



CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Language genres.....	1
English (Higher Level) Paper 1 Overview	2
1. Paper 1: Comprehending A.....	3
Comprehending A at a glance.....	3
Responding to Comprehending A questions.....	4
Writing about style.....	16
Visual literacy questions	23
2. Paper 1: Comprehending B	31
Comprehending B at a glance	31
The opinion piece.....	32
Talks.....	36
Letters and blogs.....	39
Business communications: Memos, proposals and reports	46
Diaries and interviews	49
Introductions and presentations	52
3. Paper 1: Composing	56
Types of Leaving Cert essay	56
The personal essay	57
Persuasive speeches and talks.....	62
Discursive writing	65
The descriptive essay	69
Informative writing.....	71
The short story	75
English (Higher Level) Paper 2 Overview	89
4. Paper 2: The Single Text.....	90
<i>King Lear</i> by William Shakespeare	90
<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> by Margaret Atwood.....	101
<i>Days Without End</i> by Sebastian Barry	110

<i>Othello</i> by William Shakespeare	114
<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> by Oscar Wilde	125
<i>A Doll's House</i> by Henrik Ibsen	134

5. **Paper 2: The Comparative Study** **137**

Cultural context	138
Cultural context in <i>Philadelphia, Here I Come!</i>	141
Cultural context in <i>Room</i>	146
Cultural context in <i>Silas Marner</i>	152
Cultural context in <i>Unforgiven</i>	158
General vision and viewpoint	171
General vision and viewpoint in <i>Philadelphia, Here I Come!</i>	175
General vision and viewpoint in <i>Room</i>	177
General vision and viewpoint in <i>Unforgiven</i>	179
General vision and viewpoint in <i>Silas Marner</i>	181
Comparative Study Appendix 1: Theme or issue	192
Comparative Study Appendix 2: Literary genre	195

6. **Paper 2: Poetry** **198**

The Unseen Poem	198
Prescribed Poetry.....	203
Poetry – stylistic features	231

Mechanics Revision **233**

3

Paper 1: Composing

The Composing section is the most important on the Leaving Cert English paper and is worth 100 marks (25% of the overall total). The question provides an opportunity to display a variety of writing skills and a flair for language use.

Aim for at least 900 words (written over approximately 80 minutes).

Types of Leaving Cert essay

Personal essay	Speech/talk/debate
<p>Purpose: to share an experience and reflection.</p> <p>How: take a personal stance, use of 'I', description appealing to senses, personal anecdotes, offer reflective insights, confessional tone, humour, exaggeration, individual observations.</p>	<p>Purpose: to convince an audience to agree with your point of view.</p> <p>How: language of argument and/or persuasion, awareness of audience, use of allusions, illustrations, rhetorical questions, emotive language, personal anecdotes.</p>
Informative article	Feature article/opinion piece
<p>Purpose: to offer a factual account and to educate in an interesting way.</p> <p>How: use informative language, presenting arguments and counter-arguments, analysis, facts, statistics, sources, synthesis.</p>	<p>Purpose: to inform, entertain, reflect and persuade readers.</p> <p>How: offer a view into the human experience using emotive language, detailed description, personal anecdote, exaggeration, humour.</p>
Dramatic dialogue	Short story
<p>Purpose: to enable a reader hear a serious/humorous discussion from more than one voice on a topic.</p> <p>How: create distinct voices/characters, dramatic tension, dramatic development, variety of tones – comic, sincere, satirical, sceptical, persuasive.</p>	<p>Purpose: to write a narrative about fictional events and characters.</p> <p>How: use plot, characterisation, setting, description, atmosphere, dialogue, narrative shape, tension, suggestion, flashback, climax, resolution, aesthetic qualities.</p>

Descriptive essay	Discursive essay
<p>Purpose: to describe a person, place, or thing in vivid detail and involve readers in the experience.</p> <p>How: descriptive writing, imagery, setting, anecdote, atmosphere, attention to detail, appeal to senses, quality of observation, vivid vocabulary, aesthetic features.</p>	<p>Purpose: to explore both positive and negative aspects of a topic.</p> <p>How: discursive writing, allusions, arguments and counter-arguments, illustrations, analysis.</p>

The personal essay

A personal essay explores your opinions and feelings about a subject or issue in an engaging and interesting way. It should be both **personal** and **reflective**. You are expressing your outlook or explaining your point of view.

