were often those which wove together the elements of argument from the body of the essay as a way of returning to the chosen statement. Weaker conclusions were focused on restatement or were solely text-focused.

Many answers were longer than needed, often because candidates offered all they knew on an aspect of their text, failing to filter and shape their evidence by reference to their statement of choice. In addition, some potentially strong candidates offered three (or more) examples of different contexts in which evidence for their argument could be found, but did not seek to develop their argument as a result. In other cases, discussion of the differences between multiple examples or of the relationships between multiple contexts provided an avenue through which to develop argument further.

Candidates are reminded of the statement in the assessment specification, “The quality of the candidate’s writing is more important than the length of their essay. Candidates should aim to write a concise essay of no more than five pages (or about 750 words) in length.”

Candidates must ensure they write in the appropriate answer booklet. NZQA may not transfer candidate responses from the written standard to the oral or visual standard, or vice versa.

Part B: Report on standards

91472: Respond critically to specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), supported by evidence

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- engaged with the statement in the introduction to some degree
- referred to elements of the statement at several points within the essay
- indicated in some way the extent to which they agreed with the statement
- remained largely focused on material from the text, providing little evidence of wider significance

- made simple links to modern society when discussing wider significance
- used sufficient textual evidence to support their argument
- wrote with variable focus on the argument, providing some irrelevant material.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- misinterpreted the statement or did not present a clear stance on the statement
- had a limited understanding of issues in their chosen text
- failed to provide relevant or clear evidence from their text
- addressed the statement in some paragraphs with a final sentence
- re-worked the statement in a way that ignored its intent
- presented a pre-learned answer which was tenuously connected to the statement
- chose a statement unsuitable for their text
- wrote essays with insufficient structure to display a relevant argument.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- selected a relevant statement which suited their text
- connecting relevant aspects of the text to human experience or society
- offered a cohesive argument by making connections between paragraphs
- displayed comprehensive knowledge of their text
- provided a relevant but unsophisticated analysis of ideas in the light of the statement
- engaged early with the statement and remained so
- presented material which was at times irrelevant to the statement
- used subject specific vocabulary with some confidence
- showed maturity in their discussion in sections of their essay.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- wrote a concise response that engaged with the statement throughout

- provided a personal understanding of the messages in their text
- provided evidence of an individual perspective
- presented insightful observations about the text
- critiqued a society or provided a wider-world link which they had experienced
- wove links to modern society seamlessly into their discussion
- linked fluent, well-constructed, often succinct paragraphs
- used articulate and appropriately sophisticated expression fluently
- concluded with observant statement-focused comments rather than repeating paragraph topics.

Standard specific comments

Overall, it was promising to see how well the texts were understood by the candidates. Many of them had obviously been encouraged to think critically about their studied texts and did so with originality and skill. Statement choice continues to be key. Some candidates focused on one keyword and ignored what the statement was really asking. Success depends on how the candidate has engaged with a text and shaped evidence of engagement into an appropriate response.

Texts and authors that worked well included *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Kite Runner*, "The Tell-Tale Heart", *The Things They Carried*, *The Reader*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Book Thief*, *The Bell Jar*, *The Road, Atonement;* Shakespeare, Mansfield, Baxter, Plath, Hughes, Duffy and Heaney. A number of texts offer insufficient depth for many candidates. Examples of these include "Lamb to the Slaughter" and many songs, such as "Pretty Hurts". Some bleak texts provided little opportunity for significant numbers of candidates to relate to them.

Writing concise, well-structured essays should continue to be a focus. When candidates write paragraphs which extend over a whole page, they generally struggle to provide a logical, focused argument. This can prevent potentially successful candidates from gaining higher grades.

91473: Respond critically to specified

aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- used their chosen statement as the basis for a straightforward argument
- provided some relevant evidence to support their argument
- offered some critical response
- attempted to link their ideas to a wider context
- had a good understanding of the text
- referred to some parts of their chosen statements more than to others
- used appropriately formed paragraphs
- included some material irrelevant to their argument such as copious technical details or plot.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- provided a pre-learned answer which did not fit their chosen statement or only just grazed the statement
- offered an essay which did not address their chosen statement
- misinterpreted the statement
- wrote using simplistic ideas
- used evidence which did not match the critical response being given
- wrote a very short essay
- recounted the plot of their chosen text without significant response to the statement.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- addressed most if not all parts of their chosen statement
- offered a developed understanding of elements of their chosen statement
- displayed a nuanced understanding of their text
- were aware of the director / creator’s purpose

- linked the film techniques discussed to their argument
- provided well-chosen, unpacked examples
- used a convincing level of detail
- displayed independent thought.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- provided insightful comments on the meaning of their chosen text(s)
- used well-selected details and were thorough in their approach
- took an original approach to their chosen statement
- discussed the meaning of their chosen statement in the context of their text
- wrote in fluent and sophisticated ways
- moved beyond formulaic essay structures
- provided a conclusion which returned to the statement.

