

LEAVING CERTIFICATE

ENGLISH

ORDINARY LEVEL

STUDY GUIDE



Inside I'm Dancing

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Communication

“Words, words, words! They shut one off from the universe. Three quarters of the time one’s never in contact with things, only with the beastly words that stand for them.” Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point* (1928)

“Words ought to be a little wild for they are the assault of thoughts on the unthinking.” John Maynard Keynes in *New Statesman* (1933)

“Words are not (except in their own little corner) facts or things; we need therefore to prise them off the world, to hold them apart from and against it, so that we can realize their inadequacies and arbitrariness, and can re-look at the world without blinkers.” John Austin, “A Plea for Excuses” (1956)

“Words can have no single fixed meaning. Like wayward electrons, they can spin away from their initial orbit and enter a wider magnetic field. No one owns them or has a proprietary right to dictate how they will be used.” David Lehman, “The End of the Word” (1991)

“Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.” Rudyard Kipling, in a speech (1923)

“Written words differ from spoken words in being material structures. A spoken word is a process in the physical world, having an essential time-order; a written word is a series of pieces of matter, having an essential space-order.” Bertrand Russell, *An Outline of Philosophy* (1951)

"For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the soul within." Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (1850)

“Honest plain words best pierce the ear of grief.” Shakespeare, *Love’s Labours Lost* (1557)

Contents

Comparative Study Explained.....	Page 4
"Inside I'm Dancing" - Theme.....	Page 7
"Inside I'm Dancing" – Social Setting.....	Page 20
"Inside I'm Dancing" - Relationships.....	Page 23
Memorable Quotes.....	Page 27
Film Language.....	Page 30
Guidelines for Answering Exam Questions.....	Page 32
Past Exam Questions.....	Page 34

Comparative Study Explained

The comparative study question asks you to compare **two texts** under one of the **three modes of comparison**. (In this case, 'compare' means point out similarities and differences.)

The comparative modes we will be studying for the exam in June 2011 are:

1. **Theme**
2. **Social Setting**
3. **Relationships**

You need to know your comparative text well, but not in the same level of detail as your single text. When you are reading through your text, it is a good idea to keep the modes of comparison in mind.

Concentrate on *key moments* in each text. (The word 'moment' here can be taken to mean an entire chapter or scene.) A key moment in your text is one which illustrates or helps in the development of one of the chosen modes.

A key moment may be:

- A moment of conflict.
- A moment of resolution.
- A moment which shows the chosen theme very clearly.
- An occurrence or description which gives us an insight into the social setting.
- A pivotal moment in a relationship.

Key moments can overlap, one may be an illustration of both the social setting and a pivotal moment in the theme, for example.

When you are reading your comparative text, as well as keeping the modes in mind, you should think about your personal response. The examiners will be looking to see how well you engaged with the text. As you read, ask yourself:

- Did I like the characters?
- Would I like to have lived in that time or in that place? Why? Why not?
- Is the theme one to which I can relate?
- Do I like the way in which the author presents the theme?
- Do I find certain parts of the text funny or poignant or disturbing?

Note:

The word 'text' refers to books, films and plays.

The word 'author' refers to novelists, playwrights and film directors.

Theme

A theme is an issue or concern in the text which the writer is trying to explore. The theme is not the plot: don't confuse the two.

There can be several themes in a text besides the main one; it doesn't matter which one you pick as long as it is central to the texts you are studying.

When you are reading the text and thinking about this mode of comparison, ask yourself:

- ◆ How is the theme introduced? Is there a key moment that gives us an indication of the message the author is trying to explore? Does one of the central characters say or do something that sets us on the path of understanding the theme? Or is it conveyed by the minor characters or even the setting?
- ◆ How does the author develop this theme? Is it through a series of small events? Do we see situations developing that we know must lead to a crisis of some sort? How does the author interest us in the theme? Is it through a central character with whom we can empathise?
- ◆ Is there a moment of crisis or a turning point in the text? Does the central character have to make a difficult decision? Does the character do the right thing? How is this decision linked to the theme?
- ◆ How is the theme resolved? Are you very clear on the author's view of the ideas explored in the theme? Have we learned anything about human behaviour or society in general from the exploration of this theme?
- ◆ Does the author's use of setting, imagery, motifs, lighting, costumes, special effects or music (if it's a film) add to your understanding of the theme?

Social Setting

The social setting is the kind of world in which the story takes place.

When you are reading the text and thinking about this mode of comparison, ask yourself:

- In what century or decade is the story set? Does the time matter? Could the story take place now or are things in our society very different?
- Where is the story set? Does the setting matter?
- Do we learn a lot about the social life of that place or time by reading the text?
- What are the protagonists' attitudes and values?
- Are there class distinctions?
- Are there race distinctions?
- Are there gender distinctions?

- Are children treated well?
- What are the manners and customs of that place/time?
- How does the daily life of the characters differ from life in 21st century Ireland?
- What are their attitudes towards religion, money, love, family etc.?
- Would you like to live in that time or place? Why? Why not?

Relationships

The vast majority of narrative texts centre on relationships. They can be relationships between lovers, friends, family or even enemies. In "Inside I'm Dancing" we will be concentrating on the central relationship between Michael Connolly and Rory O'Shea.

When you are reading the text and thinking about this mode of comparison, ask yourself:

- How is the relationship introduced?
- ◆ Does the relationship change or develop as the narrative progresses? Is it through a series of small events? Do we see situations developing that we know must lead to a crisis of some sort? How does the author interest us in the theme? Is it through a central character with whom we can empathise?
- ◆ Is there a crisis or complication in the relationship? Does the central character have to make a difficult decision? Does the character do the right thing? How is this decision linked to the theme?
- ◆ Does the relationship end well?



"Inside I'm Dancing" - Theme

Note – (K) symbol means 'Key Moment' in the text. It is important to use key moments to illustrate the points you are making in your answer.

We will be exploring the theme of **communication and understanding** in "Inside I'm Dancing."

- ◆ How is the theme introduced?
- ◆ Is there a key moment that gives us an indication of the message the author is trying to explore?
- ◆ Does one of the central characters say or do something that sets us on the path of understanding the theme? Or is it conveyed by the minor characters or even the setting?

NOTE: The following is not written in essay form but rather is a series of points. This is for study purposes and is not meant to reflect the way in which you should structure your answer.

Michael's inability to communicate easily with others is shown clearly in the opening sequence. He is sitting with the other residents who are watching "Bagpuss", a children's television series from the 1970s. Michael is sitting silently and passively but is not watching the television. In the background, a cleaner is moving around the room with an electric polisher.

Eileen enters and asks the residents if anyone wants to go to mass. Meanwhile, the polisher's cable has snagged on one of the wheelchairs and Michael notices it. The camera angle allows us to see the situation from Michael's point of view. He becomes agitated as he realises the potential danger of the cable and tries to alert Eileen to the hazard. Eileen is well-meaning but cannot understand Michael. (K) We realise that he is unable to communicate a simple but important message to her. Added to his frustration is Eileen's condescending attitude. It appears that she has no sense Michael may have something urgent to tell her. In the end, Eileen gets Michael's "card", which we realise is his principal means of communication. We share in Michael's rising panic as he tries desperately to pronounce the word "Cable" clearly. Eileen points out the letters on the card and the slowness of it all adds to our understanding of Michael's frustration. It is such a simple message and yet it seems to take forever to spell it out as Michael's agitation grows.

When Annie falls, just as Eileen says, "Cable? What cable?" we hear the television in the background referring to the prima ballerina and the humorous note here makes the situation seem even more ridiculous.

In this scene, we see that everything - from the setting to the camera angles to the characters themselves - contributes to our understanding of the theme and clearly show us how difficult it is for Michael to communicate with those around him. We empathise with his distress, his feelings of powerlessness and frustration and we feel his sadness and hopelessness as he sits in his wheelchair, watching a children's television programme.

- ◆ How does the author develop this theme?
- ◆ Is it through a series of small events?
- ◆ Do we see situations developing that we know must lead to a crisis of some sort?
- ◆ How does the author interest us in the theme?
- ◆ Is it through a central character with whom we can empathise?

