

Table of Past Questions on Studied Fiction

This table may help you to get an idea of the types of questions asked in previous Junior Certificate examinations.

Topics	'12	'11	'10	'09	'08	'07	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	'01
Character study (especially <u>change</u>)	X					X	X	X				X
Relevance of themes to you and peers	X											
Moving moment/mood/atmosphere		X								X		
Style		X			X							
Setting		X					X					
Surprise/unexpected development			X						X			
Review/recommendation			X			X				X		
Theme				X								
Favourite section/opening/ending				X				X				
Relationships					X						X	
Good versus evil/conflict									X		X	
Structure of story												X

Note:

- You are always asked to give the name of the novel or story and the name of the author.
- You cannot use the unseen extract as your studied fiction. However, examiners are well aware of the novels and stories frequently chosen for study in the Junior Cert, so are unlikely to choose one of those as an unseen extract.
- Always check the marks allotted to each part of each question. These can vary from year to year.

Sample Answers

Sample answer 1: 2010 examination– based on *To Kill A Mockingbird*

From a novel or short story you have read describe a character that impressed you, and explain why this character did so. (30)

Plan:

1. Intro: S is outspoken etc. but becomes mature
2. Impulsive, means well. Walter C incident.
3. Intelligent and well-read.
4. Intelligence and sense of fairness = becoming less judgemental.
5. Changing attitude towards Boo Radley shows how much S has changed.
6. Learns that outspoken honesty is not always wisest policy. Mature.
7. Has developed into mature person who is well-equipped to face future challenges.

The novel I have studied is Harper Lee's 'To Kill A Mockingbird', set in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama, during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The character who impressed me the most was the young narrator, Scout Finch. Scout is a remarkable and unusual girl who develops over the course of the novel from a rebellious, outspoken child to a far more mature and wise youngster.


This is your thesis statement, and will be referred to again in the conclusion.

It is best to approach your points in chronological order.

From the beginning of the book, Scout captures our attention. Unlike the other prim and proper girls in Maycomb, Scout is a tomboy who is far from perfect and often resorts to fighting to solve her problems. Her temper gets the better of her at times, and she is very impulsive and outspoken. However, she always acts with the best of intentions. When her teacher, Miss Caroline, tries to lend lunch money to Walter Cunningham, Scout takes it upon herself to explain to the teacher that he will not accept it as the Cunninghams never borrow anything they cannot pay back. Scout's well-meaning effort to spare both Walter Cunningham and her teacher embarrassment backfire when she is punished for


speaking out, but I admired her forthright manner in tackling the problem in the best way she could.

Link sentences
make your answer
flow well.



Another aspect of Scout's character that impressed me was her intelligence. She can read and write before she goes to school, even though she does not remember being taught to do so. For her age, Scout has an astonishing knowledge of the law and current affairs as a result of reading her father's books and papers every evening while she sat in his lap. She values this knowledge greatly, and is disturbed by her teacher's insistence that she stop reading and writing until she can be properly taught. That such a young child should set such store by learning is truly admirable.

Although she can be insensitive, for example when she asks Walter Cunningham why he is pouring syrup on his dinner or when she challenges Dill's lies about his 'father', Scout's desire to learn and her innate sense of fairness enable her to become, in time, less judgemental and more tolerant of others. She sees, for example, that Mayella Ewell is a lonely, poor, ignorant girl whose longing for affection sparks off a tragic sequence of events leading to the rape trial and Tom Robinson's death. She also sees for herself that there are many people in Maycomb who are unwilling to rise above their prejudices and will sentence a man like Tom Robinson to death for having the audacity to try to be kind to a white girl for whom he feels pity. I found it impressive that Scout did not allow such difficult lessons to make her cynical or hard, but instead she maintains her sense of justice and her conscience throughout.



Make sure you keep
referring back to the
question.


Scout's progression from a quick-tempered little girl to a wiser young woman capable of making rational and thoughtful decisions is most clearly seen in her attitude towards her neighbour, Boo Radley. At the start of the novel, Scout believes all the rumours about Boo, and does not question that he is a 'malevolent phantom' who is responsible for any 'stealthy crimes committed in Maycomb'. It is when Boo comes to Scout and Jem's aid and saves them from

Bob Ewell that Scout finally sees him for what he is: a shy, fragile and timid man unable to function in the world outside his home. What impressed me most about Scout's meeting Boo for the first time was the way in which she is able to see things from his perspective and realises how nervous he is in company. She treats him with gentle respect and does her best to make him comfortable.