What is personal writing?

‘I have been very proud to hear how my great-grandparents helped other families less fortunate than themselves with food and fuel during those bitter winter months.’

Personal writing, using the personal pronoun ‘I’.

‘Previous generations helped other families less fortunate than themselves with food and fuel during those bitter winter months.’

Informative writing, non-personal, no use of personal pronoun ‘I’.

What is reflective writing?

‘I was bullied at school when I was ten. I realised I had a choice, I could allow myself to be bullied or I could stand up for myself. It was up to me.’

Reflective writing shows the writer thinking about an experience and sometimes drawing a lesson from it.



N.B. ‘The general functions of language outlined here will continually mix and mingle within texts and genres. So, there can be an aesthetic argument, a persuasive narrative, or an informative play.’ (Department of Education English Syllabus)



Aesthetic writing refers to language that appeals to our sense of beauty. It is closely associated with an imaginative and carefully crafted poetic style. Aesthetic language is most likely found in descriptive, narrative and personal compositions.



Don’t just re-tell experiences and memories – interpret and discuss them.

Purpose

To describe, share and **reflect** on an experience/relationship between **yourself** and someone/something else.

How?

- Decide on a **goal** – what do you want to show, share, understand?
- Identify your **target audience**.
- Use **descriptive, humorous, discursive** language.
- Include **autobiographical anecdotes** (experiences, either fictional or real from your life).
- **Personal feelings** should be expressed sincerely and convincingly.
- Write in a **confessional, intimate tone**.
- Use **first-person pronouns**: 'I', 'me', etc.
- **Reflective insights** (considering what the experience you have described meant to you).

key
point

Do you have any knowledge or experience of this subject? Do you hold strong opinions on it? If not, don't choose this type of essay.

Remember!

Personal essays are usually distinguished by their lively, conversational language. The tone is often candid and confessional. You are likely to be writing about something that has really changed your view of life, such as a turning point that taught you a lesson about social inequality.

How is the Leaving Cert essay marked?

The criteria for assessment (usually referred to as the **PCLM**) are as follows:

Clarity of purpose (30%)

This refers to engagement with the task. Has the candidate engaged with the question? Relevance, focus, originality, freshness, clear aim, and understanding of genre are rewarded here.

Coherence of delivery (30%)

This refers to the ability to sustain the response over the entire answer. Continuity of argument, sequencing, management of ideas, use of examples, control of register and creative modelling are all rewarded in this section.

Efficiency of language use (30%)

This refers to control of language to achieve clear communication. Has the candidate used language suitable for the task? Vocabulary, syntax, paragraphing, punctuation, and use of lively expression are examined here.

Accuracy of mechanics (10%)

This refers to spelling and grammar.

Sample essay question



Question

Write a personal essay in which you reflect on significant moments of insight and revelation that you have experienced.



PCLM Marking Scheme guidelines:

- Always address the question. The 'P' element of PCLM requires candidates to focus on the task. Your response must be a personal essay containing reflections on significant moments of insight and revelation experienced.
- In this case, the writing can be informative, argumentative and persuasive (depending on the stance you have chosen).
- Allow about 80 minutes and aim for 900 words.

