



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2015

ART

Imaginative Composition and Still Life

Higher Level

100 marks are assigned to this paper, i.e. 25% of the overall marks for Art

Monday, 27 April – Friday, 8 May Morning, 9.30 – 12.00

This paper should be handed to candidates on **Monday, 13 April**

Instructions

You may work in colour, monochrome, mixed media, collage or any other suitable medium. However, the use of oil paints or perishable organic material is not allowed. You are not allowed to bring aids such as stencils, templates, traced images, preparatory artwork or photographic images into the examination.

Write your Examination Number clearly in the space provided on your A2 sheet.
Write the title 'Imaginative Composition' or 'Still Life' immediately below your Examination Number.

If you wish to work on a coloured sheet, **the superintendent must sign this sheet before the examination commences** confirming that it is blank. Maximum size of sheet: A2.

Choose one of the following:

1. Make an **Imaginative Composition** inspired by **one** of the descriptive passages: A, B, C, D or E. Your starting point and the rationale for your Imaginative Composition should be stated on the reverse side of the sheet, indicating their relevance to the descriptive passage you have chosen.
2. Make a **Still Life** work based on a group of objects suggested by, or described in **one** of the descriptive passages: A, B, C, D or E. You are required to bring relevant objects to the examination centre for the purpose of setting up **your own individual** Still Life composition. **This must be done in time for the commencement of the examination.** Your starting point and the rationale for your Still Life should be stated on the reverse side of the sheet, indicating their relevance to the descriptive passage you have chosen.
3. Make an **Abstract Composition** inspired by and developed from **one** of the descriptive passages: A, B, C, D or E. Your starting point and the rationale for your Abstract Composition should be stated on the reverse side of the sheet, indicating their relevance to the descriptive passage you have chosen. State clearly whether your Abstract Composition is following **1** above – Imaginative Composition, or **2** above – Still Life.

Descriptive Passages

Passage A

Most every morning at nine, the emergency responders assigned to the Seine pull on their wetsuits and swim around the Île de la Cité. In the course of their circuit around this teardrop-shaped island in the middle of the river in the middle of Paris, the firemen-divers scour the bottom, retrieving bikes, cutlery (which they clean and use in the nearby houseboat where they live), cell phones, old coins, crucifixes, guns, and once, a museum-grade Roman clasp.

By the Pont des Arts, where lovers affix brass locks inscribed with their names (“Steve + Linda Pour la Vie”), they retrieve keys tossed in the water by couples hoping to affirm the eternal nature of their padlocked love. One bridge upriver, at the Pont Neuf, near the Palace of Justice law courts where divorces are decreed, they find wedding bands, discarded when eternal love turns out to be ephemeral.

As the central artery of Paris, the Seine naturally accrues the detritus of human civilisation and relationships. Through centuries it has served as highway, moat, water tap, sewer, and washtub. Its scimitar arc slices the city, dividing it into Left and Right Banks. Historically, Left was bohemian, Right, aristocratic, but distinctions have blurred over time.

On the Île de la Cité itself, in front of the Gothic tracery of stone that is the Cathedral of Notre Dame, is a bronze compass rose set into paving stones. From here – *point zero* – all distances from Paris are measured. The Seine centres Paris; it is its liquid heart.

It is also, as the French say, *fluide*. No use commanding the Seine to sit still. A river stilled is no longer a river. It changes with the time of day and season. Its currents carry the jetsam and flotsam of life and death – lost plastic toys, escaped balloons, cigarette butts (Gauloises, naturally), empty wine bottles, sometimes even a corpse – as they swirl, churn, flood and flow past the monumental architecture of Paris. *C’est fluide*.

For one summer month in Paris the Seine becomes an urban Riviera, an ebb-and-flow of beach volleyball players; sand-castle engineers; samba, tango and breakdancers; rock, jazz, soul musicians; and sunbathers – who demonstrate the infinite variety of the human form. Space, like water, is mutable, changing with the flow of time and events. “In the same space you can have freedom. Or confinement.”

The Impressionists distilled its light into quicksilver. Claude Monet kept a floating studio on the river near Argenteuil. Henri Matisse, a post-Impressionist, had a studio on the Quai Saint-Michel. The flat, grey ribbon of water painted by earlier artists danced with opalescence through the lens of the Impressionists. Their art reflected not just the flow of the Seine but the world as well. The industrial revolution had arrived. Electricity hung pearls of light against the black night. Construction of the Paris Métro was imminent. The rhythm of the world was accelerating. It was rapid and fluid, and so was the brushwork of the Impressionists.

Adapted from *Love and Loss on the Seine*, by Cathy Newman, National Geographic, May 2014.

