



# Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2025

## English - Ordinary Level - Paper 1

Total Marks: 200

Wednesday, June 4 – 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 LOVE.
- 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.

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**TEXT 1 – Humphrey – A Loving Companion**

The following text is based on edited extracts from an article in, *The Irish Times* by Paul Howard. In it, he remembers his beloved dog, Humphrey. Paul Howard is perhaps best known for his Ross O'Carroll Kelly novels.

1. His bed still sits in the corner of the living room. His toys are strewn across the floor. We can't bring ourselves to get rid of any of his things, even though it's been six weeks now. I never loved an animal like I loved Humphrey. I still find his hairs on my clothes. I'll be sitting in a meeting and I'll spot one on the sleeve of my sweater or the leg of my trousers and I'm sad again.

2. It's like Humphrey was my wisecracking sidekick and I was his straight man. He ate a man's sandwich in Stephen's Green once. The man took his eye off it for a second and Humphrey had it out of his hand without even breaking stride, leaving me to apologise for him. Another time, I tethered him to a bench outside the post office in Avoca and he decided to take off, dragging the bench behind him like a sled dog, until it was smashed into a dozen pieces.

3. I can put my hand on my heart and say that, in all the years we shared together, he never, not even once, did anything I told him to do, unless it happened to be something he was about to do anyway. One day I was trying to persuade him to get into the car after a walk, but Humphrey decided he'd prefer to stay out if it was all the same with me. I resorted to pleading with him the way I always pleaded with him. "Humphrey, please get into the car. I'm begging you. Please, Humphrey, don't do this to me. I don't need this today." And then I noticed, standing a few feet away, a couple with a Golden Labrador, staring at me like they believed me to be quite mad.

4. I think Humphrey was of the opinion, generally, that I took life too seriously and could do with lightening up. There were times when he drove me to despair, but the

love he gave back to us was always more than ample compensation. If you left him alone for five minutes, he greeted your return like you'd been away for a month. Incredibly intuitive, he sensed if you were sad and would lie across your feet, or your lap, just to let you know that he was there – he had this.

5. In the afternoon, I returned to work, while Humphrey went back to sleep, although he often woke to bring toys to my desk to try to entice me to play with him. More often than not, he was successful – he was very, very persistent – but sometimes, if I had a deadline to meet, I had no choice but to ignore him. On those occasions, when I finished work, I looked down to find a pile of his toys on the floor next to the desk. It always broke my heart that they were never his favourites but the ones he thought that I had a bias towards.

6. The evenings were Humphrey's time. When we settled down for the night, Humphrey was adamant that we should, at the very least, share the sofa with him. The word "no" to a basset hound means "not now – but try again in, say, 30 seconds." Sometimes, he decided that he preferred the sofa to himself. Many times, my wife arrived home from work to find him stretched out on the thing, snoring, with his ear in his mouth, while I sat glumly on the floor.

7. Maybe Humphrey will be the first and last dog that ever shares my life. And maybe I'll never get over the feeling that there's a foolish animal missing from my side, mocking me but only out of love. For 13½ years, he was my constant companion. We were seldom out of each other's sight. It was Humphrey who taught me that perhaps the

best day's work we ever did on this planet was to domesticate the dog, but also the great sadness, which every dog lover knows,



that our lives are so very long, and theirs so very short by comparison. And it's always too soon to say goodbye.



**N.B. Answer ONLY ONE Question A and ONLY ONE Question B.**

### Question A – 50 Marks

- (i) Based on your reading of the above article, how would you describe the relationship Paul Howard had with his dog, Humphrey? Explain your answer, with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) Which of the following word or words would you use to describe the language used in this article?
- Humorous
  - Descriptive
  - Moving
- Give reasons for your answer, referring to the article. (15)
- (iii) (a) In your view, what does Paul Howard mean when he says that, 'perhaps the best day's work we ever did on this planet was to domesticate the dog...'? (10)
- (b) Love can be shown in many different ways. Describe a moment when love was shown to you or when you showed love to another. (10)

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

### Question B – 50 Marks

You have been asked to write a **pamphlet** for a charity that rescues and rehomes dogs and cats. In your pamphlet you should: encourage people to adopt an unwanted animal by explaining some of the ways a pet would benefit their lives, outline the key steps involved in the adoption process, and describe some of the challenges they may encounter by bringing a pet into their homes.

## TEXT 2 – Unsettled – Familial Love

This text is based on edited extracts from Rosaleen McDonagh's memoir, *Unsettled*. Rosaleen is a board member of Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and a member of Aosdána. In 2020 she was appointed to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. When she was a child, she attended a special residential school, returning to her family during holiday periods.

1. This book is a love letter.

In our home, Mam was a singer, a baker, a sewer. She was the one who dealt with money and decided where we put our trailer. She was determined that my father would not keep horses because we had so many small children. As a small child, I'd sit beside my mother for hours with a crayon and colouring book while she sewed. Being physically close to her was comforting. In the residential special school, many hours, particularly at night-time, were spent in tears. Missing her was a constant. Holiday times were never long enough. My loneliness when away from my family matched Mam's continuous heartache because of my absence.