Sample answer

- 1 This year, above any other year, I need a moment of revelation. I need a totally reliable test which would tell me with pin-point precision – Yes, I am supposed to be a world famous scientist, No, I am not supposed to be an actor even though I was the lead in the TY school musical, 'The Sound of Music'. But I have found revelation comes when you least expect it.
- 2 Last July I was in New York for a week during a heatwave. At one of the gates going into Central Park, a little lady was selling 'blue' roses. I shook my head in disbelief. Sadly no rose, genetically, can be blue. The sticky summer afternoon had a line of kids ordering 100% artificially azure blue snow cones. The ice-cream van tinkled, the kids giggled. The ice-cream man presented the children with mouthfuls of frozen, sweet idealised 'sky'. I suddenly realised that not everything has to be judged scientifically. Humans dare to make impossibilities possible, even if only with syrup and food colouring.
- 3 If an experience goes so deep that a special sense of knowing emerges, then this is when insight occurs. When I went off to secondary school, my Gran bought me a new lunchbox. She used to say, 'I don't know where the years go to!' I don't think it had registered with her that I was twelve, pretending to be fourteen, not ten! In the canteen, on that first day I went in, a second year student sneered, 'Oooh, look at her, with her new shiny lunchbox!' I cringed. Is this what secondary school life was going to be like? When I went home, I went straight to my computer

Personal response,
reference to question.

Personal experience,
reflective insight.

and posted an urgent message on Facebook. It announced that the director of 'Frozen' was coming to our area tomorrow and was looking for a teenager who had merchandise associated with the film. A picture of this student would be taken with the director.

- 4 Next day I arrived in the canteen, proudly carrying my 'Frozen' lunchbox. Some of my classmates crowded around me excitedly. A hush descended. A group of the second years were coming.

'How much for that lunchbox?'

'Not for sale, my Gran bought me it.'

'Where?'

'Woodies.'

'Let's go!'

I smiled to myself. I realised that Gran sometimes knew what she was talking about when she said, 'You gotta be smart!'

There would be no more problems with these older students. Must make sure to report that the director went to the neighbouring village by mistake!

Personal experience,
reflective insight.

- 5 When I was in TY, we did a project on Seamus Heaney. I really felt that this poet could communicate moments of insight. Who can forget Heaney's home-place, Mossbawn, with its 'water honeyed in the slung bucket' on long sunny afternoons? For me, my oasis of calm against the crazy world is my quiet living room where I lie spread-eagled on the couch, trying to snatch a few precious moments of extra shut-eye before school. My living room marks the celebration of the year, Christmas. It captures the intoxicating excitement of the day. The tall Christmas tree takes pride of place, ornaments glittering, lights twinkling. An hour after our family's exchange of presents, the room looks like a bomb site with torn wrapping paper covering every part of the floor. We raise a toast to my late Gran's picture, her eyes shining as brightly as the lights on the tree. Just like Heaney, I know that in this ordinary room 'is love like a tinsmith's scoop sunk past its gleam in the meal-bin'.

Reference to Heaney's
insight adds interest.

- 6 Of course, poetry isn't for everyone – and there's no law saying that you have to like it or learn by it. But it's interesting that most of my so-called life-changing experiences have happened with my family or at school. Back when I was in 6th Class, the most memorable moment happened during a History lesson when the teacher began discussing World War 2. Although I had heard of the war and the Holocaust, it had not really made an impact on me. Like most young children, I didn't relate to statistics. It wasn't until I read the number '6 million' on the board – and the teacher explained that this number was much greater than the entire population of Ireland, North and South, that I began to understand. In a way, it was the beginning of growing up. In the years since then, I have learnt much more about the reality of what happened to innocent Jewish victims during the 1940s. I still don't understand how such inhumanity could occur in a civilised part of Europe

less than 100 years ago, but I am still as shocked as ever by what some humans are capable of doing to one another.

Reflective anecdote broadens discussion.

