



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2013

English - Ordinary Level - Paper 1

Total Marks: 200

Wednesday, June 5 – Morning, 9.30 – 12.20

- This paper is divided into two sections, Section I COMPREHENDING and Section II COMPOSING.
- The paper contains **three** texts on the general theme of HUMOUR.
- Candidates should familiarise themselves with each of the texts before beginning their answers.

- Both sections of this paper (COMPREHENDING and COMPOSING) must be attempted.
- Each section carries 100 marks.

SECTION I – COMPREHENDING

- Two Questions, A and B, follow each text.
- Candidates must answer a Question A on one text and a Question B on a different text. Candidates must answer only one Question A and only one Question B.
- **N.B.** Candidates may NOT answer a Question A and a Question B on the same text.

SECTION II – COMPOSING

- Candidates must write on **one** of the compositions 1 – 7.



TEXT 1

DES BISHOP – MY DAD WAS NEARLY JAMES BOND

The following text is based on edited extracts from Des Bishop's book, *My Dad Was Nearly James Bond*. The book is about his father Mike's amazing life, his courageous battle with cancer and the effect of Mike's final illness on the Bishop family. These extracts deal with the writer's youthful relationship with his father.

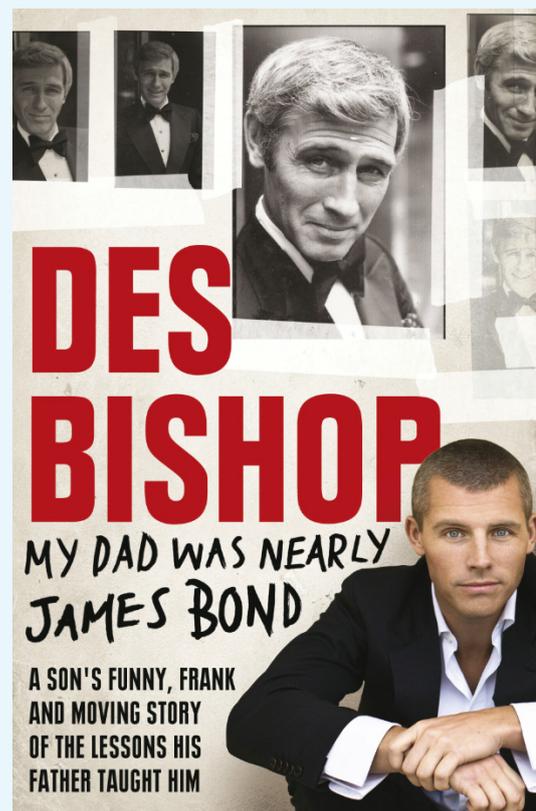
1. When I was a kid I believed every one of my dad's stories. As far as I was concerned he was pretty famous when he was younger. I did not know much else about his life other than his career as an actor and a model. He had been in the British Army and had lived in Midleton, County Cork, during World War II. Sometimes he would be watching TV and would recognise someone he knew from his past. One I always remember was Robert Shaw from *Jaws*. *Jaws* was a big movie and the fact that my dad knew someone from it was pretty cool.

2. All my friends loved my dad. They loved his accent and he would always tell them ghost stories. He was great at doing Dracula stories. I can still picture a large group of us, sitting in the living room one early evening while my dad was telling one of his stories, and how mesmerised we were by it. He was a great performer for my friends. It's cool when you are young and the girls that you are beginning to take notice of tell you that your dad is cool.

3. When we were kids, there wasn't much to dislike about my dad, but he didn't really have much authority in the house. My mother was the boss. To us, our dad was just cool and fun. He never gave us a hard time about school or homework, he just encouraged us to do well in sports. Up until I hit puberty, most of the time I just saw my dad as a really cool guy. I was too young to be aware that he was not the

authority figure, he was just the guy I wanted to impress. 'Dad, watch me dive off the diving board.' 'Dad, count how long I can stay under water.' He was our hero.

4. But it all changed when I became a teenager. I developed a desire to challenge my dad's authority. I went from thinking my parents were the coolest people on the planet to thinking they were the dumbest people on earth. I think American writer, Mark Twain, said it best when he said, "When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished by how



much he'd learned in seven years." I had entered my period of rebellion and my brothers would enter that period at two year intervals behind me. We expressed it by making fun of my father all the time. When my dad went from being the only person we wanted to impress, he became the butt of our jokes and our attempts to impress each other. We were like fanatical fans who turn on their idols with a vengeance. We had outgrown his style. He was not cool anymore.