An honest girl, Scout nevertheless appreciates the need to shelter Boo from public attention, and therefore readily accepts the sheriff's suggestion that the official story will be that Bob Ewell fell on his knife. This is a huge step forward for Scout and shows how much she has grown up in a few short years. The little girl who couldn't stop herself from pointing out Walter Cunningham's poor table manners has now become capable of realising that sometimes it is better to say nothing or tell a lie to protect the innocent. As she says to Atticus, drawing attention to Boo would be 'sort of like shootin' a mockingbird'. I found Scout's maturity in dealing with this situation commendable.

By the end of the novel, Scout's perspective on life has changed from that of an innocent child to that of a girl more than ready to take her place in a world with a capacity for great goodness as well as great evil. She has developed into a person whose sympathy and understanding will, I believe, equip her to face future challenges ethically and kindly. All in all, Scout Finch is certainly one of the most impressive characters I have come across in my reading.

Conclusion should refer back to points made in the introduction.



Sample answer 2: 2009 examination– based on *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.

Select a novel or short story you have studied which has an interesting theme.

- (i) Outline the theme of the text you have chosen. (15)
(ii) As the theme develops why does it interest you? (15)

Support your answer with reference to your chosen novel or short story.

- (i) Outline the theme of the text you have chosen. (15)

*The novel I have studied is Mildred D. Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. The setting is Mississippi during the Great Depression of the 1930s and the story is narrated by Cassie Logan, a nine year old black girl living on her family's farm. The theme which I find particularly interesting in this text is that of racial discrimination.*


The theme is introduced early in the novel when Cassie and her siblings are walking to school.

They have to walk as, unlike the white children, those who attend the all-black school do not have a bus. As well as being discriminated against in this way, the black children also have

a shorter school year so they can work on the farms, and many of them do not complete their education because they must leave school and work to support their families. Even the books they use in class show how little black children's education is valued by the authorities. Books are passed down through a number of white children over time until they become so old and worn that they are not considered fit for white students. At that stage they are marked 'nigra' and passed on to the black schools.

As the novel progresses we learn that racial discrimination can have far more serious consequences than the unfair allocation of school books. A neighbour of the Logans, John Henry Berry is set on fire by white men because they believe that he flirted with a white woman. His agonising death goes unpunished, even though everyone knows that the white Wallace family are responsible.

The Logans boycott the Wallace's store as a protest against this violent act, but



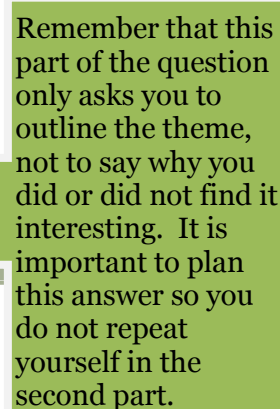
It is best to approach your points in chronological order. Think of the plot structure when you are planning your answer.

they in turn are threatened by the powerful white landowner, Harlan Granger, who says that all the white farmers will raise their rents on land farmed by black families if the boycott continues.

Tensions between the black and white communities run high, and Cassie has her own experience with prejudice when she is humiliated by Lillian Jean Simms and her father and forced to treat the white girl as a superior simply because of her colour. Although Cassie gets her revenge on the other girl, this is only a tiny victory.

The Wallace and the Simms families cause great trouble for their black neighbours. The Wallaces attack Cassie's father, leaving him injured and unable to farm his land. The Simms brothers lead the foolish and lonely black boy T.J. astray and make him the fall guy for their murder of a white shopkeeper.

All of this racial discrimination culminates in white vigilantes going to T.J.'s house with the intention of lynching him. In order to prevent this racially motivated murder, Cassie's father sets fire to his fields, causing all the locals, black and white, to rush to stop the spread of the fire. The two communities are brought together briefly, but T.J. still faces trial for murder. The best Cassie's father could do was to spare him a lynch mob. The novel ends on a sombre note and there is no sense that racial discrimination will cease, or even lessen.



Remember that this part of the question only asks you to outline the theme, not to say why you did or did not find it interesting. It is important to plan this answer so you do not repeat yourself in the second part.

ii) As the theme develops why does it interest you?

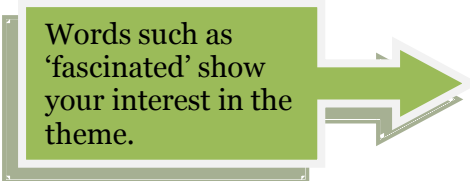
(15)

Support your answer with reference to your chosen novel or short story.