- 7 Luckily, life is generally not so horrific. During the holidays I always enjoy taking some quiet time to chill. Now I rise early and in the stillness of the dawn I like to be in my bedroom looking at the graceful silver birch swaying smoothly against the blue sky. I switch off my phone and close my eyes. Some days I imagine I am like the tree, my feet growing roots down through the floor into the soil, connecting with the earth. I follow the gentle pace of my breath, flowing in and out. Time drifts by. I open my eyes and stretch. The silver birch is still there, gently rocking to its own beat. It's then I realise I am part of this wonderful blue planet's creation.
- 8 Flashes of insight occur when our minds are quiet and our aware self is at rest. The genius inventor, Thomas Edison, would often let his mind wander, hoping to capture fleeting bits of original thought which he would jot down. Anxiety creates 'noise' in the brain, drowning out the space for revelation. Often we are told to think long and hard before making an important decision, like what should I choose to be in the future. I now realise that moments of insight and revelation pop up without warning, just as life happens while you are planning it. I think that's what I'll do with my career choice. Let's just see what pops up!

Conclusion links ending with opening paragraph, rounding off the essay.

(1,020 words)

EXAMINER'S COMMENT

- Well-written, focused response.
- Good structure in organised paragraphs.
- Reflective approach sustained throughout.
- Effective use of a range of personal anecdotes.
- Engagingly lively and discursive tone.
- Slightly awkward expression and repetition of 'went' in paragraph 3.

GRADE H1

P = 30/30

C = 30/30

L = 28/30

M = 10/10

Total = 98/100



A personal essay will be **sharply** penalised if it reads like a short story and lacks a reflective quality.

5

Paper 2: The Comparative Study

aims

- Identifying and understanding the four comparative modes.
- Developing successful comparative responses to question.
- Revising key prescribed comparative texts.

The Leaving Cert Comparative Study section is worth **70 marks** – the second most important question on the exam paper.

In this section, novels, plays and films are all referred to as **texts**.

A **mode** of comparison is simply a basis or framework for exploring a text.

The prescribed Higher Level modes for 2021 are:

- Cultural context
- General vision and viewpoint
- Theme or issue



You will need to study at least **two of the three** prescribed modes.

The prescribed Higher Level modes for 2022 are:

- Cultural context
- General vision and viewpoint
- Literary genre



Note that cultural context, and general vision and viewpoint, are prescribed modes for both 2021 and 2022.



In the Comparative Study section, a mode is a way of studying a text.

Students can check details about prescribed texts with their teachers or by accessing www.education.ie for circulars regarding prescribed material.

Note:

- There will be questions on two of the three prescribed modes in the examination.
- Each mode on the exam paper will offer a choice of two questions.
- Candidates must choose one mode and answer one question.

EITHER	OR
<p>A single essay question comparing three prescribed texts (70 marks) (Aim for at least 900 words)</p> <p>Time: 70 minutes</p>	<p>A two-part question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part (a) requires discussion of one prescribed text (30 marks) (Aim for at least 400 words) Part (b) requires comparison of two other prescribed texts (40 marks) (Aim for at least 500 words) <p>Time: 70 minutes</p>

When answering comparative questions, candidates may compare and/or contrast, i.e. address similarities and/or differences in both the subject matter and style of their chosen texts.

The modes and texts used in the study notes and sample answers that follow are all prescribed for both the 2021 and 2022 examinations.



In your answer you may not use the text you have answered on in **Section I – The Single Text**.

Cultural context

Prescribed mode for 2021 and 2022



- Studying texts by examining the ‘world’ of the story.
- Understanding how aspects of cultural context shape characters and events in texts.

The cultural context is often described as **the society or ‘world’ of the text**. It refers to the social setting, values, attitudes and day-to-day practices. Our understanding of a text is enriched by knowing about the culture in which the story is set.



Various aspects of cultural context, such as social class and identity, are likely to overlap at times.

Analysis of cultural context

Family	How does family impact on characters and their actions? Does it nurture or restrain characters? (Obedience, love, duty, guilt, confidence, etc.)
Society/class structure	How does the type of society affect the characters and their actions? Does it empower or restrict characters? (Power, money, status, education, etc.)



