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# Assessment Report

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## Level 1 English 2018

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## Part A: Commentary

Examination questions are designed to encourage candidates to truly 'engage' with their chosen texts. Questions are designed to elicit genuine responses; pre-learned responses are therefore not appropriate.

The choice of texts is critical in allowing candidates to engage with and respond to in order to give genuine personal responses. To gain higher grades, candidates need to show personal engagement with the text(s) to see their relevance in a wider context.

Candidates are reminded of the statement in the assessment specifications, '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 three pages (or about 550 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

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

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Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- shared a straightforward response to a text
- addressed both parts of the question, but with some imbalance, often only referring to the second part of the question in the conclusion
- used some detail from the text, but without quotes
- wrote structured essays
- included supporting evidence from just one aspect of the text which was not always clearly linked to the question
- lacked well-understood and relevant links that moved beyond the text. These were often superficial, tacked on, and did not develop the response.

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

- did not address the question
- only addressed one part of the question (usually the describe part)
- did not provide any specific evidence from the text
- provided a brief and superficial response
- retold the plot
- wrote a pre-learned essay that did not fit the question.

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

- gave a detailed account of their text in relation to the question and supported it with specific examples from the text, usually using quotes
- provided an imbalanced discussion, i.e. showed a stronger response to one part of the question
- used various language techniques and understood the craft of the text
- attempted to link their discussion to beyond the text, but this often was a pre-learned phrase that was repeated rather than a genuine show of insight
- showed engagement with the text
- structured their essay in a manner that allowed for logical progression of ideas in relation to the question asked
- referred to the author's purpose, though this may be implied.

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

- were usually able to make authentic, beyond the text, references that were clearly linked to the question and the text
- used plenty of specific evidence to support points, with quotes woven into the response
- identified the author's purpose aptly and showed a good understanding of how writers deliberately crafted their text
- addressed both parts of the question with balance
- used sophisticated and analytical vocabulary
- wrote concise, well-structured, and cohesive essays
- showed a mature personal interest and engagement with the text.

### **Standard specific comments**

As expected, there were the standard Level 1 texts: *Of Mice and Men*, *Animal Farm*, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Montana 1984*, *Lord of the Flies*, and war poetry. However, many responses showed limited engagement to these texts as the ideas presented seem to be beyond the understanding of many New Zealand teenagers, e.g. the Great Depression, Russian Revolution, Jim Crow era, etc.

Song lyrics were a popular text type this year, and candidates typically showed engagement to these texts as they were relevant to teenagers and today's society.

Short texts were done well for Question One. However, some responses seemed very formulaic and lacked originality, especially responses on war poetry.

Some short texts did not seem to have enough depth for candidates to provide more than a simple response. They were also limited to the questions they could answer, especially when only referring to one poem as this usually would not show a character change, a relationship, a challenging setting, or have enough detail to connect the beginning and ending.

It is still a problem seeing rote-learned / memorised essays. These responses do not do well as they appear very inauthentic, even when keywords have been changed around to suit the question.

Essays over four pages were often lacking specificity and cohesiveness, and contained superfluous evidence. Digital responses were typically unnecessarily long and went well beyond the recommended 550 words.

Candidates need to practise using keywords as 'signposts' throughout their essay to show that they are answering the question.

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

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

- made at least three key points which were reasonably well supported
- used the key words from the question to structure their essay
- wrote at sufficient length: usually 2–3 pages
- used relevant quotes and/or examples to support their key points
- answered both parts of the question
- did not specifically mention language features but implied them

- had too much reliance on quotes as evidence, rather than more convincing visual features
- answered the question appropriately, but may have addressed both parts of the question unevenly.

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

- did not answer both parts of the question or did not address the question at all
- showed good knowledge of the text, but did not link their information to an appropriate question
- misinterpreted or ignored the key words in the question
- described plot only, and did not “explain” their thinking with phrases such as “this shows...”
- lacked appropriate evidence.

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

- addressed and engaged with both parts of the question clearly
- discussed film techniques thoroughly and explained how these contributed to the overall meaning of the visual text
- had a comprehensive understanding of the characters, themes and settings of the visual text
- used the key words well, but did not repeat them necessarily
- had a suitable introduction and conclusion
- made a strong link between the text they had studied and the wording of the question they attempted.

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

- provided multiple examples from the text to support ideas
- sustained a convincing line of argument together with substantial supporting detail
- used analytical language and personal commentary to prove engagement with the text
- used their introduction and conclusion to help develop and shape their

response

- gave examples beyond the text as convincing proof of deeper analysis with comparisons, contrasts and alternative contexts
- showed an awareness of deliberate directors' crafting and decision making
- wrote fluently and with some sophisticated language
- provided insight into the director's purpose, and/or positioning of the audience, and offered personal insight into their own lives.

### **Standard specific comments**

There was a very wide range of films used for assessment, including several New Zealand films.