When we first meet Rory, he appears to be the polar opposite of Michael. His rebelliousness is signalled by his hair, his clothes, his nostril piercing and is reinforced by the way he is first introduced to us as he sits behind the metal grille in the ambulance, like a prisoner. However, the major difference between the two young men is Rory's ability to use language to communicate. Here, he has the advantage over Michael.

Although Rory is articulate and easy to understand, he uses language to shock rather than to befriend and impress those around him. Michael, as we have seen, wanted to communicate in order to warn of a potential danger but Rory seems interested only in himself. (K) He uses bad language and is sarcastic and disparaging about the home and its residents. On entering the lounge for the first time, he introduces himself in a very outspoken way and then asks "So is it always this much fun here? Or is today somebody's birthday?" He has a sharp wit and the residents seem unsure how to approach him.

Rory continues to talk sarcastically and ironically about Carrigmore as he is shown around, punning on people "Dying to get out" of the home. He has excellent linguistic skills and we are struck by the difference between himself and Michael.

However, although Rory may have a sharp tongue and a keen wit, his coarse language and aggressive tone are completely ineffective when he tries to get his own way in Carrigmore. (K) On his first night, his stereo is confiscated and although he rages and rails against this perceived injustice – calling on the other residents to support "The Carrigmore One" – he achieves nothing. We realise that behind all his bravado, he is as helpless as Michael, if not more so. Rory's approach is immature

and overly dramatic and we can see that this method of communication is utterly ineffective against Annie and Eileen, as it is with all in authority.

We, the audience, realise by the end of the first sequence that although they may appear very different, both Rory and Michael are outsiders even in the specialised care unit of Carrigmore. Michael has accepted his role passively but it is clear that Rory will not do so.

The following day, the residents of Carrigmore are taking part in an art class. Rory is disenchanted and wants nothing to do with it. (K) He uses language to mock others and calls Michael "Mary." He goes on to cruelly poke fun at Michael's inability to make himself understood, saying that his – Rory's - Swahili is a bit rusty. He is cruel to Michael and asks if there is even any point in trying to communicate with him or is he wasting his time. Tommy, another resident, appears to be on Rory's side but Rory quickly turns his sarcasm on him and compares him unflatteringly and mockingly to Stephen Hawking. Rory uses language to insult and hurt rather than to help or befriend. The only power he seems to have is the power of words and he abuses this verbal agility whenever he gets an opportunity to do so.

A key moment in terms of communication occurs when Rory sees Michael being treated by a pretty young female therapist. (K) Rory cannot pass up the chance to tease Michael, who reacts angrily. The therapist cannot understand Michael and offers to get his alphabet card but, astonishingly, Rory understands every word.

Michael is thrilled by the discovery that Rory can understand him and begs Rory to use his "gift" to act as his interpreter. Rory wants nothing to do with this idea and scorns the notion that he possesses a "gift." He explains that he spent six years sitting beside a boy with a worse speech defect than Michael's and he dismisses Michael's excitement and his request. Meanwhile, Rory continues to use his verbal skills to shock the carers in Carrigmore and to offend everybody who speaks to him.

There is a huge difference between the way Michael communicates with his father and the way Rory communicates with his. Michael's father placed him in care when his mother died and has shown no desire whatsoever to see his son since. Rory's father, on the other hand, clearly loves his son and wants him to know he can come home at any time. The two fathers could not be more different.

(K) Yet, for all that Rory's father chats happily to his son, there is little real understanding there. Mr. O'Shea is a kind, gentle man and Rory shows a more thoughtful side to his character when he treats his father decently but still, there is clearly a gulf between them. Simply being able to talk does not bring with it an automatic understanding of the other person's feelings and we realise that Rory has his family problems too. Both fathers are ineffective and neither son can communicate honestly and openly with their parent.

As the film progresses, the two young men form a close bond. Michael is more than happy to let Rory do the talking when they go to a bar together for the first time.

Rory's method of chatting up the girls they meet is to be shockingly open about his and Michael's conditions and he even goes so far as to refer to the girls as the chosen "cripple companions of the month."

(K) Rory's brash manner nearly lands him in trouble when he accidentally spills a man's drink. In his usual aggressive way, Rory provokes the man, who is clearly tempted to hit him until a strange girl steps in. This is our first introduction to Siobhan and she impresses the boys immediately with her cool, sharp wit. She is more than an equal for the fast-spoken Rory and treats him with an honesty and an impatience that he clearly finds intoxicating. We wonder if anyone has ever spoken to him like this before and if it isn't what he has wanted, rather than a condescending kindness and positive discrimination.

(K) Rory is not above using the combination of his verbal skills and Michael's calm, logical intelligence to confuse and wrong-foot others. He does this to good effect when the pair are denied entrance to a nightclub. Initially he tries to use his brashness and aggression to force the bouncer to allow them in but when Michael intervenes and offers a suggestion that they inform the doorman of their legal rights, Rory is delighted. This is a great example of the two young men understanding one another perfectly and joining forces to gain their objective. Rory may have the ability to speak clearly and entertainingly but Michael has the edge when it comes to diplomacy and calm assessment of the situation.

(K) Rory is his irreverent self once more when the young men arrive back at Carrigmore and are confronted by an irate Eileen. She has good reason to be angry but Rory is undaunted by her efforts to make him submit to her authority. She has more success with Michael and, seeing Michael's shame and distress, Rory accepts all the blame. The two have formed a close bond and are becoming dependent on one another. Rory understands that Michael cannot speak out when Eileen tells him how disappointed she is and he steps in to rescue the situation. However, he cannot resist trying to shock Eileen and ends by asking her to change his underwear for him. We realise that Rory still uses his verbal skills to challenge any perceived threat to his independence. As we have little sympathy for the well-meaning but inept Eileen, we see this as a comic scene. Eileen has never understood Michael as well as Rory does after only a short time in Carrigmore.

(K) Rory's attempt to secure independent living for himself is another example of his inability to communicate effectively with the outside world. (The irony is, of course, that at the start of the film it appeared Michael was the one with the difficulty but we are seeing more and more that effective communication is about more than just clear speech.) Rory mishandles the panel and his immaturity and lack of respect for authority are obvious. He tries in vain to speak appropriately but as soon as he realises things are not going his way, he loses what little self-control he had. His attempt to copy Michael's legalese is embarrassing and shows us that he still struggles to understand how to communicate his feelings in an appropriate manner. It

is clear from the shots of Michael looking ashamed at the mention of the stolen collection money that he is far better at understanding the situation than Rory is.

(K) Back at the home, Rory's frustration is expressed in torrents of invective and, far from finding it shocking, we feel sorry for him. His bluster and bad language now appear slightly pathetic. Later, he asks Annie to type an appeal against the panel's decision not to grant him an independent living allowance and he continues his tirade of abuse in the letter. Even when communicating in written form, Rory refuses to temper his language, instead using language as a vent for his temper. Rory hasn't yet realised that shocking people will not get him what he wants.

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- ◆ Is there a moment of crisis or a turning point in the text?
 - ◆ Does the central character have to make a difficult decision?
 - ◆ Does the character do the right thing?
 - ◆ How is this decision linked to the theme?

There are a number of key moments in the text which show how communication and understanding play a vital role in changing the characters' lives. Some of these changes are for the better but some are more difficult for the young men to accept.

(K) Rory and Michael have now become firm friends and rely on each other in a way that they don't even seem to fully realise yet. They return to the panel, who are surprised and irritated to see Rory accompanying Michael and clearly intending to stay for the duration of the hearing. The chairman tries to get him to leave, but Rory says that although the panel may *hear* Michael's application, they will not understand it.

The chairman is condescending in his attitude and smugly tells Rory that he and the others on the panel have plenty of experience of people with speech difficulties. The camera work in this scene highlights the irony and the comedy of the situation. The facial expressions of the panel as Michael begins to speak are marvellous. Their inability to understand him and their obvious discomfort are most amusing, especially in the light of the chairman's patronising manner.

The theme is once again highlighted when Michael, through his gleeful interpreter, simply repeats what he had read in a brochure on independent living. The panel, for all their slick professionalism, are completely taken in by this. They have no real understanding of the people with whom they are dealing and they are fooled by very superficial, official-sounding speeches. To them, appropriate language is enough and they happily agree to Michael's request.

