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# Introduction

aims

- Recognising and understand the different genres of language use in the examination.

## Language genres

To prepare for Leaving Certificate Higher Level English, you are expected to be familiar with these five broad language genres.

### Informative writing

*Found in newspapers, reports, etc.*

- Factual, direct, using verifiable data
- Clearly organised, accessible language

### Argumentative writing

*Found in newspapers, discussions, etc.*

- Logical, using valid evidence
- Reasonable, rational language

### Persuasive writing

*Found in speeches, opinion pieces, debates, etc.*

- Presents a strong view or opinion
- Emphatic, often emotional language

### Narrative writing

*Found in novels, plays, films, etc.*

- Story-telling based on plot, characterisation and conflict
- Fictional language, structured and atmospheric

### Aesthetic writing

*Found in poetry, short stories, diaries, etc.*

- Appeals to our appreciation of beauty
- Poetic imaginative language, often using rich imagery

key  
point



There is no single exclusive style of writing. Different language **genres usually overlap**. Persuasive writing, for example, is similar to argument and often includes elements of informative language.

# English (Higher Level) Paper 1 Overview

## English (Higher Level) Paper 1 Overview

Paper 1 accounts for 200 marks (half the overall examination total).

You are required to:

- choose one of the three texts in **Section A** (50 marks – 45–50 minutes)
- choose one question from **Section B**. However, you cannot answer the Section B question that accompanied the Section A text you have chosen (50 marks – 40 minutes)
- answer one question from **Composing** (100 marks – 75 minutes).

The time limit for Paper 1 is  
**2 hours and 50 minutes.**



- Read the questions carefully to discover the various tasks in each question.
- All parts of the tasks need to be addressed in order to achieve a high mark.
- Plan your answer before you begin your response.

# 1

## Paper 1: Comprehending A

aims

- Understanding the different types of 'Comprehending' questions (information retrieval, personal opinion and style).
- Developing the thinking and writing skills that are essential for successful answers.

### Comprehending A at a glance

The total mark awarded for Paper 1 is 200 (half the overall total for the exam). This includes 100 for Section 1 (Comprehending) and 100 for Section 2 (Composing). The Comprehending A section (worth 50 marks) tests your ability to read, understand, analyse and respond to a particular text. This section consists of three parts.

exam  
focus

Choose **one** of the three Comprehending A texts and allocate your time carefully:

- Reading the text – allow about **6–8** minutes
- Answering part (i) – allow **10–12** minutes
- Answering part (ii) – allow **10–12** minutes
- Answering part (iii) – allow **15–18** minutes

### Parts (i) and (ii)

Parts (i) and (ii) are each worth 15 marks. In these two questions, you might be asked to **summarise** (in your own words) or **give your opinion on key aspects of the text**.

**Possible questions include:**

- Your impressions of places, settings and atmospheres.
- An outline of the writer's own views.
- Your observations about a character, relationship or ideas in the text.

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Three short paragraphs (based on three relevant, supported points) should be sufficient for an answer to part (i) or (ii). Focused, succinct answers are required.



- Compare or comment on visual images.
- The overall impact of the text (or particular parts of the text).
- Responding personally to the text.

### Part (iii)

Part (iii) is worth 20 marks and often refers to the writer’s style. Allow about 15–18 minutes to write three or four succinct paragraphs based on three relevant, supported points – and aim for at least 200 words.



Read the questions first, identifying the specific type of question (information retrieval, personal opinion, style or a mixture of these). Keep this in mind as you read through the extract.

## Responding to Comprehending A questions

It’s essential to **study the wording** of questions carefully before you begin writing. Highlight the key words in the question, so that you are clear about the task.