The development of the theme interested me at every stage of the novel. The introduction of the theme is through a series of relatively minor events which affect Cassie and her friends but have little impact on the rest of the characters. As Cassie is a nine year old girl, it seems fitting that she should only focus on those things which directly affect her. Through incidents such as the white children's bus covering the black children with dust and mud or Little Man

refusing to accept a tattered old school book, we are gradually led into a world where racial prejudice and discrimination are rife.

As the story develops, the racial discrimination becomes more serious and, although Cassie's family try to protect the young girl from some of the worst horrors such as the burning of John Henry Berry by the night men, it is impossible to keep such stories from her. Thus we see that the evil that racial discrimination brings with it taints Cassie's childhood and drags her and the other children into the darker side of the adult world long before their time.

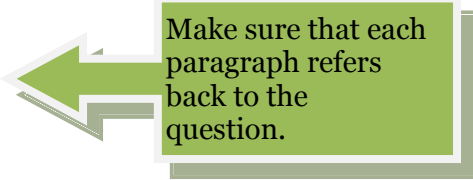


Words such as 'fascinated' show your interest in the theme.

I was fascinated and horrified by the way in which so many adults in the novel seem to accept racial injustice and the intimidation of black people as the norm. The white community in general supports the Wallaces, even though they know that they are violent criminals. Even Big Ma tells Cassie to apologise to Lillian Jean Simms in Strawberry, despite the fact that Cassie did nothing wrong. Having read the novel, I began to understand the helplessness that some black people must have felt in the face of overwhelming prejudice. After all, even the law of the land said that segregation was right and proper.

Cassie is an ideal narrator because as she encounters incidents of racial prejudice and has to have them explained to her by her family, we – the readers – learn too. I liked Cassie's spirit and her refusal to simply accept discrimination as a part of life. Yet, through her, I also learned how much people can suffer in their quest for justice and equality.

I think one of the most interesting, and also one of the saddest aspects of the development of the theme was the way in which the reader is not led to believe that there is any quick fix for the problem of racial prejudice. Although Cassie's father saves T.J from a lynch mob at the end of the novel, we learn that T.J. will be tried for murder and may even face the death penalty. There is no happy ending here, but I think that is appropriate. The issue of racial discrimination is still a major theme in the lives of the Logans and their neighbours, and their troubles are not yet over.



Make sure that each paragraph refers back to the question.

Books and Websites You May Find Useful

To Kill A Mockingbird

1. The 'Shortcuts to Success' book by Allyson Prizeman contains a plot summary, character analysis and lots of sample answers from past exam papers. It is a very useful study guide.
2. Spark Notes

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mocking/>

This site contains chapter-by-chapter summary and analysis, as well as analysis of the major characters.

3. Cliff Notes

<http://www.cliffsnotes.com>

This site also contains chapter-by-chapter summary and analysis, as well as analysis of the major characters.

4. Shmoop

<http://www.shmoop.com>

Again, this site contains chapter-by-chapter summary and analysis, as well as a brief but interesting discussion of the major themes. (You are only given the first sentence of the discussion on each theme, so must click on each of them to get the full piece.)

Under the heading 'Analysis' there are some in-depth discussions on the writing style.

5. Grade Saver

<http://www.gradesaver.com>

This is similar to the Cliff Notes site.

Past Questions on Studied Fiction– 2001 to 2012

2012 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. From the short stories and novels you have studied, choose either a character you like OR a character you dislike. Identify one or more incidents from the text that particularly influenced your feelings towards this character and explain why your chosen incident(s) influenced you to either like or dislike him or her.

OR

2. Write the text of a talk that you would give to your class, in which you explore the relevance of a novel or a short story that you have studied to the lives of young people today. Support your answer with detailed reference to your studied text.

2011 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. (a) Identify a brief episode or moment from a short story or novel you have studied that you found particularly moving. Describe the effect this episode or moment had on you. (15)

(b) Explain how the author made the episode or moment so moving.

In your answer you may wish to refer to some of the following: the action in the story or novel, the characters, the author's use of language, imagery, symbolism etc. (15)

OR

2. From the short stories or novels you have studied, choose one in which the setting (time and place) is either similar to or different from the time and place in which you live.