2. Mam held counsel with other women who lived on the site. She was the person who dealt with settled people. The negotiator was a role she relished. Be it social workers, doctors or teachers, it was Mam who did the placating of these professionals.

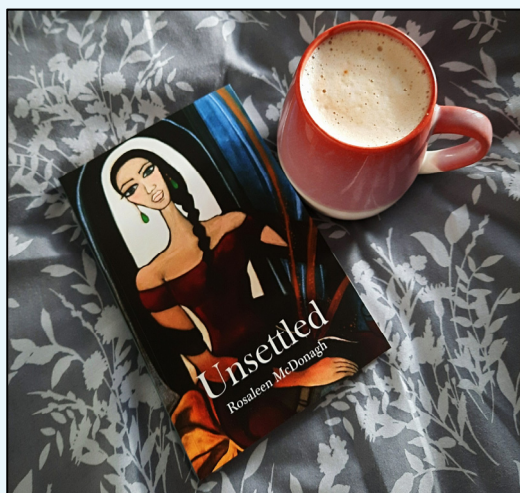
3. Once, when I arrived home to the site with a short, punk haircut, Mam broke down in tears. "Don't let your father see you like that." Five minutes later, one of my aunts called to the trailer door. She told my mother that maybe being away in school was a bad thing. My short skirt, my short haircut and peculiar taste in music were a bad influence on the other girls in the site, particularly my cousins. Mam defended me in a way no one else could, would or should. The clothes and the music were only a symptom, an indication that part of me knew somewhere along the line that the difference, not just between Mam and myself, but also between me and my sisters and cousins, would become unmanageable.



4. My wheelchair is my freedom. My wheelchair is my armour. My wheelchair is most definitely an extension of who and what I am. Despite Mam not being literate, we had many chats about the words that described my body. There is no universal template for the relationship between mothers and disabled daughters. I got lucky. Mam wasn't a martyr or hero. We had an easy, loving relationship. She was happy knowing I had my brothers and sisters to teach me to be strong in an able-bodied world.

5. My earliest memories of my grandmother Brigid are as a child trying to slip my hand into her beady pocket, wondering what treasures might stick to my beady fingers. She wore a plaid skirt, boots, an open cardigan and her hair in two long plaits until the day she died. A quiet but steely woman, she was widowed at an early age. In the cold weather, I would run up to her fireplace in the tent, and she would put trousers on me. To everyone else, the trousers were to keep me warm; deep inside me the kernel of knowledge that this was a political act grew. Brigid, like most Traveller women, was strategic and political in practical ways. Putting me in trousers meant that I could do things around the camp, chores that were considered only for boys.





6. Mam was a small woman, just under five foot, but she took on the establishment. On one occasion, at the residential school, there was a row over my long hair and how

much attention it would demand. Short hair was manageable, and I was told I should have my long hair cut short into the pudding-bowl style that was supposed to be a bob, for my Communion. Short hair took away any sense of individuality. My Communion was in eight months. Mam dug her heels in.

7. Mam and my grandmother didn't just leave my hair long, they managed to put it in ringlets under my communion veil. By the time my Confirmation came around, it was down to my hips. By then, all the girls in special school had learned how to grow, plait and oil their hair. The hair oil was contraband. It was great fun oiling and plaiting each other's hair. A small revolution but an important one.

**N.B. Answer ONLY ONE Question A and ONLY ONE Question B.**

#### Question A – 50 Marks

- (i) Based on your reading of the above memoir, how would you describe the relationships Rosaleen McDonagh had with her mother and grandmother? Explain your answer, with reference to the memoir. (15)
- (ii) Which of the following word or words would you use to describe the language used in the memoir?
  - Honest
  - Descriptive
  - Moving
 Give reasons for your answer, referring to the memoir. (15)
- (iii) (a) In your view, what does Rosaleen McDonagh mean when she says, about her mother, that 'The negotiator was a role she relished.'? (10)
- (b) Love can be shown in many different ways. Describe a moment when love was shown to you or when you showed love to another. (10)

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

#### Question B – 50 Marks

TEXT 2 features three generations of women from one family. Imagine you are a grandmother writing a **letter** to your granddaughter about what life was like for you growing up. In your letter you should: describe some of the hardships you experienced when you were young, outline how life was different for women and girls in your time, and describe some of the things you and your friends used to do to entertain yourselves as children.

### TEXT 3 – Love in Many Guises

Text three is a series of quotations, song lyrics and visual images, dealing with different aspects of love.

