



New Zealand Qualifications Authority  
Mana Tohu Matauranga O Aotearoa

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*Home > NCEA > Subjects > Assessment Reports > English - L1*

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# Assessment Report

## Level 1 English 2016

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

### Part A: Commentary

Many Excellence responses were shorter than some meandering Merit or Achievement responses.

It was pleasing to see fewer pre-prepared responses.

Some planning pages showed real thought and awareness and candidates who took the time to thoroughly plan their essays were usually rewarded. 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. Planning an essay can be a “settling in” period to the examination. 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 any question must be addressed. Candidates need to look for a “how” component. In Question Seven this year, candidates were asked to discuss how an important character was revealed. Some saw this as an opportunity to discuss why a character was important but such an approach missed the mark. This question was potentially about the author’s technique. Candidates who did not appreciate this were not automatically failed but this question illustrates the need to for candidates to read carefully. If a question appears too easy, be warned!

Many candidates wrote on one text only and were able to write in more depth than those who wrote on more than one, who were frequently penalised for the lack of depth.

Candidates who are unable to make the distinction between written and visual or oral texts and respond in the wrong answer booklet cannot expect to achieve. If a candidate realises they have made a mistake and indicates so, NZQA will endeavour to have the response marked against the appropriate standard.

### 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 selected question, though sometimes aspects were “implied” only.
- showed understanding of chosen text but did not attempt to go “between the lines” to any noticeable degree.
- included some relevant detail and usually some quotations.
- provided quotations which were “abbreviated” or “approximations”
- structured responses using some wording from the question
- focused more on plot, but eventually covered both parts
- wrote responses lacking sufficient detail
- used a formulaic structure or approach.

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

- did not address both parts of the question
- showed insufficient understanding and / or knowledge of the text
- wrote incomplete or very short essays with superficial connection to the text
- had little or no planning
- used a text that may not have been studied in class
- repeated content with no analysis
- provided personal opinion or comments that were unrelated to the question
- presented arguments unrelated to the question or merely outlined the text
- offered rote-learned responses to a question which didn’t appear.

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

- answered both parts of the selected question
- showed clear knowledge and understanding of the text
- included clear, relevant details
- developed and connected points in detail
- responded convincingly
- showed understanding of author’s purpose and societal value of text
- made an attempt to go beyond the immediate narrow confines of the question
- personalised their response (not always convincingly)
- presented a balanced response
- showed links between different parts of the text
- wrote very well and showed occasional glimpses of perception.

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

- showed originality of thought and interpretation
- showed very detailed knowledge and understanding of the text

- made comments relating to the societal implication of the text in the real world which were firmly related to the text under discussion
- wrote a structured essay with an impressive introduction and conclusion demonstrating flair and confidence
- paragraphed tightly which reinforced the clear argument associated with thoughtful structure
- compared their chosen text to others
- showed mature perception
- utilised a higher level of vocabulary
- went beyond the text to include societal / pop culture implications.
- wove quotes and evidence along with their philosophical musings into the response seamlessly.

### Standard-specific comments

The choice of text influenced the quality of the answer.

Poetry was popular, especially war poetry and the poems of Carol Ann Duffy, and frequently led to exceptional answers.

Popular short texts included *The Sniper*, *Ka Kite Bro*, *Lamb to the Slaughter*, *On the Sidewalk Bleeding*, *In the Rubbish Tin*. Responses on Mansfield stories were of a high quality.

Texts which elicited higher-achieving responses included *Animal Farm*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Macbeth*, *The Book Thief*, *Dulce et Decorum Est*, and the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy.

Texts which elicited responses that in many cases were only awarded Achievement included *Tomorrow When the War Began*, *The Pearl*, *Z for Zachariah*, *Holes*, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*, and *The Wave*.

*Of Mice and Men*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Night*, *Noughts and Crosses*, *Unwind*, and *Feed* were answered with understanding by candidates at all levels of achievement.

For Achievement, candidates provided solid textual details, but frequently lacked appreciation of the text as a whole or the author's purpose which is required for Merit.

Candidates who wrote about more than one text frequently lacked depth, which was a disadvantage.

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

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- addressed both parts of the question (albeit unevenly) and explored at least one main idea
- made at least one and frequently two relevant points to answer the specific aspect(s) of the question
- used the key words of the question to frame the introduction and refer back in the middle of the essay.
- explored two visual techniques and showed how this linked to the essay idea being explored.
- chose a question that was better suited to their studied text.
- used “dialogue” as their only technique – such responses could score an A3.

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

- did not answer the specifics of the question
- tried to contort learned responses to fit a question (frequently this could work for the first part but not the second part of the question)
- chose inappropriate questions
- showed little awareness of the director’s purpose and the effect on the viewer
- re-told the storyline
- did not use any visual or verbal techniques
- used one technique that had no link to the essay idea (e.g. a self-evident or generalised quote)
- used vague or imprecise visual features with no supporting detail (e.g. “used a mid-shot to show the idea...”; “technique is conflict...”; “used ‘intense’ music ...”).

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

- selected questions to suit their text.
- understood the specifics of the question and wrote accordingly.
- explored both part of the question and focused on the key words (e.g. “character reveal” / “emotional response (in viewer)”) )
- used two or more relevant visual or verbal techniques, which were closely linked to the idea(s) being explored
- showed “convincing” details but usually not more than a high quality description
- explored director purpose and effect on viewer
- had a good sense of personal voice and showed an awareness of the text
- sometimes linked to relevant ideas / issues outside the text
- integrated evidence into the rather than tacking it on
- discussed how the director used the evidence or could explain how several pieces of evidence worked together to build a picture of the aspect being discussed.

