



# Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 2024

## English - Ordinary Level - Paper 1

Total Marks: 200

Wednesday, June 5 – 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 **CHALLENGES**.
- 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.

Do not hand this up.

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## TEXT 1 – CHALLENGE 1: A NEW SCHOOL

TEXT 1 is an adapted extract from the novel, “How to Build a Boat” by Elaine Feeney. It was longlisted for the 2023 Booker Prize. It tells the story of Jamie O’Neill, a 13-year-old, who has a unique way of viewing the world that involves a need to be organised when facing new challenges. In this extract Jamie prepares for his first day at secondary school with some help from his father, Eoin.

1. Jamie’s school uniform hung on his bedroom door and the plastic covering was pinned with a small tag that read: *For Collection: Jamie O’Neill. No Charge. Best of Luck Jamie x.* All of Jamie’s clothes were laundered before first wear. He started to think... Vest. Good. Socks. Red. First sock. Second. Favourite colour? Red. Trousers. Yes. Good. Belt. Tight. Tighter. New hole, not great. Eoin insisted on doing it with a fork. Level of exasperation with Eoin: Ten. Breathe. Shirt. White. Good. Tie. Red. Horrible. I do not like. Make your bed. Get up. Get up, put your feet on the ground like Eoin says. I wish I could complain to a manager, tell him I don’t want to go to school... what is the point?

2. As Jamie’s bedroom filled with rain sounds from a sensory machine Eoin picked up in Argos, the walls lifted to pink, reddened and reassured him like he was floating inside a lava lamp.

3. He wished the day would go to plan. Since he was born at three pm, three was his lucky number, and he whispered *Good Morning* three times. He climbed out of bed with his arms stretched backwards, gripping the ladder like a gymnast before dismount. Jamie then ran his hand on neat piles of books on his bottom bunk.

4. When he had started primary school, a slew of birthday invites arrived – but soon they trickled to single figures. And by year two, all the colourful invites stuffed in his schoolbag with monkeys or clowns and elastic writing in different-coloured inks, stopped altogether. At which time, the bottom bunk of Jamie’s bed, once considered for sleepovers, was relegated/elevated

for Jamie’s ‘Books of Great Importance’. The books were left in piles along the bare mattress like tortoises with meticulous hand-written notes pressed on their immaculate covers: Date and Place of Publication. Date Started. Date Completed. Initial Reaction. And most pressing – Jamie O’Neill’s Star Ratings. The Star Ratings were harsh and among the piles, only one book received five hand-drawn Jamie O’Neill Stars: *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*.

5. Next door, Eoin was restless having spent the night tossing about the bed’s flat sheet which ended up on the floor. The fibre pinheads of the bare mattress scratched and inflamed his skin. He picked up his phone and dropped it so many times throughout the night that he couldn’t recall, and he was good at keeping count: his whole life had turned into measurements and timings and while Sundaynightitis was a fever he was used to, this was different. Jamie was about to begin secondary school and Eoin was filled with whirling moments of the boy at different stages of life. He tried for hours to remember the first day Jamie lost a tooth or his first step. He thought of the days that the boy never stopped chatting, the times he had not listened back, or was short tempered. And his regrets, coupled with anxiety, had kept him awake until he settled on a memory of Jamie making a daisy chain one June evening out on the green and gifting it to the scrawny neck of a stray cat.

6. “Jamie! Lad... you OK?” Eoin said, sticking his head around his son’s door. “Heard you rummaging. What are you up to at this hour?”  
Jamie said, “Yes, Eoin, I’m OK.”