<b>Outline</b>	Briefly describe only the main points or facts about something.
<b>Comment on</b>	Give a critical, analytical response on subject matter and/or style of writing.
<b>Explain</b>	Clarify by giving details and/or reasons.
<b>Discuss</b>	Examine and distinguish the positive and negative points of something or someone.
<b>Identify</b>	Find one or more examples.
<b>Evaluate</b>	Consider something carefully and decide how significant/ insignificant it is.
<b>Define</b>	Specify exactly what something means.
<b>Analyse</b>	Consider and question closely in order to explain.
<b>Illustrate</b>	Show by giving more information or examples to explain or prove something.
<b>Compare and contrast</b>	Examine similarities and differences.
<b>Develop your own point of view</b>	Support the points you make through further – and more detailed – discussion, using suitable reference.



Neat, legible handwriting will help to make a positive impression on examiners. Corrections should be made by simply drawing a line through the mistake.



## Being scared isn't easy – but it's fun!

**When she's not stuck at her desk, the best-selling thriller writer, Patricia Cornwell, is a scuba diver and helicopter pilot.**

I'm always scared when I learn a new sport but my number one rule in life is that I will not be ruled by fear. If I'm afraid of something I'm going to figure out a way to deal with it. Since I was a little kid I've loved fast, powerful machines but the truth is I find all my hobbies – scuba diving, helicopter flying and motorcycling – nerve-racking. I'm terrified.

During my scuba diving training, the dive master made me sit on the bottom of the bay and take my mask off, then put it back on. I could not do it. The water went rushing up my nose. I thought I was going to drown; I started to bolt up to the surface and he grabbed my ankles to hold me down. It was just an awful experience.

Even now when I dive, I hope the weather gets bad so I don't have to go. I get into the water and have to settle for a minute because my heart starts racing. But you cannot dive if you get hyped up – you have to calm down. And when you do, you might have the dive trip of your life.

The first time I flew a helicopter solo, my knees were knocking together – literally – I had to start singing to myself. Then all of a sudden it was like, 'Oh my God, this is the most fun thing I have ever done. I am flying, I'm alone and it's just me doing this.'

The most frightened I have ever been was flying a helicopter. We were north of Florida, and we got caught in weather we weren't expecting – an unpredictable storm was moving in. We got trapped in fog, flying at 100-something feet in a wooded area, and couldn't see. It was raining like a monsoon and I really thought this was going to be it; any minute we were going to hit a power line and come down. It was terrifying. Just when we thought it was hopeless, all of a sudden this little grass strip opened up under us and we landed.

If I hadn't learned to deal with fear, I would have been crippled by it. If you don't confront your fear, it wins. Which is why I'm a totally different person since I took up my extreme hobbies. It's made me more confident, bolder, keener to try other things.



You don't need to do what I do – unfortunately it's expensive to fly a helicopter. But you could do a helicopter tour and enjoy the ride. Scuba diving is more accessible. You can go out on a charter boat with a group of people and down you go.

It's as simple as this: if an opportunity presents itself, don't walk away from it. If someone says it might be cool to learn to snorkel, or ride a motorcycle, and you light up like a Christmas tree when they say it, don't argue yourself out of it. Take the next step. And don't let anyone tell you that you can't do something. Everything I do is stuff I was told I couldn't do.

A lot of people enjoy fear as pleasure. It's delicious that you can get so close to the dragon that you can feel its warm breath, but you're not going to get burned. That's an empowering experience.

All this makes you feel more alive because you are taking power and control over a world that is random and difficult. And the more you do with boldness and confidence, the more you get out of life. That's what we should do while we're here. Don't just exist – do something!

### Question A

- (i) Based on your reading of the above extract, what do you learn about Patricia Cornwell's attitude to fear? (15 marks)

#### Prompt!

It's natural to feel scared.

- Fear can be seen as a challenge.
- It's important to confront fear.
- Fear can even be exhilarating.
- Overcoming fear is empowering, and gives us a great sense of achievement.

