# Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
# State Examinations Commission

## LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2017

# ART

## Imaginative Composition and Still Life

## Higher Level

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

**Tuesday, 2 May – Friday, 12 May** **Morning, 9.30 – 12.00**

This paper should be handed to candidates on **Monday, 3 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

I missed my daughter, and some days I couldn't get her out of my head. She had gone to college. She was living her own life now, no longer under the shelter of her parents. But the cottage in Leitrim still resonated with the remnants of her childhood, which seemed eternal while we were in the middle of it and yet it passed like leaves falling off a tree, suddenly and unexpectedly.

In the shed behind the house, I would sometimes stand when it was raining and think about her. A green galvanised shed that had stood there for years. It was painted green by three wise men who came out of the blue one summer day in a white van and said they possessed the best paint in the universe. Paint that was used by Harland and Wolff to paint ships. Paint that would never peel in an aeon of Leitrim winters. In fact, the paint was peeling off by the end of the following November but nobody complained. The shed was only used for storing things. Plastic bags of furry toys. Old furniture. The books and CDs and broken radios that got edged out of life as we moved along with new fashions. There were even a few bits of the bed I was born in leaning against the wall. And a hammer we lost years ago. A high-heeled shoe enfolded in light cobweb lay on the window-sill. There was a picture of Harry Houdini. An old pot-bellied stove.

But she grew up, suddenly and without warning. I had not really noticed her stretch the length of the cot. I had not really noticed the speed with which she slipped from one phase to another; from new teeth to new words, talking and walking, and eating and sitting in cars, and making friends, and going to play school. Fully dressed, she waited at the patio door, her face to the glass, shouting, "Car!". Her blue plastic lunch box in her hand, her blue beret cocked to the side. On the drive to town, she named her territory. That's the broken house. There's the caravan in the field. The digger digging the road. The donkey on the hill. And in the play school, she tossed her lunch box in my direction and dashed round the corner to the toys.

And when she went to Mullingar as a young teenager, she did find enormous fun in stable yards, riding horses and competing in shows. She even had her own pony, a beautiful chestnut gelding called Darwin. Darwin grew up on an organic farm, eating herbs, and he had long brown eyelashes and enormous brown eyes. For the princess who grew up with donkeys in the hills above Lough Allen, he was a dream come true. He took her over all the fences she ever faced, though it was more than jumping kept them together; she really loved him, and he loved her. He loved to toss his bucket at her. To roll on the ground with her, and blow breath into her face, to stretch for apples, or just chew Silvermints, while she plaited his tail.

"Dad," the voice called out. "Where were you? I've been waiting here for the past hour." And I saw her sitting there, with her Canon camera and her café latte; a young woman, ready and waiting.

Adapted from *Staring at Lakes, A Memoir Of Love, Melancholy and Magical Thinking* by Michael Harding, Hachette Books Ireland, 2013.

## Passage B

The results for his online search for his dream car emerged on the luminous pond of the screen amid an exasperating chaos of multicoloured ads and last-minute offers, cyber casinos, airlines, shops that sold tyres and spare car parts, antivirus programs, video games...

The screen flickered like a star at the heart of a dark room in an apartment, a fading star, around which the room's furnishings slowly revolved, the unmade bed whose skirt dragged on the ground, the chair with a mountain of clothes to iron and fold, sleeves and pant legs hanging between chair legs, the cardboard box with the empty cans and bottles he occasionally got up to get from the kitchen...the cylindrical basket with the overflowing bag of dirty laundry...

The small table was another orbiting planet, with the unplugged clock radio, a desk lamp with a burnt-out bulb, and little drawers that he never opened filled with coins, cards, pens, maps of cities he'd traveled to a thousand years ago, papers, photographs, and torn concert tickets... There was a poster the mechanic had given him pinned up right beside the window with its blinds drawn, a blown-up photo of the latest model of a car, red like his, but his was already twenty years old. He always had to fix it, one patch over the next, and the mechanic had told him he could buy a new one with all he spent on repairs. Sure, he had thought. In my next life. The poster was curling slowly, puffing out slightly like a shifting sail, a carefully manoeuvring car.

