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Paper 2

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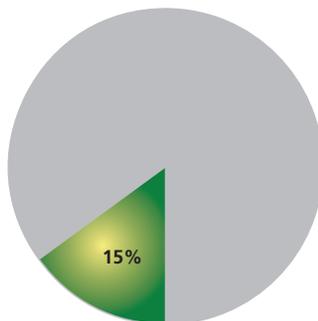
The Single Text

aims

- To outline key points to remember for Single Text revision.
- To identify the typical questions that could be asked in this section.
- To examine some texts in detail to show how to revise.

Getting started

- You will have studied **ONE** text in detail for this part of the exam.
- The questions will be quite specific.
- The writing tasks are sometimes like those found in the comprehensions on Paper 1.
- There are 60 marks available – so spend around 55 minutes on this section.



2018 Exam

- BRONTË, Emily *Wuthering Heights*
- FITZGERALD, F. Scott *The Great Gatsby*
- MILLER, Arthur *All My Sons*
- NGOZI ADICHIE, Chimamanda *Americanah*
- SHAKESPEARE, William *King Lear*
- BINCHY, Maeve *Circle of Friends*
- GAIMAN, Neil *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*
- O'CASEY, Sean *The Plough and the Stars*
- RYAN, Donal *The Spinning Heart*



There are several questions/exam pages in Paper 2 that are of no relevance to you on the day. Identify your chosen 'Single Text' and ignore the others.

2019 Exam

- AUSTEN, Jane *Persuasion*
- ATWOOD, Margaret *The Handmaid's Tale*
- CARR, Marina *By the Bog of Cats*
- NGOZI ADICHIE, Chimamanda *Americanah*
- SHAKESPEARE, William *Macbeth*
- DONOGHUE, Emma *Room*

- FITZGERALD, F. Scott *The Great Gatsby*
- RYAN, Donal *The Spinning Heart*
- SYNGE, J. M. *The Playboy of the Western World*

Revising the Single Text – WARNING!

The first thing to do here is to be **sure which text you have studied for the Single Text question**. This cannot be stressed enough for each student.

- You cannot then use that same text again in any other section.
- You will be severely penalised for using the same text again in the exam.

key
point

You must know the difference between the 'Single Text' and 'Comparative Texts' before the exam starts. Each school and teacher will make different choices.

Answering questions

When answering exam questions, your answers should follow a familiar format:

**POINT – QUOTE – EXPLAIN
OR 'P.Q.E.'**

This means that you must **write something**, include supporting **quotes or references** and then follow things up with some **further explanation of your own**.

Examiners will be on the look-out for this approach to answers on Paper 2 especially.

Question format

60 marks in total

- Three 10-mark questions – Do all three – 30 minutes
- Three longer 30-mark questions – Do ONE – 25 minutes

10-mark questions

- Comment on **specific moments** or issues in the text.
- Comment on a **specific character** and their role in the text.
- Your answers should be **precise**. **Stick to what the question asks**. You should write 6 or 7 full sentences and address the question directly with your opening sentence.
- Follow the **'statement–quotation–comment'** approach; i.e. say something to begin with, include a quote or reference, then finish with a follow-up comment.
- Spend a maximum of 10 minutes on each answer and no more than **30 minutes in total for these three questions**.
- If you are running out of time, **finish what you are doing and move on** – there are many more sections to come.

key
point

You must use your time wisely so always remember the number of marks per question.

30-mark questions

Since there are **30 marks** available, spend no more than **25 minutes** on this question. This includes writing a **short plan or brainstorm before you begin**. These are the types of questions that you should **practice beforehand when studying**.

Typical tasks

- Take a **personal point of view** on a theme/issue in the studied text.
- Imagine that you are ‘character x’ and write an **account of a key moment**.
- Write a **journalistic article** of some sort based upon the events of the studied text.
- Write a **diary/journal entry** of a key character.
- Write a **letter to/from** a character from the text.

key
point

The writing skills needed on Paper 1 are just as important in Paper 2.

Selected Single Texts

There are some essential areas for revision of the Single Text. These are:

- **STORYLINE** – what happens?
- **MAIN CHARACTERS** – who does what and why?
- **MAIN THEMES and ISSUES** – what does the text teach us?

There is a total of fifteen different ‘Single Texts’ available for study in the 2018 and 2019 Leaving Cert exam years. We will concentrate on **six of the more popular texts** suggested for Ordinary Level students.

- *The Spinning Heart* (2018/19)
- *The Great Gatsby* (2018/19)
- *The Plough and the Stars* (2018)
- *The Playboy of the Western World* (2018)
- *Room* (2019)
- *Circle of Friends* (2019)

1. *The Spinning Heart* by Donal Ryan (2018/19)

Storyline

- *The Spinning Heart* is set in an unnamed rural Irish village during **the severe economic crisis** from 2008 onwards that followed the Celtic Tiger years.
- It consists of **twenty-one separate first-person accounts** of how life has panned out for everyone in this **desolate*** and **depressing** place.



