GrindSpot
ONLINE GRINDS PLATFORM

LEAVING CERT 2027

LEAVING CERT ENGLISH

Exam Ready

Higher Level · Paper 2 · 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
- **32** exam-style drills with model answers
- **1** full practice paper on the 2027 course
- ✓ 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 2 from the last 9 exams (no exam in 2020) and noted what each question asked. Texts and poets change every year; the kinds of question do not. Literary Genre is not a comparative mode for 2027. We counted what each question asked about (a character, a theme, technique, a comparative mode, a poetry skill), not which text it was on: a question set in the same words for several texts counts once.

	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Years
Prescribed poetry: style and language	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	9/9
Prescribed poetry: themes and ideas	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	9/9
Single text: reader's response and relevance	2	1	1	3	5	5	5	5	7	9/9
Single text: character	5	5	1	5	5	4	–	2	2	8/9
Single text: theme or issue	5	2	1	1	5	2	4	4	5	9/9
Single text: author's technique and style	5	–	3	6	3	3	1	1	2	8/9
Unseen poem: language, imagery and tone	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	9/9
Comparative: general vision and viewpoint	2	–	2	2	2	2	–	2	2	7/9
Comparative: cultural context	–	2	–	2	2	–	2	2	2	6/9
Comparative: literary genre	–	2	2	–	2	2	2	–	2	6/9
Unseen poem: meaning and ideas	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	9/9
Comparative: theme or issue	2	–	–	2	–	2	2	2	–	5/9
Single text: key moments and plot	1	1	–	–	3	–	1	–	1	5/9
Single text: relationships	–	1	1	1	1	1	2	–	–	6/9
Unseen poem: personal response	1	1	1	2	–	1	–	–	1	6/9
Prescribed poetry: personal response	–	1	–	1	1	–	–	1	–	4/9

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.

Your view counts: insight and engagement questions have grown since 2022.

Poetry: every question asked about style and theme together.

Each 2027 mode was in 4 or 5 of the 6 papers since 2021.

The unseen poem always asked about language, imagery or tone.

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.

Section I · The Single Text — 60 marks

Answer one question from this section (A to E). If you answer on Othello here, you have answered on Shakespearean drama.

A · Girl on an Altar · Marina Carr — (60 marks)

(i) "In *Girl on an Altar*, Carr presents Clytemnestra as a character who is both wronged and wrong." Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to Carr's play.

OR

(ii) "Carr's distinctive use of narration and storytelling makes *Girl on an Altar* a powerful and unsettling experience for an audience." Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to at least two dramatic techniques used in the play.

B · Hamnet · Maggie O'Farrell — (60 marks)

(i) "O'Farrell's use of structure, particularly the movement between two timelines, intensifies the reader's emotional engagement with *Hamnet*." Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to the novel.

OR

(ii) "Agnes's deep connection with the natural world makes her one of the most memorable characters in modern fiction." Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to *Hamnet*.

C · The Great Gatsby · F. Scott Fitzgerald — (60 marks)

(i) "Nick Carraway's role as narrator shapes, and sometimes distorts, the reader's view of the characters in *The Great Gatsby*." Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to the novel.

OR

(ii) "Fitzgerald's novel is a powerful exploration of the gap between dreams and reality." Discuss this statement, developing your response with reference to *The Great Gatsby*.

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".