

# Leaving Cert Art History | Artist Summary

## Sample Answer

### Harry Clarke (1889–1931)

#### Background:

Harry Clarke was born in 1889 in Dublin. As the son of a craftsman, he worked with his brother in the family studio from a young age. At a time when medieval-style stained glass was enjoying a revival, Clarke was one of its greatest innovators. He was a member of *An Túr Gloinne*, a studio established by Sarah Purser, which raised the standard of stained glass design in Ireland. In 1914, Clarke won a scholarship that enabled him to study medieval glass in England and Paris. There he visited Chartres Cathedral and aspired to its greatness. The following year he was commissioned to create windows for the Honan Chapel in Cork, this work established his reputation and many other commissions. *An Túr Gloinne* – The Tower of Glass, was a studio set up in Dublin by artists and followed the same idealistic principles of the British Arts Crafts Movements. In 1910, he won the gold medal in the Board of Education National Competition for stained glass for his piece The Consecration of St. Mel, Bishop of Longford which now hangs in the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork. Clarke's illustration of Hans Christian Anderson's Fairy Tales was hailed as a masterpiece.

#### Style, Technique & Subject Matter:

There were a number of elements that set Clarke apart as a stained glass artist; his use of rich colours was unique, he mixed bright greens and rich reds with blues, purples and pinks to create sparkling contrasts. His absolute detail; he was known to fire a single piece of glass over and over again until he got the colour and quality just right. His skill as a draughtsman also set his stained glass apart, his beautifully-modelled, elongated figures in elaborately decorated settings were unusually detailed and expressive in such a precise and technical craft.