5th Year
English
Higher Level
Gavin Cowzer

Comparative

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Ref: 5/eng/h/gc/Comparative
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**NOTE:** These courses are built on the fact that there are certain predictable trends that reappear over and over again in the State Examinations.

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### EASTER REVISION COURSE FEES:

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Timetable

An extensive range of course options are available over a two-week period to cater for students’ timetable needs. Courses are held over the following weeks:

» Monday 10th – Friday 14th April 2017
» Monday 17th – Friday 21st April 2017

All Easter Revision Courses take place in The Talbot Hotel, Stillorgan (formerly known as The Stillorgan Park Hotel).

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Note: 5th Year students are welcome to attend any of the 6th Year courses above.

* Due to large course content, these subjects have been divided into two courses. For a full list of topics covered in these courses, please see 3 pages ahead.

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Timing

- Paper two is divided into three sections
- You have 3hrs 20mins to complete this paper. It breaks down as follows:
  
  o Reading and selecting questions (15mins). This has become a very important part of the exam. Selecting the correct question to best suit the material you have is the difference between the top grades. Also underlining the key elements of the question is vital here. You should also make a note of the marking code. This will keep your answer focused on the question and help you to get those elusive P marks.

  o Single text (60marks) 55mins
  o Comparative (70marks) 1hr
  o Poetry seen (50marks) 45mins
  o Poetry Unseen (20marks) 20mins

  o Remaining 5minutes should be used to read over your answers.
Comparative Study- Overview and modes of comparison

- The main thing to remember for this section is you are being tested on your ability to plan and structure an answer in which you compare the three texts you have studied, not on how well you know the texts.
- You should study the three texts concentrating on the three modes of comparison. The Comparative Modes for Examination in 2016 are:

  Higher Level
  (i) Cultural Context
  (ii) General Vision/Viewpoint
  (iii) Literary Genre

- For each of these areas you should have 3/4 key moments from each text that demonstrate the points you have to make about these areas.
- As with all sections the most important thing is to answer the question directly and clearly. Avoid summarizing the story and ensure you always engage with the question and texts- personalize it and make it interesting.

HOW TO COMPARE
A note of caution:

- A number of approaches have been put forward as frameworks as to how exactly this is meant to be done. This may mean that your teacher has advocated a very rigid framework within which they expect you to write. It is possible that from your own research you have been hearing contradictory messages about how this is meant to be done. The confusion that surrounds this is a reflection of the gradual shifts that have occurred in how this course is to be approached.

- Until recently examiners were asked to expect a comparison in every paragraph. This meant that in a single paragraph you were expected to refer to all three texts. This meant that any in depth reading of moments in a text meant that paragraphs were running to a page and a half in length.

- This really rigid framework has been loosened more recently. Examiners have been told to accept students separating different texts into different paragraphs as long as there are clear links being developed.

- Skip a line when moving on to a new point. This is a very strong paragraph break and will signal to your examiner that you wish to look at another
aspect. You can, if you prefer, indent (start a new line a third of the way into the line) when moving to a new text.

- **You must link the texts in every paragraph.** Unless you are starting a new point/section in your comparative in which case your first paragraph refers back to the question. The next two paragraphs for the two texts begin with links (connectives).

- If you write about one text in one paragraph and then the other in the next paragraph it is crucial that your opening line of the second paragraph begins with a linking sentence (This is similar to...).

- When comparing you should look at the similarities (compare) and the differences (contrast).

**The key moment in action**

- This is the single most important aspect to sorting out your comparative. In your Single text (probably Shakespeare) you are expected to quote liberally as you make your points. As you can also be asked how the Shakespeare uses language to tell the story this is even more important.

- With the comparative this need to quote is not really there. It can help to add authority to your answers but it is not a requirement. For example in an essay on the theme of the influence of the past on the present the following quotation might be helpful: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.” This is the final line of the novel and as Fitzgerald’s last words deserves to be given due consideration.

- However this in itself is not as useful as explaining the context of the line. The context is the key moment. This essentially is the evidence that you use to back up your arguments.