Cultural forces can have a positive or negative impact on characters.

Men/women	Who has power, men or women? (Patriarchy, matriarchy.) How does this influence the central character's life?
Religion	Is religion a comforting or inhibiting force? (How does it affect marriage, sex, social change, the happiness of characters?)
Violence	Is the violence physical, emotional or intellectual? Who is the offender and who is the victim? What is the impact of violence on society and individuals?
Poverty	How does poverty affect the progress of characters? (Lack of opportunity, helplessness, disease, honour, pride, etc.)

Making comparisons		
First text: drama	Second text: novel	Third text: film
<i>Philadelphia, Here I Come!</i> Brian Friel	<i>Room</i> Emma Donoghue	<i>Unforgiven</i> Clint Eastwood
Who has power or influence?		
Older men, the Church	Old Nick, society	Violent men
Is power used responsibly or abused?		
Abused	Abused	Abused
Choose a scene that illustrates how power is used.		
The tea-time scene between Gar and his father S. B. He longs for S. B. to make 'one unpredictable remark' to bridge their tragic communication gap.	Old Nick switches off the electricity and stops bringing food.	In a brothel, a cowboy slashes a woman's face because she mocks how he looks.
Outline what happens as a result.		
No change in relationship occurs. Gar and his father hold precious memories of their shared past (fishing trip, wee sailor suit) but they are unable to express their true feelings.	Ma decides they must escape (pretends Jack is dead). Police catch Old Nick who gets sent to prison for 25 years to life with no parole.	The sheriff treats it as a minor matter. The women of the brothel employ William Munny, a hired killer, to take revenge.
Cultural context impact		
Has Gar succeeded in overcoming his oppressed cultural context?	Have Ma and Jack succeeded in overcoming their restrictive cultural context?	Has the rule of law succeeded in overcoming violent lawlessness?

Responding to texts

How individuals react to their problems within the confines of their different worlds is of great interest today. We have to learn how to co-exist. We have to be aware of differing points of view. Yet what one person perceives as a threat may be viewed by another as admirable.

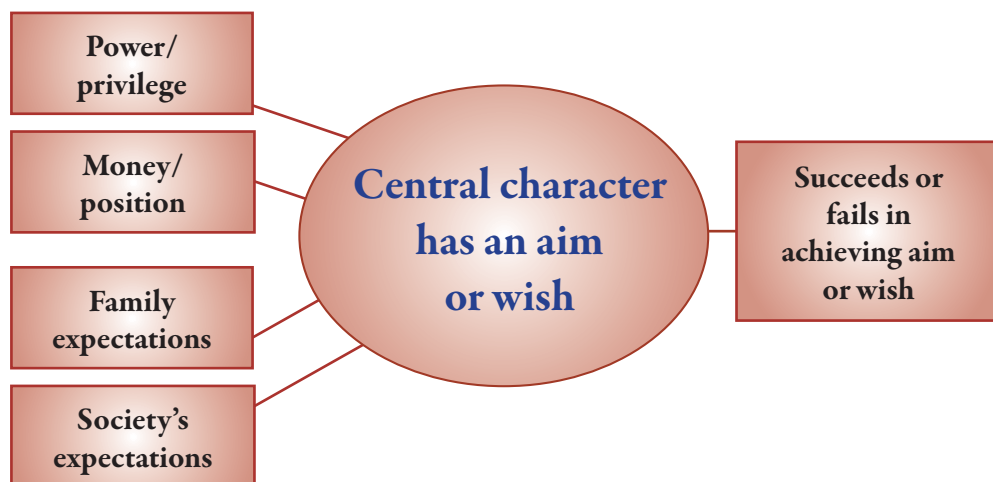
Different personalities react in distinctive ways to unexpected challenges in their lives. Do they act or do they remain passive? Are the odds overwhelming? By examining the responses of individual characters as they conform to (or rebel against) the forces of class, money, privilege, dreams and expectations, we gain important insights into life.

