

Composing 3 2009 Sample Response

3. "...the decisive moment..."

(TEXT 3 2009)

Write a short story in which the central character is faced with making an important decision.

What did the Marking Scheme state?

Reward awareness of the narrative shape of a short story. The decision facing the central character should play an important part in the storyline.

Note the second statement from the Marking Scheme. It is less easy to slip in a learned off story and still accomplish the task. Creative adaptation is usually required if you are recycling previous work. Avoid parroting a story that you wrote in response to a previous Leaving Cert Exam. Ask yourself though whether it could be adapted, with less focus on a decisive moment, to story with mystery at the heart of it, to suit one of the 2012 composing tasks, i.e. to write a story in which a mystery is solved.

*Try to appreciate this response by a Sixth Year as a good story. Trust that if you can entertain a reader, while being on task, you can gain an **A** grade, as here.*

In the exam, the reader is the examiner and she or he is expecting a creative response that is focused on the instruction of the question.

Note the clever use of language to create a heightened sense of drama in the opening. By the way, a subtle rather than a dramatic approach to the writing of stories often works best. On this occasion the writer was able to deliver the dramatic plot well.

If you want to learn more how to write at this level, listen to and learn from your teacher.

If, as well, you want further expert assistance, log on to

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Model Composition:

Target in the crosshairs! He had him now, by George he had him! He tapped his rather fat looking metal pen in his pocket. Mark Watson, Irish Mirror Environment Correspondent, smiled triumphantly as he drove his car home along the M50. 'Wait till I tell Wendy about this latest scoop!'

For weeks now, eager journalist Mark had been suspicious of TD Harry Grimes and his involvement with the Deep Porcupine Oil Company, and he had finally got him! Just a short while previous to this, Mark was about to enjoy a sandwich in Grab A Bite on Duke Street when he saw Grimes flash past the cafe window on his mobile. Mark had stopped late to snatch a bit of lunch and now he'd have to starve for a bit longer. Mark casually got up, over-paid his bill and walked outside, immediately shadowing the TD. Duke Street wasn't very busy. So he took out his mobile phone and switched on the video camera, both hiding his face and keeping a record for later. Passing the Oilslick Bistro, Mark steadied himself a comfortable distance behind Grimes and could even hear snippets of his call: 'Yep...Sean, you'll be where?...okay, that's fine... don't worry, you can strain the spuds alright, haha!'

'Bingo' thought Mark; to the casual passerby Grimes would seem to be making a joke. However Mark had enough savvy by to know that 'spuds' meant 'oil' and 'strain' meant 'pump'. Mark firmly believed that any honest man shouldn't need to speak in code. Of course, he never thought to think most honest men shouldn't need to tap a TD's phone and nick his post.

It wasn't hard to understand why one of Mark's personal favourites on his bookshelf was 'The Prince', a study in how to rule one's subjects!

Suddenly Grimes wheeled round and Mark, who was good at this type of pretence, kept walking with his phone held up. The amateur would have tried to duck and hide at this point, but not Mark Watson. Grimes turned again and continued to walk, dropping his mobile into his pocket. 'Must call Rob later and see if he can 'acquire' me that phone', Mark mused to himself. Rob used to be a thief with a shady connection to an executive

Mark had been investigating in the past. Mark had blackmailed Rob into working for him at first, but the two had hit it off and their continued contact had proven to be of mutual benefit. Mark smiled at the thought of knowing someone who could steal the belt off your trousers and you wouldn't notice until you felt a breeze about your ankles.

Grimes made for a small café and sat down at a table with a smartly dressed man and a rather large looking fellow with his arms crossed. 'Bennet, CEO of Deep Porcupine Oil Company and some muscle by the looks of things', Mark noted to himself as we walked in and plonked on a vacant stool at the counter, a fortunate perch from which to eavesdrop while appearing to be anonymous. As he reached into his pocket he let a pen slip out and roll across the floor towards Grimes' table. None of them noticed, so intent were they on their initial greetings. Mark smiled at the fact that the pen was a 'Spy Kids Super Agent Recorder Pen' shoved into a larger, posher pen casing. It had served him well in the past year—he made a mental note to buy his son an extra big present for the coming Christmas. Mark was the type of journalist who liked to minimise the shady trail he left behind him as a result of his work.

After a while, as the politician and his cronies left, Mark mouthed an 'Oh' shape, bent for his pen, pocketed it and walked out casually behind them.

Mark's wife, Wendy, heard the gravel scratch as he parked and she greeted him with 'What are you doing home at this hour Mark? You scared me for a moment when you didn't knock'.

'Stick on a pot of coffee and I'll give you the jist', Mark invited.

After he had told her the whole sordid saga with Grimes, Wendy frowned.

'Mark, this sounds more dangerous than the usual story. You remember what happened to that reporter on the Naas Road a few years ago. I don't want the same to happen to you'.

'Ara will you stop! I think there is a bit of a dread deficit between West Dublin gangs of the last decade and bloody, greedy Harry Grimes. I'm doing this as an environmentalist. The bugger is going to let them drill off the coast of Wicklow, without any committee report or permits granted through the normal channels. He's short-cutting red-tape, not hiring assassination squads'.

'But why does it always have to be you, Mark? What about the Gardai—do you like doing their job for them? Just ring them and let them know what you know and then this will be all over'.

Mark shook his head despite her pleading tone.

'Wendy, I love you but I've worked hard for this. Besides the bonus factor for my salary, I actually cannot trust the Gardai not to let Grimes know. And the people of Ireland wouldn't stand for what Bennett and Deep Porcupine are trying to pull off.'

'Fine then. Be the big man, Detective. Go and get shot', she just shouted and stormed off.

Mark shook his head and sipped his coffee. 'Women', he cursed. Maybe she'd be fine about it next week; but it was unusual to see Wendy so worked up, Mark reflected. She was usually cool and composed, rarely crying at some of the harsh stories he brought home from his job. After all, her coolness was probably why he had married her.

Compromise was called for here. He decided to write the story in its present form, submit it tomorrow and quit playing high private risk detective. Mark sat back and decided that he owed to his family to give it a rest.

Suddenly Mark heard his phone vibrate in his pocket. With a mixture of reluctance and excitement he opened his phone. It was an email and the sender was a disposable Usenet one. He opened it and read: 'I know you are 'researching' Grimes. I can help. Meet me 9 am tomorrow Pearse Station.' His heart raced. Instantly he thought he'd been found out and this was a trap. Pearse Station was always busy; if he met someone there he could be sure of evading notice. But if it did turn out to be a trap, then a gunman could easily take him out.

Mark's hands were shaking. He had a very important decision to make. Would he submit what he had or would he meet the mysterious E-mailer?

Comments

The unexpected, incomplete narrative, leaving the reader wondering, is a more satisfactory ending to a TV drama type of story than a straightforward heroic or tragic climax.

90 ex 100 awarded for this response done as a mock paper.

There is no doubt that an LC examiner or Appeal examiner if it came to it would award an A1. The quality stands out.

A **B** grade would be a poor reward for this story.

Remember, if you feel that the original mark was unfair to you in the LC, that you can *appeal* your mark in September.