The coup-de-grace in this scene occurs when the panel expresses concern about Michael's decision not to use speech aids. Michael's reply, given by a delighted Rory, is that he will have no need for such aids as he will communicate via his live-in interpreter, Rory O'Shea.

Thanks to their ability to understand one another both verbally and emotionally, the two young men can at last begin to lead independent lives.

(K) When Rory and Michael approach Fergus Connolly in his office, we see that Michael's self-confidence is still easily shaken. It was he who could deal with the panel, but it is Rory who is forced to deal with Michael's father. Michael is dumbstruck in his presence and gazes sadly at the picture of Fergus with another young man at a graduation ceremony. Michael is unable to communicate with his father in any way but fortunately Rory has no qualms about telling Fergus that they need money for accommodation. Fergus agrees, but only once he is sure that he will not be required to do anything more than pay Michael off.

Rory and Michael have become dependent on one another and it seems that the more emotionally charged the situation, the more they need the other's help in communicating their desires in an effective manner.

Though all appears to go well for the young men as they prepare to move into their new house, (despite a comic moment when the voice-activated lights don't respond to Michael's attempts to turn them on and off) it is obvious that they will need a full-time carer. There follows a series of highly amusing interviews with prospective carers, all of whom are clearly unsuitable and it is only when they happen to see Siobhan by chance that the pair decide to ask her to take the job. She is initially reluctant to accept their offer of employment but agrees after some persuasion from Rory.

It becomes apparent after a short time that Michael is fascinated by Siobhan and clearly harbours romantic feelings towards her. She understands what he is saying much of the time and he is delighted with the attention she gives him when fixing his hair or helping him with his speech.

(K) When Michael and Rory go to the party with Siobhan, things reach crisis point. Michael makes his feelings for Siobhan clear by holding her too tightly as they dance and this leads to an unfortunate scene.

Rory has always understood that Siobhan is an attractive young woman who has a friendly but platonic relationship with himself and Michael. It has been obvious, through the use of camera close-ups of his face when Siobhan was talking, that he is attracted to her too but has accepted that the feeling is not mutual. Michael, on the other hand, has not had enough experience in the outside world to enable him to make this judgement.

As Michael holds the increasingly distressed Siobhan ever closer, the music and song lyrics echo the pathos of the situation.

"The Look Of Love"

*The look of love is in your eyes
A look your smile can't disguise
The look of love is saying so much more than just words could ever say
And what my heart has heard, well, it takes my breath away.*

*I can hardly wait to hold you, feel my arms around you
How long I have waited
Waited just to love you, now that I have found you.*

*You've got the look of love, it's on your face
A look that time can't erase
Be mine tonight, let this be just the start of so many nights like this
Let's take a lover's vow and then seal it with a kiss*

*I can hardly wait to hold you, feel my arms around you
How long I have waited
Waited just to love you, now that I have found you
Don't ever go
Don't ever go
I love you so*

The camera focuses on Michael and we see his heartbreak and dejection.

Back at the house, the tension mounts as Siobhan, ironically dressed in a nurse's uniform, helps the young men to get ready for bed. It is painfully obvious that Michael has misunderstood Siobhan's kindness and believes they have a chance of a romantic future together. Michael's lack of experience in the outside world, having lived always in the sheltered environment of Carrigmore, has not helped him when it comes to socialising with people his own age.

(K) There is a heartbreakingly painful scene at the house when Michael tries desperately to tell Siobhan that he loves her. She is clearly uncomfortable and rejects his advances, once again. Michael, in near despair, asks if she has any feelings for him. Ironically, this is one moment where Siobhan's understanding of Michael's speech fails and she is forced to rely on Rory's interpretation skills. Rory is no happier with the situation than Siobhan is. Siobhan explains that her job is simply that – a job.

- ◆ How is the theme resolved? Are you very clear on the author's view of the ideas explored in the theme? Have we learned anything about human behaviour or society in general from the exploration of this theme?

The tension in the house increases the next day. The two young men are clearly angry and upset. Neither will eat and we see the food on Michael's plate as an unspoken reproof of what he perceives to be Siobhan's betrayal.

(K) The crisis point in the relationship comes when Siobhan answers the door to Peter, a fully-qualified PA. We realise that she intends to leave for good. Michael is distraught and begs her not to leave. He still does not understand that her kindness to him was nothing more than that – kindness.

Rory, who has a greater experience in communicating with people outside of the world of the care home, sees the situation for what it is far sooner than Michael does. Siobhan tries to tell the pair that, regardless of their disabilities, if they want to be part of the wider community, then they must understand how to function in that community. She tells them that, "If you want to be equal, then you have to show people the same respect you demand of them. In the real world, if you insult some guy in a pub, you expect to get hammered.... and if a woman says 'No' to you, you accept that maybe you're not the right man for her."

She tells Rory that he has to learn to give people the respect he expects from them. In effect, what she is saying is that they must interact with others in as normal a way as possible. Their situation does not mean that others should be more understanding or treat them differently, especially as that is not what they say they want. Rory reacts with his usual bad language and cynicism.

Michael is unable or unwilling to understand what Siobhan is saying. He has never had to deal with such a frank speech before and he is distraught. Rory, however, has clearly been bracing himself for such a rejection. He advises Michael not to beg and tells Siobhan, "You said you were going. I think you should go. Fuck off." Siobhan tells him angrily that his problem has always been that he has to turn every situation into a fight. She leaves and shuts the door behind her. This is symbolic of her shutting the door on any hope Michael might have had of a relationship with her.

Michael has misunderstood Siobhan's kindness and is devastated when she leaves. Rory, who is more pragmatic, tells Michael that he is not the only one with a broken heart.

(K) Michael heads towards Carrigmore and "home." Rory follows him and attempts to stop him from making a rash move. Michael expresses himself in a language more typical of Rory, saying, "I fucked it up." He has embraced some of Rory's mannerisms of speech and communication but now it is Rory's turn to speak in more measured tones. He realises the importance of this moment and talks to Michael in a genuine, caring way. This is such a change from his usual flippant, disrespectful tone that we listen carefully to what he has to say, as Michael does. Rory is honest when

he tells Michael that having the future ahead of him is what he, Rory, calls a "gift." We sense that there is more behind these words than might be at first apparent. Rory's earnestness is obvious and he seems desperate for Michael to listen to him.

When Michael does agree to go back to their house, Rory's ebullient mood returns and he jokes about writing a letter to the council, complaining about the lack of wheelchair access to the water, thus depriving the disabled of their right to throw themselves in the river.

"Take a letter, Michael. To Dublin City Council. "Dear Sir or Madam, As wheelchair users with suicidal intentions, I must protest at the lack of facilities. None of the bridges are equipped with easy parapet access, thus curtailing the rights of the disabled to throw themselves in. Yours in disgust, Rory Gerard O'Shea and Michael Connolly."

(K) Rory caught a chill on the night of Siobhan's departure and now he develops pneumonia. He is hospitalised and there is a poignant moment when the doctor fails to understand Michael's question about how long Rory will be in the hospital. Michael struggles to make his speech understood so his query is short and simplistic and the doctor misinterprets it, believing he is aware that Rory is dying. She tells him that it won't be more than a day or two and Michael looks pleased for a moment, thinking that Rory will be allowed home soon. She continues and tells Michael that sufferers of Rory's condition usually die around his age. At this stage in the film, we, the audience, understand Michael's speech with relative ease so there is dramatic irony in the doctor's inability to do so. We feel for Michael as she kindly but incorrectly guesses what he meant and answers the question she thought she heard. Communication and understanding still cause some problems for Michael.

(K) Michael's meeting with the panel towards the end of the film shows us how far he has come in his ability to express himself. He has always had the potential to present ideas in a calm, logical way and now he has the confidence he had lacked when we saw him first. He doesn't need to use legalese or coarse language or any other device to make himself understood. Through Siobhan, he tells the panel that a right must exist independent of its exercise and they are forced to agree with him.