- The last line of the book reveals the theme that Fitzgerald wished to explore in writing ‘TGG’. Fitzgerald investigates how we, as human beings, are created by our experiences. It is the influence of these moments within our pasts that shape us as human beings. When our narrator Nick Carraway meets Tom Buchanan on 5th avenue at the end of the novel we are told that Tom is described as stopping and looking into the windows of a jewelry store. Tom knows that he has been lessened in Nick’s eyes by his treatment of Gatsby. Nick tells us that he initially refuses but finally shakes Tom’s hand but it is clear that he holds him in contempt. Fitzgerald shows that the events leading to Gatsby’s death will continue to haunt both men. Tom does not accept responsibility for telling Wilson where Gatsby lived thereby causing his
death. His selfishness is made evident that he can only see the effect on himself of the events surrounding Gatsby’s death. The fact that Tom is shown looking into the windows of the jewelry store is, in my opinion, crucial to understanding the message of the novel. We know that Tom used his wealth to convince Daisy to marry him by buying her a string of pearls valued at $350,000. I think that Fitzgerald is suggesting that Tom has not learnt from his experience and is again looking for an expensive gift for the mistress he has found to replace Myrtle Wilson. Although clearly affected by his experiences Tom has refused to learn from them. Nick however has come to understand the emptiness at the heart of the lives of the super-rich during the Jazz age.

Once this key moment has been examined in depth the key is then move to another key moment that is either comparable or that stands in contrast to this one while staying focused on the same theme.

**Linking Language**

In order to make sure that you are comparing you should try to use some of the following phrases in your answer:

**When making connections between similar aspects of texts:**

- I noticed in both x and y that...
- This situation in x is very like the part in y where...
- Joe in x reminds me of Mary in y where he says...because he does...because they both...
- This way of thinking/behaving is typical of both x and y.
- When we turn to y again we see/find...

**When recognizing differences between texts:**

- However, in y
- .... Unlike what happens in X
- What a contrast to X where....
- X differs from y in that....
- X shows us...whereas y...
When showing that similarities/differences need to be qualified/explained:

- This situation also crops up in y, but things work out differently...
- Although x and y deal with a similar theme, x treats it tragically but y treats it more light-heartedly.
- X and y deal with similar problems, but x’s world is very different to y’s
- In both texts, you see into the hero’s mind; in x this is done through first person narrative, whereas in y...
- X and y both deal with…but they offer strongly contrasting points.

**Other phrases/words to use:**

On the other hand, however, whereas, in comparison to, in contrast to, meanwhile, similarly, also, I noticed in both....

Linking words help you to connect ideas and sentences, so that people can follow your ideas.

**Giving examples**

- For example
- For instance
- Namely

**Adding information**

- And
- In addition
- As well as
- Also
- Too
- Furthermore
- Moreover
- Apart from
- In addition to
- Besides

**Summarising**

- In short
- In brief
- In summary
- To summarise
- To conclude
- In conclusion
**Sequencing ideas**
The former, ... the latter
Firstly, secondly, finally Lastly
The first point is The following

**Giving a reason**
Due to / due to the fact that Because of
Owing to / owing to the fact that Since
Because As

**Giving a result/Conclusion**
Therefore
So This means that
Consequently As a result

**Contrasting ideas**
But
However
Although / even though
Despite / despite the fact that
In spite of / in spite of the fact that
Unlike
In theory... in practice
Nevertheless
Nonetheless
While
Whereas ...
Basic paragraph structure of your comparative essay

- Point answering the question.
- Comparison highlighting similarities or differences between at least two of the texts.
- **Key moments** which demonstrate the point you have made in this paragraph.
- Personal engagement/thoughts on the point/key moment.

Comparative: The General Vision and Viewpoint

When dealing with the general vision and viewpoint, you should consider the following ideas:

- What is the atmosphere in the opening scene? How does this impact on us as readers? Is it uplifting or is it bleak?

- Is the general vision of life optimistic, pessimistic or both?

- What view of society does the author offer? What aspect of society does an author focus on?

- Individuals struggle against injustice and/or oppression; they struggle to attain something significant in life. Is this struggle seen as worthwhile? Or is it viewed as tragic failure?

- The concluding moments of the texts leave us with a final impression of the author’s overall view of life.

- What view of family is given? Is the family atmosphere nurturing or is it dysfunctional?

  - You will be discussing **four** of the above areas in your essay. Because you are analysing three texts in one paragraph your paragraph length will longer. It will be **one page to a page and ¼**.

- While the questions may vary in their wording, your reference material remains the same. Your **topic sentences** are **crucial in linking the reference material to the question. Don’t forget this.**

- Using comparative words like;
  - Similarly
  - Likewise
  - This is also mirrored in..
  - Also
  - This is also seen in
– We are presented with an equally bleak vision....
– In contrast
– However
– Nowhere in this text do we see
– This is the opposite to...
– Contrary
– Unlike what we see in....

Make sure you clarify WHY you’re making the comparison.

