

## Assessment Report

# Level 1 English 2017

Standards [90849](#) [90850](#) [90851](#)

### Part A: Commentary

This commentary covers:

- the desire to see candidates think for themselves
- the nature of scaffolding in 90851
- “at least one”
- length of digital responses
- the nature of personal responses

The questions for the literature standards seek to find angles that encourage candidates to think independently, that is not just recreate a learned response. This year questions 1 and 7 proved slightly too difficult for many candidates. The level of sophistication expected was just a little beyond many. That does not mean that all candidates performed poorly, but those who wrote their prepared essay about ‘the ending’ without regard to the ‘predictable’ aspect or those who discussed an idea without establishing what their initial position was obviously did not fare as well as they might have. Each question must be thoroughly dissected before deciding on what best suits individual candidate’s needs.

In the Unfamiliar Texts questions, bullet points are sometimes used to guide or scaffold candidates into ways of thinking about the texts. These are meant to help but they should not be considered a check list that must be worked through. Indeed, such responses sometimes limit themselves unnecessarily.

Candidates are often asked to identify techniques, but this year they were asked for quotes in the poem because it was felt that candidates at this level might be too restricted in their poetic knowledge. This seems to have worked in favour of candidates so similar question formats may be created in the future.

The assessment schedule for Unfamiliar Texts has changed slightly over the years. It is not an overly prescriptive document because some candidates are capable of thinking outside the box and we are sometimes pleasantly surprised at the originality of responses.

If ‘at least one’ is stipulated in literary questions candidates may reference one or more texts. Candidates who write superficially about too many texts limit themselves. No one fails because they have attempted several examples but; candidates who try to cover too much inevitably penalise themselves.

An increasing number of schools and candidates availed themselves of the digital trial examination NZQA has offered. This examination is sat on an on-line platform, and is a practice for sitting the end of year digital pilot version instead of the traditional paper examination. Candidates are given the advice to write a concise essay. The examination paper suggests about 3 sides of hand written material is adequate. The digital versions advise that 550 words is sufficient. Some able candidates write more but

many Merit answers are often longer than the crisper Excellent equivalents. Volume does not equate with quality.

The nature of 'personal' response is important. Many candidates like to conclude their answers with a link to the outside world. Such responses are genuine and sincere, however these 'observations' are often very self-evident and unconvincing. Candidates often achieve if they make slightly more sophisticated comments about how their chosen text might link to the world at large.

Candidates are managing well with these recent changes in examination format and direction:

- the questions or statements are more specific and targeted
- a smaller range of questions or statements to respond to in the essay standards.
- wording of some questions varies from previous years
- guidance given to write concise essays.

Expected outcomes:

- fewer candidate responses are pre-learned or pre-prepared essays.
- candidates have better opportunities to choose the most suitable questions, and are rewarded with better grades.
- candidates respond well to different question formats for Unfamiliar Text
- more candidates write essays within or about the suggested length
- the published exemplars, especially for Merit and Excellence, continue to provide good examples of succinct and well organised essays.

## **Part B: Report on standards**

### **90849: Show understanding of specific aspect(s) of studied written text(s), using supporting evidence**

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- answered both parts of the topic
- addressed the second part of the topic briefly and often in the conclusion
- used some detail from the text
- had rote-learned responses and didn't adapt them very well
- wrote structured essays
- included supporting evidence from just one aspect of the text and was not always clearly linked to the question
- lacked well-understood and relevant 'real world' examples which did not develop the response, e.g. references to Donald Trump and North Korea.

Candidates who were assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- ignored the wording of the topic, despite sometimes showing a good understanding of the text.
- did not explore the 'whole of the text'
- provided very brief responses.
- depended on plot
- misinterpreted the topic
- did not answer both parts of the topic
- did not have a developed enough understanding of the text.

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

- engaged with the topic

- moved beyond explaining the text
- wrote convincingly detailed answers to all sections of the topic
- planned and organised answers well
- used clear, solid evidence in the form of quotes or details in support of comments
- provided a genuine personal response
- some spent too much time on making connections to the real world that weren't relevant to the question.