We see clearly now that Michael is able to tailor his language to suit his audience and that, although his speech may be difficult to understand, his ideas are not. He makes a powerful and convincing argument and the panel agree to his request, in principle.

Although it is too late for Rory, this victory is significant nonetheless. We see at the end of the film that Michael is a wiser, more mature young man with an ability to cope independently in the world outside Carrigmore. The brash, outspoken Rory indeed had a "gift," even if it was not the one Michael originally thought it was. He helped Michael to live a full, independent life.

"Inside I'm Dancing" – Social Setting

Social Setting

The social setting is the kind of world in which the story takes place.

Although "Inside I'm Dancing" is set in contemporary Ireland, the characters live in a very different world to the majority of their peers.

(K) Carrigmore is a care home for the disabled and it is run by a well-meaning but inept group. When we first meet Michael, he is sitting passively with the other residents, watching a children's TV programme. It is ludicrous that a group of adults should be watching "Bagpuss" but they seem to accept their lot stoically. We soon learn that the sheltered environment of Carrigmore has kept Michael in a state of immaturity in many ways. He has little or no experience of the outside world.

The inability of the carers to treat the residents as normal people is highlighted by Eileen's bungling attempt to make out what Michael is saying as he attempts to warn her of the dangers of the snagged cable. We, the audience, see the situation from Michael's viewpoint and have little sympathy with Eileen or Annie, despite their good intentions.

(K) When Rory is introduced, it is obvious from the start that he poses a threat to the smooth running of Carrigmore as it is envisioned by Eileen and Annie. He is a normal, if slightly rebellious, young man. However, his hairstyle, his mode of dress, his taste in music and his coarse language all cause conflict with the carers in the home. We are shown an unpleasant side to the way in which those with disabilities are treated in our society. Rory's demands are not unreasonable but he is viewed as a disruptive influence on the other residents and it is clear to us that Carrigmore's function is not to meet the needs of the disabled but rather to force the disabled to fit into the carers' idea of a well-run institution. It is unlikely that any young men of Michael and Rory's age would normally be subject to the kind of rules and regulations imposed on them by Eileen.

Contemporary Ireland and its attitude towards the disabled are held up to the spotlight in this film. There is no doubt that had the boys lived a hundred years ago, their situations would have been worse but still, we are shown a smug and self-satisfied approach to those in care and a belief that the people in charge know what is best for those in their care. All the residents of Carrigmore are adults yet they are treated like children and kept in a state of passivity and acceptance of their lot. Rory's arrival shakes the status quo and Eileen is deeply suspicious and disapproving of him as a result.

(K) Rory's very arrival shows us what the director thinks of his position in society. He is in an ambulance when he comes to Carrigmore and the first view we have of him is through a metal grille. We are thus prompted to see him as a prisoner, an impression he reinforces on the first night when his stereo is confiscated and he shouts "Free the Carrigmore one!"

We see how dependent the residents of Carrigmore are on their carers for even the most basic of needs and we sympathise with their plight. They are cared for in a brisk, impersonal way and are obliged to obey a set of rules, some of which seem arbitrary and unfair. There is little sense of dignity and the resident's sense of identity and individuality is stripped from them by little acts such as the refusal of the carers to allow Rory to have his hair gelled every day. It may indeed take some time to do but it is another example of a situation in which the needs of the residents are put below the needs of those running the home.

It may make uncomfortable viewing at times but "Inside I'm Dancing" does not flinch from showing us the truth about the attitudes towards disability and services for the disabled.

(K) When Rory and Michael venture out into the "real world" of modern-day Dublin on the flag day, we see the difficulties they face in society. Rory is brash and loud, as usual. He harasses passers-by and generally behaves in a provocative manner. The public ignore him, by and large. When Rory persuades Michael to go to the pub with him, we are again shown how the two are not readily accepted by those they meet. They approach two girls, whose eyes widen in shock and dismay as Rory begins to chat them up. Rory offers to pay for drinks and the girls agree, although one is more reluctant than the other. The pub is full of young men, all of whom seem to be standing or walking around, while Michael and Rory sit in their chairs, relatively helpless and dependent on the girls to hold their drinks for them. When it becomes clear that Rory has designs on the girls, they become uncomfortable and decide it is time to go. One of them is quite taken with Rory and kisses him before she leaves. The camera shows her friend's horrified face and wide eyes as she looks at a clearly expectant Michael. She gives him a quick peck on the cheek before leaving hurriedly but Michael is thrilled with even this level of attention. His delight is shown by a camera close-up and the scene is both comic and a little sad. Rory had promised him romance and Michael seems to believe he is experiencing some romance at last. We realise now what a sheltered life Michael has led to date.

(K) When Rory crashes into a customer in the pub and spills his drink, the man becomes aggressive and warns Rory that people like him, in wheelchairs, shouldn't look for trouble. We are shocked by this but after all, Rory wants to be treated like everyone else. If, as Siobhan tells him later, an able-bodied man spoke to someone the way Rory proceeds to speak to the belligerent customer, he would be punched. Rory and Michael may be able to go to a pub but they are most certainly not treated

the same way as other young men of their age.

(K) We see another example of society's discrimination against those with disabilities when Rory and Michael try to get into a nightclub. The doorman does not want to let them in and it is only when Michael spouts some legalese and confounds the doorman with threats of fines that they are allowed to enter. Still, the doorman is unhappy with the situation and it is only the coincidence of a guard's arrival on the street as Michael, through Rory, is talking about the two thousand euro fine payable by the official denying entry, that finally wins the day. The doorman is defeated but as they pass him, he warns them to "keep in by the wall." Clearly, they are not viewed as normal members of the public.

(K) The unfortunate result of all the drinking earlier in the evening is that Rory, unable to go to the toilet by himself, has wet his clothes and must wend his way back to Carrigmore in that state. We see once more that the world in which the pair live is a difficult one where even the most basic necessities cannot be taken for granted. For all Rory's talk of independence, he needs physical care. The problem is that in Carrigmore, such care comes at a price.

The world of Carrigmore is nothing like the modern world outside and its aim seems to be to keep its residents dependent and placid.

(K) Rory is not content to have his every move directed by others and we learn that he has been seeking an independent living allowance. We are struck by how different his position is from most people his age. He must prove to the panel that he deserves to live on his own and they are not inclined to grant him that right because of his unruly and immature behaviour. In desperation, Rory tries to bluster his way through some legalese but his attempt to threaten the panel just makes him look foolish.

(K) Having seen Rory's pain and anger at being forced to stay in Carrigmore, the next scene seems even more ironic. A singer is entertaining the residents in the home but, like most things there, he seems to please the staff more than the residents. He is singing "He's got the whole world in his hands" and the song, as well as being dated, seems like a cruel mockery of Rory's situation.

(K) The bureaucracy and hypocrisy of the panel is shown when Michael makes his case for independent living. He simply quotes their own brochure back to them and they are most impressed by his argument. They have no hesitation in granting him an allowance and, much like the time Michael stunned the nightclub bouncer with legalese, we see that society is often more concerned with the letter of the law than the rights and needs of individuals. Nothing we have seen so far has shown us any evidence that our society is truly a caring one, for all that it appears to make provisions for those with special needs. Lip service is paid to those needs but little real understanding or compassion seem to accompany the services.

(K) When Michael and Rory begin looking for a place to live, we again see how difficult it is for people with disabilities to cope in contemporary Ireland. The estate agent is about to show them an apartment accessible only by a flight of stairs and it isn't until Rory draws his attention to the problem that he realises his error. While this scene is treated comically, the situation is far from humorous and the pair are forced to approach Michael's father for money in order to have a house adapted to their needs. Even then, all is not straightforward. The voice-activated lights, which seem like a marvellous idea for someone in Rory's position, don't react to Michael's attempts to say "On." The builder is uncomfortable and doesn't quite know how to deal with this failure, quickly saying that he will leave the boys to it. Although this scene is also treated humorously, it does draw our attention to the difficulties of finding appropriate housing for those with special needs.

