Pre-Leaving Certificate Examination, 2024

English – Ordinary Level – Paper 1

(Option A)

Total Marks: 200

Time: 2 hours 50 minutes

- This paper is divided into two sections.
  Section I COMPREHENDING and Section II COMPOSING.
- The paper contains **three** texts on the general theme of **HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.**
- 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.

SECTION I COMPREHENDING (100 marks)

TEXT 1 – HOPE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

This text contains edited extracts from an autobiography by Michaela DePrince, who was orphaned at the age of four in war-torn Sierra Leone and left in an orphanage by her uncle. She refused to give up hope, was adopted by a family in America, and is now a professional ballerina with the Dutch National Ballet. She credits her success to all people, good and bad, who influenced her life journey, as well as her passion for ballet.

1. The rain had stopped, and the last rays of the sun were disappearing when I awoke. Uncle Abdullah opened the tailgate of the lorry and crooked his finger to beckon me out. Then he tipped his nose in the direction of a gate without saying a word to me. I stared at a large sign, but it wasn't in Arabic, so I couldn't read it. I hopped out and followed him without argument. 'My mat! Wait!' I shouted to the driver. He pulled away before I could hop back up and get my grass mat. Uncle Abdullah gave me a shove towards the gate, not caring that I had lost my only remaining link with my mother.

2. A man in tan pants, a blue shirt and brown shoes with laces came out of the building. 'Welcome to the Safe Haven Orphanage,' he said. My head jerked up, and I stared at the man. Had I heard him correctly? Had he said 'orphanage'? Was I now nothing more than an orphan? I had no one to love me or protect me … no one to think that I was special. These thoughts tumbled through my mind as I heard my uncle explain, 'My brother has been killed. His wife recently died. I bring you my young niece, their daughter. I am her guardian, but I cannot care for her. I have three wives and many children of my own, so I cannot waste food on her. Besides, she is an ugly, evil-tempered child with spots. I will never get a bride-price for her. I am sure you understand.' Andrew Jah crouched before me and asked, 'What is your name?' 'Mabinty Bangura,' I promptly answered. 'What language do you speak?' the director asked in Krio.

3. When I hesitated, Uncle Abdullah swatted my head, and Andrew Jah began to ask the same question in Mende, but I interrupted him in Krio, saying, 'I speak Krio, Mende, Temne, Limba and Arabic.' 'Do you mean to tell me that you are only four, yet you can read and write Arabic?' the director asked, startled. I nodded my head, and he looked at my uncle and said, 'This child shows great promise. Our orphanage is full, but I will make room for her under one condition. You cannot return to claim her.' 'I have no intention of doing that,' Uncle Abdullah said. 'I am glad enough to be rid of her.'

4. When the director saw that Uncle Abdullah did not know how to sign his name, he removed a small black pad from his drawer, rolled my uncle's thumb on the pad, and pressed it onto the paper, leaving a neat thumb print on the document. 'Now I can prove that you were in agreement with me,' Andrew Jah said.

5. 'How much will you be paying me for the child?' Uncle Abdullah asked. 'We do not pay for children. The fact that we will feed them, care for them, educate them and find them a good home is payment enough to most parents,' the director said. 'I am not her parent. My own children are not spotted, like her,' Uncle Abdullah retorted. He snatched the thumb-printed paper away. 'I could just as easily sell her to a cocoa plantation,' he shouted as he seized my arm and began dragging me through the door. We do not ordinarily pay for children, the director said, but we sometimes help their families when they are in need.' He unlocked a

metal drawer in a cabinet and removed some paper money. He held it out to my uncle. 'Ah yes. This will help me feed my hungry family,' Uncle Abdullah said as he fondled the bills. Then he turned on his heel and left me behind without as much as a goodbye. I wasn't sad to see him go, but I would miss some of my cousins and Auntie Yeabu. I hadn't even been allowed to say goodbye to them.



Image A

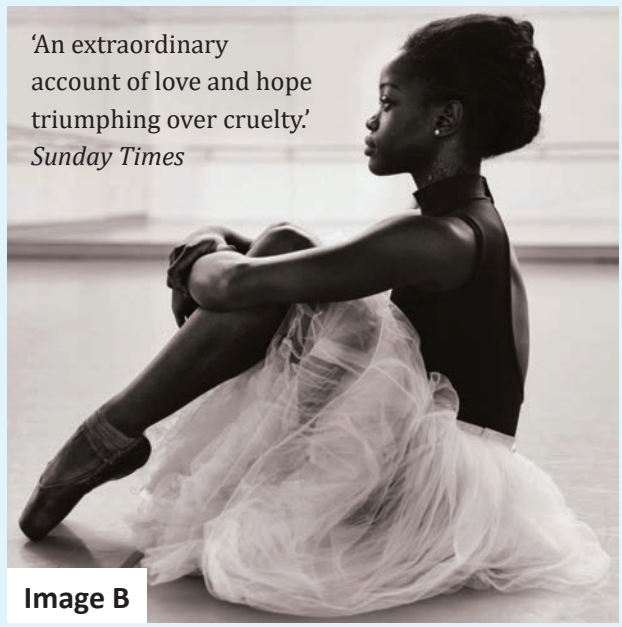


Image B

This text has been adapted, for the purpose of assessment, without the author's prior consent.