The closet's open door was like a dissected wing, lined with photographs of concept cars, the most of ten years past, which had yellowed in the photographs. And on the top shelf of the closet above the bar of empty hangers – he only had two shirts hung up, two ridiculous shirts he never wore amid a pile of notebooks and textbooks from school, a dinged trophy he had won in a school literary contest, and a racket...

Adapted from *The Boys* by Toni Sala, Two Lines Press, 2014.

## Passage C

I love doing nothing. Just hanging about, leaning over a gate looking into a field, or meandering along the bank of a river, walking by the sea. I love sitting on a seat in Stephen's Green, gawking, listening to the ducks, and wondering at all the office types rushing their sambos and take-out coffees.

A coffee shop with a window taking in the lie of a street, such as exists in town, is a great perch. In fact, you can be busy doing nothing almost anywhere, and I must say I love being busy doing nothing.

This is a condition quite different from boredom. In fact it is the opposite of boredom. Oscar Wilde quipped that "only the boring are bored", and I thank the grace of God and not any particular genius on my own part, that boredom is such a small part of my experience I cannot tell you when last it seized upon me.

But I can see boredom half a mile away, in the hangdog go of a teenager who has lost his imagination on Facebook, or in the unfortunate homeless man who has colonised a shop front off the Main Street. There is boredom in the faces of women who think compulsive shopping will deliver them from it, and in the husbands who trot behind them out of either pressure or loyalty.

No. The bored people have lost the art of being busy doing nothing, and feel they have no identity unless they are either buying or producing something or other. Or improving themselves by exercise or books.

This is good beach-walking weather and I have been out and about. The storms had cut into a sandy-clay bank which has been taken over by a colony of sand-martins. I caught them entering and leaving the hollows they had fashioned, saw them swooping and circling, and was dazzled with the "illusion of two" as the sun cast strong shadows of the speeding birds. I was rapt, but then distracted by athletes, who were as busy as the sand-martins, as they jogged up the beach. It was group of four.

They were sweating. It's not for me to judge the value of their activities, but they were so busy about training or keeping fit that they had no eyes for the dance of the sand-martins. That's neither a good thing nor bad, just a matter of fact. All I would claim is that I was as busy as the athletes, busy gawking, busy doing nothing.

Later on the same morning I sat before the sea on a washed-up lobster pot to listen to the waves. Lovely. Warmth on my face, wind in my hair, herself gone off looking for shells. A very worthy walker strode by in walking boots and socks. He broke stride to ask me what I was doing. I said that I was listening to the waves. He glanced out to sea, shook his head, and walked on. He looked busy; I was happy doing nothing.

Adapted from *Cassidy Says - Busy Doing Nothing,* Ireland's Own, June 24, 2016.

## Passage D

To be honest, the thought of going to Dubai to report on the arrival of street art in the Middle East felt like something to be avoided. So I tried to get out of it. I knew little about Dubai – beyond the fact that it is a notorious shopping destination with flexible taxes. And I have nothing against street art. But putting the two together felt like cultural flimflam. There are many places where street art belongs and it has a history – Paris, New York, London, Barcelona – but Dubai isn't one of them. Or so I feared. But the fact that 15 notable international street artists had been invited to contemporary Arabia to express themselves on the duty-free walls of Dubai demanded some investigation.

Art, it seems, is becoming a brand leader for the Gulf States. But can you buy culture? Dubai is silver and brown. The brown is the colour of the sand blowing in from the desert, creating a layer of sepia above the rooflines. The silver is the colour of all the chrome, all the glass, all the mirrors, all the spouting water with which this impossible city is seeking to disguise its desert origins. Everywhere you look, your reflection stares back at you from ceilings, columns, walls, fountains and the silvery path that leads you, Wizard of Oz-style, through the duty-free shopping. We pass into town through a canyon of silver towers, each trying to look taller than the one next to it, like classmates in a school photo. Not one of them has a scratch on it, let alone a dollop of paint or a quickly scrawled name. Such actions are illegal here.