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

- discussed ideas and thoughts that were beyond the text
- Wrote on more complex texts
- understood the author/s purpose
- had a very good understanding of how writers deliberately crafted their texts
- addressed both parts of the question, usually evenly
- made authentic connections beyond the text
- Showed understanding of how the text is relevant to a contemporary audience
- wrote concise and cohesive essays that were well structured and engaged the reader
- wove clearly relevant detail and evidence throughout the essay – quotes were intelligently chosen
- wrote in a sophisticated manner with a lot of supporting detail
- wrote on texts that allowed them to reveal their understanding of societal issues.

### **Standard specific comments**

Text choices:

As expected, there were the standard Level 1 texts: *Of Mice and Men*, *Animal Farm*, *Lord of the Flies* and war poetry.

Some new and engaging texts are also being taught, such as *Unwind*, *Feed*, *The Diary of a Part-time Indian* and *The Adoration of Jenna Fox*.

While texts such as '*On the Sidewalk Bleeding*', *Trash* and *The Giver* tended to result in basic responses, this was not always the case and it is clear that able candidates can bring depth and insight to almost any text.

Poetry was very successful when candidates focused on technical analysis. It was less effective when candidates attempted questions on character. Selecting the best topic is key, as always.

Writing on two texts, on the whole, did not help candidates develop their response to the essay questions this year. Candidates who did this successfully incorporated both texts to build their argument – as opposed to 'another story that also had an interesting challenge is ...'

## **90850: Show understanding of specific aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), using supporting evidence**

Candidates who were assessed as **Achievement** commonly:

- answered the question accurately, though with a frequent bias toward the first part of the assessment. They frequently used only a couple of basic visual language features – usually dialogue, even though it was sometimes not specifically credited as such
- answered the question but tended to focus more on one part of the question

- used implied rather than explicit references to ‘shocking/surprised/predictable/comfortable’ etc. These answers were light on technical details and many that relied on quotes or references to camera angles etc were vague or not related to the question
- wrote a formulaic answer that mentioned aspects of the question but did not fully engage with those aspects
- lacked techniques in their discussion e.g. only referring to dialogue and no camera shots etc.
- provided responses that were superficial/literal
- relied on plot to boost their answer.

Candidates who were assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- did not address both parts of the question
- wrote a plot summary
- tried to use a prepared essay
- wrote a simplistic account of the text without showing any analysis of it in terms of film techniques
- misunderstood key words (e.g. friendship) and so wrote an essay that did not answer the question
- Some essays held up as literary essays and understanding of ideas was clearly evident but when no cinematic techniques are mentioned, such responses are doomed to fail.

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

- had depth and detail through examples and analysis and were better explained and illustrated than an Achieved pass
- understood the question, and made references to both parts. Such answers were generally explicit about using key words from the question and relied on several visual and oral techniques
- had an appreciation of the purpose of the text
- chose appropriate questions for their texts that allowed for depth in their discussion by developing points in (reasonably) convincing detail.

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

- made comments relating to the social implication of the text in the real world that were firmly related to the text under discussion
- wrote a structured essay with often an impressive introduction and conclusion demonstrating flair and confidence
- had depth and detail as for Merit but the quality of the analysis was more original, and clearly emanated from the candidate as opposed to just being well-taught
- wrote with flair and fluency at length, using more than 3 pages but not so long as to alienate the reader
- used higher level techniques e.g. mise en scene and layered techniques together
- cleverly interpreted the question, sometimes with a narrower focus but beautifully executed
- wrote a demanding introduction, which was original and had a degree of flair (many markers saw fit to comment on the strength of the introductions this year)
- showed perceptive understanding, relating ideas to society through a realistic, genuine reflection.

### **Standard specific comments**

Texts which solicited often superior responses were: The Truman Show, Slumdog Millionaire, Gattica, and Shindlers’ List, Pleasantville, Gallipoli, The Dark Knight, The Intouchables, Romeo and Juliet.

Texts which solicited solid responses were: Hidden Figures, The Help, Boy, Hunt for the Wilderpeople, The Blindside, V for Ventdetta.