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

Question A – 50 marks

(i) Based on your reading of the written part of TEXT 1, what impression do you form of Uncle Abdullah? Make three points in your response. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)

(ii) In your opinion, which **two** of the following words do you think accurately describe the above extract? Explain your response with reference to the text.

Inspiring Thought-provoking Well-written (15)

(iii) (a) In her book, Michaela describes many people who made a positive impact on her life. Describe a person who has made a positive impact on your life and explain how. (10)

(b) Which **one** of the two images of Michaela DePrince would you choose as the cover for her book? Give reasons for your answer. (10)

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

Question B – 50 marks

As an ambassador of War Child Holland, Michaela uses her role to spread her message that no matter what circumstances you are born into, you can still dream, work hard, and most importantly, hope. Write the text of a **talk** she would give outlining why it's important to support her charity. In your talk, you should: mention the importance of believing in your dreams, the importance of having people in your life to help you, and why it's important to help those in circumstances beyond their control.

TEXT 2 – FAILURE OFFERING HOPE FOR SUCCESS

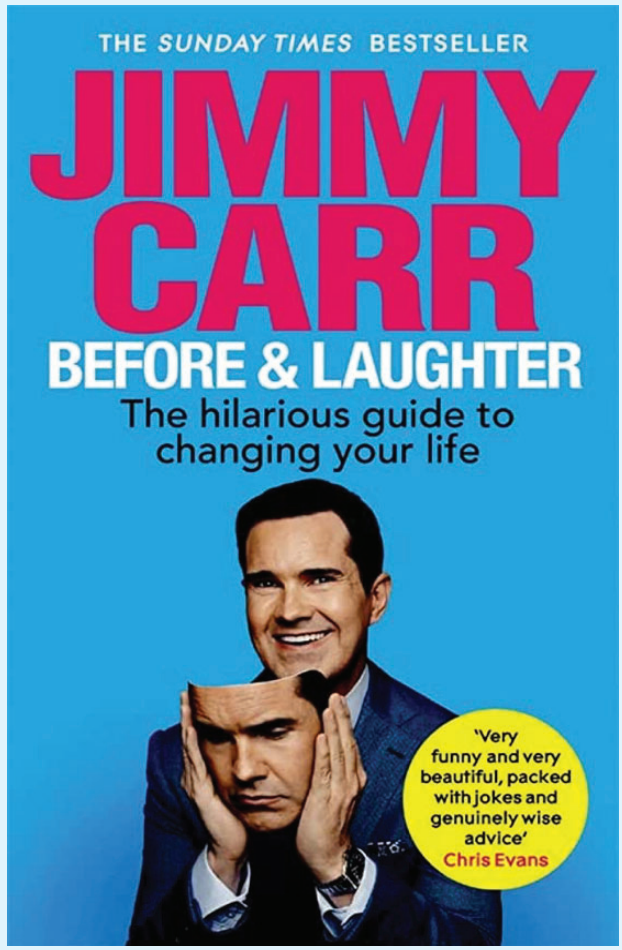
In this edited extract from Jimmy Carr's memoir and self-help book, *Before & Laughter,* Jimmy offers a unique and comical perspective of the life lessons he has learned as a stand-up comedian that he would like to pass on to his son and wider audience.

1. If you do think you're a unique human being, destined for greatness and it's all just going to 'happen' for you – well, good luck with that. You can stop reading this now and might I suggest something from the fantasy section? The idea behind this book is: if I did it, you can do it. Maybe not what I did exactly, but my story is I had a boring life and now I have an interesting life. That's the short version; the publisher insisted I expand on that. Lots of people want to make that leap – well, here's the 'how to'. 'The road' I took, 'the road' I'm still travelling on as a comic – it contains all the wisdom I ever needed. All the wisdom, and any advice I have to give, I learned it all from comedy.

2. Comedians are stand-out human beings. We have so many superpowers we should wear capes. If you've ever watched a comedian and felt jealous of any of their skills – great. All of it's learnable, which means you can do it too. What we comedians do is to take a group of people and we change their mood. But how is the comedian actually doing this?