For example, when challenges are met with courage, **we can learn what adds to a character's feeling of self-worth**. Authors and film directors often want us to think about an aspect of the human condition and to question our opinions and beliefs. In turn, we can re-evaluate what real success means and the importance of genuine friendship.

Comparative study texts broaden our understanding of what it means to be a human being. They allow us to experience (at a safe distance) the struggles of others as they seek to find a resolution to their difficulties. We all need to know ourselves, to distinguish between reality and appearance, growing up, taking responsibility for our decisions, understanding the corrosive effects of hatred as well as the redeeming power of love and to ultimately face the finality of death.

Developing a personal response

Check the graphic below to aid your understanding of **the impact of cultural forces** on a character in a text. The forces which influence an individual are those on the left. They will either help or hinder the central character as he or she tries to achieve their goal in life.



Cultural and social forces in any particular place or time shape the lives of people as they conform to (or sometimes rebel against) the pervading forces of class, money, privilege, dreams and expectations.

Cultural context in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

Overview

- Brian Friel's play is set during the early 1960s in the small Donegal village of Ballybeg just before Gar O'Donnell emigrates to America.
- Gar finds it difficult to live in such a claustrophobic environment.
- The play reflects the conservative structure of society during this period.
- Emphasis was on the family unit and religion was at the centre of family life.
- Traditional male/female roles are strongly defined.
- The dominant influence of State and Church provided moral and social leadership for the people.

Negative cultural influences			
Religion	The Irish State	Education	Patriarchal society
Canon Mick O'Byrne represents the Church.	Senator Doogan represents the Irish State.	Master Boyle represents education and scholarship.	S. B., Gar's father, represents the patriarchy.
Parish priest, spiritual leader in the community, local school manager – he has immense influence in society. Represents conservatism in the Catholic Church. Remote and self-regarding , he has no words of comfort for Gar about leaving home or for S. B. who will miss his only son.	Wealthy establishment figure , local politician. Wants his daughter Kate to marry a university graduate rather than Gar. Epitomises middle-class snobbery and class prejudice. Conservative symbol of power and high social standing .	Gar's teacher is a drunken failure who quarrels with the Canon. Unsuccessful suitor to Gar's mother, Maire. Self-interested fantasist who dreams of important teaching post in Boston.	S. B. is a prominent respectable citizen . Tragically, unable to communicate with Gar. Personal tragedies – Gar's mother dies giving birth. Willing to accept societal norms , servile attitude to the Canon.
Cultural impact			
The Canon demonstrates how religion is no longer relevant . He does not support Gar's emotional needs or spiritual life.	Skilled speaker who confuses and discourages Gar . The senator amplifies and exposes Gar's sense of inferiority .	Although Boyle has some regard for Gar, he insults him : 'You're young and strong and of average intelligence'.	Cannot express his feelings. Gar is devastated when S. B. misses his chance to discuss his memory of the blue boat fishing trip.