Short films such as Lovefield, Two Cars One Night, Tama Tu, did not fare well as they did not allow for depth of discussion.

Also not faring well were music videos and television shows like The Simpsons.

Q1 was the least popular question. The losing scene was often well described, but predictable / unexpected element often not referred to.

Alternatively, candidates also wrote about the entire second half of the film.

Q7 seemed to attract the more able candidates, generating a high percentage of Excellences. The word 'perspective', however did seem to throw many candidates, who were unable to explain how 'theirs' had changed.

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## **90851: Show understanding of significant aspects of unfamiliar written text(s) through close reading, using supporting evidence**

Candidates who were assessed as **Achievement** commonly:

- identified a language feature and explained how it was used
- answered the question first and then endeavoured to use the bullet points
- provided an explanation without identifying a language feature or only focused on one particular language feature so they could not advance to merit
- responded to the question at a literal level
- did not label a language feature - embedded or implied understanding of language features
- understood how ONE language feature worked to achieve the writer's purpose
- provided some textual details either as a quote or paraphrase
- provided a basic description of the intended effect of the techniques selected
- showed implied understanding via relevant selection of details, but were not explicit enough about intended effect to be convincing
- referred to language features, more often than structural features
- showed an understanding of the text by rephrasing in own words
- focused on the key words of the question. They did not just write about the text generally, they targeted their response to what the question asked
- did not integrate their discussion of different language aspects.

Candidates who were assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- failed to provide a specific response. Would give generic comments which lacked evidence to substantiate their response
- alluded to features yet didn't actually state them. Alternatively, language features were acknowledged without any reference back to the text
- did not provide enough explanation
- only ticked the language feature and gave an example
- gave the term and example with no clarification of purpose
- wrote plot summary of the extract and just gave an opinion about the piece without any reference to language features
- did not provide any evidence to support their ideas
- did not understand or misinterpreted the text itself
- made generalisations. For example, 'created a picture in my head' or 'helped me understand the feelings of the writer' (but didn't specifically state what feelings).

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

- answered the question using two or more language features
- presented some explanation of how significant ideas worked together.
- made perceptive comments but not necessarily 'big picture' ones
- showed some insight into the theme or purpose

- showed some responsiveness and personal engagement with some beyond text discussion
- linked terms, and explained and developed ideas, often with an overall theme or purpose
- identified a range of techniques and their intended effect
- were not phased by vocabulary and made inferences
- began to comment on structural features of the texts
- used connectives effectively to link their ideas and show how the techniques worked together to produce effects
- worked methodically and logically through the texts
- used synonyms when explaining examples – did not repeat words from the example
- discussed texts from different perspectives of the characters in the texts
- looked to present their own opinion or point of view.

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

- chose the most effective techniques with which to answer the question rather than just default to their favourite techniques
- were responsive and genuinely engaged rather than giving vague generic responses
- were succinct about language features but very relevant ones selected
- embedded the term, purpose, example and overall relevance to the text succinctly.
- had an overriding idea linked throughout their examples
- understood how the pieces worked holistically and made understanding of writer’s purpose evident, often with an awareness of tone
- fully unpacked the language-often at a word level
- saw the connection between the opening and ending of the texts
- created an argument for their interpretation of the texts and linked all of the techniques back to this
- regularly discussed the symbolic and metaphorical and the literal aspects of each text
- understood the relevance of each text as a commentary of society/humanity.

### **Standard specific comments**

Some candidates spent too much space and time defining the language feature, when there was no need as the explanation and analysis should make this apparent.

Candidates did well if they used their reading strategies first rather than using formulae for answering questions as it appeared that some candidates failed to read the texts and understand them before launching into a formulaic response which often didn’t work because they hadn’t understood the text in the first place.

Correct understanding of language terminology is a key to doing well in this standard.

Clear, direct responses to each question are highly recommended.

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Clear, direct responses to each question are highly recommended.

Candidates should complete all questions first and then look to add in additional quality.

Candidates focused on the bullet points in Text 3 question rather than the question. This made it hard for some candidates to show a convincing or perceptive understanding of the text.

## **English subject page**

### **Previous years' reports**

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