3. Let's break it down. First, we have communication. The most obvious superpower of the comic. You watch a comedian on stage, and they seem to be having a completely natural conversation with 3,000 people. That is a learned skill. Most people are terrified of being on stage, so the ability to simply get up there in the first place, let alone get across a point, to create a laugh and to look comfortable, is pretty impressive. Comedians are constantly listening and watching; whether to our audience or simply to the world around us. That's how we're able to report back. Secondly...timing. It's not only about what you're saying, it's about when you're saying it. Do you need to pause before delivering the punchline?

4. Additionally, comedians have a superpower when it comes to honesty. And that's no lie.



There is a brutal honesty with comics when they get together which is refreshing and also kind of shocking. Trust me, stick a couple of comics in a room, give it five minutes and call the police, because I guarantee you someone has said something unacceptable.

5. Comedians are constantly changing and adapting to make things funnier. The audience laughter, or more pointedly the lack of laughter, tells you what you need to change. Sometimes you'll fall in love with a line and the audience doesn't like it. What do you do? What you do is change it. You'll change it, and you'll change it, and you'll change it and eventually, it gets a laugh. Audiences keep comedians honest. The audience's laughter is brutally honest. I can't think of another art form like it. Is my

painting any good? It's hard to tell. Does my music connect? Maybe . . . Are my jokes funny? Well, did they laugh or not? There's no polite response. They laughed or they didn't.

6. Lastly, failure is a superpower. Every great comic is 'Captain Failure'. Every comic writes more jokes that don't work than jokes that do. There's never been a comedian who is an exception to that rule. If you think about it, neither has there been a musician who's had more hits than misses or an artist that's produced nothing but masterpieces. With comedians, it's a shorter feedback loop, meaning they get less attached to the results. So they get less stressed by failure. All failure is just feedback. You look at something and think, 'Okay, that doesn't work, I'll change it.' You don't just fail the same way a thousand times; you fail differently each time until you run out of ways to fail. And at that point, it's called 'success'.

This text has been adapted, for the purpose of assessment, without the author's prior consent.

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

Question A – 50 marks

(i) Based on your reading of TEXT 2, what impression do you form of Jimmy Carr? Make three points in your response. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)

(ii) What features of the above advice do you believe make it suitable or not suitable to be read by Leaving Certificate students? Explain your answer with reference to the text. (15)

(iii) (a) Jimmy Carr wrote this book primarily to leave advice for his son. Describe a person who has given you good life advice and explain why you think it was good advice. (10)

(b) Based on both your reading of the text and the image of the book cover, would you like to continue to read this book? Explain your answer. (10)

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

Question B – 50 marks

Jimmy Carr advises that "all failure is feedback". Imagine that you are a sports writer who follows a sporting person or team. Write the text of an **article** to be published on your blog. In the blog entry, you should: outline some of the failures or disappointments that the team or sports star have faced, explain what lessons are to be learned from these failures, and offer them advice on what they need to do in order to succeed in the next season.

TEXT 3 – HOPEFUL FUTURES

In this edited extract from a graduation speech at Tennessee University, Oprah Winfrey advises the graduation class on how to stay hopeful about their futures, and to change the world for the better.

1. Good afternoon and welcome to everyone here today! You are here today to graduate as a single one individual, but remember you have climbed on the foundations of those gone before you. When I walk into a room, I come as one, but I stand as 10,000, because everybody that's ever come before me walks into that room with me. My great-great grandfather, Constantine Winfrey, was born an enslaved man who couldn't write or spell his name. He became the first person in my American lineage to own his own property and created opportunities for his children to be more successful than he was.

2. "I come as one. I stand as 10,000" has been my mantra for power. Because for so many of my earlier years I was the only woman, I was the only person of colour, the one nobody expected to be in the room or even at the table. And at no time did I ever feel out of place or not enough or inadequate or an imposter. Do not let the world make an imposter syndrome out of you. Why? Because I knew who I was. And more importantly, I knew whose I was. I didn't know the future. But I knew who was in charge of the future.

3. But my job today is to help you to begin the next part of your dream. So let's talk about the right moves for that. I've been thinking a lot about how much there is to be worried about. You're aware that the planet is getting warmer. Women's rights are being dismantled. Books are being banned. History is being rewritten. The leaders are behaving like children. Greed and profit inform decision making.

