my experience as an examiner that most students opt for the 70 mark comparative essay. Part (a) will ask you to explore ONE TEXT. Part (b), asks you to deal with THE OTHER TWO TEXTS YOU HAVE STUDIED in a comparative frame. You don't need to refer to the text used in part (a) in your answering of part (b). The examiners mark the two part question /30 and /40 marks. The discrete criteria PCLM vertical grid is not used but, of course, the four criteria are what dictates your mark and the examiner will have those criteria in mind as they assess your answer.

Constructing a Comparative answer-a suggested approach.

(There is no set structure to a comparative essay, however, the more structured an answer is, the more coherent it will be and the higher your grade will be; all things being equal.)

No comparison is straightforward and to push up into the higher grade brackets you need to be aware of **qualifying comparisons** where necessary. For example, similarities on the surface can conceal differences under the surface. Things that are similar can also be different, if you will.

The three step **PIE** method, as is often the case in English is useful in comparative tasks. Make your **P**oint, **I**llustrate your point via reference to a key moment, quote if you can-it adds weight and moment to your point and finally **E**laborate on the idea. Show how your **I** supports your **P**.

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The Question:

"The roles men and women are expected to fulfil in societies give us insights into the power structures governing their respective cultural contexts"

1. List the texts thus at the top of the first page of your essay:

"The Great Gatsby" (GG) a novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald
"A Doll's House" (DH) a play by Henrik Ibsen
"Winter's Bone" (WB) a film, dir. Debra Granik

1. In your introductory paragraph define the mode. Brevity is the soul of wit so don't indulge in a lengthy treatise on the mode. For example it is enough to describe CC as 'the way we do things around here' or words to that effect and then focus on the ASPECT, in this case gender roles and expectations and the insights that aspect of the texts' CCs gave you as a reader. Then address the question head on and set out your stall, being careful not to overpopulate your introduction with ideas. Remember, if you say in the introduction that you are going to deal with three points make sure you deal with three points in the essay:

*One can define the cultural context mode as **"the way we do things around here"**. By studying the very different expectations that the societies in the texts I studied have of men and women **I was able to gain significant insights** into the way in which **men endeavour to control and subjugate women.** What became apparent as I studied the three texts was that, despite the significant timespan covering the three texts, from c.1870 to the first decade of the 21st century, the basic power structures remained the same. Women were expected to fulfil certain obligations foisted on them by a patriarchy thus limiting their choices and their freedoms.*

2. In your first paragraph I suggest you compare two of your texts, perhaps on the basis of a similarity. Make your point re text 1, use a key moment to support your point and then elaborate and develop the point. Deploy the linking phrase and bring to bear text 2. Use a key moment to support your point. Elaborate/develop the point alluding to both texts in the balance of the first paragraph:

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ADH opens with a scene of apparent domestic Victorian perfection. It is Christmas in the Helmer household and Nora is in a state of excited anticipation as she gets ready for the festive season, her arms full of presents as the porter brings in the Christmas tree. She endeavours to keep quiet so as not to disturb Thorvald who is at work in the study. This little detail, and her surreptitious consumption of the macaroons suggest, even this early that Nora's role is subservient. Her role as a kind of chattel-wife is illuminated further when Torvald infantilises and objectifies her using terms such as "little lark" and "squirrel". He gives her money-as an uncle would to a niece and berates her for being such a spendthrift. Nora's role is confirmed as a wife-child, a beautiful accessory to be admired by her husband, a home-maker and a mother. It is a ***very clearly defined role*** *in this very conservative cultural context. Unarguably we are in a patriarchal* ***power structure*** *where the rules are written by men, for men.* ***There is a strong resemblance****,* ***<u>at least on the surface</u>*** *between the impression we get of what's expected of women in the play and what's expected of them in the film, WB-despite the c. 140 years between both cultural contexts. Within about ten minutes of the opening credits Ree Dolly is portrayed to us as playing a very similar role to Nora. She too is expected to fulfil the roles of mother, nurse and carer, educator and home maker. She is less house bound than Nora is but she seems to be a 'maid of all work' in her cultural context. When she goes to school it is to drop her younger siblings to class. She is shown twice looking in through door windows at the school activities of her peers. This suggests that she is locked out. Like Nora, her choices appear to be limited by the patriarchal power structures at play in the Ozark community. As she ventures on her odyssey she encounters resistance, mostly from men. Teardrop warns her off asking questions and physically assaults her in his house. Merab says 'Ain't you got no man to do this?' later in the film. It is becoming apparent that Ree is venturing outside her designated role. However, she, unlike Nora appears to have more freedom. She is often pictured outside the home. Nora is a creature of the interior domestic sphere until the play's denouement. In both cases early on in the respective stories we see a parallel pattern emerging where women are subjugated by a patriarchal structure.*