For example, the sentence ‘This is similar to ‘HMMB.’ Is not enough. Instead, clarify why/how you’re making a comparison. Example below of correct comparative techniques:

– ‘This is similar to ‘HMMB’ as Johnston also offers a pessimistic view of society.’

– ‘Both Salvatores and McCarthy offer an optimistic view of the individual’s struggle against adversity, as both see the struggle as worthwhile.’

The above sentence signal a comparative point AND explain the nature of the comparison. Make sure you do this.
As we do not have time to go through each individual text fill out the following for the three texts you intend to answer in the leaving certificate examination:

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<td><strong>View of Society:</strong></td>
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General Vision and Viewpoint Sample Answer

Intro

The three texts that I have studied are ‘The Road’ by Cormac McCarthy, ‘I’m Not Scared’ (‘INS’) by Gabriele Salvatores and ‘How Many Miles to Babylon?’ (‘HMMB’) by Jennifer Johnston. The emotional responses I had aided me to shape the vision and viewpoints of the three authors.

1. My reaction to the opening moments of these three texts helped me to realize the views that the authors had. I found the beginning of both ‘The Road’ and ‘HMMB’ to be very bleak. In ‘The Road,’ McCarthy gives us a very negative description of the dark of night and how ‘the days (are) more grey...than what had gone before.’ We are immediately presented with as nightmarish vision of the world. The boy and his father must traverse a post-apocalyptic landscape. However, the father remains steadfast in his objective – to ‘move south.’ This instilled some hope in me and allowed me to understand McCarthy’s point – that the human spirit can be resilient in the bleakest of places. Johnston, on the other hand, gives us no such hope in the opening moments of her text. Here, the author tells us in great detail just how meaningless Alec’s life has become as he is committed to no cause and ‘loves no living person.’ From the outset of this text I was struck by the utter hopelessness of his situation as he awaits execution. I found this scene to be overwhelmingly pessimistic as Johnston brings into focus her view that life can sometimes be without hope. While I found the opening moments of ‘INS’ to be dark, it wasn’t as overtly so as with the other two texts. At first, Salvatores presents us with some fairly innocent images of children playing in a beautiful golden field. However, the text takes an unexpected dark turn when Michele finds a human foot at the bottom of a hole while exploring. This greatly disturbed me and it helped me to understand Salvatores’ belief that – while a place can look idyllic on the surface, it can also be harbouring some very sinister secrets.

2. All three authors focus on the negative forces within society which leads to a general view of life that is bleak. Both McCarthy and Johnston present a deeply pessimistic view of society’s insensitivity and brutality. In ‘HMMB’ Johnston presents us with a view of life where rigid class differences leave no room for individuality. This negative view is intensified in the second part of the text when the story moves to the trenches of WWI. Men are no more than cogs in the great war machine and as a result are expendable. They are cattle to be led. Alec’s attempt to argue with his superior, Major Glendinning, leads to an important insight into this world of strict impersonal discipline. Glendinning’s cold emotionless orders prompt Alec to ask; “where did you learn to be so evil?” His superior replies “the world taught me.” Johnston’s bleak view of society is aptly encapsulated in this dramatic moment and it aided my understanding of vision and viewpoint. Similarly, McCarthy also

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Gavin Cowzer
delineates a society over-run by chaos. However, McCarthy goes one step further by showing us what can actually happen when society has broken down. We are given many key moments where his viewpoint is brought into sharp focus. The world these characters populate is a very oppressive one, filled with inhumane marauders. In one horrifying moment we witness a stygian scene as the marauders pass with ‘catamites’ held together in chains and humans being used as slaves to feast on. The boy and his father live in a constant state of fear as they wonder can they ‘be seen from the road.’ Like Johnston, McCarthy suggests that society is always on the verge of collapse. However, he also argues that people are always close to regressing to their primal instincts. This was something I hadn’t thought about before. And it was only through reading of these key moments that shaped my understanding of this concept. While the society that Salvatore’s depicts in ‘INS’ isn’t as destructive as the other two texts, it’s still a very corrupt one. In one pivotal moment we see just how deep the corruption runs as the majority of the adults in the village debate what to do with the boy they have held prisoner down a hole for monetary gain. Salvatore’s presents us with the notion that poverty can corrupt. Like the people who populate ‘The road’ in McCarthy’s text, the villagers in ‘INS’ are driven to desperate measures in order to survive. I was struck by this idea – that poverty has the power to destroy principles. This was something I had never thought about until I read these three texts.