### Sample answer

Patricia Cornwell has changed her attitude towards fear over the years. She is honest in admitting that she has often been fearful in the past, but says that she 'will not be ruled by fear'. While her extreme sports hobbies, such as scuba diving, excite and scare her, she has always succeeded in conquering fear.

The famous author is a very positive person who encourages everyone to face up to what terrifies them: 'If I hadn't learned to deal with fear, I would have been crippled by it'. From personal experience, she believes that she has become a 'totally different person' by taking up extreme hobbies, including helicopter flying and motorcycling.



Allow about 10–12 minutes and aim for three focused, supported points in short paragraphs.

Cornwell obviously gets great pleasure from taking part in such 'nerve-racking' sports. Her enthusiasm for life is evident throughout the extract. It's interesting that she conquers her fears by taking on challenging sports that make her feel confident and 'more alive'. Her concluding tone is particularly enthusiastic ('Don't just exist – do something!') and makes it clear that she is totally convinced about the many benefits of overcoming fear.

### EXAMINER'S COMMENT

- Succinct, well-organised response is directly focused throughout.
- Three distinct, relevant points are aptly supported by reference and quotation.
- Discussion ranges over the entire extract.
- Controlled economical language use. Clear expression, e.g. 'succeeded in conquering fear', 'concluding tone is particularly enthusiastic'.

MARKS AWARDED: **15**  
**15**



Realistic time management is an essential part of successful answering. For the Comprehending A 15-mark questions, allow about 10–12 minutes and aim for three relevant points, supported by suitable evidence. Do not fall into the trap of over-writing, as this is likely to leave you short of time for the other questions.



### Running away

**Waris is a young girl, living with her family in the desert in Somalia, in Africa. She decides to run away from home to avoid an arranged marriage.**

A slight sound awoke me, and when I opened my eyes, I was staring into the face of a lion. Riveted awake, my eyes stretched wide – very wide – as if to expand enough to contain the animal in front of me. I tried to stand up, but I hadn't eaten for several days, so my weak legs wobbled and folded beneath me.

Collapsing, I slumped back against the tree where I had been resting, sheltered from the African desert sun that becomes so merciless at noon. I quietly leaned my head back, closed my eyes, and felt the rough bark of the tree pressing into my skull. The lion was so near I could smell his musty scent in the hot air. I spoke to God: 'It's the end for me, my God. Please take me now'.

## Theme or issue

(Prescribed mode for 2019 and 2020)

aims

- Studying texts by examining central ideas or messages presented by authors.
- Understanding how authors establish and develop themes in different texts.

A theme or issue refers to the central idea or message in a text. The theme should not be confused with the plot or storyline. It's likely that there will be a number of significant themes in a text. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, for example, there are several themes and issues, including identity, power, feminism, exploitation and survival.

### Popular themes include:

- relationships/isolation
- love/hate
- identity/escape
- injustice/inequality
- good/evil
- hope/hopelessness
- change/survival
- power/ambition
- appearance/reality
- conflict/harmony, etc.

### Why does a theme have special meaning for you?

The author's presentation of a theme or issue often challenges the reader or audience to think about human nature and to distinguish between right and wrong. We learn that struggling to do what is right can be difficult.

We all need to know and understand ourselves. We have to come to terms with growing up, the loss of innocence and the rewards of maturity. Great writers help us to do this.

