

English



Leaving Certificate English invites students into rich experiences with language so that they become fluent and thoughtful users of language and more aware of its significance in their lives. It develops a range of literacy and oral skills in a variety of areas: personal, social, and cultural. These will allow them to interpret and enjoy a range of material so that they become independent learners who can engage confidently in the world beyond school.

Senior Cycle Subject Content

Leaving Certificate English is assessed at two levels, Ordinary and Higher level.

Language

Students are required to study the following five designated areas of language in a wide variety of contexts, functions and styles.

1. The Language of Information.
2. The Language of Argument.
3. The Language of Persuasion.
4. The Language of Narration.
5. The Aesthetic use of Language.

Literature

- Students are required to study one literary text from a list of prescribed texts.
- Students are required to study three other texts in the Comparative manner, according to the comparative modes prescribed for that year.
- Students are required to study at least six poets from the eight poets prescribed at Higher Level. At Ordinary Level 36 poems are prescribed.

Compulsory elements: At Higher Level a Shakespearean Play must be one of the texts chosen for study on its own or as an element of the Comparative study.

Optional Elements: At Ordinary Level the study of a Shakespearean play is optional.

Exam Structure

Paper I

Higher and Ordinary Level - 170 mins. - 200 marks.

Section I

Three texts - one which is visual - are presented to students on a general Theme. Two sets of questions, an A and a B follow each text. Candidates must answer a question A on one text and a question B on a different text. (100 marks)

Section II

Composing - Candidates must write an extended composition in a specific genre of language from a list of seven choices. (100 marks)

Paper II

Higher and Ordinary Level - 200 mins. - 200 marks.

Section I The single text (60 marks)

Section II The Comparative study (70 marks)

Section III Poetry (70 marks)

(H.L.)

(i) Unseen poem (20 marks)

(ii) Prescribed poetry (50 marks)

(O.L.)

(i) Unseen poem (20 marks)

(ii) Four poems will be printed on the exam paper and students must answer questions on one of the four. (50 marks)

Comment

Parents and students should be aware of the following cautionary points when considering the study of English at Higher Level for the Leaving Certificate exam.

- The study of English at Higher Level places significant demands on the Leaving Certificate student.
- The syllabus is very broad in its range of prescribed materials and can be quite time consuming.
- The Higher Level (course) exam rewards good writing skills and an independent learner.
- The extended composition features largely on both papers at Higher Level and students are expected to write between 750-1000 words in the time available, in these compositions.
- There is the assumption at Higher Level that students will read widely and independently over the two years.
- An interest in social, political and current affairs is vital and highly developed writing skills and critical analyses skills are prerequisite at Higher Level.
- Conversely at Ordinary Level textual material is printed on the exam paper for students, for example in the poetry sections poems are printed for the students. Less extended pieces of writing are also expected.
- Texts at Ordinary Level are less challenging, particularly bearing in mind that students at O.L. do not have to study a Shakespearean play.
- Texts prescribed at O.L. are very student friendly and aimed at encouraging the more reluctant reader.