1. Being loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.  
Lao Tzu
2. Love does not begin and end the way we seem to think it does. Love is a battle, love is a war, love is growing up.  
James Baldwin
3. What we have once enjoyed, we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.  
Helen Keller
4. All You Need Is Love.  
The Beatles
5. Love is blind.  
Geoffrey Chaucer
6. Love is being stupid together.  
Paul Valery
7. Love is an act of endless forgiveness, a tender look which becomes a habit.  
Peter Ustinov
8. No matter how badly your heart is broken, the world doesn't stop for your grief.  
Faraaz Kazi
9. Never allow someone to be your priority, while allowing yourself to be their option.  
Mark Twain
10. Stab the body and it heals; but injure the heart and the wound lasts a lifetime.  
Mineko Iwasaki
11. All the people think love's for show / But I would die for you in secret.  
Taylor Swift
12. Loving can heal, loving can mend your soul.  
Ed Sheeran

**Image A**



***Family***

**Image B**



***Loyal Companion***

**Image C**



**Friend Group**

**Image D**



**Community**

**N.B. Answer ONLY ONE Question A and ONLY ONE Question B.**

**Question A – 50 Marks**

- (i) Based on your reading of TEXT 3, which **three** quotations, out of the ten, do you think have the most important things to say about love? In each case, explain your answer with reference to your chosen quotations. (15)
- (ii) Which **two** of the four visual images in TEXT 3 convey your view of love most? Explain your answer with reference to the images. (15)
- (iii) (a) Suggest another image, about love, that you would add to the collection of images in TEXT 3 on pages six and seven. Describe the image, and explain why you would suggest it. (10)
- (b) Love can be shown in many different ways. Describe a moment when love was shown to you or when you showed love to another. (10)

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

**Question B – 50 Marks**

As a specialist in Well-being, you have been invited to do an **interview** about loving relationships for a popular health magazine called, *Spring to Life*. The interviewer asks you the following questions:

1. What factors, do you think, are important at the start of a loving relationship?
2. How can you develop and maintain a strong, loving relationship?
3. How can you deal with conflict if it arises in a relationship?

Write the text of the answers you would give to these questions.

## SECTION II

## COMPOSING

(100 marks)

Write a composition on **any one** of the following composition assignments in **bold print** below.

Each composition carries 100 marks.

The composition assignments are intended to reflect language study in the areas of information, argument, persuasion, narration, and the aesthetic use of language.

1. **In TEXT 1, Paul Howard celebrates the relationship he had with his pet dog, Humphrey.**

Imagine that you are a family pet. Write a short story as this pet, entitled, *What I get up to when you're not around!* Your story may be serious, humorous or a combination of both.

2. **In TEXT 2, Rosaleen McDonagh's mother and grandmother stand up for her and support her wish to have long hair in school.**

Write a personal essay where you reflect on the importance of people standing up for their views and beliefs.

3. **In TEXT 1, Paul Howard tells us he believed that: Humphrey was of the opinion that he took life too seriously and could do with lightening up.**

Write a magazine article in which you explore the importance of not taking life too seriously and lightening up. Your article may be serious, humorous or a combination of both.

4. **In TEXT 2, Rosaleen McDonagh tells readers that her wheelchair is her freedom.**

You are a parent delivering a talk to the Parents' Council in your school entitled, 'Freedom and Young People Today – The Challenges!' Write the text of the talk you would give.

5. **In TEXT 3, Helen Keller says the following about love: 'What we have once enjoyed, we can never lose.'**

Write a short story featuring two characters in love, who are driven apart by difficulties, but who restore their love in the end.

6. **In TEXT 1, Paul Howard tells us, it always broke his heart when Humphrey, trying to distract him from his work, brought him the toys Humphrey thought that Howard had a bias towards.**

Write a personal essay in which you reflect on some of the things in life that can be heart-breaking.

7. **TEXT 3 reminds us of a famous Beatles' song.**

Write a speech for or against the motion that: 'All you need is love.'



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## Acknowledgements

Images and texts that appear on this examination paper were sourced as follows:

### Texts

Howard, Paul. 'I never loved an animal as much as I loved Humphrey'. *The Irish Times*. June 2024

McDonagh, Rosaleen. *Unsettled*. Skein Press. 2021

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/love>; Swift, Taylor. *Peace*. Folklore. 2020; Sheeran, Ed, *Photograph*. X. 2014;

The Beatles, *All you Need is Love*. 1967

### Images

Images on page 3: <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/me-and-my-dog-you-be-you-and-i-ll-be-your-fool-1.3605581>; <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-style/2024/06/30/paul-howard-i-never-loved-an-animal-as-much-as-i-loved-humphrey-for-13-years-he-was-my-constant-companion/>

Image on page 4: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/rosaleen-mcdonagh-this-is-the-best-moment-of-my-life-1.4644605>

Image on page 5: <https://www.pauladennan.com/reviews/unsettled-by-rosaleen-mcdonagh>

Images on page 6: <https://thirddage.com/grandparents-raising-their-childrens-children-get-the-job-done/>;  
<https://bvna.org.uk/blog/national-love-your-pet-day-2/>

Images on page 7: <https://mountainhealthcare.co.ukus/>;

<https://www.bing.com/images/search?q=love+your+community&form=HDRSC4&first=1>

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Leaving Certificate – Ordinary Level

English

Wednesday 4 June

Morning 9.30 – 12.20