3. Drop a line. Deploy your well-chosen linking phrase. Bring to bear text three. Make your point. Allude to the first two texts. Key moment-then elaborate and analyse in a comparative manner. Include what you discussed in paragraph one in your analysis:

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The roles expected of women in my third text, GG ***were more difficult to define.*** *Where Ree and Nora had clearly defined roles* ***I found it hard to work out what was expected of Daisy in the novel.*** *She is,* ***like Nora*** *a kind of trophy wife. She too, like Nora is portrayed as frivolous and inconsequential in the opening. She seems to lie around all day in expensive clothes with her pal Jordan, waiting for something to happen. Daisy indulges in superficial conversation at the dinner party, eg. the pointless story about the 'butler's nose'. In a key conversation with Nick Carraway, the narrator, she describes how disappointed and cynical she has become. She thinks the best thing her daughter can be is "a beautiful little fool". She is painfully aware that Tom, her husband is a serial philanderer as the phone calls from Myrtle Wilson, Tom's 'woman in New York' keep interrupting the party like a 'fifth guest'. I wonder whether or not she is describing herself and her role as defined by this society?* ***If so then there is a strong link between the expectations foisted on Daisy in New York in 1922 and those foisted on Nora in the cultural context of the play.*** *Daisy is wife and mother, although Pammy is only seen once in the novel and Daisy is in no way as hands on a mum as Nora is. Daisy's role, as defined by the cultural context of the jazz age seems to be a subservient one* ***even though in the exposition, she is feisty and defiant,*** *repeating the word 'hulking' to annoy her husband, Tom and belittling his intellect, "He reads deep books with long words in them." In this much, at least,* ***Daisy is like Ree in her 'defiance' of the power structure represented by Tom.*** *Before reading the novel I thought that the Jazz Age would see a more equal society where power structures are concerned but as the story progressed I began to realise that, just like the other two texts I studied, the power structures are dominated by men and woe-betide any female character who steps outside her allotted role.*

4. Repeat the above structure with your second and subsequent points.

5. Don't worry too much about a beautiful and lengthy conclusion to your essay. A brief summing up of your essay where you return to the terms of the question is enough. You will be marked on how well you have answered the question. There is little point in repeating in detail what you've covered in the essay-the examiner has just assessed it.

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By studying gender roles and expectations in my three texts I gained valuable insights into the power structures that govern the three cultural contexts as I have discussed above.

Comparative linking phrases: Avoid abusing our old friends 'similarly' and 'in contrast'. Mix it up. Be daring!

TERMS USED TO DENOTE SIMILARITY	TERMS USED TO DENOTE DISSIMILARITY
Likewise	By contrast
Similarly	On the other hand
In the same way	However
Also	Whereas this is black, the other is blue
There is a parallel between	There is a distinct difference
There is a resemblance between	There is no comparison between
There is an analogy between	As different as chalk and cheese
They are alike	Totally dissimilar
Identical	Totally unlike
Equivalent to	The antithesis of
Corresponds with	The reverse of
Equally	The opposite of
One and the same	At variance with

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Approaching Poetry

The Unseen Poem-An Overview.

In this section of Paper II, you are presented with a poem which you will not have studied before and which you may not have seen before. The Unseen Poem is worth 20 marks or 10% of Paper II.

Sometimes an introduction to the poem is provided. **Don't ignore or disregard this. It can provide valuable insights and valuable material for answering the questions.** You may be set questions on: the **language** of the poem, either in the poem as a whole or in selected lines or phrases; the **imagery** of the poem; the **moods** and **emotions** of the poem, particularly as expressed through **sound**; and the **theme**, **experience** or **content** of the poem. You can choose between:

(1) two separate questions dealing with specific aspects of the poem, for 10 marks each.

(2) a single question on the entire poem, for 20 marks.