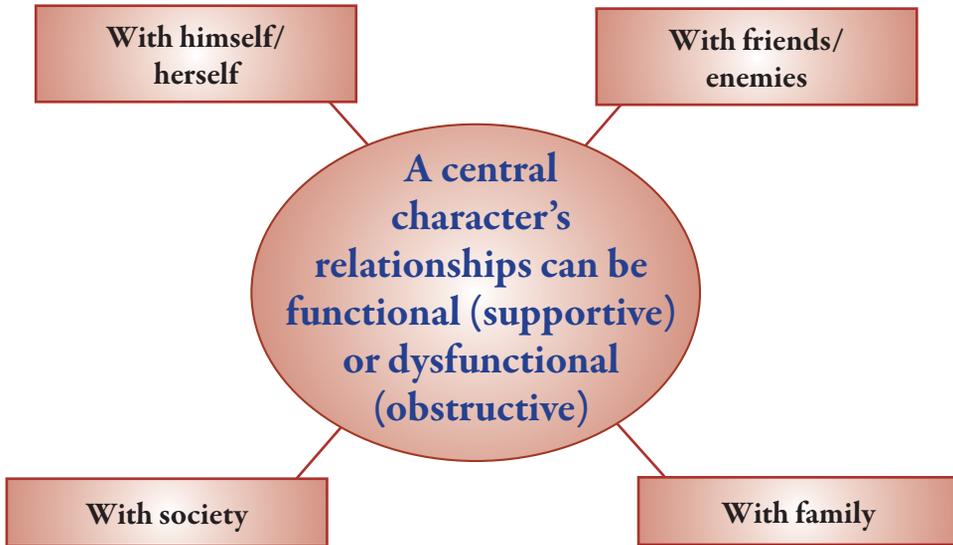
### How do we respond to the author's treatment of a theme?

Comparing different authors' treatment of a theme broadens our understanding of the difficulties we face in life.

We engage with characters as we follow their efforts to overcome obstacles such as growing up, learning to be independent, responding to crises, etc. When we identify with another character's experiences, we clarify our reactions to challenges in our own lives.

## Key theme: relationships

Relationships can help or hinder a character’s progress through life.



Authors’ treatment of relationships		
First text: drama	Second text: novel	Third text: film
<i>The Playboy of the Western World</i> J. M. Synge	<i>The Great Gatsby</i> F. Scott Fitzgerald	<i>Brooklyn</i> Joe Crowley
Introduction – people vulnerable when falling in love		
Christy, stranger to Mayo, meets Pegeen Mike in shebeen, lacks confidence, immediately attracted to Pegeen as she is to him.	Gatsby, officer in American Army, meets Daisy at party, lacks confidence, immediately attracted to Daisy as she is to him.	Eilis, new emigrant to Brooklyn, meets Tony at local dance, lacks confidence, is attracted to Tony as he is to her.
Development – people grow in confidence when loved		
Christy is an opportunist who takes advantage of the gullibility of the Mayo villagers. He and Pegeen talk, Christy becomes more assured due to her praise. The couple declare their love for each other. A confident Christy shows great ability at sports day, winning many prizes.	Gatsby is an opportunist who takes advantage of circumstances by using bootlegging and crime, he becomes rich. Through Nick, Gatsby meets Daisy again. She is impressed by his wealth and success. She declares love for Gatsby and they become lovers. Gatsby stops having parties.	Eilis is becoming less homesick and much more at ease in New York. She declares her love for Tony who is a hard-working, genuine person. He brings Eilis to meet his family and declares his love for her. Tony shows Eilis the plot of land where he and his brothers hope to build homes.

## Authors' treatment of relationships

### Complication/climax – character has to confront fears

Christy fears his father whom he has already tried to kill, but Old Mahon returns. How will he respond to this crisis? For Pegeen, Christy's image has been damaged.

Tom discloses Gatsby's illegal source of wealth, bootlegging, Gatsby claims that Daisy loves him, but he is uncomfortable. For Daisy, Gatsby's image has been damaged and she turns to Tom.

The unexpected death of Eilis's sister Rose means that Eilis has to return to Ireland. Before leaving, she and Tony marry secretly. Back home, Eilis finds herself attracted to Jim and life in Ireland.

### Resolution – character grows or does not grow because of experience of falling in love

Christy tries to kill father 'again', hoping to impress Pegeen. But the locals and Pegeen turn on him. He leaves Mayo with his father, their roles reversed. Christy is in charge. There is hope for his future, but not for Pegeen who is heartbroken.

