

Assessment Report

Level 3 English 2017

Standards [91472](#) [91473](#) [91474](#)

Part A: Commentary

English teaching and learning in New Zealand are most definitely in good heart. Evidence seen across the three standards demonstrate that candidates are well prepared and they are performing well.

When dealing with the written and visual text standards, candidates may agree or disagree with the statement, but should not use the disagree part to place a pre-prepared essay down. There must be a genuine argument that is developed in relation to the statement.

Information included should be relevant; too many candidates still want to write everything they have been taught instead of arguing in a succinct, specific and critical way.

One of the common weaknesses with the essay writing was the inability to write a strong conclusion. Candidates seem able to construct an introduction and write several paragraphs but even some strong candidates appeared to struggle with tying up their ideas and addressing their statement for the final time with confidence. Too often a fabulous discussion ended with a simplistic comment apparently rushed at the close.

Overall, however, many discussions across the standards were thoughtful, rich and well-articulated demonstrating that our young people are engaging in literature and language with authentic and sophisticated voices.

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

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

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- understood and could explain the crafting of their chosen text(s)
- constructed three straightforward paragraphs
- only addressed the second part of the statement briefly or at the close of the essay
- developed a simplistic argument
- wrote long essays which were quite plot-based and instead of selecting specific examples they tended to try and fit the entire novel into the answer
- often had a superficial understanding of the key concept they were trying to discuss and could not expand on the idea with much depth.
- wrote in the style of something that had been said over and over in class
- had little personal voice.

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

- wrote pre-prepared essays
- unsuccessfully tried to twist the statement to fit a pre-prepared essay
- showed only a superficial understanding of the specified aspects and did not develop their argument sufficiently
- wrote overly wordy unfocussed essays that tried to deal with too many different aspects and did not sufficiently address their chosen statement
- did not provide enough specific evidence from their texts and only provided general comments
- wrote short, incomplete essays
- were on the right track but then stopped their essays too soon and their ideas had not been developed far enough
- confined their responses to summaries
- offered no real thesis or argument.

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

- addressed their chosen statement in full, answering both parts of the question fully
- showed an understanding of their author's purpose
- showed an understanding of important ideas/themes in their text in relation to their chosen statement
- wrote a well-structured, and well-worded essay
- expressed their ideas clearly with academic language
- attempted to go beyond the text in their analysis
- had personal voice and showed a sense of connection with the text
- developed a thesis statement with clear argument and evidence.
- synthesised and wove quotes into the essay.

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

- wrote fluent, comprehensive essays that were well-structured and demonstrated a command of expression
- showed insight into the wider themes of the text and their relevance to wider society at the time the text was written (or modern day society)
- provided a great range of specific evidence from their chosen texts
- quoted outside sources from critics or philosophers in relation to their chosen statement

- demonstrated original understanding and revealed a strong personal voice
- wrote fluently with a wide, formal vocabulary
- wrote with freedom and surety – they knew exactly what they wanted to argue
- presented an essay that was coherent and unified
- combined ideas from other research which supported and developed their argument
- chose which information to include wisely; it was succinct and relevant.

Standard specific comments

Candidates may agree or disagree with the statement, but should not use the disagree part to place a pre-prepared essay down. There must be a genuine argument that is developed in relation to the statement.

Candidates should pay attention to the development and structure of their essays and not limit themselves to three short paragraphs.

Information included should be relevant; too many candidates still want to write everything they have been taught instead of arguing in a succinct, specific and critical way.

91473: Respond critically to specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- wrote a clearly structured essay response using some evidence from the text
- attempted to make use of technical language
- focused primarily on plot but with enough critical response to achieve
- addressed all parts of the question but not necessarily in a balanced way
- wrote essays that were quite short
- presented ideas not developed enough
- responded critically to their chosen text, showing an acceptable level of understanding of it together with focus on the question
- showed some knowledge of film techniques
- used quotes in their discussion
- used key words from the statement to guide their essay.