Trumping all the other towers in the height stakes is the miraculous Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, which soars half a mile into the sky. Shapewise, it's a medieval church spire, stick-thin and pointy. The way it sits on every horizon is churchy, too. The point of a church spire was to call you in from every distance. In Europe, they can't do that anymore because taller buildings have obscured them. But in Dubai, in the desert, the effect lives on.

Just a paper-aeroplane glide away from the Burj Khalifa, Meeras is building a custom-designed modern neighbourhood called City Walk. It differs from other custom-designed neighbourhoods in two ways. The first is that it is strikingly low-rise, City Walk sprawls sideways into the sand. The second difference is that its walls are covered in loud, scratchy, surprisingly naughty murals. The first one I see is gigantic – a girl peeling an orange, painted onto the side of a six-storey building. Judging by her clothes, which are severe and domestic, the giant kitchen girl is more used to peeling potatoes than oranges. But hey, this is the Middle East, right?

She sits on a beautiful, oriental carpet that seems too posh for the circumstances. And as she hunches over her work, her glum mood seems also to belong to another era: the era of the Old Masters. Actually, I have seen her kind before in moralistic Dutch kitchen scenes of the 17$^{th}$ century, where the kitchen maid's lot in life is to stare into the distance and lament her domestic imprisonment. Surely, Etam Cru, a sarky Polish duo who specialise in end walls, couldn't have had those kind of meanings in mind in their contribution to City Walk? They wouldn't have had the nerve, would they?

Adapted from *Can You Buy Culture?* by Waldemar Januszczak, The Sunday Times Magazine, 29 May, 2016.

## Passage E

It's hard to believe now, but I wasn't exactly the kind of girl who dreamed of country living. In fact, I'd never even been on a real working farm in my life – except for a visit to Zander's maple sugar farm in Wisconsin during the fifth grade, which doesn't count because the only scent there was sweet syrup, not ripe, steaming slurry.

Then everything changed. Mad love swept me up and carried me across the Atlantic where I landed on a centuries-old farm in the Irish countryside with the dashing man I would later call my husband. When I first moved to Ireland, we took up residence in the village of Adare, Co. Limerick. Adare looked and felt like a scene out of medieval times.

It took me a long time to get used to rural living. There are no food delivery services or nearby restaurants in the middle of the Irish countryside. It became quite clear that I had to teach myself how to cook and grow whole, healthy, interesting foods on our farm. My new family's pastures were rich with dairy cows, chickens, hedgerows and superb soil to start a bountiful kitchen garden.

In the autumn of 2009, I began writing my blog, originally called *I Married an Irish Farmer* and later becoming simply *Farmette.* I needed an outlet for my creativity, to produce something and perhaps connect with other farming women.

With all the time I was spending in the kitchen, I started quizzing my mother-in-law on her traditional Irish cooking skills and recipes. I photographed and recorded my culinary experiments and shared them on my blog. My blog not only built my online community; I soon found that if you prepared homemade clotted cream and baked a mean scone, you might make a friend or two in the neighbourhood.

In the farmyard, Richard milks Holstein Friesian dairy cows, morning and night, all year round. He also raises free-range poultry. There is a small orchard on the home farmyard. Originally planted in the 1940s, it has since been cut back to a scale that provides just enough apples, pears, plums, gooseberries, and currants for our families each summer and autumn. Dunmoylan Grove is where I make wholesome magic with the milk from the farm and press orchard apples and pears into juice.

Adapted from *Eat, Taste, Love,* The Irish Times Magazine, March 12, 2016.
From *The Farmette Cookbook* by Imen McDonnell, Roost Books.

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