



Comparative Modes
Leaving Cert 2014



An explanation of the Comparative Modes 2014

There are three modes on the Leaving Cert course for 2014

- Cultural Context
- Theme or Issue
- General Vision and Viewpoint

Cultural Context- What does this mean?

Cultural Context looks at how characters behave, live and interact because of the world of their text. You must consider when and where each text is set. The time and location of a text will have a huge bearing on the decisions, behaviour, reactions, opportunities and treatment of other characters.

When I am addressing the cultural context of a text with my students, I always get them to address the following headings as these areas will reveal the cultural context of each text.

- ✓ Social Class – Are there Authority figures who maintain the social class boundaries? How the characters opportunities are determined by social class? Wealth or poverty? Power?
- ✓ The role of men and woman – Are their roles stereotypical? Have any characters broken the stereotype? Family life?
- ✓ The role of religion – How does religion influence the characters behaviour? Is religion at odds with their behaviour? Is religion less prevalent? Do characters have a moral compass?
- ✓ The role of politics or war – How has government influenced people's lives and opportunities in the text?

(There are other aspects that may be particularly relevant to your texts, make sure that you address these too)

A part of a sample answer on cultural context would outline your understanding of it and identify the headings you plan to analyse further in your answer. For example:

Cultural context refers to the world of the text, when and where it is set and how the characters react, behave and live within the cultural context of their worlds.

The role of men and women, social class, politics and religion are important areas where the cultural context is revealed and which allow us to determine how similar or different their worlds are.

The texts I have studied for my comparative course are the novels "How Many Miles to Babylon" by Jennifer Johnston revealing an Ireland on the cusp of change, the Anglo-Irish culture at the beginning of World War One just before Ireland's Rising, the play "Sive" by John B. Keane set in the parochial poverty stricken mindset of rural Ireland in the 1930s and finally the film "I'm not Scared" which takes place in rural Southern Italy during the politically and financially turbulent difficulties between the wealthy North of Italy and it's much poorer Southern region in the 1970's.

This means that your paragraphs (The role of men and women, social class, politics and religion) and how you plan to compare the texts is outlined in your introduction and you now have a plan for each of the remaining paragraphs in your answer!

Theme or Issue

This is very self explanatory; you must discuss a common theme or issue that is evident in each of the texts.

When considering the theme of a text, look at the following areas

1. Trace how the theme develops in each of the texts. Is the outcome different or similar in any of the texts?
2. How is the theme part of the lives of the characters, does it present in similar or different ways. Why?

There are many themes in each text, your theme will analyse the one you found relevant to all three. However, it is the wording of the question that will be essential when discussing the theme in your answer. For example, if the question asks for you to “*Discuss an important/ essential/ interesting theme*”, then your introduction will address the theme as being *important/ essential or interesting* and your answer will analyse why the theme is so.

General Vision and Viewpoint

This refers to what vision of the world is being portrayed by the author/ director or playwright...and also how **you** see the world they have described. The view of the world of a text can change as the text develops. You can have one viewpoint at the beginning but have a totally different one by the end.

If you think about General Vision and Viewpoint, authors, playwrights and directors all have an opinion about the world they want to present. The author might have a romantic/ pessimistic/ dark/ optimistic view of the world of their text, and so this is what they want to communicate to the reader. You also need to think about how they have managed to portray this vision or viewpoint. They may have used camera angles, characters, relationships or stage directions.

When determining the General Vision and Viewpoint of a text I always get my students to consider the following questions:

1. What is the General Vision and Viewpoint being portrayed by the author at the beginning. Does it change? Is it negative, positive, optimistic, pessimistic?
2. What General Vision and Viewpoint do you have of the text. Do you share the authors?
3. How does the author create the General Vision and Viewpoint for a play? Think of stage directions, atmosphere, language, symbols, relationships, etc.
4. Compare the General Vision and Viewpoint at the beginning of the text and then at the end of the text. Trace this journey.

What features of the text contribute to the unique atmosphere of the General Vision and Viewpoint? Look at the stage directions of a play, the camera angles and sound track of a film, etc.