- The story is a **testimony*** of the **collapse of normality in people's everyday lives**, especially within the **family unit**. It started when a 'young Cunliffe lad' was shot dead by the armed-response unit. His old aunt then sold off the land to allow Pokey Burke to begin his building spree.
- Bobby Mahon is the first character to speak in the novel. We learn of his hatred towards his father. '**I go there every day to see is he dead and every day he lets me down.**' This sentence sets the tone for much of the novel as many dark and unpleasant experiences are remembered.
- We must piece together the story from all these chapters. However, a small number of characters play a major part in the action. These are:
 - **Pokey Burke** (he does not have a chapter – others speak about him)
 - **Bobby**
 - **Triona**
 - **Frank**
 - **Denis**
 - **Josie**
 - **Realtin**
 - **Trevor**
- The main **villain** of the story is the 'cowboy' builder and developer **Pokey Burke**. However, he does not speak at all. He is the villain because his failure to properly look after so many people employed by him has led to many of the financial and family problems and the **demise*** in general in the town. Many of the other characters then **tell their own story**, seeing reflections of their own lives in the events tied to Pokey and the various associated local people.
- The local small-town hero of sorts, **Bobby Mahon**, Pokey's **handsome but volatile*** young foreman, is suspected of murdering his **bitter and vindictive*** father, **Frank**. However, this is not true, as it was **Denis** who did so in a fit of rage one evening. Bobby's wife **Triona** provides us with an important chapter outlining the 'real' Bobby, a person quite different to his public image. She also dismisses the idea that Bobby is having an affair with **Realtin**, putting it down to gossip.
- Midway through, Realtin's baby is kidnapped from a crèche, causing all sorts of panic. The kidnapper is **Trevor**, a mentally unstable Montessori teacher and friend of the equally disturbed young man, Lloyd. The baby is rescued, unharmed, following a tip-off from young **Timmy** who informed **Jim**, the local Garda Sergeant.
- The book concludes with a long and thoughtful chapter from **Triona**, who asks us: 'what matters only love?'



Five Key Words

- **Desolate** – lonely, dreary, dismal, abandoned
- **Testimony** – evidence, spoken word, truth
- **Demise** – downfall, ending, failure
- **Volatile** – unpredictable, unstable, changeable
- **Vindictive** – vengeful, likely to seek revenge, bitter

CHARACTERS

Each of the twenty-one characters has something interesting to say about themselves or somebody else. Each chapter contains some **key words** or a **quotation** that is central to their perspective. Here are some suggestions:

Bobby – a central character in the story, he is married to Triona and was Pokey Burke's foreman and the local town hero, despite being quite insecure and full of self-doubt: **'Imagine being so suddenly useless.'**

Josie – he is the father of Pokey, who tries to explain in his own head why Pokey became the man that he is: **'Who's to blame when a child turns rotten?'**

Lily – she is described by the locals as 'the bike', a crude reference to her status as the local prostitute: **'Like the men that came to my door, nature overpowers me.'**

Vasya – he is from Khakassia in Siberia, an immigrant worker cheated by Pokey: **'I took from others words and phrases that served me well for a while: *off the books, under the table, on the queue tee.*'**

Realtin – she is an attractive but fickle young single mother living in a near-empty, half-built housing estate, who has a fancy for Bobby Mahon: **'There's nobody living in the other houses, just the ghosts of people who never existed.'**

Timmy – he is a vulnerable yet likeable young labourer whose mother died giving birth to him: **'Bobby was always fair sound to me. He was the only one never slagged me.'**

Brian – he has just left school and sees very little future for himself in Ireland: **'I won't think about Lorna again once I start tapping some fine blondie wan below in Australia, that's what I'm getting at.'**

Trevor – he comes from a family with a history of mental illness and domestic troubles. He is a Montessori teacher but with a disturbing personality: **'I'm dying, I'm sure of it. One day soon my heart will just stop dead.'**

Bridie – she has never recovered from the tragic drowning of her beloved son twenty years earlier: **'How is it at all that I let one child take my whole heart? It wasn't fair on anyone. Life isn't fair as the fella says.'**

Jason – he is an abuse victim who is also a casual witness to the murder of Frank without realising it: **‘The very minute you have a tattoo on your face the whole world looks at you different.’**

Hillary – she is a work colleague and a two-faced ‘friend’ of Realtin: **‘A lot of those culchies are mad though. They’re so *repressed* like. They all spend their whole lives going to mass and playing GAA and eating farm animals and cabbage.’**

Seanie – he is father to Realtin’s child, although they don’t enjoy a close relationship: **‘I was always a pure solid madman for women. I couldn’t stop thinking about them from when I was a small boy.’**