Popular films included: *Hidden Figures*; *Pleasantville*; *Billy Elliott*; *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, *Blindside*, *Boy*, *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, *Hunger Games*, *The Help*, *V for Vendetta*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Freedom Writers*, *Whiplash*, *The Truman Show*, *Gattaca*, *Remember the Titans*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Dead Poets Society*, *The Dark Horse*, an NZTA drink-driving advertisement, *The Greatest Showman*, *The Shining*, *Shawshank Redemption*, *Seven Pounds*, *Pride*, *Hacksaw Ridge*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Two Cars One Night*, *Lars and the Real Girl*.

Markers felt that some of these films contained material inappropriate for this age group – either too mature or too dark.

Teachers must be aware of darker topics covered in some films and the changing nature of candidate mental health. Some films used had very mature content that could be difficult for younger candidates to comprehend.

There were several candidates making throw-away comments such as “This was a great film that gave us many things to think about” and “I would recommend this as a great film for all teenagers to view”. There is potential in these statements, had they been developed further, yet in most cases these were simply used as a final statement.

“Setting” was misinterpreted by many candidates, most reading it as “set” or taking the “challenge” more than exploring the physicalities and social / historical aspects.

The mechanics of candidates' writing was often poor. Basic spelling and punctuation were often amiss. While this is not expressly assessed in this standard, it can prevent the meaning of the essay from being clear.

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

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

- discussed how a technique worked to create a specific meaning in the text supported by evidence
- worked through the text discussing techniques in relation to the question in a linear fashion, without looking at how the techniques worked together
- mentioned 'mood' or 'author's purpose' or 'reader's response' without developing and supporting their ideas on those aspects
- provided a simple or brief explanation of how a technique or aspect achieved the writers' purpose
- included some evidence to support their ideas
- focused on one aspect of the text.

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

- explained how techniques worked without relating their discussion to the specific usage in the text
- were only able to identify a technique and/or give an example without an appropriate explanation to discuss how the technique created the specific meaning in the text
- provided a brief explanation OR some evidence of an aspect but did not explain the link between them
- did not address the question
- provided a literal explanation of the text, and did not demonstrate an appreciation of the deeper meaning

- addressed the question without giving their own interpretation, e.g. common in text three was the opening statement “The author develops a particular atmosphere in this text”
- misunderstood the text completely.

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

- offered a full and detailed discussion that showed an understanding of techniques working together to create the specific meaning of the text
- started to discuss ‘mood / tone’ ‘author’s purpose’ ‘reader’s response’ and started to move beyond the text
- provided an in-depth explanation of multiple aspects of the text, supported by evidence
- demonstrated a convincing understanding of the author’s purpose.

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

- showed an awareness of how the specific meaning was created through various techniques working together
- moved beyond the text and offered appropriate theories around the meaning created, engaging authentic personal response to exhibit inherent understanding
- dealt competently with ‘mood / tone’ ‘author’s purpose’ ‘reader’s response’
- provided an in-depth explanation of multiple aspects of the text, supported by evidence
- demonstrated a convincing understanding of the author’s purpose
- demonstrated understanding of how multiple aspects worked together to fulfil the authors’ purpose
- were fluent and coherent
- were focused on the guiding questions and fully supported by relevant quotations.

### **Standard specific comments**

Overall, candidates coped well with the demands of this examination. There were several incredibly perceptive responses. The brevity of questions means quality over quantity is now required.



### Question One

Successful candidates recognised the boy’s imagination, that he was trying to make his work more enjoyable. With the return to reality at the end of the poem more insightful candidates were able to focus on the contrast between the boy’s reality and his fantasy. There was some interesting discussion about the importance of imagination, the problem with boredom, and the horrors of working conditions for children.

### Question Two

Many candidates were able to relate to the school environment – school was not a pleasant place to be. There was some challenging vocabulary in the text. There was some misinterpretation of the word “memorable” (some candidates assumed this was a good thing), and of the boys laughing at the punishment of others. Candidates made the most of the provided explanations of “Colditz Castle” and “Darwinian”, although some simply copied the explanations, without showing they had understood the references.

### Question Three

Many candidates correctly identified language features in part (a), but not all of them related to the setting, which is what the question asked for. Most candidates recognised the silence and the connection between the inn and its owner, but many didn’t move beyond that, assuming that the silence and emptiness in the inn meant that it wasn’t popular, or it was going out of business because of its isolated location. Better responses explored the ominous and eerie atmosphere, and the sense of emptiness; insightful beyond the text links included discussion of depression, death, old age.

In general candidates who did well in the standard had a personal voice to their responses and rather than responses that were too tied to techniques, they wrote more about the texts as a whole and the impression the pieces created.

## [English subject page](#)

### Previous years' reports

[2017 \(PDF, 63KB\)](#)

[2016 \(PDF, 254KB\)](#)

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