Your answers do not have to be long, 300 to 450 words on average but the key thing is to work around the idea of **what the poem says to you** and to concentrate on content but **more importantly the technical (sound and imagery) aspects of the poem.**

NB! There is no 'correct' reading of any poem-only your own interpretation.

In its annual guidelines to examiners correcting Leaving Certificate English scripts, the State Examinations Commission offers the following general observations on the Unseen Poem.

"Students should be able to... read poetry conscious of its specific mode of using language as an artistic medium…

Note that responding to the unseen poem is an exercise in aesthetic reading. It is especially important, in assessing the responses of the candidates, to guard against the temptation to assume a 'correct' reading of the poem…

Reward the candidates' awareness of the patterned nature of the language of poetry, its imagery, its sensuous qualities, and its suggestiveness…

Pay particular attention to 'the patterned nature of the language of poetry."

(DES English Syllabus, 4. 5. 1)

In discussing the patterns of **sound**, keep in mind that sounds can be hard, harsh, jarring, and cacophonous or soft, sweet, and melodious. To achieve either effect, poets might use **assonance**, **alliteration**, **metre**, and **rhyme**. The word **tone**, which has an emotional content, may be used when discussing the 'feel' of a particular sound. All the sounds together create the **rhythm** of a poem, and rhythm, as in music, may be fast or slow, but more precisely, a million things in between, such as excited, intense, frantic, languorous, seductive, reflective …. A technique very often used to control rhythm is the

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caesura, a pause inside a line, mostly because it gives the rhythm the movement of informal speech, which many modern poets strive to achieve.

In discussing the patterns of **imagery**, keep in mind that the term refers to the images stimulated in the imagination by language and has its origins in the essential human activity of comparing one thing to another. We use images all the time in everyday speech, usually without thinking about them. When we call someone a clown, for instance, we don't mean that they're a clown, literally. Imagery is therefore **figurative language**, not **literal language**.

In poetry, images are selected very carefully and used very precisely, usually in patterns, where one image is linked to another to enrich the effect and the meaning.

The main technical terms for discussing imagery are **simile** – an indirect comparison, using 'as' or 'like', eg. 'She's *like* lightning on the race track' – and **metaphor** – a direct comparison, 'She *is* lightning on the race track'. Where a metaphor is developed and recurs in a poem it becomes an extended metaphor or a controlling metaphor. The preserved body of the Tollund Man in Heaney's poem of the same name, for instance.

Prescribed Poetry

Study four or five poets. Study a minimum of six poems per poet, aim to cover four poems in the June examination, do not dip below three poems in the exam.

Questions will inevitably be a variation of **WHAT** the poet is stimulated/preoccupied/exercised by, in other words the thematic/content element of their poetic corpus, and **HOW** the poet explores their chosen themes/content; in other words, the techniques/stylistic devices the poet uses when engaging with their themes. For a glossary of techniques, see the 'Glossary of Poetic Terms' at the bottom of these notes.

Marking Schemes and Prescribed Poetry Answers.

Please see below guidance for examiners from the marking scheme when approaching Prescribed Poetry answers.

GENERAL

"Students at Higher Level will be required to study a representative selection from the work of eight poets: a representative selection would seek to reflect the range of a poet's themes and interests and exhibit his/her characteristic style and viewpoint. Normally the study of at least

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six poems by each poet would be expected." (DES English Syllabus, 6.3)

Note that, in the case of each poet, the candidates have the freedom of choice in relation to the poems studied.

Note that there is not a finite list of any 'poet's themes and interests'.

Note that, in responding to the question set on any given poet, the candidates must refer to poem/s they have studied but they are not required to refer to any specific poem/s, nor are they expected to discuss or refer to all the poems they have chosen to study.

In each of the questions in Prescribed Poetry the underlying nature of the task is the invitation to the candidates to engage with the poems themselves.

