

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 2012 are:

Relationships

Theme

Hero/Heroine/Villain (We are looking at Villain)

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 friendship.

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 text?
- 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.

"Inside I'm Dancing" – Theme of Friendship

- How is the friendship 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 friendship 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 friendship 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 friendship. 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 friendship, 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 young men leave the bathroom, we see that Michael has listened to Rory's advice and has put gel on his own hair too. Rory's influence over him has begun.

(K) The growing closeness between Rory and Michael is shown on visitors' 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 Rory and Michael have something else in common now: neither has a stable family background.

(K) Rory and Michael's growing interdependence is reinforced when they 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 friendship between Rory and Michael and their dependence on one another are shown most clearly when Michael applies for the Independent Living Allowance. 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 friendship? 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 friendship. 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 friendship 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 friendship. 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 friendship 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 friendship 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 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 they 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 friendship 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 arsehole!

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.