Gatsby's car kills Myrtle Wilson, Tom's lover, with Daisy driving. Gatsby chivalrously takes the blame. George is fooled by Tom's insinuations that Gatsby was Myrtle's lover. He kills Gatsby and then himself. Few come to Gatsby's funeral. Tragic end.

Miss Kelly threatens to disclose Eilis's secret marriage. Eilis confronts her and then reveals the truth about her secret marriage to her mother. Eilis returns to America and re-unites with her husband. Hope for future.

key  
point

Relationships can have a positive or negative impact on characters.

exam  
focus

- Discuss how a theme is first established in a text.
- Then trace how the author develops this theme.
- Identify turning points or moments of crisis.
- Finally, comment on how the theme is resolved at the end.

## Taking a comparative approach to texts

First text: drama	Second text: novel	Third text: film
<i>The Playboy of the Western World</i> J. M. Synge	<i>The Great Gatsby</i> F. Scott Fitzgerald	<i>Brooklyn</i> Joe Crowley
<b>Family</b>		
<p><b>Obstructive, negative impact.</b> Old Mahon is regarded as a bullying tyrant by his son, so Christy tries to kill him in order to be free. Later, when the Father turns up, Christy's reputation is damaged in Pegeen's eyes. But Christy fights back, attempting to kill his father again. This act changes Old Mahon's attitude to his son and he now accepts Christy as his master.</p>	<p><b>Not close, Gatsby has re-invented himself, embarrassed by his past.</b> Henry C. Gatz comes to Gatsby's funeral, proud of his son's achievements. Gatz seems more moved by his son's material success (he carries a photograph of Gatsby's mansion). Ironically, while Gatsby pursued the American dream, he failed to develop meaningful relationships.</p>	<p><b>Supportive, positive impact.</b> Eilis's sister Rose: arranges a job for Eilis through her friend, Father Flood. She also buys Eilis new clothes for her new life in Brooklyn: 'That's one of the reasons I'm going, I can't buy my own'. Later on, Eilis's mother is reassuring when told of Eilis's husband back in America, 'He'd have to be nice, if you married him'.</p>
<b>Friends</b>		
<p><b>Support Christy at first, then turn against him.</b> Christy is 'proud as a peacock' with the new clothes given to him by the villagers. Yet when his heroic story is found to be an exaggeration, people turn on him, he is 'pulled down to the floor'. Widow Quin ridicules him and warns him about how Pegeen will also change her attitude: 'She'll knock the head of you'. Love interest – Pegeen is volatile and soon becomes disillusioned with Christy: after idolising him at the start, 'gowns bought ready, the way I can wed you, and not wait at all' changes to 'You've told me that story six times since the dawn of day', ending with 'Quit off from this'.</p>	<p><b>Accept Gatsby's hospitality but abandon him.</b> Woman guest at Gatsby's party (Chapter 3) accepts gift of a new evening gown from her host, but ridicules him behind his back. Neither Wolfshiem nor Klipspringer come to Gatsby's funeral, nor do any of the people who attended his lavish parties. Nick alone is loyal to Gatsby, imagining Gatsby asking, 'you've got to get somebody for me ... I can't go through this alone'. Love interest – disloyal. Daisy who is not sure of her feelings: 'Oh you want too much ... I love you now – isn't that enough? ... I did love him once – but I loved you too'.</p>	<p><b>Support Eilis and boost her confidence.</b> Georgina: 'remember that sometimes it's nice to meet people who don't know your name'. Father Flood: 'Home sickness is like most sicknesses. It will pass'. Eilis soon settles into a new life in the Brooklyn boarding-house. Girls help Eilis eat spaghetti. The landady Mrs. Kehoe gives her the best room. Miss Fortini, her supervisor in the department store, encourages Eilis: 'You look like a different person'. 'Most Italian men appreciate a fuller figure.' Love interest – loyal Tony: 'I love you'.</p>