Standard specific comments

In general, there was evidence of significant engagement with visual and oral texts by many candidates. A significant number of candidates provided material which suggested a coherent programme of teaching which went beyond cinematic techniques and into ideas, contexts and so on. Overall, candidates responded appropriately to the statements provided. However, some candidates provided a pre-learned theme-based essay which payed scant attention to the anchors provided in the statement. Others ignored key aspects of statements and provided plot-based information without a critical response.

A wide range of films were used by candidates in this examination. Immediate obvious relevance to candidates was not necessarily an indicator of a text with potential for success. Many candidates were successful when they were able to forge links between their world and that of the text. For instance, several candidates wrote on Hitchcock's *Psycho*, appreciating the potential of historical context combined with craft to illuminate gender in society. Similarly, complex modern texts such as *Pan's Labyrinth*, when approached through genre and social reference, were helpful to candidates. A few texts limited candidate achievement because of their simplicity, but these were few and far between.

A continuing focus is the need for candidates to pay attention to the construction of argument in relation to a given statement. Argument is best developed in

concise, focused paragraphs and supported by well-chosen details. Re-writing rehearsed essays or dumping information on a topic are approaches unlikely to produce success.

91474: Respond critically to significant aspects of unfamiliar written texts through close reading, supported by evidence

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- provided a literal analysis of how they understood the text in relation to the question
- summarised events in the text to demonstrate an understanding of both the text and the question
- started to critically respond to the question and identified two aspects in a structured piece of writing
- supported their assertions and connected an idea to each aspect
- used quotations with some explanation
- presented an imbalanced or uneven discussion of aspects within one answer, or an imbalanced response across the paper
- identified the author's position in relation to the idea specified, sometimes in a general way
- constructed answers around one or two small pieces of the text
- focused on identifying techniques rather than building a developed discussion
- wrote about techniques separately or provided undeveloped links
- wrote very structured and deliberate answers.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- identified insufficient aspects from a text, or none at all
- did not exemplify identified aspects
- chose irrelevant examples

- did not answer all questions
- did not demonstrate links between writing techniques, effect and authorial intent
- produced superficial and short answers
- quoted from the text to support their ideas, but did not identify language features being used
- only included a plot summary of the texts and described content without any critical analysis
- failed to understand the ideas in the texts or to develop ideas sufficiently
- did not relate their response to the question
- focused on real world / personal experiences, not on a critical analysis of the text through language features.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- identified two or more aspects of text that were relevant to the question
- provided a valid and convincing discussion of identified aspects with at least one example for each
- unpacked the discussion of the aspects and explored how the aspects were used to deliver ideas
- traced the development of aspects and/or ideas throughout the text
- balanced discussion of aspects within a question and across the paper
- began to integrate a synthesised discussion of the impact of two or more aspects
- were able to identify the writer’s purpose and make convincing judgements about why aspects were used
- used several relevant quotations and unpacked their meaning
- made relevant and valid links between ideas
- developed a sustained critical response with evidence and connections to relevant ideas linked to the resources supplied
- engaged with the text as a reader, sometimes going outside the text in a relevant way
- wrote fluently with a clear structure that wove examples into their response

- were more likely to have answered all three questions.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- identified correctly at least two aspects of written text with exemplification and evidence
- unpacked with depth how language supported the idea
- evaluated how the author created meaning
- used a wide range of terminology accurately and with confidence to produce detailed and insightful analysis
- made links between ideas consistently
- provided perceptive interpretations amply supported with woven evidence
- considered multiple interpretations of the author's perspective in relation to the question
- traced the development of an idea through the text
- provided a balanced discussion of aspects within a question and across the paper
- synthesised their understanding of the two texts to form a coherent and cohesive whole in a seamless way
- wrote fluently and with clarity, using sophisticated and nuanced vocabulary
- analysed structure and noted shifts in character and mood / tone
- demonstrated originality.

Standard specific comments

Many candidates found Questions One and Two straightforward, offering some insightful comments about the texts. Many struggled to offer the same insight and perception in response to the demands of the last question. Practice in synthesis and comparison will support candidates in their preparation. Synthesis is an important skill which perhaps deserves additional attention.

There was evidence of familiarity with language techniques and aspects in the work of many candidates. Others, however, demonstrated insufficient knowledge in this area. Candidates who were confident to select aspects not on the list given often did well. Specific examples are required for all questions; a balance between answers and between aspects within answers is desirable. Timing is a factor here. Sophisticated answers demonstrated an awareness of the

development of ideas through multiple aspects/language techniques within a text. Often, successful candidates embedded key question words in their answers.

English subject page

Previous years' reports

- 2017 (PDF, 60KB)
- 2016 (PDF, 249KB)

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