(K) Rory and Michael play on society's discomfort in the presence of those with disabilities when they approach Fergus Connolly. He is shamed into inviting them into his office when Rory tells him loudly that they have come to report a case of blatant neglect. Fergus agrees to pay the pair off in return for a promise that they will not have any contact with him in the future. Michael's gaze falls on a photograph of Fergus with a young man at a graduation ceremony and Fergus, obviously uncomfortable, moves to block Michael's view of the picture. Still, the message is clear: if Michael hadn't been disabled, he might have been the one standing with his proud father.

(K) Michael and Rory's first shopping trip shows us how little experience both have in the world outside of care homes. They don't take the expense of the items into account as they fill their trolley and it is only when the cashier tells them that the total will be €415.28 that reality sets in. They have a lot to learn about living independently, it seems.

(K) The harsh realities of living outside of Carrigmore continue to become apparent as Michael struggles to brush his teeth without help and Siobhan tries to get Rory into his bed, using the hoist. Meanwhile, an iron burns a shirt and the whole situation soon becomes farcical. We see that even the simplest things cannot be taken for granted.

(K) Michael's love for Siobhan is obvious but when she rejects him, Rory's cruel comment to Michael that "parakeets don't mate with armadillos" stirs her to anger. The following exchange shows that she does see the boys as social equals and she doesn't mince words when explaining the situation to them:

Siobhan: That's a filthy bloody thing to tell him!

Rory: Is it? It's the truth!

Siobhan: Oh, it's the truth you want, is it? Okay, here's some. If you want to be equal,

then you have to show people the SAME respect that you demand of them! In the real world, if you INSULT some guy in a pub, you EXPECT to get hammered! If you come home in the middle of the night, you don't EXPECT to find the help waiting in and if a woman says no to you, you accept that maybe you're NOT the right man for her. You don't ASSUME you have an automatic right to love because you're in a wheelchair!

Rory: Siobhan... You said you were goin'. I think you should go... Fuck off! I mean it!

Siobhan: You know what your disability is? You're an arsehole!

Her language may be harsh but her message is a fair one and Rory is defeated. He saw prejudice and discrimination where there was none and Siobhan was quick to put him in his place. Equality means accepting that sometimes you will be hurt when others don't see things your way. Siobhan is simply pointing out that equality can come at a price too. They young men wanted to live in the real world but they must accept that this does not bring with it a guarantee of happiness. Rory has nothing to say to this.

(K) Although there are painful scenes, such as the one above, the film also contains plenty of lighter moments, albeit through a slightly black humour. One of these is when Rory is arrested for joy riding. The garda who comes on the scene first assumes Rory is able-bodied and is about to drag him from the car. When Michael intervenes and points to Rory's chair on the street, the garda's embarrassment and inability to cope are comical. However, we see his prejudice emerge when he asks Rory "Who's in charge of you?" Rory is enraged and we sympathise with his anger. Why should anyone be in charge of him, just because he is in a wheelchair? Perversely, Rory now demands to be arrested, saying it is his right. He feels he is being discriminated against. The garda does give in and takes Rory to the station, but he is released soon afterwards. Would he have been treated that way if he was not in a wheelchair? It is unlikely. This incident forces us to think about the nature of discrimination in our society.

The transition from Carrigmore to the real world was a difficult one for both Rory and Michael but ultimately, they managed it. As the film ends, we see a confident Michael heading off into a busy street on a sunny day. The camera pulls back and Michael blends into the crowd, just another young man out on the streets of Dublin.

"Inside I'm Dancing" - Relationships

- ◆ How is the relationship introduced?

Rory and Michael's first introduction to one another is hardly a good one. Rory has already made his mark in Carrigmore on the day of his arrival by speaking crudely to the other residents about his disability and by disturbing everyone at bedtime with his blaring music. His rebellious nature is in stark contrast to Michael's helpful, obedient, conservative personality. It seems unlikely that the pair will have anything in common.

(K) This view is reinforced the next day, when Rory sits opposite Michael in the art class. Rory appears sullen and uncooperative, and when one of the assistants asks him if he would like to paint anything, he appears to acquiesce, but in fact spits the paint at the canvas, splattering Michael and the art materials. Michael looks understandably irritated by this, and again we do not feel that the young men are destined to be friends. Rory's behaviour is rebellious, but a bit over the top. His bad language and disruptive behaviour are not what we would expect from someone of his age. In contrast, Michael's passive acceptance of his lot is also not what we would expect from a typical young man. Rory is locked into stereotypical teenage behaviour and Michael is locked into childish compliance with those in loco parentis. Both Rory and Michael are immature in their own ways and part of what makes their relationship a success as the film progresses is that they help one another to grow up.

(K) It is Rory who initiates conversation, albeit in a sneering, insulting manner. He calls Michael "Mary" and asks if he has a brain and if he is even worth the effort it would take to talk to him. Tommy, the other resident at the table speaks disparagingly of Michael's intellectual ability, saying that cerebral palsy "fucks the brain". This is untrue, of course, but Michael accepts the insult with the passivity which seems to be the hallmark of his personality. Surprisingly, Rory does not join in this criticism of Michael and turns his sarcasm on Tommy, asking if he's Stephen Hawking and wondering aloud if his crashing his motorbike was his most intelligent act to date. A glimmer of hope and humour seems to cross Michael's face as he listens to this exchange, and he looks at Rory with renewed interest. Tommy's disgusted, "Ah fuck off, the pair of you," links Rory and Michael for the first time. This phrase is repeated again in a later scene when Rory pretends that Michael is insulting Tommy and yet again when Rory and Michael are leaving Carrigmore together. Rory happily tells Tommy that "We're fucking off: the pair of us." They may not have been a pair when Tommy made the comment originally, but they are now.

- ◆ Does the relationship change or develop as the narrative progresses? Is it through a series of small events? Do we see situations developing that we know must lead to a crisis of some sort? How does the author interest us in the theme? Is it through a central character with whom we can empathise?

Michael's interest in Rory has been piqued by the exchanges during the art class, and he curiously wanders into Rory's room in an effort to learn something more about this unusual young man. The room resembles a teenage boy's room rather than a young man's room in many ways and shows us once again that in many ways Rory is a little immature for his age. There are the usual posters calling for anarchy and freedom as well as those advertising bands and making jokes about "big boobs". Michael, in his dull, conservative clothes, seems out of place amongst all this expression of youthful rebellion, but he is clearly intrigued. He looks with delighted disbelief at the photograph of Rory with two beautiful girls in bikinis. Already, Rory is beginning to change Michael's view of the world and Michael seems to like it.

(K) If Michael is interested in Rory, then the feeling is reciprocated. When Michael is having his physiotherapy session, Rory cannot resist this opportunity to tease him. As the young women touch Michael, Rory makes a crude gesture with his tongue. Only Michael sees it, but he is embarrassed and angry. When Rory asks lasciviously if Micheal is enjoying himself, Michael loses his patience and shouts at Rory to leave. The therapists don't understand Michael and offer to get his card. However, to everyone's astonishment, Rory does understand him. Michael is very excited and as soon as he can, he finds Rory and asks if he will use his "gift" to translate what Michael is saying. Rory dismisses the idea that he has a "gift" and rejects Michael's request. It is clear that Michael needs Rory, but it is not clear what Rory might gain from such a relationship. Rory holds all the cards at this stage and is in a position of power over Michael. This is not healthy and does not bode well for a good relationship, which should be based on equality and mutual respect.

(K) The first sign that Michael may have something to offer Rory comes when Annie refuses to gel Rory's hair into its rebellious spikes. Eileen has decided that it takes too much of the staff members' time to apply the gel each day, prompting Rory to call her "Delilah" after the woman in the biblical story who cut Sampson's hair and thus took away all his strength and power. Rory is furious with his flattened hairstyle and even Michael cannot contain his mirth at the ridiculous fringe and Rory's obvious rage. Rory asks Michael to help him, although he cannot bring himself to ask politely and still refers to Michael as "Mary". While Michael applies the gel, Rory begins to talk to him almost kindly, and advises Michael on the importance of dressing well.

The pair chat and it is obvious that they are growing closer. Rory is shocked at Michael's lack of knowledge about the outside world, but instead of mocking him cruelly for it, he shows sympathy. When he asks Michael what crime he committed to land himself in a place like Carrigmore, Michael's answer – "unarmed robbery" – amuses Rory greatly. He looks at Michael with newfound respect and although he still calls him "Mary" there is no malice in his voice now. Michael, for his part, is delighted at Rory's appreciation of his humour.