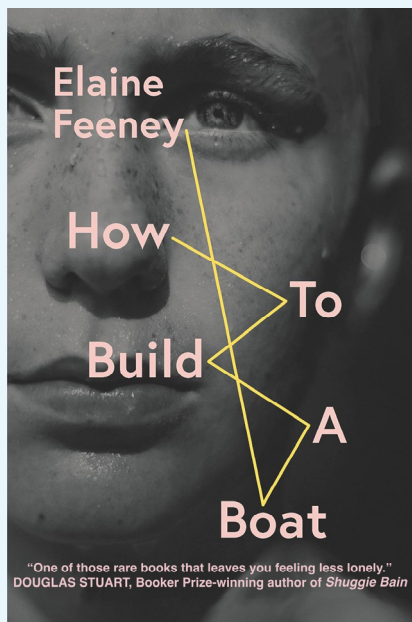
“Big day, eh?” Eoin said, folding a pink laundry bag over. He regretted his words. A build-up was the worst thing that could happen: birthday, Christmas, a trip – anything that involved a countdown.

7. “Eoin?” Jamie said, “I’ve been thinking about the route to school.”

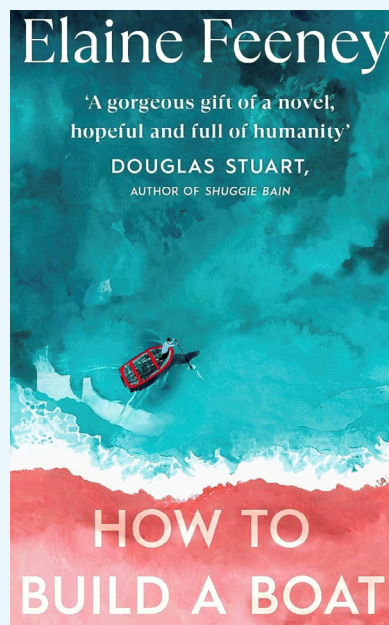
“Want us to take the van?” Eoin said. “We can.”  
 “No,” Jamie said. Somewhere in the boy’s mind was a mortal fear that culminated in planning each day at great length, and not leaving things to chance.

“You’ll be OK, I promise.”

“You can’t make that promise, Eoin.”



Cover  
A



Cover  
B

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

### Question A – 50 Marks

- (i) What impression do you form of Jamie from reading the above extract? Make three points in your response. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) Do you think this extract is a good example of descriptive writing? Give reasons for your answer, referring to the above extract. (15)
- (iii)
  - (a) The theme of this examination paper is ‘Challenges’. What do you think will be the greatest challenge ahead of you in life? Describe how you intend to deal with that challenge. (10)
  - (b) The cover of a novel is important in catching a potential reader’s attention. Cover A and Cover B have both been used to sell the novel, *How to Build A Boat*. Which cover do you prefer? Give reasons for your answer, referring to **both** covers in your response. (10)

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

### Question B – 50 Marks

You are nearing the end of your time in secondary education. You have been asked to put three objects into a time capsule, representing your time in school. A time capsule is a container storing a selection of objects, buried for discovery in the future. Write a **blog** for your school website in which you: describe each object you will put in the capsule, explain why you have chosen each of them to represent your time in school, and imagine how people will react when they find the capsule fifty years from now.

## TEXT 2 – CHALLENGE 2: BEAT THE CLOCK

This text is based on an article by Ian O’Riordan which appeared in *The Irish Times*. In it he profiles Rhasidat Adeleke, an Irish sprinter who is on a sports scholarship attending the University of Texas. She is one of Ireland’s brightest Olympic hopefuls.

1. Tuesday afternoon, at the corner of Mike A. Myers Stadium, waiting for Rhasidat Adeleke to start practice. The sky is hazy but the sun floats through. It’s hot down here in Austin, Texas, even at the end of March, and the air soon burns. As an athlete training to be among the best sprinters in the world, this 20-year-old Irish woman has chosen to make Austin her home from home, partly because of the heat. It’s 2.30 pm when she walks out of the glass-doored building and into the 20,000-seater arena, the home of track and field at the University of Texas. This arena lies in the shadow of their Memorial Stadium, the enormous college football arena which seats 100,119 spectators.

Everything is bigger in Texas.