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Constructing a Poetry Essay

Every question will have a ***'Language or 'How''*** element

Therefore, prepare quotation which illustrate **aspects of the poet's style, like techniques used to create:**

Imagery
1. Metaphors / symbols
2. Similes
3. Personification
4. Juxtapositions
5. Allusions
6. Precision (verb choice / noun-adjective combinations

Rhythm/Sound Patterns
1. Alliteration
2. Sibilance
3. Meter
4. Rhyme
5. Assonance

And

Other techniques like:
1. Oxymoron
2. Repetition
3. Enjambment
4. Characterisation
5. Engaging opening lines

'Language' wording from past questions
1. *Vivid imagery*
2. *evocative imagery*
3. *provocative imagery*
4. *natural imagery*
5. *powerful language*
6. *Appealing descriptive style*
7. *A diverse range of imagery*
8. *an engaging style*
9. *a dated style*
10. *a vivid and energetic style*
11. *masterful use of aesthetically pleasing language*
12. *unique approach to language*
13. *effective use of poetic narrative scenes*
14. *transforms the familiar and mundane*

You must engage with these aspects of the question in a reflective and text-based approach

Top-tip: **Practise** writing paragraphs, moulding prepared material to the wording of past questions

Every question will also have a **Thematic or 'What'** element

You need to think about the
- Message
- Philosophical insights
- Purpose
- Subject matter

Motifs

Think about the **thematic connections** between poems – if there are connections, use them **to link your discussion** of different poems.

Paper 2
- Section 3
- 50 marks
- C. 50 minutes

- **8 poets** prescribed for study
- **5 questions**
- **Answer 1**

Minimum requirement:
Prepare 4 poems x 4 poets

Best Practice:
Prepare 5/6 poems x 4/5 poets

Completed essay
At least 1,000 words long

Examples:

1. **Bishop's'** forensic description leading to revelation
2. **Heaney's** emphasis on place and history
3. **Eliot's** seeming preoccupation with the bleakness of the human experience
4. **Yeats'** exploration of the personal and the political
5. **Smith's** exploration of memory, religion relationships etc.

'Thematic concerns' wording from past questions

1. *…meaningful insights about the nature of life*
2. *…explore the complexity of a variety of abstract ideas*
3. *…triumphs, trials and limitations of the human condition*
4. *…explore structures and values in society*
5. *…themes are irrelevant in the twenty-first century."*
6. *…fascination with life and its rich experiences*
7. *…insights he draws from history, myth and legend*
8. *…profoundly insightful*
9. *…profound lessons*
10. *…intellectually stimulating*
11. *…analytical*
12. *…themes relevant to contemporary Ireland*
13. *…probe universal aspects of the human condition*

Structure - Opening

1. A short, direct and confident **opening sentence**
2. A **THESIS STATEMENT** which addresses the elements of the set task and clearly establishes the intended approach of the essay
3. An **opening paragraph** which **is question-facing** and establishes **links** between poems, where they exist

Development Paragraphs

1. Follow the PIE guidelines (Point, Illustrate, Explain)
2. Each paragraph needs to have a purpose which is clearly relevant to the task
3. The paragraphs should endeavour to make points which are **Separate but Connected**
4. **Quotation** used in support of points being made
5. A clear mix of **Summary and Relevant Commentary** within each Development Paragraph
6. A concluding paragraph which refers both to the question and to the key points developed

Finally, remember; you are being examined on three things:

- your 'personal engagement' with and knowledge of the poetry
- clear communication
- analytical skills.

If you want to score well, you must focus on the task and remain focused on PCLM!!

HEANEY STUDENT SAMPLE 1

Class A Tuesday

48/50

9:00 – 10:00

Heaney uses a deceptively simple style to convey profound observations about people and places.

Seamus Heaney's poetry is celebrated for its ability to elevate the everyday into the extraordinary, to turn simple experiences into poems that have been studied by many people across the world. His deceptively simple style, marked by vivid imagery, precise language, and an acute sensitivity to his surroundings, reveals profound observations about people and places. His style, on a first reading can often seem overly simple, but I believe through poems such as Mossbawn: Sunlight, The Skunk, A Call, and The Forge, Heaney transforms seemingly mundane moments into meditations on memory, love, mortality, and resilience.

In Mossbawn: Sunlight, Heaney captures the warmth of a childhood memory, using the simple domestic imagery to explore themes of love and connection. The poem opens with a calm, rhythmic tone, as Heaney describes the sun as "like a griddle cooling / Against the wall of each long afternoon." This vivid image evokes both the literal warmth of the sun and the metaphorical warmth of his home – the place that moulded him into the poet he became. The poem centres on his aunt, who is portrayed not through a full in-depth description but through the repetitive, loving act of baking. Her "floury apron" and "whitened nails" become symbols of quiet devotion, grounding the memory in tactile, sensory detail.