Denis – he is the one who actually kills Frank, in a fit of rage one evening, due to extreme stress: **‘I haven’t a snowball’s chance in hell of a job. I’m owed a small fortune. The sky is falling down.’**

Kate – she is married to Denis. She runs the local crèche and when the economic crash occurs her business suffers: **‘One good thing that happened since the recession started is that people will work for less than the minimum wage.’**

Lloyd – he claims to be a solipsist, a nonsense-philosophy that believes the entire universe consists of just him and his thoughts. He is an associate of Trevor who conspires in the kidnapping of Realtin’s child from the crèche: **‘I dreamt I killed the kid. That kind of fucked things up, I can tell you.’**

Rory – he is a sensitive young man who is crippled by self-doubts and a lack of confidence: **‘Every bollocks is going around cribbing about the country being fucked. It’d wear you out so it would.’**

Millicent – she is a small child who likes to copy her parents’ angry outbursts and practises her daddy’s bad language: **‘Mammy works in Tesco’s. She told Daddy that she has to work her fingers to the bone. I cried when I heard Mammy say that.’**

Mags – she is the sister of Pokey. She is a lesbian, something Josie cannot really accept: **‘I just want him to remember how he loved me. I want him to know I’m still his little girl.’**

Jim – he is the local fat-bellied Garda Sergeant. He notes that Ireland is now changed forever: **‘There was a time when killing was for good, for God and country. That time is long gone.’**

Frank – he is the father to Bobby, who hates what his son has grown up to be. He lived through an abusive childhood, with a father who tried to beat the ‘pride’ out of him, and who is dead for one month when he tells his story from beyond the grave: **‘I hadn’t time to know I was dying before I was dead. I went quare easy in the end.’**

Triona – she is Bobby’s wife and tries to provide an explanation for why Bobby and others behave as they do. She pledges her loyalty to Bobby throughout and is described by Bobby in glowing terms in his chapter: **‘What matters only love?’**

Themes

1) Family

Family in General

Running through *The Spinning Heart* is a continuous reflection upon the family unit and how the **breakdown of society can be tied to the breakdown of the family**. The author does not provide any **commentary or judgement** on the theme, instead allowing each of the characters to speak for themselves and their own situation.

Selling the Family Land

The start of it all was the shooting dead of the young Cunliffe boy a number of years before, a boy who ‘never threw a shape nor said a cross word’, according to Bobby. His aunt then sold off the land.

Nothing good in *The Spinning Heart* comes from this decision by the aunt, as Pokey Burke’s father, Josie, admits in hindsight: ‘We should have known it would all end in tears. Around here, it all started with tears.’ The division of the land, like ‘our Lord’s purple robe’, thus removing the Cunliffe ‘family name,’ serves as a curse on the village, sending many people’s hearts ‘spinning’ and their worlds toppling.

Incidentally, the fact that Josie loved one son (Eamonn) more than the other partly accounts for why Pokey turns out to be such a corrupt, selfish individual in adulthood. Josie admits all of this in his reflections.

Broken and Dysfunctional Families

The family circumstances described throughout are **almost all negative**. We discover that many of the characters have come from broken and dysfunctional families. Lloyd puts it bluntly: ‘**My Dad fucked off when I was a kid. I think he just couldn’t stand to look at her anymore.**’ This situation is mirrored in the lives of others:

- **Seanie** (father of Realtin’s child, but distant)
- **Jason** (he is barred from even seeing his own child)
- **Denis** (his wife Kate can’t stand the smell of him, among other things)
- **Lily** (her dearest son John refuses to speak to her, breaking her heart even more)
- **Trevor** (his schizophrenia may well be hereditary, or so he believes)
- **Josie** (he cannot accept Mags, who remains distant to him, because she is a lesbian)
- **Bobby** (he seems desperate for his marriage to Triona to work but he is deluding himself so long as he maintains an affair with Realtin)

There are examples of the breakdown of the family unit in every chapter. When taken together, *The Spinning Heart* portrays a world in which such breakdown is tied to the breakdown of wider society, leaving victims and broken people all around this rural village.

2) Suffering

Violence Brings Suffering

Frank Mahon is dead for a month when he voices his own story, the second-last chapter of the book. His **partly-comic, partly-tragic reflection is one of the most important in the book**. His soul is stuck as a 'ghost' in the spot where Denis, a local businessman who suffers a complete meltdown, chose to murder him with a plank of wood in a fury one evening. He experienced a painful and brutal death.

Suffering Continues

But the suffering has not yet ended. He is stuck in the same place, now that the Vatican 'got rid of purgatory.' He suffered at the hands of his own cruel father years before, who shouted, '**You know notten!**' at him the day he came home from school with great pride in himself. He now asks a question central to the fate of many characters in the novel:

'I wonder is this meant to be a punishment, to be confined to this cottage where I lived my whole life and where my father lived before me.'