5. Our dad let us make fun of him with minimal retribution. One of my running jokes for a while, any time my dad would get annoyed with me and raise his voice, was to say the lines he had said in a cheesy 1960's British movie, *The Day of the Triffids*. I would say in a British accent, 'Mayday, Mayday. Please talk us down.' Or if he shouted up the stairs at me, 'Desmond, get down these stairs right this

minute!' I would say, 'Please talk us down, Mayday, Mayday! There is still no reply, sir.' My brothers and I thought we were being so funny when we did that over the years.

6. My father wasn't a total pushover. We had some proper clashes during those turbulent teenage years. Later on I wondered why he allowed us to make fun of him as much as we did. At times our dinners became like a sketch show, all based on us doing impersonations of my dad. As an adult I thought back to those times and wondered why my dad had never stood up and properly let us know that he had had enough. A lot of it was good fun, but more of it was disrespectful. I sometimes wished when I got older that he had slammed his fist on the table and let us know who was the boss.

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

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

Questions A and B carry 50 marks each.

Question A

- (i) From your reading of paragraphs one to five of the above extract, what do you learn about Des Bishop's youthful relationship with his father? Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) Do you approve of the behaviour of the writer and his brothers towards their father as described in the last three paragraphs of the passage? Explain your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (iii) (a) Explain why **any two** of the following words could be used to describe Des Bishop's account of his teenage years.
Honest Amusing Affectionate
Support your answer with reference to the text. (10)
- (b) Based on what you have read in the above extract, would you like to read more of Des Bishop's book, *My Dad Was Nearly James Bond*? Explain your answer with reference to the extract. (10)

Question B

Write the **text of a talk** you would give at a happy family event, in which you recall some of your important family memories. (50)

TEXT 2

GARY LARSON – FAR SIDE CARTOONIST

The following text is based on edited extracts from American cartoonist, Gary Larson’s book *The PreHistory of The Far Side*. In this passage, Larson writes about cartooning in general and his own work over many years as the cartoonist behind the famous Far Side cartoons.

1. “Where do you get your ideas?” has always been the question I’m most often confronted with. I’ve always found the question interesting, because it seems to stem from a belief that there exists some secret place of origin for cartoon ideas. Every time I hear it I’m struck by this mental image where I imagine myself rummaging through my grandparents’ attic and coming across some old, musty trunk. Inside, I imagine finding this equally old and elegant looking book. I take it in my hands, blow away the dust, and on the front cover in large, gold script is the title, *Five Thousand and One Weird Cartoon Ideas*.

2. I’m afraid the real answer is much less exciting: I don’t know where my ideas come from. I will admit, however, that one key ingredient is caffeine. I get a couple of cups of coffee into me and things just start to happen. The idea for any cartoon, in my experience anyway, is rarely spontaneous. Good ideas usually evolve out of pretty lame ones, and vice versa. I’ve destroyed a few good cartoons by re-working them to death. There’s only one cartoon idea I ever got that came directly from my own personal experience, (see IMAGE 1). Some cartoons come from just staring stupidly at a blank sheet of paper and thinking about aardvarks or toaster ovens or cemeteries or just about anything, and others come out of “doodles” that I continually enter into a sketch book. When an idea hits it is important for me to write it down or sketch it as quickly as possible.

3. By trial and error I’ve learned a few things over the years about cartooning that

sometimes make or break the final result. The act of drawing is a continuous learning process for me. I assume stand-up comedians either work at or instinctively understand things like timing, voice inflection, delivery, body language, etc. In cartooning, there are elements in both the drawing and the caption that parallel some of these same things. Cartoon humour is strange in that it is a totally silent world of creation and reaction. The cartoonist never hears laughter, groans, curses, fits of rage or anything. It’s a shoot-in-the-dark approach to humour – some things hit their target and some don’t.