These small details, captured via the eyes of the young Heaney demonstrates the appreciation that he must have felt for his aunt. Her baking is to me, an act of quiet devotion, of care. She provides a safe environment for young Seamus to explore himself and ultimately creates the metaphorical "womb" of his creative self. The man Seamus Heaney may not have been born in Mossbawn, but the poet was. Through this focus on the ordinary, Heaney reveals the extraordinary stability and love that defined his early life. The deceptively simple descriptions mask a profound reflection on the enduring influence of familial love and the deep

connection between people and their places of origin – his connection to the north of Ireland undoubtably affected his works. Perhaps without his aunt's nurture, and her stewardship of his youthful, creative mind, he would not be the same man we know today.

Similarly, in The Skunk, Heaney's everyday observations evolve into an intimate meditation on love and longing. The poem's central image of a skunk, observed during his time apart from his wife, serves as an unexpected but evocative metaphor for their relationship - perhaps Heaney is the only man who could compare his lover to a skunk and get away with it. Descriptions such as "the black plunge-line nightdress" and the skunk's "intent and glamorous" movements blend the mundane with the sensual, capturing both physical desire and emotional intimacy.

The skunk, "ordinary" yet "mysterious," mirrors the complexity of his memory of his wife - fragile yet persistent. To me it also shows how exotic California must have been to him – a skunk would have been a rare sight around Mossbawn. It has been eleven years since he had last written love letters to his wife – this to me shows his pining for her: "After eleven years I was composing/Love-letters again", this to me shows the profound effect that the distance between them had on him. She was his muse, his first critic, she was perhaps the person whose opinion mattered most to him in the world.

Skunks don't live in Ireland

What begins as a humorous observation soon deepens into a poignant exploration of absence and connection. His wife's absence becomes a tangible presence in the poem. Small, intimate details, such as the distinctive "tang" of eucalyptus, serve as poignant reminders of her; reminders that she is not there with him. Reminders that she is across an ocean. Five thousand miles away.

This scent, described as "useless" highlights his inability to share the moment with her, all these sights, these opulent and exotic senses are nothing when compared to the idea of "inhaling you off a cold pillow". He misses his wife. His soulmate. His divine counterpart. Even something as simple as having a glass of wine reinforces the sense of absence and

distance between them. As in Mossbawn: Sunlight, Heaney's attention to the small, often overlooked details allows him to articulate perhaps universal truths, drawing a parallel between the constancy of love and the effects distance can have on our relationships to the people around us.

A Call shifts slightly from the themes of love and memory to a quiet meditation on mortality. The poem's premise is again, deceptively simple: a phone call with Heaney's father as he tends to his garden. Yet, through understated language and precise imagery, Heaney transforms this everyday interaction into a profound exploration of life's fragility. Within two years, 1984 and 1986 Heaney lost both of his parents. He was deeply affected by this. This poem, in particular, feels like a powerful expression of his emotions and may be interpreted as an act of elegising his late parents. The poem opens with the poet's mother's voice on the phone as Heaney telephones home and asks to speak to his father.

The "amplified grave ticking of hall clocks" serves as a subtle reminder of the passage of time, while the description of his father "touching, inspecting, separating one / Stalk from the other" conveys both the ordinariness and the dignity of his actions. In this moment his father is the Grim Reaper, the personification of Death, he chooses which of the leeks survive and which don't. Which are untimely plucked from their bed, and which get to live on. Heaney depicts Death, through his father as benevolent, both "Pleased/but rueful".

Heaney muses that in the modern era the telephone would be how Death would call upon the "Everyman". To me this makes the image of the un-attended phone more sobering. His parents have been 'called' upon by Death itself. The tension between the mundane and the profound reaches its peak in the final lines, where the speaker's hesitation to say "I loved him" underscores the unspoken depth of their bond. Heaney wishes that he could have told his father how he felt, before Death took him too.

He wants others to avoid the mistakes he made, for one to live each day as if your loved ones could be taken from you. To enjoy their presence while you can. Like The Skunk, this poem captures intimacy through simplicity,

using small moments to confront universal themes of love, loss, and the inevitability of time. However, to me this poem holds more weight, more impact. The more we think, the more we understand, the darker it gets. To me this poem truly shows Heaney's talent as a wordsmith.

In The Forge, Heaney turns his focus outward, using the figure of the blacksmith to explore themes of tradition, creativity, and resilience. The forge itself is described with precise, tactile imagery: "The hammered anvil's short-pitched ring" and "the hiss when a new shoe tightens in water." These details ground the poem in the physicality of the blacksmith's craft while also suggesting its metaphorical significance as a site of transformation; a site where something is created from nothing, a place of manifestation – of creation.