As the pair leave the bathroom, we see that Michael has listened to Rory's advice and has gelled his own hair too. Rory's influence over him has begun.

(K) The growing closeness between Rory and Michael is shown on visitor's day. Rory introduces his father to Michael, although he doesn't give him his correct name, calling him "Hugh Grant" instead. The humour of this is totally lost on Rory's father, who seems to be a kind, if ineffective man. Mr. O'Shea would like Rory to move home, but Rory realises that his father is not capable of looking after himself, let alone a disabled son.

Michael has no visitor, and Rory asks him about his family. He is moved by Michael's story and angered on his behalf when he hears that his father abandoned him when his mother died. We see that the pair have something else in common now: neither has a stable family background.

(K) Rory and Michael's growing interdependence is reinforced when the pair abscond from the flag day collection and go to the pub. Rory has decided to show Michael a little bit about the ways of the world, and boasts of his experience with girls. For all his bravado, Rory is not able to get himself and Michael into the night club, and it falls on Michael to save the day with some impressive legalese. Rory translates Michael's words for the increasingly baffled bouncer, and the pair are admitted, albeit grudgingly. Rory is thrilled, and praises Michael, calling him a "legal genius". Bit by bit, Rory is realising that Michael is indeed "worth the effort" it takes to get to know him.

(K) The relationship between Rory and Michael and their dependence on one another are shown most clearly when Michael applies for the Independent Living Allowance. As I said in my notes on Theme, the coup-de-grace in this scene occurs when the panel expresses concern about Michael's decision not to use speech aids. Michael's reply, given by a delighted Rory, is that he will have no need for such aids as he will communicate via his live-in interpreter, Rory O'Shea.

Thanks to their ability to understand one another both verbally and emotionally, the two young men can at last begin to lead independent lives.

- ◆ Is there a crisis or complication in the relationship? Does the central character have to make a difficult decision? Does the character do the right thing? How is this decision linked to the theme?

(K) Although Rory and Michael are delighted with their new home, all is not perfect. There are a number of issues which affect their relationship. Rory's desire to be independent makes him a little selfish and insensitive at times. When he is trying to persuade Siobhan to be their carer, he tells her that she will be working for him. Michael is affronted when he hears this. After all, he was the one who was granted the allowance and it was his father who paid for the flat. There is further tension when Siobhan and Michael refuse to allow Rory to play his music as loudly as he wants. Rory is furious at the mention of rules, as it reminds him of Eileen and the residential home. While we may sympathise with him, we also realise that Michael and Siobhan have a point too.

Rory reacts to the introduction of rules by acting as rebelliously as he can. He is arrested for joy riding and seems oblivious to the worry and distress his actions have caused Michael and Siobhan. When he finally arrives back at the house, Siobhan berates him for his thoughtlessness and stupidity, and Michael's silence speaks volumes. He clearly agrees with everything Siobhan says. The balance of power in the relationship between Rory and Michael is firmly in Michael's favour, and Rory feels isolated and angry. The scene in which Siobhan reproaches Rory for his behaviour is reminiscent of parents scolding an errant child who has come home late and is in serious trouble.

Siobhan is a real source of conflict now, and unwittingly threatens Rory and Michael's close relationship. Michael is so smitten by her that he is content to sit in and wait for her rather than go out with Rory. Rory is hurt and disappointed, and as he looks at Michael sitting passively, staring out the window, he remarks bitterly that he is turning the new home into Carrigmore.

Although they may not be living the dream that they imagined when they thought of having their own home, Rory and Michael still care for each other. Rory realises that Michael is heading for heartbreak and he tries to advise him against telling Siobhan about his feelings. He is protective of his friend, and even warns Siobhan on the night of the fancy dress party that she should watch out in case her behaviour was misinterpreted. Sure enough, Michael is devastated by Siobhan's rejection and nothing Rory can do stops him from telling her exactly how he feels about her. Rory is pained by Michael's distress, but cannot do anything about it.

(K) Siobhan's departure brings Rory and Michael together again. Distraught, Michael is prepared to go back to Carrigmore, but Rory catches up with him on the bridge and talks him out of it. The bridge symbolises the division between the old life of Carrigmore and the new life of independent living. Rory cannot let Michael cross that bridge and throw away everything they have achieved together. He abandons his usual jokey manner and speaks openly and honestly to Michael. (The significance of his words when he talks about Michael having a future is made clear to us all too soon when he is hospitalised.) As the rain pours down, echoing the mood of the scene, Rory tells Michael that it was "the pair of us" who failed. Rory has at last accepted responsibility for his actions and has matured enough to see that any relationship needs give and take and that he should be more considerate of others. His use of the expression "the pair of us" reminds us of the first time that phrase was used by Tommy in Carrigmore. They may have drifted apart, but Rory wants Michael to know that they are still a pair and that they still need one another. We believe that Rory wants what is best for Michael and that he is determined to help him to lead his own life. Rory genuinely cares for his friend in a way that the carers in Carrigmore never did. Appearances can be deceptive.

When Michael announces that he is going home, Rory checks that he means their flat and not Carrigmore. He calls it "our home" and in his relief, reverts to his usual jokey self and pretends to dictate a letter to Michael about the disgraceful lack of suicide opportunities for the disabled. He ends the fake letter with both their names, again linking them firmly and showing that they are united once more.

◆ Does the relationship end well?

(K) The happiness does not last, however. Rory becomes ill and his manner becomes surly and unfriendly once again. Michael is getting on very well with Peter, the new carer, and Rory is distanced from them. Rory has helped Michael to become independent, but of course that means Michael does not need to depend on him as much any more now.

Rory is hospitalised with pneumonia and we quickly learn that his condition is extremely serious. The doctor tells Michael that Rory is dying, and that he would have been expecting this to happen. For the first time, we understand Rory's anger and his desperation to live life to the full. Of course he was driven to near despair by the Independent Living Board's decision to review his case in six months. At the time, his reaction seemed unreasonable, but now we know that he knew he may be dead by the time he finally got a home. His references to Michael having the "gift" of the future makes sense too, as does his determination to push his friend to make the most of every day of his life.

Rory's affection for Michael is shown when the pair speak in the hospital, as is Michael's love for his friend. When Michael tells Rory that he needs him, Rory corrects him and says Michael doesn't need anybody. He is his own man now. From the first time Rory gave Michael the advice about hair and clothes, he has been guiding and helping his friend along the path to the life he now leads. Michael, for his part, points to his heart and says, "Rory O'Shea is here." Rory lightens the mood by asking if Michael has brought his stereo and when Michael says he hasn't, Rory says, "I never liked you." The camera shows the pair holding hands, and we know that Rory is not serious.

(K) The final testament to the changes wrought in Michael by his relationship with Rory is seen in the final scene. Michael, having said goodbye to Siobhan in a mature and friendly manner, hears Rory's voice in his head, urging him to go out and make the most of the day. Clearly, Michael was right when he said that Rory would live on in his heart. Smiling, Michael heads out into the sunny street. It is spring, and there are flowers everywhere. The season is a symbol of hope, growth and new life. These are the gifts Rory has given Michael and although he is gone, his legacy lives on.

Memorable Quotes

To the other patients in the home, who view his effervescent introduction of himself with apathy or disapproval.

Rory: So is it always this much fun here? Or is today somebody's birthday?

Boy: Are you a goblin?

Rory: No, I am not a fuckin' goblin!

[before leaving the Carrigmore institution]

Rory: If I've said or done anythin' earlier to offend ya' at any time, then... good!

Siobhan: Can I ask you something? Were you born like this?

Rory: Like what?

Siobhan: Dodgy hair and shit taste in music.

Rory: *[explaining why he can understand Michael's speech]* I spent six years in a class sitting next to a kid that makes you sound like Laurence Fucking Olivier.

Rory: *[on using the money from the charity collection tin at the pub]* It's funding for the needs of the disabled. I'm disabled and I need a drink.

Rory: *[at the foot of the steps to the flat which the estate agent is showing them]* There's a bit of a problem. Can you guess what it is?

