

Assessment Report

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Part A: Commentary

Examination questions are designed to encourage candidates to truly ‘engage’ with their chosen texts and 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.

Higher achieving responses were inevitably the result of careful planning, while other candidates did not take advantage of this time and wrote essays that were plot-driven and unduly lengthy. A thorough, unhurried plan will help candidates identify irrelevant material.

Essays at this level are essentially two-part questions – ‘describe’, then ‘explain’ – and both parts of the question needed to be addressed. Candidates should practise using the keywords from the question as ‘signposts’ throughout their

responses to make sure they are addressing both parts of the question in their response.

Responses that were awarded Merit or Excellence often showed understanding of the author's or director's purpose.

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 550–600 words) in length". Many digital responses far exceeded the recommended word length.

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:

- 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
- wrote structured essays
- included supporting evidence from just one aspect of the text which was not always clearly linked to the question
- did not provide well-understood and relevant links that moved beyond the text. If they were included, they were often superficial, 'tacked on', and did not develop the response
- showed reasonable understanding of the story and recounted only those aspects relevant to the question
- incorporated at least some aspects of personal response.

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

- missed the key point of the question

- only addressed the first part of the question (the ‘describe’ part)
- did not provide any specific evidence from the text
- provided a brief and superficial response
- retold only the plot.

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 a mostly balanced discussion but demonstrated a stronger response to one part of the question
- understood the crafting of the text by using various language techniques
- 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
- 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 have been implied.

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

- wrote concise, well-structured, and cohesive essays
- addressed both parts of the question with balance
- made 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 throughout the response
- identified the author’s purpose aptly and showed a good understanding of how writers deliberately crafted their text
- used sophisticated and analytical vocabulary
- showed a mature personal interest and engagement with the text.

Standard-specific comments

Choosing texts that candidates can show an appreciation of and some engagement with the ideas is imperative. Candidates can then show their own

personal understanding and insight better.

Text choice is an important aspect to the way in which teenagers in 2020 respond to what they are reading. There were some texts that candidates, who could be at achievement level, struggled to connect with. In contrast, texts that had a context New Zealand teenagers could connect with allowed candidates to respond in a way that showed they understood the wider ideas in the text.

Short texts were very popular this year, with many candidates providing excellent responses. However, some short texts did not seem to have enough depth for candidates to provide more than a simple response, especially when only referring to one poem or song lyric. Question 5 was done well for short texts, but some responses seemed very formulaic and lacked originality, especially responses on war poetry. Some candidates also struggled with how the techniques created 'an emotional response' in them, especially those whose answer relied too heavily on ideas, rather than naming emotions.

Question 1 on structure was not a popular choice, and many just wrote a response that outlined the beginning, middle and end of the text.

Many responses included very few specific details from the text. To reach Achievement with Merit, convincing knowledge of the text is shown by the inclusion of 'clear, relevant details, usually using quotations, integrated into the answer'.

Candidates need to remember that their analysis of the text and their response to the question is most important. Linking outside the text, or to their own world or lives can develop their answer but should not be the focus of the essay.

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

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 the key words from the question to structure their essay
- used some relevant quotes and / or examples to support their key points

- may not have specifically mentioned language features but implied them
- discussed their own experiences more than the details of the studied text
- used quotations without identifying other verbal and visual techniques.

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

- only addressed one part of the question (usually the 'describe' part), or addressed the second part only in a cursory fashion
- 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:

- provided a mostly balanced discussion but may have shown a stronger response to one part of the question
- wrote fluently and had a clear paragraph structure, including a clear introduction that specifically referred to the question
- identified verbal and visual techniques
- linked examples back to what the question had asked
- included discussion of the director's purpose
- used specific and relevant detail, frequently with more technical vocabulary
- knew the text well and made thoughtful and deliberate comments showing a thorough understanding of the text
- showed a solid understanding and appreciation of deliberate crafting
- showed evidence of understanding and appreciation of the impact of ideas on the viewers and its application to today's world.

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

- wrote concise, well-structured, and cohesive essays
- made 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 and visual / verbal techniques woven into the response
- identified the director's purpose aptly and showed a good understanding of how directors deliberately crafted their text
- addressed both parts of the question with balance
- used sophisticated and analytical vocabulary
- showed a mature personal interest and engagement with the text
- had a good understanding of technical vocabulary and used this effectively
- adapted their existing knowledge to the question accurately
- showed a thorough understanding of the implications of the text and its place in society.

Standard-specific comments

It was good to see that some newer texts were being used for this standard – for example, *The Peanut Butter Falcon*, *Parasite*, *Jojo Rabbit*, and *The Hate U Give*, to name a few.

Some of the texts the candidates used made it hard for them to make relevant links to current events and issues because they were from another era. Capable candidates could make it work but others struggled to make the links.

There seemed to be a greater number of New Zealand texts being used; *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* was answered better than in previous years; *Jojo Rabbit* was a successful text overall, but not a lot of candidates gained Excellence; essays on *Boy* were often formulaic and lacked any perceptive understanding.

Some candidates did not read the question carefully, or appeared to have deliberately ignored parts of the question to enable them to use rote-learned notes. Candidates need to highlight the key words within the question parts and write their response answering these and not use a rote-learned essay.

Candidates need to be specific in their use of film terminology – for instance, 'low- and high-contrast lighting' instead of 'dim' and 'bright'.

Setting and structure are often only vaguely understood; candidates need to understand which aspects of the text can come under this heading.

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

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

- had only one or two language features, despite having some understanding of the texts and / or the ideas in them
- identified language feature(s), provided examples and offered a simplistic explanation
- identify language features relevant to the question correctly
- were able to paraphrase the words of the question and/or the words of the texts
- understood metaphor at a basic level
- were able to select the information that was relevant to the question
- presented clear explanations.

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

- could identify a language feature but did not address why or how the language feature was used
- could not accurately identify language features relevant to the question
- did not understand the question(s)
- did not use correct terminology
- did not refer to the text(s) sufficiently.

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

- showed some insight and awareness of the textual contexts
- showed good understanding of the poem and its ideas without straying too far from it
- explained how language features worked together to create an effect or to achieve a purpose
- could accurately identify language features relevant to the question, and could provide some extrapolation of how these features linked to a theme or

ideas in the texts

- could identify tone
- attempted to link the ideas in the text to wider society / wider human experience / their own experiences.

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

- combined insight into the texts, linked them elegantly to the wider world and didn't use too many language features
- chose language features that fitted into the points they were developing
- focused on the overall purpose of the text
- looked at the wider world context, took a philosophical approach, and generally identified language features and how they worked together to achieve this purpose
- had proficient vocabularies that enabled them not only to paraphrase but to analyse with some sophistication how language was used for a particular purpose
- could identify and show appreciation of tone
- could link the ideas in the text to wider society / wider human experience in a seamless and relevant way.

Standard-specific comments

This standard requires candidates to analyse three unfamiliar texts. For candidates to do well in this standard, use of correct terminology is critical, as is the ability to explain clearly why the relevant language features are used.

Successful candidates appeared to strategise – reading the passages carefully and unpacking the specific key words in the task enabled them to show a convincing and perceptive understanding of the texts.

Lastly, candidates should see each text as a mirror on society and consider a personal response backed by evidence from the text and wider society.

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Previous years' reports



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