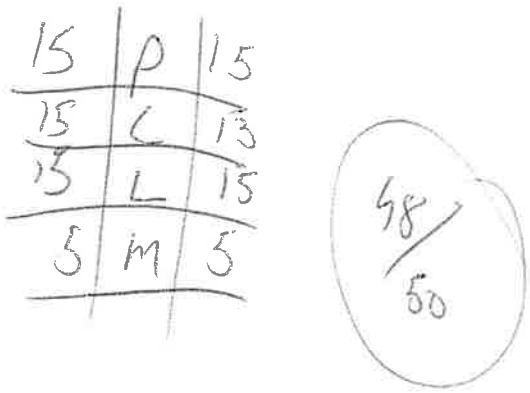
However, Heaney is an outsider in this world, he is stuck at the threshold, stating "All I know is a door into the dark". Heaney can only imagine what lurks within this darkness. He can only imagine the magic of the blacksmiths craft. He depicts his work as something mystical – describing the anvil as "horned as a unicorn". He imagines the anvil; an altar of creation, "Set there immoveable" at the centre of it all. The 'Omphalos' of the smith's domain.

The blacksmiths 'altar' "set there immoveable / Where he expends himself in shape and music", becomes a symbol of continuity and perseverance in the face of change. He refuses to accept the death of his craft, his is ultimately a dying art – once every village had a smith, a pillar of the community. Yet, in the poem I would argue that this pillar is decaying. Just like the "old axles and iron hoops" laid outside his shop, the smith in the poem has been left to rot by the wider world. "He leans out on the jamb, recalls a clatter / Of hoofs where traffic is flashing in rows", stuck between two worlds, unable to adapt to the changing times. Unable to evolve. Unable to move on.

The simplicity of the description belies the depth of Heaney's reflection on the passage of time and the evolving role of tradition in a modern world. The forge, much like the domestic spaces in Mossbawn: Sunlight and A

Call, becomes a lens through which Heaney examines the profound connection between people and their environments. The forge is this Blacksmiths entire world, his entire life but seemingly it is beginning to wither away. Leaving him alone, solitary, in the dark of the forge.

Heaney's ability to find depth in the ordinary is the hallmark of his deceptively simple style. Across these four poems, he uses precise language and vivid imagery to elevate everyday moments, revealing their emotional and philosophical significance. Whether reflecting on the warmth of a childhood memory, the intimacy of a romantic relationship, the quiet bonds of family, or the resilience of tradition, Heaney's poetry invites us to look closer at the world around us. In doing so, he reminds us that the profound often resides in the seemingly simple, things that others would overlook - a truth as enduring as the people and places his work so beautifully captures.



Liam Dingle: 6th Year English, (HL) Saturday Class. 2024/2025

Student sample V&V answer using 'Sive' and STLT-even though you might not be using these texts the comparative technique used in the answer is what is important to note!

The answer garnered 70/70

Using Key Moments from both texts, trace the development (the good, the bad and the ugly!) of the General Vision and Viewpoint (V&V) of both "Sive" and "Small Things Like These". Conclude your response by comparing the overall V&V of both texts. In other words, did you feel the overall V&V of the respective texts was optimistic or pessimistic, or a mixture of the two?

"Small Things Like These" (STLT), a novel by Claire Keegan
"Sive", a play by John B. Keane

Both "Sive" by John B. Keane and "Small Things Like These" by Claire Keegan explore similar themes of social oppression and the patriarchy, yet they present contrasting perspectives on hope and change shaping their respective general vision and viewpoint. While "Sive" presents a bleak portrayal of a community steeped in greed and control, STLT offers a glimmer of hope through the power of compassion.