Positive cultural influences

<p>Madge, housekeeper to the O'Donnell family, plays the traditional female role; central figure, mediator and surrogate mother to Gar.</p>	<p>Kate Doogan is Gar's lost love – she belongs to a wealthy family and represents the privileged middle class.</p>	<p>Ned and the 'boys' are Gar's male friends – they symbolise the constricted lifestyle of most young Irish people during the 1960s.</p>	<p>Con and Lizzy, American relations (Lizzy's sister was Gar's mother) who want Gar to return to America with them – they represent a possible escape for Gar.</p>
<p>Madge has genuine affection for Gar hidden by horseplay and rough language, 'you brat you'.</p> <p>She is important to Gar, 'I think I love you more than any of them'.</p> <p>A mediator – attempts to break the silence between father and son.</p> <p>Loyal to S. B. – 'Just because he doesn't say much doesn't mean he hasn't feelings'.</p> <p>Disapproves of the 'boys' – 'couldn't even come here to say good-bye to you on your last night'.</p> <p>Allows audience to see things as they really are – S. B. and Gar are 'as like as two peas'.</p>	<p>Kate is inventive – tries to circumvent her father's opposition to her marrying Gar (S. B.'s 'supposed' retirement).</p> <p>Assertive – tries to make a man out of an adolescent – tells Gar that their future is 'entirely up to you'.</p> <p>Mature – makes the best of a situation, such as marriage to Dr King, 'I hear no complaints'.</p> <p>Caring – calls to say goodbye to Gar and wishes to maintain friendship.</p> <p>Sensitive – tells Gar, 'Your father'll miss you'.</p> <p>Dignified farewell – 'Good-bye Gar'.</p>	<p>Ned, Joe and Tom have difficulty communicating their feelings – Madge 'asked' them to call to see Gar.</p> <p>Immature – they live in fantasy land, 'Any volunteers for a big booze-up and a couple of women?'</p> <p>Dependent financially on parents – 'I meant to buy you something good, but the aul fella didn't sell the calf to the jobbers'.</p> <p>Ned has genuine affection – 'flings belt' as a gift to Gar – 'If any of them Yankee scuts try to beat you up'.</p> <p>Encourages Gar – 'You'll make out all right over there'.</p>	<p>Lizzy is emotional – but also sentimental, impulsive, vulgar, dissatisfied and misses having children of her own.</p> <p>She is also over-protective towards Gar – 'we'll offer him everything we have'.</p> <p>Lizzie can be cruel – sarcastic nickname for her husband, 'Rudolph Valentino', famous Hollywood screen lover.</p> <p>Gar has reservations about her – 'She'll tuck you into your air-conditioned cot every night'.</p> <p>Con and Lizzy glorify the 'American Dream', unlike their friend Ben Burton who says 'it's just another place to live'.</p>

Bittersweet memories

Gar fails to communicate his feelings about Madge and is left with the bittersweet memory, 'Watch her carefully ... this is a film you'll run over and over again'.

After losing Kate, **Gar fails to communicate** his love for her and is left with feelings of regret, 'sweet Katie Doogan ... my darling Kathy Doogan'.

Gar is aware of his friends' flaws – 'ignorant bloody louts' and has nostalgic memories of 'foolish, silly fun and foolish silly laughing ... precious, precious gold'.

Gar rashly decides to emigrate – he wants to associate himself with the 'laughing, crying, impetuous' family of his mother – but has he made the right choice?

Gar's two 'worlds'

Exterior world

The playwright allows Gar Public to interact with his everyday world.

Interior world

The audience can also see into Gar's mind through Gar Private who comments on events, actions and characters, including himself. By retreating into fantasy, Gar Private blocks what his public self finds unpleasant in the exterior world.

Cultural references in the play

In addition to Irish heritage, Gar inherits fragments of **Anglo-Irish, European and American culture**.

- Gar repeatedly quotes from a speech by the Irish commentator Edmund Burke: 'It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles.'
- Burke celebrates an idealised past which is contrasted with an unhappy present.
- Gar also refers to American cowboys forging forward new frontiers: 'let's git that li'l ole saddle bag opened and let's git packin'.
- He listens to European music, particularly Mendelssohn's 'Violin Concerto', representing beauty.
- Gar also enjoys Irish music, 'She Moved through the Fair', possibly reflecting his inability to find his own voice.

What significance do these cultural references have for Gar?

- Do they suggest that Gar is a dreamer or a realist?
- What does Gar Private's 'life' reveal about the cultural values of Ireland in the 1960s?
- How have the negative and positive aspects of the cultural context shaped Gar's personality?
- Do they enable or prevent him from making good choices in order to achieve his dreams?