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

- wrote answers that were lacking in detail and were short
- used a limited range of vocabulary
- presented a limited analysis of how the ideas were shown
- demonstrated a lack of exploration of authorial or directorial intent
- produced a response that was purely descriptive
- did not engage with the key words of the question
- made some attempt to address the statement but did not supply enough evidence or relevance to their chosen statement
- provided a prepared essay that focussed on a broad theme or character statement rather than those statements provided
- focused on plot or a basic step-by-step character recount

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

Candidates who were awarded Achievement with Merit commonly:

- constructed a focused argument that was more nuanced than stating “I fully agree/disagree with the statement”
- demonstrated a precise familiarity with their chosen text(s).
- showed discrimination in the material they selected to support their argument
- successfully related their argument to relevant wider context(s) and text(s)
- structured their essay persuasively by providing convincing, strong points first, followed by supporting points
- demonstrated precision with language, using terms more subtle than “positive” and “negative”
- set up a convincing argument in their introduction
- discussed a variety of technical aspects in their answer
- showed an understanding of the director’s purpose
- discussed beyond the text to provide evidence for their critical opinion
- showed a sound understanding of the text and could apply knowledge to the question
- confidently referred to the statement throughout response.

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

- constructed a fluent and persuasive argument
- showed evidence of independent thought
- showed genuine engagement with both the text and the chosen statement
- showed flair in their use of language, most noticeably, via a sophisticated vocabulary
- perceptively integrated their argument with wider context(s) and other text(s)
- wrote precisely and concisely (rather than writing everything they have ever learned about the text(s))
- seemed to have enjoyed studying their chosen text(s) and appeared to relish writing the essay
- could articulate and present a comfortable handling of technical jargon
- showed greater awareness of societal context for the film.
- responded to their chosen text with a high level of perception and insight
- displayed extensive knowledge of film aspects and were often able to include insights from beyond the text
- took an unusual position or offered a fresh perspective and backed up their position with evidence and sense of the director’s purpose
- expressed themselves fluently.

Standard specific comments

It was noted that teachers use a wide range of texts, including a range of “classic” texts from across several decades. Some texts were excellent vehicles to allow candidates to achieve at the higher grades. These include Psycho, American Beauty, Blade Runner, Heavenly Creatures, Atonement, Schindler’s List, American History X, The Talented Mr Ripley, The Piano, Waltz With Bashir.

It seemed that as usual, statement choice was particularly important to get right for their chosen film. Not all statements are going to suit particular films and teaching candidates the art of statement choice is important. It was nice to see more New Zealand film essays such as Boy, Hunt for the Wilderpeople, and as noted, Heavenly Creatures and The Piano. The Great Gatsby and American Beauty were extremely popular as was Atonement and Clint Eastwood’s, Gran Torino. Hitchcock films seemed popular this year as did a lot of Tarantino films and the occasional American Psycho, Apocalypse Now and The Fight Club.

When approaching more violent films like those of Quentin Tarantino, few scripts showed any awareness or appreciation of the satire which suggests that the candidates were not able to really critically engage with these films and were viewing them primarily as ‘entertainment’

There are a growing number of candidates approaching the podcast genre and “Serial” in particular , and this genre was confidently handled.

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

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- showed evidence of a literal and on-the-text understanding
- were often straightforward in their identification and discussion of aspects
- used the question to guide the structure of their answer
- identified and exemplified two aspects/features in the text and gave a relevant explanation of at least one of the examples although they could be uneven in their responses to the different aspects used in the texts
- made a broad judgement about the attitude, the nature of passing of time and the difference between fantasy and reality
- supported further explanation with relevant evidence
- treated each text separately in the comparative question and often used a different aspect for each text
- addressed aspects separately and didn't necessarily unpack the text as a single, coherent unit
- relied on content
- showed an emerging understanding of authors' intentions.