The opening chapters of Keegan's STLT immediately introduce a negative vision and viewpoint with an emphasis on the freezing cold weather that "cut the knees off those who still knelt to say the rosary". Not only does the cold imagery foster an uneasy feeling in the reader but it is also suggestive of the frigid society in which the novel is set, where the Catholic Church rules with an iron fist and no questions are asked. This pessimistic vision and viewpoint is carried through to chapter two and is reinforced by society's attitude towards Bill Furlong's illegitimacy. He recalls being jeered, called ugly names and coming home from school with his coat covered in spit when he was just a boy. Despite having "developed good Protestant habits" society's attitude to his birth circumstances failed to change as "The clerk's mouth had bent into an ugly smile" when he went to collect his birth certificate. Despite the negative vision and viewpoint that dominates the opening chapters, moments of positivity are peppered throughout particularly with regards to Mrs Wilson who "took him under her wing, gave him little jobs and helped him along with his reading" after his mother passed away. Moments of compassion are also introduced when Bill tells Eileen he offered Mick Sinnott's "little chap" a lift and "gave him what bit of change was loose in my pocket". Furthermore, moments of beautiful familial love are seen when Bill reflects on a "deep private joy that these children were his own" and his love and respect for his wife. The Furlong family is presented as a unit, always supporting, working and looking out for one another. These moments of compassion dilute the initial negativity of the vision and viewpoint.

In comparison to this there is nothing to buffer the bleak vision and viewpoint in the opening of "Sive". The play's opening stage directions "the late evening of a bitter March day" not only sets

the atmosphere but also mirrors the freezing opening of STLT. It becomes clear that this bitterness is not exclusive to the weather as the first interaction between characters is a depressing argument between Nanna and Mena in which their hatred for one another is put on full display. While the creative insults may provide humour at first, the never-ending digs and jabs begin to oppress the reader leaving us feeling pessimistic regarding the vision and viewpoint. Mena's attitude towards her family and Sive's education stands in complete opposition to Bill's pride in his daughters and the familial harmony that we see in STLT. She is bitter and resentful of Sive saying "Out working with a farmer you should be, my girl instead of getting your head filled with high notions. You'll come to no good either, like the one that went before you". Her attitude to Sive's illegitimacy "you are a bye-child… a bastard" mirrors the attitude of New Ross society in the novel with regards to Bill's birth circumstances. The introduction of the patriarchal society depresses the vision and viewpoint further. Mena is always working, just like Eileen, cleaning, cooking, as is their expected role in society. However while Eileen's work is selfless with the focus of caring for her family, Mena works exclusively because she has to and as a result of this she has fostered a deep resentment for her family telling Nanna "I could have done better if I bided my time". The vision and viewpoint in the opening of "Sive" remains firmly negative and despite the sympathetic connection between Nanna and Sive, lacks the powerful moments of compassion and love that can be seen in STLT.

The vision and viewpoint in STLT plummets upon Bill's discovery of Magdalen girls locked in the convent grounds surrounded by towering walls topped with broken glass in chapter 4 of the novel. One of the Dublin girls appeals to Bill saying "well I've nobody, and all I want to do is drown meself. Can you not even do that fukken much for us?" The description of the girls' unkempt appearances, their hair "roughly cut as though someone blind had taken to it with a shears" highlights the neglect they face and provokes a deep sense of sadness in the reader. The argument that occurs between Bill and Eileen as a result of this interaction only succeeds in enhancing this sadness further as Eileen brutally tells Bill "wasn't it far from the hardship that you were raised". Her isolationist mindset becomes clear "if you want to get on in life,, there's thighs you have to ignore". Even if this mindset is born out of love for her family and fear of the Catholic church it still succeeds in driving a wedge between the pair which elicits a sharp uncomfortable tension. This tension only heightens when Bill discovers Sarah Redmond in the convent's coal shed. She asks Bill "Won't you ask them about my baby…They've taken him from me now…". However, Bill fails to ask and instead finds himself being threatened by Mother Superior with regards to his girls as she lies to him saying "It was all a big nothing". The presentation of a powerful figure who is meant to embody Catholic qualities as a liar and an abuser makes the reader feel hopeless. If the Catholic Church, who rule the town so rigidly, cannot be trusted then who can? Despite the depressing vision and viewpoint a glimmer of hope can be seen. Bill's encounter with Sarah Redmond will change the course of his life even if he is not yet aware. His compassion towards Sarah and his defiance towards Mother Superior gives us hope as the idea of the 'extraordinary' Bill is introduced.

