GrindSpot
ONLINE GRINDS PLATFORM

LEAVING CERT 2027

LEAVING CERT ENGLISH

Exam Ready

Higher Level · Paper 1 · Workbook A

Dyslexia friendly
large, clear text · room to write

Built from 9 years of real Leaving Cert papers: what comes up, how it's marked, and the practice to nail it.

- **9** years of exam trends, question by question
- **36** exam-style drills with model answers
- **1** full practice paper, 200 marks
- ✓ marking guide for the practice paper



Know what's coming.
Walk in ready.

Original GrindSpot material written in the style of the Leaving Certificate examination. Not an official SEC paper.

What comes up

2017 to 2026

We read every Higher Level Paper 1 from the last 9 exams (none in 2020). Each number is how many questions in that year's paper set that task. We counted tasks, not subjects: a Question A counts once for each task its parts set, a Question B or composition once for its form.

	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Years
Question A: personal response	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	9/9
Question A: style and language	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	9/9
Question A: understanding the text	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	9/9
Composition: personal essay	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	9/9
Composition: short story	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	9/9
Composition: discursive or persuasive essay	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9/9
Composition: speech or talk	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9/9
Question B: article	2	2	1	1	1	1	–	–	1	7/9
Composition: article or opinion piece	1	–	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	7/9
Question B: letter or email	–	1	–	1	1	1	–	–	1	5/9
Question B: speech or talk	1	–	–	1	1	–	–	2	–	4/9
Composition: descriptive or reflective writing	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	3/9
Question A: visual image	1	1	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	3/9
Question B: diary, blog or personal account	–	–	1	–	–	1	1	–	–	3/9
Question B: other task	–	–	1	–	–	–	1	1	–	3/9
Question B: report, review or proposal	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	1	2/9
Composition: other	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1/9

Darker = more questions. Source: State Examinations Commission papers, 2017 to 2026, read and grouped by GrindSpot. Every question we counted is listed at **grindspot.ie/exam-trends**. A guide to what has come up, not a prediction of what will.

Question A keeps its shape: what the text says, your personal response, and the writer's style.

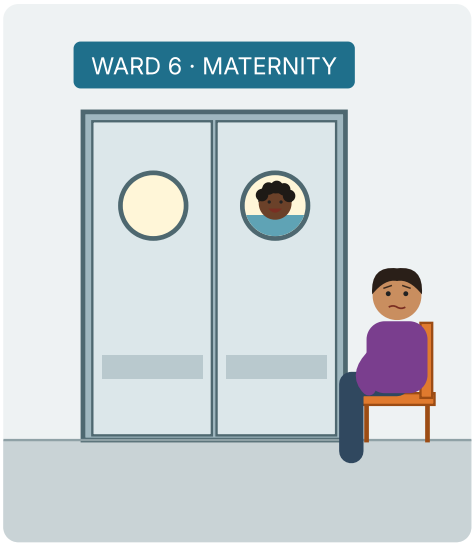
Two personal essays and two short stories in every paper since 2018, plus a speech.

Question B changes form: article 9 times in 27, letter or email 5, speech or talk 5.

Image questions are rare: 4 parts in 3 questions in 9 years, the latest in 2023.



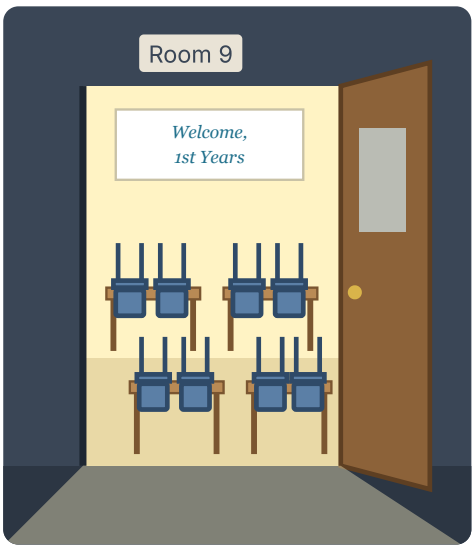
A · "Number 14. My great-grandfather painted it red the week his son came home from Boston, so he could see it from the end of the road."



B · "Nearly every family in this town has waited on that chair. Some of the best news in the world comes through these doors."



C · "Gate 312. Half the people in the queue are crying and half are trying very hard not to. The pilot is from Longford."



D · "Room 9, the last week of August. The chairs are stacked and waiting. Nobody has arrived yet, so everything is still possible."

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- **32** exam-style drills with model answers
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TOPIC 7

The unseen poem

Worked answers →

In the real exam

Language, imagery or tone in 18 questions, 2017 to 2026: 20 marks, about 18 minutes.



Fionn's tip: Read the poem three times: for sense, for feeling, then for technique. Quote single words or short phrases and say exactly what they do. Answer the question in your first sentence.

1. Read this poem, written for this book.

> **Night Shift · Anjali Thomas (an invented poet; written for this book)**
>
> My mother comes home when the street is waking,
> the milk float humming, the first birds unsure.
> She leaves her shoes at the door like two tired dogs
> and stands for a moment, listening for us.
> All night she has held the hands of strangers.
> Now she butters toast for us in her coat,
> asks about homework, signs the note for the trip,
> and climbs the stairs as the rest of us go out,
> her day ending as ours begins,
> like two tides passing in the hall.

In about 60 words, what is the poem about?

2. Pick two words from the poem whose sound matters. Explain the effect of each.

There is no single right answer in English. For each question this guide gives **what a strong answer would include** (the kind of points examiners look for, not a full list), then **the marks** and a guide to how marks are awarded, in the style of the SEC marking schemes (our guide, not an official scheme). Every answer is marked on **P** Clarity of Purpose (30%), **C** Coherence of Delivery (30%), **L** Efficiency of Language Use (30%) and **M** Accuracy of Mechanics (10%). C and L can never get more marks than P: engage with the exact question asked, take a clear stance, and support every point with close reference to the text.

Section I · The Single Text (60 marks)

How to answer. Respond to the **whole** statement (both halves of "both wronged and wrong"; both "powerful" and "unsettling"). Agree, disagree or agree in part, but say so in the introduction. Five or six paragraphs, each with a point that answers the question, evidence (key moments, short quotation where the text allows) and analysis; a conclusion that returns to the statement. Do not retell the plot.

A (i) Girl on an Altar. Wronged: Agamemnon sacrifices their daughter Iphigenia to win a fair wind for Troy, a betrayal of the marriage and of motherhood; years of waiting; his return with Kassandra. Wrong: her grief hardens into a plan for revenge; her cruelty to others; the killing of Agamemnon continues the cycle of violence. Carr keeps both in view, so the audience's sympathy is unsettled.
A (ii): characters narrate their own actions and thoughts directly to the audience, which creates intimacy and distance at once; the myth means the audience knows what is coming (dramatic irony); spare, poetic language; sudden shifts in time; the role of Kassandra, and Cilissa, Clytemnestra's servant, as witnesses.

B (i) Hamnet. The alternating timelines (the courtship of Agnes and the young Latin tutor; the summer of 1596 when the plague reaches the house) create dread, because we know the family's future while watching its past; the chapter tracing the flea's journey to Warwickshire widens the tragedy; the husband is never named, so the family, not the famous playwright, stays at the centre; the ending at the London theatre resolves Agnes's grief.
B (ii): Agnes's knowledge of herbs and healing, her kestrel, her ability to sense a person's future by pressing the skin between thumb and forefinger, and her bond with the forest; this sets her apart from the town and makes her powerful and vulnerable at once; her failure to save Hamnet despite her gifts; a strong answer may question "most memorable".