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

- mentioned only one or did not identify an aspect from a text
- did not use exemplification as part of their answer and when they did, they failed to link this to an aspect or chose an irrelevant example
- failed to relate aspects to the question
- did not answer all sections, especially where candidates could not articulate the differences between reality and fantasy in the texts and how the author intended them to be understood
- were confused by the aspects and how to use them as evidence in their discussion
- struggled to demonstrate a basic understanding of how an author's writing techniques were used for effect and how they linked to writer's intent
- gave an incomplete or simplistic answer which was did not address to the question
- referred to a language aspect but with insufficient detail and specificity
- quoted from the text to support their ideas, but did not identify a language feature being used by the writer
- included a plot summary of the texts and described content only
- failed to understand the ideas in the texts or to develop ideas sufficiently.

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

- identified two or more aspects that were relevant to the question, and explained how each aspect achieved its effect
- unpacked their discussion of aspects
- demonstrated an accurate and thorough reading of text
- examined the text as a whole and made links between techniques, presenting an integrated discussion of the aspects
- went "between the lines" in their discussion of the language features
- attempted to track the development of ideas and aspects within the text(s), and were able to convincingly show their connection
- demonstrated an understanding of the text and the author's point of view
- presented clear and specific judgements about the author's perspective
- showed an engagement with each text
- worked to form a synthesised judgement in Question 3, comparing and contrasting both texts
- used exemplification which was relevant, valid and integrated into their discussion which demonstrated a convincing analysis of the texts

- were able to identify writer's purpose and why certain vocabulary was used
- sustained a relevant discussion
- saw the text as a complete unit and started to unpack the ideas chronologically
- wrote in a clear and fluent fashion
- began to link the ideas in the texts, e.g. that fantasy is in both texts but it was how the authors approached the idea of fantasy that made them different.

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

- showed a perceptive and insightful understanding of authors' intentions
- went 'beyond the text' with answers which reflected complexities of the human experience in a genuine and perceptive manner, and considered the significance or relevance of the text for its audience and/or society and/or self more broadly
- presented an integrated, detailed and fluent answer with little repetition
- showed originality of thought
- were adept and confident with expression
- made deeper, more sophisticated readings of the texts, inferring meaning and appreciating the subtleties of the writers' crafting
- structured their answers around their own ideas in response to the question and the text, then developed these ideas throughout their answer, integrating a range of language features into their discussion
- used a wide range of terminology accurately and with confidence
- identified two or more aspects that were relevant to the question, explained how they achieved certain effects, made a critical comparison between them, wove evidence throughout their answer and showed that they understood how the text or the author's ideas fit into the wider world, or appealed to some greater idea or context.

Standard specific comments

Candidates who trace aspects through the text tend to achieve with greater confidence. Better candidates have a greater range of aspects to reference and discuss the guiding aspects noted on the paper with more specific terminology. Candidates who write unnecessarily lengthy answers do not necessarily achieve the higher grades. Some candidates have very complex and messy scripts which required several readings before a grade can be given.

Candidates who are succinct and write with flair or command generally also display the perception required for excellence.

In the 2017 paper many candidates struggled to focus on the 'difference' between fantasy and reality required for Question 3 - however this question provided, in general, the best answers in terms of depth of perception.

A lot of candidates wrote a mini 'introduction' to each question - this was rarely useful in terms of adding value, beyond laying out the structure their writing would follow

A lot of candidates needed to be more aware of what the questions were asking. Many candidates struggled with the difference between point of view and narrative style. The bigger issue, however, seems to be candidates not being able to understand how these two aspects are used to create and enhance meaning. Many identified these techniques because they thought they were the obvious ones, but then struggled to understand how they were used. This prevented a lot of candidates from moving into the Merit or Excellence grades.

Unfamiliar Texts frequently challenge candidates. Whilst Questions 1 and 2 were generally answered well, the comparative essay (Question 3) was not addressed so strongly by many candidates

Candidates need to divide their time evenly between the three questions as some competent candidates often left answers unfinished or did not attempt Question 3.

Candidates should be reminded to make use of all the information provided in the exam paper and resource booklet about the text extracts.

English subject page

Previous years' reports

[2016 \(PDF, 0KB\)](#)

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