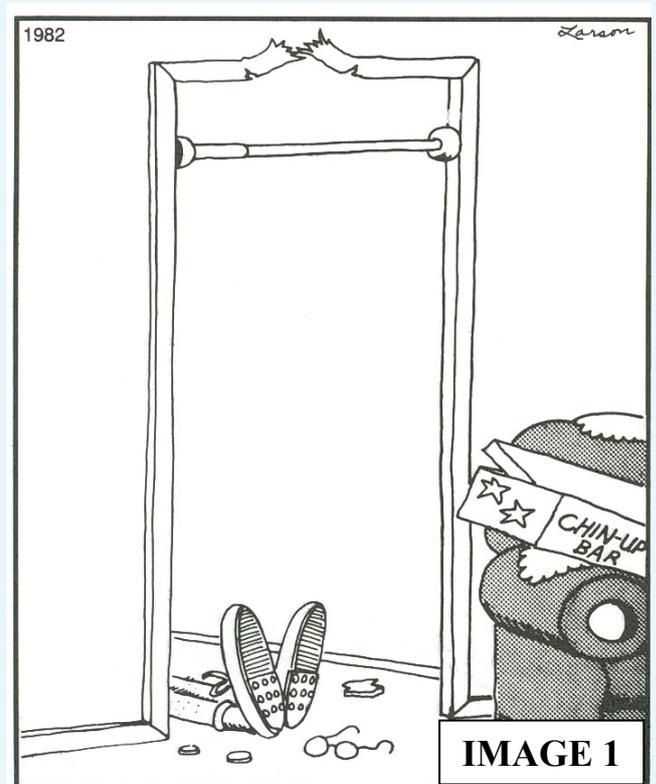


IMAGE 1

4. First of all, the key element in any attempt at humour is conflict. The natural disagreement between dogs and cats has

always provided fodder for humour in various forms. In children’s cartoons, for example, dogs and cats are constantly getting smashed into oblivion by a variety of violent means. In the vast majority of my cartoons where the theme is human versus animal, it’s the animal that usually triumphs – betraying my basic cynicism toward my own kind and a fondness for wildlife. I think the cartoon of Fifi the dog running excitedly towards the door was the first *Far Side* cartoon to score really big in the negative-reaction department.

5. I’ve honestly never set out to deliberately offend anyone. All I’ve really done, like most cartoonists, is just followed my own instinct of what’s funny and what isn’t. I think there is nothing else a cartoonist, a stand-up comedian, writer or whoever *can* do.



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

Questions A and B carry 50 marks each.

Question A

- (i) From your reading of the written passage above, what do you learn about how Gary Larson works as a cartoonist? Support your answer with reference to the passage. (15)
- (ii) Based on both the written passage and the images in Text 2, what impression do you form of cartoonist, Gary Larson? Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (iii) (a) By referring to the visual details in the cartoon, explain what you think has happened in IMAGE 1, on page four. Support your answer with evidence from the cartoon. (10)
- (b) The cartoon featuring Fifi the dog (IMAGE 2, on page five) prompted some critical letters when it was published. Do you find this cartoon funny or disturbing or both? Explain your answer with reference to the cartoon. (10)

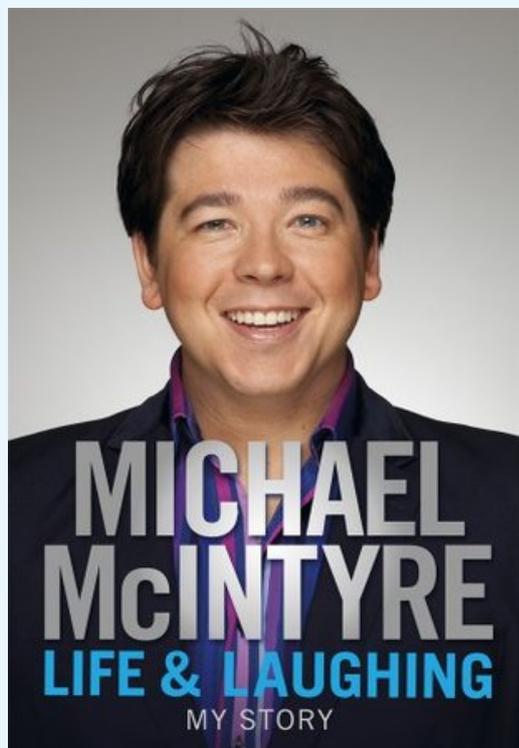
Question B

Write a **letter** to cartoonist, Gary Larson, in which you outline your response to the cartoon that appears in IMAGE 2, on page five. (50)

TEXT 3

MICHAEL McINTYRE – LIFE AND LAUGHING

The following text is based on edited extracts from Michael McIntyre's autobiography, *Life and Laughing*. In it the writer describes the beginning of his career as a stand-up comedian.



1. I was twenty-one years old. My whole life revolved around making people laugh. Every time I went out, I would come home and judge my performance. A good night for me was when I was funny. I was going to be a stand-up comedian. I announced the news to everybody.

2. At this point, I had never seen any live stand-up comedy. So my sister, Lucy, and I headed to the Comedy Store in London and also to see American comedian, Jerry Seinfeld, at the Palladium. It was so wonderful to witness live comedy. I loved how instant the reaction was. In stand-up, you spoke and if it was funny, people laughed. The audience either enjoyed it or didn't. I had my own point of view and outlook on life, and I knew it was funny; I made people laugh every day. I had been

nervous going to see live stand-up. I thought that maybe I was kidding myself and that although I was funny in the pub, professional comedy might be another league of funny. However I left the show having laughed my head off, but confident I could do it.