3. **My emotional reactions** to these three texts also aided me in comprehending how the three authors saw the individual struggle against adversity. Both McCarthy and Salvatore’s view of struggle is similar as they offer us both a positive and negative view and suggest that escape is possible, albeit not for everyone. In McCarthy’s text ‘The Road’ I was struck by the fathers struggle. It stirred in me many emotions which helped me to understand the authors vision. In his attempt to escape, the father dies. In a scene drenched in sentiment, the father tells his son to keep moving. The father knows that if the boy stays with him, he too will perish. As a result the boy walks away. Here, McCarthy expresses his belief that the individual struggle is worthwhile even though it can come with negative consequences. It is a bitter sweet moment that reinforced in me the understanding that human struggle, while fruitful, has the potential to bring about some negative outcomes. This is very much mirrored in ‘INS.’ In this text, Michele goes against the wishes of his father and helps the boy to flee his captors. However, he himself is shot in the process of aiding filippo’s escape. Even though it is strongly implied that he survives, Michele still pays a heavy cost for rescuing his friend. Though the nature of the struggle in ‘The Road’ and ‘INS’ is different, both authors believe that no matter how arduous the struggle, it is necessary if we are to achieve meaning in life. And, as readers, this gives us hope. Sadly, Johnston does not agree with this idea in ‘HMMB.’ In her view, the individuals struggle is futile. Alec struggles against the rigid conformity of his upper class background in befriending Jerry. He struggles to maintain this friendship in the trenches. It ends in defeat. The defining moment is terrible. He shoots his friend to save him from the indignity of a British firing squad. In Johnston’s view, the individual’s struggle is futile. This is a sobering contrast to McCarthy’s and Salvatore’s optimism.
However, reading **the closing moments** of these three texts allowed me to gain the ultimate **understanding of the authors view of life**. Both McCarthy and Salvatores mirror each other in their optimism and this is expressed in the **concluding scenes** of their texts. In the final scenes in ‘The Road,’ the woman that the boy meets embraces him and welcomes him into her family. With this magnanimous gesture, the boy finally receives the maternal figure that he so desperately craved. I **found this visual to be extremely uplifting** for an otherwise bleak text and this **helped me to see** what McCarthy was intimating throughout the text that – **while life is predominantly harsh, it is also worthwhile and rewarding**. Salvatores presents us with the same **positive outlook in the final moments** of his text, ‘INS.’ Here, Michele has been shot and filippo is still in some danger from Sergio. However, before Sergio can do anything to harm the boy, the rescue helicopter searching for Filippo finds them all. This ensures the boys safe return. Again, the final images of the helicopter search lights piercing the black night and of Filippo reaching out to an injured Michele are very inspiring and the masterfully **showcase Salvatores view**, that good always triumphs over evil. while McCarthy’s vision is more tentative and fragile both authors end on a positive note. This left me **feeling uplifted and positive about the unconquerable nature of human spirit**. In stark contrast, Johnston **remains doggedly pessimistic** to the end. In the **final scene** of ‘HMMB,’ Alec is awaiting in his cell for his execution the war rumbles on out side. Nothing has been resolved. His friend is dead and Alec has mere hours left in his life. I **found this lack of redemption or accomplishment to be extremely depressing and it made me understand that Johnston’s overall vision of the world is very tragic**.

4. Conclusion
My own emotional responses to the three texts that I have studied have been greatly influential in aiding me to shape the vision and view points of the three authors.
Comparative Study Checklist

- Plan your answer carefully.
- Never retell the story.
- Always check the question before you begin...are you answering all parts?
- Always answer the question asked.
- Always compare.
- Always engage with the texts.
- Always use key moments to demonstrate your points.

NOTE: You will be rewarded for engaging with the texts. This means you should always mention what your opinion is/what you think/how your opinion changed after studying the texts etc. **It is important you do this as well as just comparing the texts!**

What the examiners are saying:

“The Comparative Study is one of the areas where candidates have an opportunity to demonstrate skills in critical literacy. It is possible for candidates to challenge, wholly or in part, not only the premise put forward in questions but also the views and opinions they encountered in the course of studying texts. Many candidates showed evidence of critical engagement with the texts they had studied and a mature critical literacy was seen in the work of some candidates. Examiners were pleased when they saw candidates trust in their own personal response and demonstrate a willingness to challenge the ‘fixed meaning’ of texts. The best answers managed to remain grounded, both in the question asked and in the text. Examiners reported that examples of under-achievement in the area of comparative studies could often be attributed to a loss of focus in terms of the requirements of the task. Some candidates did not show evidence of ‘reading’ in an astute and reflective manner. The quality of evidence cited to support an opinion was a significant discriminator used by examiners.”