

Leaving cert – FRENCH – Higher LevelIntroduction à l'examen du Leaving Cert

The following notes will advise you on how to approach the different sections of the paper. They will also make you more familiar with the marking scheme and give you advice on how to time yourselves, so that you have enough time to complete each section of the paper, without having to panic towards the end of the exam...

**1. The reading comprehensions**

There are two parts in this section :

Part 1 – The journalistic comprehension : this means that the text is either a newspaper or a magazine article. The topic of the journalistic comprehension is therefore rather 'current' as opposed to topics dealt with in literary comprehensions. This section often has a TITLE that you must read and try to understand as it will give you a hint regarding the contents of the text. There are 6 questions to answer : 5 in French and the 6th one in English.  
**Marking scheme –[ 5 x 5] for questions 1 to 5 + [1 x 10] for question 6.**

Part 2 – The literary comprehension : this is an extract from a novel (1 page or even half a page sometimes). There MAY be some kind of introduction before the text in order to give you some details regarding the characters, places, times...etc... This occurs only if it is absolutely necessary for students to understand the text. Bear in mind that the structure of sentences and the vocabulary used in this section can be a little more difficult than in Section 1. There are 6 questions to answer : 5 in French and the 6th one in English.  
**Marking scheme –[ 5 x 5] for questions 1 to 5 + [1 x 10] for question 6.**

**Understanding the questions is just as important as understanding the text, therefore, make a note of the following key words, which will help you answer the questions properly :**

**Trouver – Citer – Relever = QUOTE \***

**La raison pour laquelle = the reason why**

**Décrire – une description = describe – a description**

**Expliquer – une explication = explain – an explanation**

**Pourquoi = why**

**Comment = how**

**Quel / quelle ...etc... = which / what**

**Quand = when**

**Qui = who**

**Qu'est-ce que = what**

**QUOTE \*** - When the question starts with either of these verbs, you **MUST** quote i.e. re-write a sentence or just the relevant part of a sentence word for word from the text (**Careful with spelling mistakes when quoting !!!**)

However, any time the question does NOT begin with any of these verbs, **YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO QUOTE** from the text. This means that you must change **as little as possible** from the original sentence i.e. one word is enough ! You can also add a word (if it's relevant !) to the original quote and not change anything else.

**Answering question 6** – Question N° 6 is the **ONLY** question that you must answer in English. There is one in each comprehension. This question is based solely on the text and the understanding you have of it. The question is designed to show the examiner that you understood the gist of the text.

Because you have the opportunity to answer in your **OWN** language, you are expected to make an effort (i.e. no spelling mistakes !!!)

The question will refer to a particular aspect of the text, on which you have to give your opinion, based on the text i.e. any statement you make must be taken from the text (no personal opinions allowed !). You generally have to make **2 POINTS**, which means 2 statements in English, based on what you understood, followed by 2 quotes from the text 'to justify your answer'.

Try to organize your answer logically :

- Statement in English (5 marks)
- Quote in French to prove your point (5 marks)
- Statement in English (5 marks)
- Quote in French to prove your point (5 marks)

**Total marks for Reading Comprehensions = 120 (2 x 60)**

## 2. The written production

You must complete **3 tasks** in this section. You should always read **ALL** the questions before you make your choice, section by section. Make sure that you don't overlook any of the questions and read each one very carefully and slowly (it is not uncommon to misread a question, especially if you were hoping for a certain topic to come up. You might read what you would like to see but not what's actually on the paper... !). Make your choice and highlight key words in each question that you've decided to do. Again, this will stop you from missing any important instructions.

**Section 1 – The compulsory question** : You have a choice of 2 questions in this section. You **MUST** pick one, the one that appeals to you the most ! In this section, you must tell 'a story' (true or not !!), based on the question that you are asked.

Question a) will refer to the first reading comprehension and section b) to the second one. However, your answer **MUST NOT** be based on the text at all. There will be only a very distant connection between your answer and the text (a feeling experienced by the author and also by yourself under circumstances that you will describe in your answer, a similar experience...etc...)

**Total marks for this question = 40 (10 more than any other written task)**

**Section 2** – In this section, you will have the choice between 2 questions out of 4 possible types of tasks :

- Informal letter
- Formal letter
- Message writing
- Diary entry

**Total marks for this section = 30**

**Section 3 & section 4** - If you didn't pick anything in section 2, you must then choose one question in section 3 and another one in section 4, to get your quota of 2 written tasks. But if you chose a question in section 2, then you must choose only one question in section 3 OR section 4 (which gives you a choice between 4 different questions).

Both these sections give you a choice of essays based on any of the following :

- advertisement or short text (agony column, quote....)
- picture or cartoon
- diagram
- table, chart ...etc...

**Total marks per question answered = 30**

**Remember !** Always keep 10 minutes at the end of the exam to go over your written work and check the 'obvious' :

- verb endings
- tenses
- plural / feminine agreements (adjectives, past participles, nouns...)
- spelling

**3. ESSENTIAL – Timing !!!!**

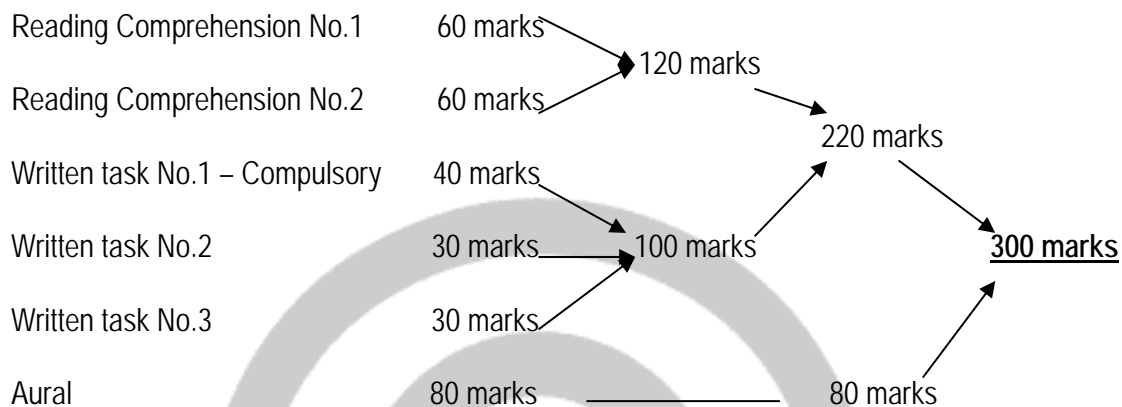
Here is approximately how you should divide your time, to make sure that you don't run out of time at the very end and that you can complete all questions before handing back your paper. It is also essential that you practice working in accordance with the following timeframes, coming up to the exam :

**25 minutes** for each reading comprehension (2 x 25 = 50)

**30 minutes** for each written task (3 x 30 = 90)

**10 minutes** to go over your written work

**Total of 150 minutes – 2h30.**

Marking scheme – SUMMARY

Please, see notes on the Oral Exam for marking scheme of that section

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