3. My sister and I also went to an open-mike night at a club called the Comedy Café. The host was a few years younger than me; he had a beard, thick glasses and a stutter. He was called Daniel Kitson and he did worry me. Kitson was just so natural and creative. He wasn't just funny; he had a stage presence that belied his awkward looks. I realized then that there was more to this business than just saying funny things. You need gravitas, the audience has to believe in you, you have to be a performer. I knew I could be funny, write funny, but could I connect with an audience? Well, there was only one way to find out. The booker at the Comedy Café was Hannah Chambers and we had friends in common. So despite there being a long wait for a slot, she booked me in the following week for my first gig.

4. That week I was so terrified, I could barely eat or sleep. I wrote joke after joke of mixed quality, some bad, some worse. I didn't have a style; I had never done this before. I compiled my five minutes and rehearsed it endlessly in front of the mirror holding my pen as a microphone – I've never owned a hairbrush. The jokes were forgettable, which is why I can't remember most of them.

5. Wednesday night was my big night. My five minutes of jokes were spinning round and round in my head. I went with my sister and her boyfriend. When we arrived at the club I thought I might vomit. The Wednesday new-act night had free entry, so the audience was packed with people who didn't like to pay for entertainment. I kept rehearsing my act, the keywords of which I had scribbled on my hand. I was on third. Daniel Kitson was again hosting and was just as hilarious as the previous week. He was enjoying himself and doing far too long between the acts. The audience were in the palm of his biro-free hand. He would introduce each act almost as if he was apologizing for the interruption to the Daniel Kitson Show, and it wasn't an interruption the audience appreciated because he was significantly funnier than everybody else. He took out the list of acts from his pocket and read out my name, beginning my comedy career. The audience applauded as I walked towards the stage and

took the microphone out of its stand. The view from the stage was surreal. Nothing can prepare you for all the expectant faces staring at you. I can't remember what I opened with but I remember hearing the sound of laughter. It was amazing. 'I'm a natural,' I thought, 'this is a breeze.' Unfortunately, I then proceeded to struggle for the next four and a half minutes. I walked off-stage to lacklustre applause.

6. Technically the gig was a disaster, but I did get one laugh, one solitary laugh, something to build on. I was so relieved that it was over and proud that I had cleared the most terrifying hurdle of my life so far. I had sat in the audience at the Comedy Store confident in my ability to succeed as a stand-up, but now I knew that was because the comedians made it look easy. It wasn't. I had been bitten by the comedy bug.

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

Questions A and B carry 50 marks each.

Question A

- (i) Based on what you have read in the above passage, what qualities and abilities does the writer possess that may have helped him to become a successful stand-up comedian? Explain your answer with reference to the extract. (15)
- (ii) From what Michael McIntyre has written, what impression do you form of comedy-show host, Daniel Kitson? Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (iii) (a) Explain why **any two** of the following words could be used to describe the writer's first night as a stand-up comedian at the Comedy Café.
Successful Disastrous Nerve-wracking
Support your answer with reference to the text. (10)
- (b) Based on what you have read in the above extract, would you like to read more of Michael McIntyre's book, *Life and Laughing*? Explain your answer with reference to the extract. (10)

Question B

Write a **review** for your school magazine of **one** of the following: a funny film or TV show; an amusing book or a live comedy performance. (50)

SECTION II

COMPOSING (100 marks)

Write a composition on **any one** of the following.

Each composition carries 100 marks.

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.

1. In TEXT 1, Des Bishop explains how his opinion of his father changed over time.

Write a short story in which one character's opinion of another character changes dramatically.

2. In TEXT 2, Gary Larson believes that drawing is a continuous learning process.

Write a personal essay in which you consider the important lessons you have learned in life.

3. In TEXT 1, Des Bishop remembers his teenage years.

Write an article for a popular young people's magazine, in which you offer advice to readers on how to enjoy their teenage years.

4. In TEXT 2, Gary Larson writes about his fondness for wildlife.

Write a short story in which an animal or animals play an important part.

5. In TEXT 3, Michael McIntyre tells us that he had his own point of view and outlook on life.

Write a personal essay about your views on ONE of the following topics:

- music
- money
- happiness.

6. TEXT 3 is based on Michael McIntyre's autobiography, *Life and Laughing*.

Write an article for your school year-book in which you give an account of some of the most significant moments in your own life to date.

7. In TEXT 1, Des Bishop tells us that his mother was the boss in his family when he and his brothers were growing up.

Write a speech in which you are for or against the motion: *that rules and regulations are important in life.*

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