He poses this question on behalf of many who find themselves in situations they desperately want to escape from. In *The Spinning Heart*, despite the prosperity that the Celtic Tiger brought, **the characters now find themselves suffering the consequences of being stuck in a world they didn't really ask for or perhaps expect.**

Other Types of Suffering

- Realtin is in a situation that is strangely similar to Frank's, actually living in a 'ghost estate', with just one other neighbour, desperate to escape or avoid the **misery of living this way**, and longing to jump into bed with Bobby Mahon at any cost.
- The young male characters such as Rory and Brian suffer **disconnection** – neither of them can manage stable relationships with young women. Seanie Shaper, for all his shape-throwing and womanising, is suffering in the depths of utter despair and considers suicide.
- Trevor, the supposedly ugly and fat Montessori teacher, suffers from **acute pains and illnesses**, so much so that he considers kidnapping a child and 'saving' Realtin so as to overcome these personal problems.
- Timmy is **badly beaten** by Mickey Briars and regularly teased.
- Vasya is treated like so many migrant workers and suffers **embarrassment and indignity** that his proud heritage would not stand for.
- Bridie weeps for her long-dead son.
- Lloyd takes the bizarre position that he **exists in a universe of one** – a 'solipsist' – which is the ultimate escape mechanism from a world of suffering.
- To top it all, the **distance** that exists between Frank and Bobby, father and son, represents the gap that people all through the novel experience between their hopes and their failings. **The failure of people to overcome these gaps is what causes so**

much suffering. The final insult to Bobby is seen when he manages to frame himself for a murder he did not commit, much to the derision of the dead father, Frank: ‘He hasn’t a dust of sense.’

Conclusion

Suffering is a key theme in *The Spinning Heart*, played out against a backdrop of everyday life, where what happens behind closed doors and in the minds of individual people can be a lot different to what we see on the surface.



Look carefully at how the writing skills in Paper 1 are then applied to 30-mark questions in Paper 2. Look at the example below.



SAMPLE QUESTION AND ANSWER (30 MARKS/25 MINUTES)

The Spinning Heart by Donal Ryan (2018/19)

Question

Imagine that you are a resident of the town where the novel is set. Write a letter to Pokey Burke explaining how his actions have affected the community. Share your thoughts and feelings and indicate your knowledge of the text in doing so.

SAMPLE ANSWER:

Dear Pokey,

My name is Andrew Byrne and I am writing to you today to make you aware of the situation that your dishonesty and self-centred state of mind has caused in your home town.

You have left your litter all over the village. This is an eye-sore to the locality and is persuading new industries not to set up here which means there are no new jobs. It was bad enough that you failed to keep your own business afloat but you have left the town in a terrible mess also.

I was talking to Bobby Mahon lately, he is a sound lad. He told me that you did not give your employees their well-deserved stamps. He also cannot provide for his own family as he has no other work and doesn't qualify for social welfare.

Your disappearance off the scene has left this once peaceful place in turmoil. Your complete disregard for others has meant that people have lost hope. Since your act of cowardice, there has been a child kidnapped, a murder, and lots of family break-ups. These things may not all be your fault but at least when people were working they were happy and were living good lives together.

I hope that where you are now was worth all the pain and suffering that you caused. When you finish reading this letter, ask yourself one question: can you live with yourself?

I am hoping that this letter reaches you wherever you are now. I am hoping that it might spark some feelings of remorse. I am looking forward to seeing you back home some day so that face to face I can tell you that you are nothing but a spineless coward and a weasel.

Yours faithfully,
Andrew

(294 words)

EXAMINER'S ASSESSMENT

The candidate **completes the task** and makes a series of points directed at Pokey, although they seem a bit **disjointed**. The first reference to litter is **interesting** although it is not mentioned in the book. The vocabulary and expression is of a very good standard (afloat, turmoil, remorse, spineless, weasel). Sentences are well-crafted. Although **short**, it is a good effort, but below top standard.

MARKS AWARDED

7 + 6 + 7 + 3 = 23/30 (O3 Grade)

2. *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald (2018/19)

Storyline

- *The Great Gatsby* presents us with a straightforward but difficult dilemma*: a handsome, wealthy young man is in love with a beautiful, young married woman. We learn about the entire drama through the words of a narrator named Nick Carraway.
- Carraway, a young man from Minnesota, moves to New York in the summer of 1922. He rents a house in the West Egg district of Long Island, an unfashionable area populated by the 'new rich'. The mysterious Jay Gatsby lives in a **gigantic and gaudy*** mansion next door and throws extravagant parties every Saturday night.
- Nick drives out to the more 'old money' district of East Egg one evening for dinner with his cousin, Daisy Buchanan, and her husband, Tom. Daisy and Tom introduce