[Police have just pulled Rory's car over. They realise he's disabled and are going to put him back in his chair]

Rory: Aren't you going to arrest me?

Garda Sergeant: No.

Rory: That's discrimination! Look, you're only doing that because I'm disabled. It's me civil right to be arrested!

Siobhan: Michael, I made a mistake. I thought I could do this but... I'm leavin'.
[*Michael begs her not to go*]

Rory: Michael, don't beg, it's undignified... Michael, parakeets don't mate with armadillos, that's the end of it!

Siobhan: That's a filthy bloody thing to tell him!

Rory: Is it? It's the truth!

Siobhan: Oh, it's the truth you want, is it? Okay, here's some. If you want to be equal, then you have to show people the SAME respect that you demand of them! In the real world, if you INSULT some guy in a pub, you EXPECT to get hammered! If you come home in the middle of the night, you don't EXPECT to find the help waiting in and if a woman says no to you, you accept that maybe you're NOT the right man for her. You don't ASSUME you have an automatic right to love because you're in a wheelchair!

Rory: Siobhan... You said you were goin'. I think you should go... Fuck off! I mean it!

Siobhan: You know what your disability is? You're an asshole!

Michael Connolly: Have you ever had a girlfriend?

Rory: Well, I've had more girlfriends than you've had speech therapy sessions, so...

Rory: [*after Siobhan tells Rory there should be rules*] It's not your job to make rules. Your job's to do exactly what we tell you to do! I do the interpreting. You do the cleaning, making the tea, cleaning up after us. You're our servant, Siobhan. Our skivvy. Our slave...

Siobhan: Are you going to shut up, or am I going to have to make you?

Rory: I'd like to see you try!

Siobhan: [*she covers his mouth*] Just remember, you're a servant too... Mister Interpreter...

Michael Connolly: [*Siobhan is interpreting Michael's words*] When I first met Rory I thought he was trouble. And I was right. He is trouble. Yet because he is seen as a rebel, you believe he hasn't the responsibility to live independently. But how do you learn to be responsible? You live in the world. You make your own decisions. You make your own mistakes. So if this panel can offer independent living to someone like me who until recently had no concept of what that meant, and refuse someone whose very life is an embodiment of independence, then I believe that the panel showed a prejudice.

Rory: [*looking at Michael*] You have the future, Michael. That's what I call a gift.

Rory: Rory O'Shea was here.

Michael Connolly: Rory O'Shea is here.

[*Michael points to his own heart*]

[*Rory has just arrived at Carrigmore and is introducing himself*]

Rory: Rory O'Shea. Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. Besides the full vocal range, I have the use of two fingers of my right hand, sufficient for self-propulsion and self-abuse. You can shake me hand or kiss me arse - but don't expect me to reciprocate.

[*after Siobhan has handed in her notice as their carer*]

Rory: Take a letter, Michael. To Dublin City Council. "Dear Sir or Madam. As wheelchair users with suicidal intentions, I must protest at a lack of facilities. None of the bridges are equipped with easy parapet access, thus curtailing the rights of the disabled to throw themselves in. Yours in disgust, Rory Gerard O'Shea and Michael Connolly."

Interview Panelist: What was your purpose in coming here today?

Michael Connolly: A right must exist independently of its exercise.

Source: www.imdb.com – *The Internet Movie Database*

Film Language

Art Director: The designer in charge of sets and costumes.

Camera Position: The position from which a camera is pointed at the subject.

High Angle Shot: The camera points down towards the character, making the subject look vulnerable.

Low Angle Shot: This shot is taken from below with the camera pointing up towards the character, making him/her look bigger and more powerful.

Aerial Shot: A shot taken from a plane, crane or helicopter.

Close-Up: When the camera is very close to a subject to show more detail or the expression on a character's face.

Point-of-View Shot: A shot that shows the action from a character's point of view.

Panning Shot: The camera moves from left to right.

Tracking Shot: Any shot in which the camera moves from one point to another, sideways or in or out.

Zoom: The lens of the camera is adjusted so that the subject is brought much closer to camera.

Director: The director organises the efforts of all the artistic/technical people involved in the production and gives the finished film its shape, tone and visual signature.

Flashback: A scene or a sequence that is inserted into a scene in present time and deals with the past.

Genre: A particular narrative form or type of film. There are several recognisable film genres including the Western, Detective Story, Romantic Comedy, Documentary, Horror, Musical.

Lighting: The process and technology of illuminating sets and action in the shooting of a film.

Montage: A short sequence of rapidly cut or dissolved shots that tell a story economically, or show the passage of hours, days, months or years.

Narrative/Plot: The story

Scene: A series of shots or a single shot that takes place in a single location and deals with a single action.

Score: The music for a film.

Sequence: A series of scenes that make up a complete section of the film's story.

Slow-Motion: This effect is achieved by filming action at speeds faster than the normal 24 frames per second, and then projecting them at normal speed. Slow-motion has been described as a 'close-up in time' as it nearly always has the effect of making the scene seem more lyrical.

Voiceover: Spoken description or analysis of action on the soundtrack of the film.

Guidelines for Answering Exam Questions

This section is worth 70 marks and should take you around an hour to complete. You will be asked to answer **one** question, A or B.

The questions are generally divided into two parts, (a) and (b) which are worth 30 and 40 marks respectively. This is not written in stone, however, so check before you begin your answer.

You may be asked, in part of a question, to answer on one of your texts separately.

Points to note:

- When you read the question, underline the key words, 'one of the texts', 'key moment', 'describe', 'explain' etc.
- Plan your answer. It is well worth taking the time to do this.
- Think in terms of key moments; this will ensure that you refer to the text and will help you to keep the sequence of events in the right order.
- When you are planning your answer, try to think of approximately *five* key moments which illustrate the mode you have chosen.
- In your introductory paragraph, name the *text*, the *author* and the *mode* you have chosen.
- You must *compare* your texts and answer *on the mode* you have chosen.
- Do not, under any circumstances, simply summarise the plot.
- When you are comparing texts, do not write a separate paragraph for each text. Instead, you must constantly compare one with the other.
- Use a selection of the link words and phrases below when comparing texts. The examiner will be looking for them.

Link words and phrases:

Likewise

Similarly

Also

In the same way

In the same manner

Just as

Both texts/characters

Each text

Conversely

On the contrary

Whereas

Differs from

However

In contrast

This is different to

While

Comparing the texts

The examiners' reports show that the two most common faults in the comparative study section of Paper 11 are:

1. Students simply summarising the plot.
2. Students treating each text separately and not comparing them.

Listed below are some sentence structures you could use when linking texts. In these sentences, T1 and T2 refer to the texts, C1 and C2 refer to the characters and A1 and A2 refer to the authors.

- We can see in both T1 and T2 that.....
- Like C1, C2 resists the pressure to conform.....
- I feel that there are many similarities between C1 and C2.
- Unlike C1, C2.....
- The same theme is handled completely differently in T2....
- A1 uses humour while A2 treats the theme more seriously....
- Both characters have to deal with....but C1 handles it very differently to C2....
- In both T1 and T2, the characters face a crisis.....but the outcome is very different.....

It cannot be stressed enough that simply retelling the story will not get you marks. The examiner knows the plot and it is assumed you do too. Avoid falling into the trap of simply describing the social setting, for example, without saying what effect it has on the characters' lives.

In order to get high marks, you need to:

1. Answer the question asked (30%)
2. Make sure every paragraph develops that answer (30%),
3. Use varied and appropriate language (30%)
4. Keep an eye on your spelling and grammar (10%). Think about the first two points when you are planning your answer.