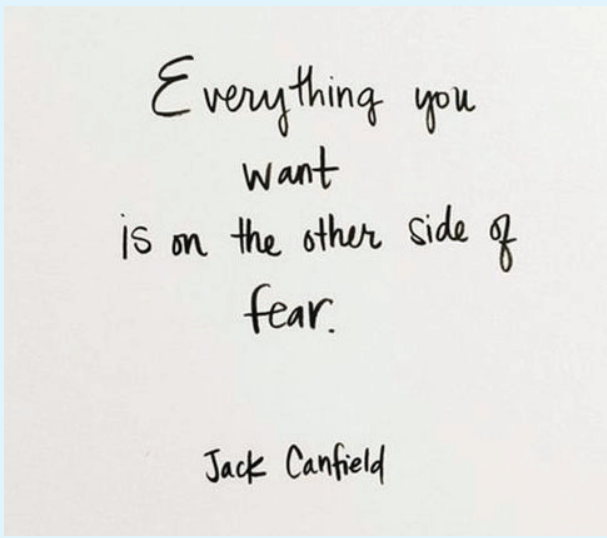
4. We live on a planet where there is more than enough wrong to keep you busy trying to make things right for the rest of your natural life. And unfortunately, you're going to encounter people who will insist that it's not actually possible to make any real difference. Well, this is what I know for sure. There will never be anything in your life as fulfilling as making a difference in somebody else's. Everybody here wants to see you take your beliefs, your curiosity, your creativity, your guts, and this education of yours, and use it to make a difference. Everybody always thinks you've got to go do something big and grand.

5. I'll tell you where you start. You start by being good to at least one other person every single day. Just start there. That's how you begin to change the world, by just being good to one other person. It doesn't matter if it's a member of your tribe or a stranger on the street. I'm here to tell you that a little act of compassion can be a lifesaver for somebody who receives it, but also for you who offers it. Just extend yourself in love and kindness to somebody.

6. And as my dear friend Maya always said, "love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles. It leaps fences." And when you step out in love, you become someone's hope. We need you to dream big. We need brave thinkers. We need kind people. We need high standards, open minds and untamed imagination. That's how you make a difference in the world, using who you are and what you stand for to make changes, big and small. And there will be times when making the next right decision will be scary.

7. And it's OK to be scared. In fact, if you weren't scared, I'd be scared for you. But let me repeat something that the most extraordinary man I've ever known said: "May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fear". That came from Nelson Mandela, an individual who literally changed the world by putting his own fears aside for the people of his country. My point is, anything is possible. The wheels are still in spin. Saints walk among us. And as Nelson Mandela so brilliantly demonstrated, "it's better to be hopeful than fearful," if for no other reason than the fact that hope brings us one step closer to joy.





This text has been adapted, for the purpose of assessment, without the author's prior consent.

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

Question A – 50 marks

(i) Based on your reading of TEXT 3, what impression do you form of Oprah Winfrey? Make three points in your response. Support your answer with reference to the text. (15)

(ii) What features of the above advice do you believe make it suitable or not suitable for Leaving Certificate students? Explain your answer with reference to the text. (15)

(iii) (a) Oprah Winfrey wrote this speech to give advice to the graduates. Describe a person who has given you good life advice and explain why you think it was good advice. (10)

(b) Imagine that one of the images accompanying this text was projected on a screen behind Oprah Winfrey as she delivered this speech. Which **one** of the two images would you choose in order to inspire the audience? Give reasons for your answer. (10)

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

Question B – 50 marks

Imagine you could invite a celebrity of your choice to speak at your Leaving Certificate graduation ceremony. Write the **text of the letter** you would write persuading them to attend. In your letter, you should: explain why you admire them, describe some of the challenges that the Leaving Certificate students of 2024 may face in their future and how the chosen celebrity would offer inspiration and life lessons to the class.

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. TEXT 1 details how Michaela was judged by her appearance.

Write a personal essay in which you describe some of the situations in your life where judgements you made based on appearance were proven wrong and what you learned from these experiences.

2. In TEXT 2, Jimmy Carr describes the superpowers he believes comedians possess.

Write a short story in which the main character has a unique superpower.

3. In TEXT 3, Oprah quotes Nelson Mandela: "May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fear".

Write a magazine article entitled "May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fear". Your article may be serious or humorous or both.

4. In TEXT 3, Oprah offers the advice that each day we should carry out one act of kindness.

Write the text of a talk you would give to young people today, persuading them of the importance of being kind.

5. In TEXT 1, Michaela DePrince looks at the positive that despite her uncle's mistreatment of her, he ensured he left her somewhere safe.

Write a personal essay about the importance of looking on the bright side of things.

6. In TEXT 2, Jimmy Carr describes how people, no matter what their talent, make mistakes.

Write a short story where the main character makes a big mistake.

7. In TEXT 1, Michaela's knowledge of language and ability to read shows her "potential" to the manager of the orphanage, who then agrees to take her.

You have been asked to give a talk to the first-year students starting in your school, entitled "The benefits of a good education." Your talk should aim to inspire students to appreciate their access to education and outline the opportunities that it will bring them.