Passage B

It may seem hard to believe, now that Climate Change – or as it's known in this country, More Rain – has decommissioned our summers, but there are people in Ireland who remember good weather. Those sun-drenched memories started the night before, with the making of the Holiday Sandwiches, containing exotic fillings and cut with an extra flourish. Cheese singles, which tasted like a by-product of the petrochemical rather than the dairy industry, were put to one side. It was a time for renewal and for sandwiches containing the likes of scallions and ham. The familiar bottles of salad cream and Thousand Island dressing were decanted into little pots. A 500ml bottle of TK White Lemonade, its packaging and labels long gone, would carry the milk. Tomorrow they would be going on a magical journey.

Everyone was up early the following morning – the forecast said there'd be rain in the afternoon, so it was important to get the good bit of the day. The children squeezed into the car. There were no rear seatbelts but luckily families were larger, so there were enough children to provide quite a tight wedge of child in the back seat that did much the same job as a seatbelt. The combination of tight squeeze, sticky heat and short trousers meant that when the family reached the destination, the children exited the back seat with a series of pleasing *shlump* sounds as they peeled themselves off the leatherette.

That was if the car made it to the seaside. Mammies had to be highly skilled in expectation management, because there was always a risk the car would break down. Once the car had slid to an anti-climactic halt miles from the sea and Himself had gone to look for a phonebox, someone had to stay behind and break the news.

The seaside of the past was a different seaside to now. There were no kitesurfers with their ruddy good health and optimism to make you feel guilty for not 'living life to the max', no farmers' markets to intercept you with crackers and dips and anti-oxidants. It was a democratic place where all were equal in the eyes of the sun.

Irish Mammy took up position, digging into a beach head and minding everything while she read *The Lilac Bus*, one eye scanning the horizon. And then suddenly she decided to take the plunge! An Institution was now wearing a swimming costume and being... giddy. This was a moment to remember.

One thing that is sadly in decline now is the classic photo of the Irish Mammy. It was one of the family, taken by Himself, standing 50 yards away with a camera that looked like it shouldn't work at all. Mammy would protest severely that she hated having her photo taken, and would hide behind a clutch of children. But these snaps are real. They are somewhere in a box. All the closed eyes and missing heads and feet, all the blurry, shaky, squinty sun ones, all the self-timer ones where nobody knows when the timer is going to go off. These photos are no more now. There has been a huge explosion of narcissism in this country, sparked by Facebook, camera phones and an improvement in general skin quality caused by the introduction of smoothies.

Adapted from *Isn't it well for ye? The Book of Irish Mammies*, by Colm O'Regan, Transworld Ireland, 2012.

Passage C

The Miller brothers looked more like prospectors than paleobotanists. Their beards were caked with dirt; goggles kept their eyes from being sandblasted by the desert winds. Both were big men, more than six feet three, and on a knife-edged ridge in southern Utah they moved with the quiet confidence of outdoorsmen. As Ian swung a pickax into the mudstone, Dane attempted to roll a cigarette between gusts. Loose tobacco flew from the paper. “Doggone it,” he said, and tried again.

Along with Scott Sampson, chief curator at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, and Joe Sertich, the museum’s dinosaur paleontologist, the brothers were prospecting for fossils in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Within that largely roadless wilderness they were exploring a particularly remote area, a maze of steep bluffs and gullies north of Horse Mountain.

While the rest of their team was a few miles away, working fossil quarries discovered in previous years, Sampson, Sertich and the Millers were looking for new ones. After months of office duty at the museum, Sampson could barely contain his joy at being “where no paleontologist has ever been before”—with the prospect of discovering new treasure from the “lost continent” of Laramidia.

Working mainly in the Kaiparowits formation, a 2,600-foot-thick deposit dating from 77 million to 75 million years ago, they’d unearthed fossils of thousands of plants and animals, from conifer cones to crocodiles, turtles, and dinosaurs—especially dinosaurs. During the 20 million years or so that it existed, Laramidia seems to have been a runaway dinosaur factory, cranking out large and small dinosaurs in a surprising diversity of species.

“This place is littered with bones,” Sampson said, as his boots crunched up a slope not far from where the Miller brothers were working. “I’ve got pieces of a turtle going up this hill, but I have no idea where the rest of this thing is.” He picked up a small beige object and licked it to see if it was porous bone or boring rock. “If it’s bone, it will stick to your tongue,” he said. “If it’s rock, it won’t. This one stuck.

Fossil-hunting has always been stubbornly low-tech. When it comes to field work, not much has changed since the great “bone-rush” of the 19th century, when discoveries in the Wild West sparked a furious campaign to get fossils out of the ground and into the great halls of East Coast museums. While the U.S. Army was chasing Sitting Bull across the northern plains, teams of scholars, wranglers and ruffians were pulling giant leg bones from the badlands, wielding the same picks, shovels, and plaster employed by paleontologists today.