Past Exam Questions

2010

B THEME

Before beginning your answer to either of the two questions on THEME, you should

- name the texts studied for your comparative course**
 - name a theme that you are going to discuss.**

1. (a) As part of your comparative course you have studied the **same theme** in three different texts. With reference to **one** of these texts, explain what you learned about this theme. Support your answer with reference to your chosen text. (30)

(b) Do you think that studying the same theme in two or more texts helped you to get a better understanding of that theme? Explain your answer with reference to the texts you have studied. (40)

OR

2. (a) i) Choose a key moment in one of the texts you have studied in your comparative course and describe how it reveals a significant theme in this text. (15)

ii) Choose a key moment from a second text you have studied in your comparative course and describe how that key moment reveals the same theme in this text. (15)

(b) Compare the similarities and differences between the two key moments described above to show how looking at more than one text can help us to better understand a theme. (40)

2009

A SOCIAL SETTING

1. (a) Write a paragraph in which you outline what you liked (**or** disliked) about the social setting in **one** text from your comparative course. (30)
- (b) Compare the social setting in the text you have described in part (a) above with the social setting in another text you have studied. (40)

OR

2. Imagine that you, as a reader, could visit the world or social setting of the comparative texts you have studied.
- (a) Describe what you found interesting about the social setting in **one** text. (30)
- (b) Explain how the social setting in the second text is more (**or** less) interesting than the one already described in (a) above. (40)

B THEME

Before beginning your answer to either of the two questions on THEME, you should name a theme that you are going to discuss.

1. You have been asked to talk to your class about the theme of the comparative texts you have studied.
- (a) Describe **one** key moment in the text where the theme is clearly evident. (30)
- (b) Compare the moment described in (a) above with a moment in another text where **the same theme** is also clearly shown. (40)

OR

2. (a) Choose a theme from **one** of the texts on your comparative course and say why it did (**or** did not) make the text entertaining. (30)
- (b) Choose the **same theme** from another text and say why it made that text more (**or** less) entertaining than the one discussed in (a) above. (40)

2008

THE COMPARATIVE STUDY (70 MARKS)

Candidates must answer **ONE** question from **either A – Relationships, or B – Social Setting**.

In your answer you may not use the text you have answered on in **SECTION I – The Single Text**.

N.B. The questions use the word **text** to refer to all the different kinds of texts available for study on this course, i.e. novel, play, short story, autobiography, biography, travel writing, and film. The questions use the word **author** to refer to novelists, playwrights, writers in all genres, and film-directors.

A RELATIONSHIPS

1. (a) “Relationships can be very complicated.”

Describe a relationship which you have studied in one of the texts on your comparative course, and explain why you found it to be complicated. (30)

(b) Choose a relationship from another text on your comparative course and explain why you found this relationship more **or** less complicated than the one you described in (a).

Remember to refer to both relationships in the course of your answer. (40)

OR

2. (a) Briefly describe a relationship from each of **two** of the three texts you have studied on your comparative course. (30)

(b) Explain why you think one of the relationships you described in (a) is more successful than the other.

Remember to refer to both relationships in the course of your answer. (40)

B SOCIAL SETTING

1. (a) “A person is often greatly influenced by his or her social setting.”

Show how the social setting greatly influences a character in one of the texts on your comparative study. (30)

(b) From one of the other texts studied on your comparative course, choose a character and show how, in your opinion, this character is influenced to a greater or lesser degree by his/her social setting than the one dealt with in (a) above.

Remember to refer to both social settings in the course of your answer. (40)

OR

2. (a) Briefly describe the social setting of **two** of the three texts you have studied on your comparative course. (30)

(b) Write a piece in which you compare and/or contrast the two social settings described in (a) explaining why you found one social setting more appealing than the other.

Remember to refer to both social settings in the course of your answer. (40)

2007

B THEME

Before beginning your answer to either of the two questions on THEME, you should

- name the texts studied for your comparative course and
- name a theme that you are going to discuss.

1. (a) Describe how your chosen theme is presented in **one** of the texts. (30)
- (b) Compare the way in which the same theme is presented in a second text with the way it has been presented in the text in (a) above. To begin your answer use one of the following statements:
- *“I thought the theme in my first text was more powerful/less powerful than the theme in my second text because...”*
 - *“I enjoyed the theme of one text more than the other because...”*
- (40)

OR

2. (a) Write a piece in which you attempt to persuade a reader that a theme is presented in a more interesting way in one text rather than in another. Support your views with reference to the two texts chosen. (30)
- (b) Select one moment from each of **two** texts that you have studied that appeals to you in a special way. Say how, in your opinion, these moments have helped you to understand the theme involved. Explain your answer with references to your chosen texts. (40)

B SOCIAL SETTING

1. (a) Name the text from your comparative course which describes a world that you would either like to visit **or** avoid. the features of that world explaining why you find it either attractive or not. (30)
- (b) Compare the world that you have just described with the world from another text you have studied on your comparative course. Explain what it is about this second world that you find **either more or less** attractive than the one already described in (a). Refer to each text to support the points you are making. (40)

OR

2. (a) “A key moment in a text can tell us how a social setting can influence a character in a text.” Describe a key moment from **one** of the texts you studied on your comparative course that tells how a character was influenced by the social setting at an important time. (30)
- (b) Describe a key moment from another one of the texts on your comparative course and show how the social setting influenced a character in the same or in a different way to the one you have already described in (a) above. Refer to each text to support the points you make. (40)

2006

THE COMPARATIVE STUDY (70 MARKS)

B SOCIAL SETTING

1. (a) Name the text from your comparative course which describes a world that you would either like to visit **or** avoid.
Describe the features of that world explaining why you find it either attractive or not. (30)
- (b) Compare the world that you have just described with the world from another text you have studied on your comparative course. Explain what it is about this second world that you find **either more or less** attractive than the one already described in (a).
Refer to each text to support the points you are making. (40)

OR

2. (a) “A key moment in a text can tell us how a social setting can influence a character in a text.”
Describe a key moment from **one** of the texts you studied on your comparative course that tells how a character was influenced by the social setting at an important time. (30)
- (b) Describe a key moment from another one of the texts on your comparative course and show how the social setting influenced a character in the same or in a different way to the one you have already described in (a) above.
Refer to each text to support the points you make. (40)

2005

A RELATIONSHIPS

1. (a) Name a text that you have studied for your comparative course. Give a brief description of **one** relationship in the text, that you feel is interesting. (30)
- (b) Compare the relationship that you have already described in part (a) above with a relationship from another text. Refer to each text to support the points that you are making. (40)

OR

2. (a) “Relationships can fail as well as succeed.”
From one of the texts that you studied for your comparative course, describe a relationship that, in your view, was either a success or a failure. Explain your answer. (30)
- (b) Compare a relationship from a second text you have studied in your comparative course with the relationship you have chosen in (a) above. In the course of your answer, you must deal with **both** relationships.
Support your answer by references to the texts. (40)

B SOCIAL SETTING

1. (a) “The places we read about in texts can be places that we ourselves would like to live in or not like to live in.”
Describe the social setting in one of the texts in your comparative course and show how it appeals or does not appeal to you. (30)
- (b) Compare the social setting in a second text from your comparative course with the social setting in the text you chose for your answer to part (a) above. Refer to each text to support the points you are making. (40)

OR

2. (a) “A character in any text can be made happy or unhappy by his or her social setting.”
Name one text you have studied for your comparative course and describe how the social setting caused one character to be happy or unhappy. (30)
- (b) Compare the social setting in a different text from your comparative course with the social setting of the text you have used in part (a) above. Refer to each text to support the points you are making. (40)

2004

B THEME

1. (a) Name a theme that you found in the texts that you studied for your comparative course. Choose one text and show how the theme plays an important part in the story. (30)
- (b) Compare the way in which **the same theme** plays an important part in the story of another text that you studied. (40)

OR

2. (a) *Discovering an important theme in a text makes studying the text more interesting..*
Describe what you find interesting about a theme in one text you studied. (30)
- (b) *Discovering **the same theme** in another text on your comparative course, can see interesting comparisons between the two texts..*
Describe some interesting comparisons you found when you discovered **the same theme** in another text. (40)

2003

A THEME

1. (a) Name a theme that was explored in a text you studied for your comparative course and show how important it was in the life of one of the characters from the text. (30)
- (b) Compare the way in which the **same theme** was important in the life of a character from another text on your comparative course. (40)

OR

2. Write down the theme that was common to two of the texts you have studied for your comparative course and then complete the following statements, (a) and (b).
 - (a) “*The theme was clearest to me in the first text when...*” (30)
 - (b) “*You could clearly see the same theme in the second text when...*” (40)