2. How it’s grown. It’s unclear whether the city merged into the university or the other way around; either way it feels one and the same. The main campus now covers 423 acres, the university property is 1,438 acres in all. It has also become one of the largest and most diverse universities in the United States, with some 52,000 students, representing all 50 states, with 3,133 teaching staff, a total budget of just over \$3.6 billion (£3.3 billion) per year. It’s in part divided by Interstate-35, which runs from Dallas down to San Antonio.

Everything is bigger in Texas.

It’s on a par with hallowed Ivy League universities such as Harvard, Yale and Brown, with tuition fees to match. For non-Texas residents that’s around \$70,000 per year.

3. One of the first things Adeleke tells me is that Austin, or anywhere else in Texas for that matter, is not where she first wanted or imagined she would be once her sprinting talent became so magnificently apparent. “When I first thought of college in the United States, it was like, *definitely not*. I was thinking it would be a dangerous place,” she says. “I was recruited by a few different schools, but came for a visit here, with my mom [Ade], and instantly just loved the team, the team atmosphere, I felt it was really family orientated. So, no regrets at all. Quite the opposite. I couldn’t imagine being anywhere else.”

4. For Adeleke the best is yet to come over 400m, the event she only moved up to late last season. She improved her Irish outdoor record to 50.53 seconds, clocked when she finished fifth in the European Championship 400m final in Munich last August. She improved that time indoors to 50.33 seconds, the magical sub-50 barrier now beckoning. “I’m really excited about it. I only did about four, five proper outdoor races last year, so that was a new experience. This year I feel like I’m more trained for it, more used to it, and looking forward to seeing what is possible. But I always just keep that focus on myself, because there’s always going to be people with eyes on you, pressure like that. So, my focus is staying in my own spot, my own space. I’m just seeing how things play out, not thinking about it that much. If a good opportunity comes along, and I feel like I’m not ready, I wouldn’t go there yet. It just all depends on how I feel.”

5. The biggest challenge for Adeleke, beyond that heat, has been juggling the academic and athletic demands, both essentially full-time. She trains six days a week, most days twice; weight room in the morning, track in the afternoon. Rhasidat says, “It’s my third year in university now, so I certainly feel I’m maturing all the time. I’m starting to know how life runs here, so it’s way smoother than it was. I’m enjoying it, feel like I’m learning more every day. Right now, I have a lot of group projects, finals are a little bit earlier this year, so I’m just getting ready for that. But I always have someone to talk to, like we all have our academic advisers, even my teammates. We’re all going through the same thing. We can give each other advice.”



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

**Question A – 50 Marks**

- (i) What impression do you form of Rhasidat Adeleke from reading the above extract? Make three points in your response. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) Do you think this extract gives a good sense of the place where Rhasidat trains and studies? Give reasons for your answer, referring to the above extract. (15)
- (iii) (a) The theme of this examination paper is ‘Challenges’. What do you think will be the greatest challenge ahead of you in life? Describe how you intend to deal with that challenge. (10)
- (b) You are designing the front cover for an information booklet encouraging young Irish athletes to take up sports scholarships abroad. Suggest **two** images you would put on the cover and explain why you think they would be appropriate. (10)

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

**Question B – 50 Marks**

You are a sports commentator on the radio, covering the end of an exciting sporting event. You can be covering any type of sporting event. Write the text of your **commentary** in which you: create a sense of the mood of the occasion for the listeners, describe two exciting incidents that occur towards the end of the event, and reflect on the outcome of the event.



### TEXT 3 – CHALLENGE 3: LIFE CHALLENGES

This text is based on a series of quotations about challenges and how we face or deal with them. It also includes a collection of photographs visually capturing various forms of challenges.

1. Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly. – Robert Kennedy
2. Turn your wounds into wisdom. – Oprah Winfrey
3. Do one thing every day that scares you. – Eleanor Roosevelt
4. Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you're doing the impossible. – Francis of Assisi
5. A new challenge keeps the brain kicking and the heart ticking. – E.A. Bucchianeri
6. Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it. – Michael Jordan
7. Our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas... and to face the challenge of change. – Martin Luther King Jr.
8. Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow.' – Mary Anne Radmacher
9. A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles. – Christopher Reeve
10. The most common way people give up their power is by thinking we don't have any. – Alice Walker



Image A – First Steps



Image B – Going for Gold



**Image C – Challenging Job Interview**



**Image D – Scaling the Heights**

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

**Question A – 50 Marks**

- (i) Based on your reading of the written text in TEXT 3, which three of the ten quotations about challenges do you find most interesting and inspiring? Give reasons why you find these quotes interesting and inspiring. (15)
- (ii) The theme of this examination paper is 'Challenges'. Based on what you see in the images in TEXT 3 above, explain three things you learn from them about challenges in life. You may use one or more than one of the images in your response. (15)
- (iii) (a) The theme of this examination paper is 'Challenges'. What do you think will be the greatest challenge ahead of you in life? Describe how you intend to deal with that challenge. (10)
- (b) You have been asked to suggest two more images to add to the above collection of images on the theme of challenges. Describe the images you would suggest and explain why you believe these would be good additions to the collection. (10)

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

**Question B – 50 Marks**

You are a newspaper columnist whose articles give advice to parents and guardians. This week you are writing about the challenges teenagers can commonly face in today's world. Write the text of your **article** in which you: write an introduction to the topic, describe some of the challenges commonly faced by teenagers today, and give your readers advice as to how they can help teenagers face these challenges.

## 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 Jamie's father, Eoin, describes the anxiety of facing the challenge of the week ahead as 'Sundaynightitis'.

**Write a personal essay in which you reflect on the challenges of facing a typical week in your life.**

2. In TEXT 3 Martin Luther King Jr. advises people 'to face the challenge of change'.

**Write a short story, featuring a character who has to overcome difficulties because of a significant change in his or her life.**

3. In TEXT 2 Rhasidat has to adjust to life in Texas, which is very different to life in Ireland.

**Write a magazine article in which you consider some of the challenges of adapting to life in a new country.**

4. In TEXT 3 Alice Walker refers to giving up power.

**Write a short story set in a world where a corrupt leader is challenged and overcome.**

5. TEXT 2 describes Rhasidat as a talented athlete.

**Write a personal essay in which you describe your own talents and consider how you have developed them.**

6. The theme for this examination paper is 'Challenges'.

**You have been invited to deliver a speech entitled, "The Challenges Facing our World Today" to a youth forum in the United Nations. Write the text of the speech you would deliver.**

7. In TEXT 1 Jamie says he wants to complain about going to a new school.

**Write a feature article for a magazine in which you explore whether or not people nowadays are likely to complain officially, when they are unhappy about something. Your article can be serious or humorous or both.**



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## Acknowledgements

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

### TEXT 1

**Text:** Feeney, Elaine. How to Build a Boat. Penguin Random House UK 2023

**Images:** <https://writersfest.bc.ca/reading-list-2023/how-to-build-a-boat>, <https://www.omahonys.ie/how-to-build-a-boat-p-10549079.html>

### TEXT 2:

**Text:** O’Riordan Ian. The Irish Times. April 8<sup>th</sup> 2023

**Image:** <https://www.thesun.ie/sport/9268146/ireland-rhasidat-adeleke-breaks-record-fifth-european-athletics-championship/>

### TEXT 3:

**Text:** <https://happierhuman.com>, <https://goodreads.com>

**Images:** <https://www.romper.com/p/why-are-toddlers-so-clumsy-experts-explain-their-hilarious-walk-22589654>,  
<https://www.paralympic.org/news/australia-names-paralympic-athletics-team>,  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/17-signs-your-job-interview-is-going-badly-a6859101.html>,  
<https://wallpaperaccess.com/mountain-climber>

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