Adapted from *Digging Utah’s Dinosaurs*, by Peter Miller, National Geographic, May 2014.

Passage D

The *Bake Off Tent* – covered in bunting, white picket fenced-off from reality – was a bizarre, dream-like space in which to bake. China cups hung neatly on the walls, huge mixers sat proudly on each bench on the scrubbed wooden work surface.

On a good day, the sun would bathe the tent with a warm glow and we'd pause for a second, hands plunged deep into our mixing bowls, to gaze out at a field of buttercups. Amid the gleaming pans and polished chrome, it was easy to lose sight of just how rarefied this environment was.

However, at the end of each week of filming, dizzy on a mix of adrenaline, sugar and pure relief at having survived the week, I'd return to a very different world: a student kitchen so small that I couldn't stretch out my arms or find space to store all the ingredients and equipment I needed. Oh, and I'm sure we had mice – or worse – at one point.

But still I baked and baked and baked. I set up a long table in my room, one high enough that I could stand at it to knead dough or to whisk meringue. I lined my bookshelves with packets of flour and sugar, stacks of chocolate and jars of spice. Baking tins filled my cupboards, cookie cutters were crammed into a drawer, and clothes were pushed aside to make room for a box full of bottles of essence and colouring. This was less student flat, more alchemist's den.

Ideally we'd all have the money for organic stoneground flour, Continental-style unsalted butter, a selection of proving baskets and a top-of-the-range mixer with more horsepower than a small car. But, if I could bake in that squalid, cramped flat, and on a student budget, then anyone can!

During my time preparing for *Bake Off*, I bought the cheapest flour and butter, swapped expensive fresh fruit for frozen alternatives and experimented with ways to draw more flavour out of cheap ingredients. But baking on a budget isn't just about knowing where to cut corners – it's also a case of learning what's worth investing in. My kitchen had an oven so old that the numbers on the temperature dial had worn away. It was consistently inconsistent, too-fiercely hot at the top and far cooler at the bottom.

Waiting to see whether your bake will emerge from the oven scorched or raw is not the sort of cliffhanger that anyone should have to endure – which is why the baking purchase I recommend most is an oven thermometer. It will quickly become your new best friend and, at around £5, it's a lot cheaper than shelling out for a new oven.

Adapted from “How I did *Bake Off* on a budget”, Ruby Tandoh, BBC Good Food, 2014.

Passage E

The tiny little meadow by the house had been cut and the hay lay crisping in swathes in the sun: the wild flowers dabbling colour in every part. There were the midnight blues of the vetch, the yellows of trefoil, the splendid reds of the clover. It was the loveliest thing to be out in the field turning the hay with the pike, my two black dogs taking comfort in the shade of the alders a while, the sweetness of the mowers wafted near and far.

The swallows meanwhile were sweeping in and out of the shed, busy as they were with the rearing of their young. It was as if they too were revelling in the light, the warmth of the sun lying gentle on their backs. The yellow lilies blooming in old clay pots across the yard: the blue of the swallows the perfect foil for the yellow of the flowers.

The young had already left the nest and were perched on the cross beams in the shed, the first little bird coming out into the sun for the very first time that morning: the lilies beneath him shining with dew. The Persian cat, weary of the heat, had found a haven of her own underneath the shrubs and left the swallows to their own devices.

Sometimes she liked to curl up among the red geraniums, but the sun was too hot for that, the shade and the shadow of the shrubs more pleasing to her then. The red clover lay in rich red pools of its own, crisping and drying still, everything about it like an echo of the summers of old.

I was always on the lookout for butterflies and bees, but the frogs were my favourite of all: the touch of their skin wonderfully damp and chill in the heat of the afternoon. The frogs were the talisman of summer, the touchstone of the season that brought it to life in a moment. Summer would not have been summer without them, so that I sat caressing them in my hands, sprays of wild rose and woodbine cascading around me.

They say that when we are at our happiest we are least aware of it. This may be true, but even then I think I knew how lucky I was just to be with the frogs and the flowers in the long grass.

As I turned the hay in the field, the swallows still swept over the lilies and the sapling apple trees. I thought of days spent helping in the fields of the nearby country estate: Mrs Ruth coming with home-made apple juice, carried in stone cold jars, in her basket, her three Irish terriers tripping at her heels. The taste of the apple juice was wonderfully cold and sweet in the heat of the afternoon. It was like the taste of nectar itself, the very epitome of all the delights of summer when the world was green and young: the Kerry cows grazing in their pastures overlooking the bay.

Adapted from *Lilies and Swallows* by Patrick O'Sullivan, *Ireland's Own*, July 2014.

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