Echoing the darkness present in the novel in chapter 4, in "Sive", the ugliest aspects of the vision and viewpoint emerge as the plot unfolds, however we fail to see any glimmers of hope. Even Nanna and Sive's conversations filled with tenderness and love alongside Liam and Sive's brief interactions showing the genuine nature of their relationship is not enough to overpower the commodification, monetisation and objectification of Sive. Akin to the Magdalen girls' predicament, the very people who should be protecting Sive crush her future to satisfy their own greed. Mike's decision to side with Mena and Thomasheen in the selling of his niece despite his

sister who “begged on the death-bed to educate her” is a blow to the reader. It feels as though Sive is slowly being stripped of her support system as she is separated from a defeated Nanna and forbidden from seeing Liam. The description of Séan Dóta, Sive’s much older husband as “a small man, a little wizened” contrasts with the description of Liam as a “gentleman” and a “play actor”. Sive’s telling of Séan Dóta’s attempted assault is deeply upsetting for the reader and we are overcome with pity for this young girl whose future is being sacrificed at the altar of greed. Mena and Sive’s final meaningful conversation in which she tells Sive “you will have no name till you take a husband… You are a bye-child, a common bye-child - a bastard” and throws her school books across the room makes it clear to the reader that Sive’s final chance at escaping poverty and the patriarchy are gone. By the end of the scene Sive is completely isolated and set to marry Séan Dóta. The vision and viewpoint is bleak and deeply pessimistic with not an ounce of hope to be found.

The vision and viewpoint toward the end of STLT completely shifts towards positivity as Bill is driven toward action. Bill’s discovery of Sarah Redmond, yet again in the coal shed is, of course, depressing, however, the depression is ultimately banished by Bill’s act of empathy. We feel great admiration and respect for Bill as he tells Sarah “You’ll come home with me now” As Bill’s insecurities begin to disappear he realises he is fulfilling his destiny “never once in his whole and unremarkable life had he known a happiness akin to this”. He makes a profound observation asking himself “was there any point in being alive without helping one another”. His self-actualisation and the “fresh new unrecognisable joy in his heart” leaves the reader with an upbeat vision and viewpoint. Bill's brave and unconventional act at the end of the novel demonstrates that compassion and integrity triumph over cruelty and injustice leaving us with an overall positive vision and viewpoint.

The final scenes of “Sive” stand in stark contrast to that of the novel. Nanna and Liam’s failed attempts to plead with Mena and Mike in Act 2 scene 1 inform the vision and viewpoint in an extremely negative manner. Mena and Mike will not deviate from their chosen path. They are hell bent on getting Séan Dóta’s two hundred pounds. Their unwillingness to back down is only made worse by Mike freely admitting that “Sive is young” and what they are doing is wrong continuously throughout the play. Any final hope for Sive’s escape is crushed with the burning of Liams letter by Thomasheen and from here on the vision and viewpoint only continues to become increasingly negative. Sive is last seen alive complaining that her “head is on fire”. She is far from the enthusiastic young girl we met at the beginning of the play. The vision and viewpoint reaches an all-time low when Sive is found dead by Liam after she killed herself in order to escape marriage. Sive’s death echoes the death of hope, youth and a better future; it is pointless, nothing but a direct result of others' greed. As the curtains close over a weeping Nanna, Carthalawn sums up our thoughts “Oh they murdered lovely Sive, she would not be a bride, and they laid her dead, to bury in the clay”
Both “Sive” and STLT present stark portrayals of oppressive societies where individuals struggle against greed and oppression, however, their overall vision and viewpoint differ in significant ways. STLT acknowledges the darkness of its setting but leaves room for hope. While Bill Furlong risks everything by standing up to injustice, his final foolhardy yet incredibly brave act suggests that change is possible, even in a world resistant to it. Unlike Sive, which leaves the audience with a sense of despair, the novel displays the power of compassion. The vision and viewpoint is unambiguously optimistic, the light that shines from Bill’s Christian deeds informs the vision and viewpoint in a positive manner encouraging us to reflect on the potential for goodness even in the most dark circumstances. In complete contrast to this Sive offers a predominantly

pessimistic outlook, as unlike Sarah Redmond whose future now looks much brighter, Sive's future is ultimately destroyed. Her life is sacrificed by a community that prioritises greed and reputation over human dignity. The tragic ending reinforces the imbalance between kindness and greed throughout the story and results in an extremely negative vision and viewpoint.

Ultimately, both texts highlight the cruelty of society and the oppression of women, however, their respective vision and viewpoints remain at odds despite their similar themes. STLT provides an optimistic outlook in its ending. It suggests that moral courage can make a difference, whereas Sive displays what happens when society refuses to change.