(a) Give a detailed description of the setting of the short story or novel. (15)

(b) How is the setting of the short story or novel similar to or different from the time and place in which you live? In your answer refer closely to your studied text. (15)

2010 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. Novels and short stories often surprise the reader with an unexpected development.
(a) Briefly describe such a development in a novel or short story you have studied. (15)
(b) Did this development add to your enjoyment of the book? Explain your answer with reference to the novel or short story. (15)

OR

2. You have been asked to rate a novel or short story that you have studied according to the following scale:

***** Will change your life!

**** Highly recommended

*** A good read

** Average

* Disappointing

Choose the rating that you feel is appropriate. Explain your choice with reference to the novel or short story. In your answer you may wish to consider some of the following; plot, character, atmosphere, relevance to your age group, insights gained, language or any other aspect you feel is relevant. (30)

2009 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. Select a novel or short story you have studied which has an interesting theme.
(i) Outline the theme of the text you have chosen. (15)
(ii) As the theme develops why does it interest you? (15)
Support your answer with reference to your chosen novel or short story.

OR

2. Choose a favourite section from a novel or short story you have studied.
(i) Describe what happens in this section of your chosen text. (15)
(ii) Why is this your favourite section? Explain your answer with reference to the novel or short story you have chosen. (15)

2008 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. Select a novel **OR** short story you have studied which deals with a loving relationship or an unloving relationship.

(a) Describe how this relationship develops. (15)

(b) Choose one of the characters in this relationship and imagine yourself in his/her situation. How do you see the other character in the relationship? Write your ideas based on evidence from the text. (15)

OR

2. From a novel **OR** short story you have studied, choose some features of the writer's style which you found interesting. Explain your choices with reference to your chosen text.

(30)

2007 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. Select a novel or short story you have studied which you would recommend to your own age group and explain why you would recommend it. (30)

OR

2. From a novel or short story you have read describe a character that impressed you, and explain why this character did so. (30)

2006 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. Choose a novel **OR** short story that has a strong sense of place *or* setting.

(a) Describe this place *or* setting. (15)

(b) How is this place *or* setting important in the novel or short story you have chosen?

Support your answer with reference to the novel or short story. (15)

OR

2. From a novel **OR** short story you have studied, choose a character you would *either* like to be *or* not like to be.

Explain your choice of character with reference to your chosen text. (30)

2005 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

- 1. Choose either the opening **or** the ending of a novel **or** short story you have studied.
 - (a) Briefly describe what happens in the opening **or** the ending of your chosen text. (10)
 - (b) Did this opening **or** ending impress you? Explain your answer by reference to the novel **or** short story you have chosen. (20)

OR

- 2. From a novel **or** short story you have studied choose a character who experiences change.
 - (a) Describe this character at the beginning of the novel **or** short story. (10)
 - (b) How has this character changed by the end of the novel **or** short story? Support your answer by reference to the text. (20)

2004 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

- 1. Many novels or short stories show the conflict between good and evil. Name a novel or short story you have studied where there is a conflict between good and evil. Trace how the author presents this conflict. (30)

OR

- 2. Choose a novel or a short story you have studied which contains a strong element of surprise.
 - (a) Describe the setting of the novel or short story. (10)
 - (b) Describe the events leading up to the surprise in this novel or short story. (10)
 - (c) How did the surprise in the novel or short story affect one or more of the characters? (10)

2003 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. You have been asked to recommend for an award a novel or short story which you have studied.

Write to the panel of judges recommending your chosen novel or short story. (30)

Some of the following prompts may help you in structuring your answer.

- Story and plot outline (brief).
- Interesting content/theme.
- Characterisation.
- Opening/Ending.
- Words and images.
- Style of writing etc.

OR

2. Choose a novel or short story you have studied where a particular mood or atmosphere is created.

(a) Describe the mood or atmosphere. (15)

(b) How does the writer create this mood or atmosphere?

Support your answer by reference or quotation. (15)

2002 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. Select a novel **or** short story you have studied that deals with conflict or difficulties.

Explain-

- How this conflict or these difficulties arose
- To what extent the conflict or difficulty was resolved.

Support your answer by reference to the novel **or** short story.

OR

2. From a novel you have studied choose a character who made a significant impact on another person's life.

- Outline this character's influence supporting your answer by reference to the novel.
- Would you have liked to encounter this person in your own life? Give reasons for your answer.

2001 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. 'A good novel or short story holds your attention from beginning to end.'

To what extent is this statement true of any novel **or** short story studied by you? You may wish to refer to the story-line, the characters, the style of writing, the author's holding back information until late in the novel or short story, etc.

2. Basing your answer on a novel studied by you would you say the principal character was –

- Strong
- Weak
- A mixture of strength and weakness?

Support the points you make by detailed relevant reference to the novel.