In Part (a) 30-mark questions on one text, no comparison is necessary. Discuss the mode only.

- Allow about 30 minutes and aim for 400 words approximately.
- Organise your answer into clearly defined paragraphs.
- Support your opinions with quotations and references from the text.



Sample 30-mark question

'Central characters can successfully or unsuccessfully challenge aspects of the cultural context in texts.'

Discuss the extent to which at least one main character challenges successfully or unsuccessfully at least one aspect of the cultural context in **one text** on your comparative course. Support your answer with reference to the text.

Prompt!

Refer to the mode and the question in your answer.

The purpose of the question:

- to show evidence of understanding the cultural context of the text (focusing on the mode);
- to discuss the behaviour of one or more central characters who challenge (or conform) to the world of the text;
- to examine the degree of success achieved.

Decide on your opinion:

- Gar needs to challenge the establishment figures of Senator Doogan and S. B., who represent the power, wealth and traditional values in Ballybeg, in order to achieve his dreams of independence and love. He fails to do so.

Make a short plan of your key points:

- Gar must confront Senator Doogan for permission to marry Kate, but he lacks the courage to do so and gives up.
- Gar has to make his father aware that he resents the way he is being treated. However, he fails to communicate with him.
- Gar fails to challenge restrictive aspects of the cultural context of his world and this prevents his pursuit of happiness and fulfilment.

Sample answer

- 1 In *Philadelphia, Here I Come*, Gar responds weakly to the challenges of rural Irish society in the 1960s. Society is tightly ruled mainly by older men through wealth and class. However, Gar's lack of courage in challenging these social values leads to his ultimate defeat.
- 2 Gar wants to marry Kate, the daughter of the local lawyer, Senator Doogan. Kate is a realist who knows the objections her father will raise against Gar. The senator is busy engineering a 'suitable' match for her with Dr Francis King. But time is running out. So she creates the false impression that S. B. is about to retire and Gar will take over. She insists Gar meet her father, 'You talk to Daddy, Gar'. But Gar panics, 'they'll wipe the bloody floor with me'. Kate reminds him, 'It's up to you'. But Gar fails to fight for his love.
- 3 Doogan also uses class superiority to belittle Gar. The Kings all went to university, 'his father and I were class-fellows school', 'later at university when he did medicine and I did law'. The culture of the time makes Gar inferior, so he lacks the confidence to marry Kate. He failed to seize his opportunity away from the restrictions of Ballybeg. Gar now also fails to seize the opportunity Kate had created for him. Private Gar immediately blames her, 'the aul bitch'. He criticises Public, 'you look a right fool standing there'. Gar has defeated himself, 'I think I'd better move on'. He has lost Kate.
- 4 Gar also blames his failure on his father, S. B., 'I'm twenty-five and you treat me as if I were five'. He complains that he cannot order a 'dozen loaves' without his father's permission. S. B. confides to his son that his business is going down, 'I mind the time when I got through a couple of dozen a week'. It is obvious that the business needs a young man with modern ideas. But Gar again displays a lack of courage and cuts his father off, 'Better get these pills and then try to get a couple of hours sleep'. Gar does not confront S. B. about his low pay, 'you pay me less than you pay Madge'.
- 5 While Gar bitterly complains about Ballybeg as 'a backwater, a dead-end', Kate disagrees, 'It isn't as bad as that'. Gar is blaming his failure in life on a place, not on his own decisions and lack of action. Gar conforms to his society not because of tradition, but because he lacks the moral strength to claim his rightful place in Ballybeg's society.

(425 words)

EXAMINER'S COMMENT

Generally focused response to the question. Clear understanding of some cultural aspects prevalent in Ballybeg and Gar's failure to challenge them. Key points are well-supported with relevant textual reference and suitable quotation. Language use is reasonably good apart from some repetition and note-like expression (e.g. paragraph 2). Discussion is rounded off effectively.

(24/30 marks)