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

- used more than two visual or verbal features in a precise manner
- inter-wove features throughout essay
- sustained the idea(s) sufficiently
- showed a good appreciation of director’s purpose
- could describe lucidly how the viewer response was “manipulated”
- established a focused, literate commentary and stayed to this throughout the essay

- linked their text ideas to similar issues in other texts or outside in contemporary society
- incorporated a sense of maturity or personal responsiveness to the issue
- chose questions for their texts that allowed for depth and quick access to the specifics of the question
- allowed intelligent doses of their own personalities to show.

### Standard-specific comments

Planning and being well prepared is important. This may include:

- choosing the right question for the text they have studied
- focusing equally on both parts of this task
- spending more time breaking down a question, noting the subtleties of phrasing, and key words
- having a clear plan, or a logical progression of ideas before they start to write
- showing that the response is on a visual text, by displaying, at least, an understanding of how a range of film techniques are deliberately used to create meaning
- discussing how or why film techniques effect a viewer
- discussing the director's purpose in creating the text
- making specific "beyond the text" connections that arise from examining the studied text
- focusing on specifics as frequently essays were too general – "director uses various film techniques such as camera shots and lighting..." with no specific details on these and their effects
- choosing texts that are not too simplistic that only allow a retelling the plot
- focusing on the keywords in the question
- structuring and essay well and beginning with a clear introduction.

Many candidates tag "evidence" on at the end of their answer. Stronger responses show how we learn something through the evidence, as opposed to stating "there is a close up".

Some candidates made the mistake of thinking that "more is better" and threw everything they knew about the film, the director, the film's back story, including sometimes the book that the film might be based on, into their essay. As a result, they produced weak and simplistic answers that limited their ability to show their understanding.

Films that consistently generated Excellence answers included *The Truman Show*, *Pleasantville*, *The Imitation game*, *Slumdog Millionaire* and *The Martian*.

*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, *Remember the Titans*, *The Blindside* and *Bend it Like Beckham* were not always conducive to Excellence responses.

Text choices are crucial and it was obvious when a candidate had really engaged with a film, and equally, when they hadn't.

A small number used a music video, computer video game, audio book or TV series episode. These tended to limit question choice and were generally not well handled. *The Band of Brothers* was the exception. Some great short films were answered very well.

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

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- identified a language feature and explained how it was used
- provided an explanation without identifying a language feature or only focused on one particular language feature
- tried to go beyond the text (off on a tangent) without doing the basics first
- responded to question at a literal level
- demonstrated understanding how one language feature worked to achieve the writer's purpose
- provided some textual details either as a quote or paraphrase
- gave short answers
- showed implied understanding via relevant selection of details, but were not explicit enough about intended effect to be convincing
- referred to language features, more frequently than structural features
- showed an understanding of the text by rephrasing in own words.

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

- alluded to features, yet didn't actually state them
- acknowledged language features without any reference back to the text
- failed to answer both parts of the question
- identified a language feature with no appropriate explanation and little development.
- did not provide enough explanation
- wrote a plot summary of the extract and just gave an opinion about the piece without any reference to language features
- made generalisations (e.g. "created a picture in my head", or "helped me understand the feelings of the writer" without specifically stating what feelings).

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

- answered the question using two or more language features (M5).
- put examples and features together and began to add more into the answer beyond listing language features (M6)
- presented some explanation of how significant ideas worked together (perceptive comments but not "big picture")
- showed some insight into the theme or purpose of the text
- understood how techniques worked together
- could link terms, explain and develop ideas, frequently with an overall theme or purpose
- identified a range of techniques and their intended effect
- gave a range of different language features from throughout the text and could comment on the meaning created from these
- unpacked language features and described what they showed

- used connectives effectively to link their ideas and show how the techniques worked together to produce effects
- used synonyms when explaining examples (i.e. did not repeat words from the example)
- discussed texts from different perspectives (of the characters in the texts).

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

- demonstrated perceptive understanding as they unpacked the text
- combined aspects and covered the author's purpose
- explored the deeper meaning of the text and went beyond the text to do this
- used vocabulary reflecting understanding / interpretation of the text
- could synthesise points across the text and integrate them as part of their response
- demonstrated some sophistication in their understanding of language (i.e. tone, juxtaposition, irony)
- were succinct about language features and chose only relevant ones.
- used strong descriptive words or phrases to explain points
- were able to embed the term, purpose, example and overall relevance to the text succinctly.
- had an overriding idea linked throughout their examples
- offered original insights and had a clear awareness of deliberate crafting and showed an understanding of how the pieces worked holistically
- focused on contrast or change, and had a clear awareness of audience and how they were engaged
- understood the intent of the writer when using different language and structural features
- could see 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
- wrote in a fluent and engaging manner
- demonstrated excellent knowledge of different techniques and how they worked together
- appreciated the different points of view.

### **Standard-specific comments**

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.

If a definition of an aspect such as a language feature is required it should be succinct, and the time spent on the explanation or analysis.

Usually formulaic responses frequently did not work because the candidates had not understood the text in the first place.

Some quoted too long and too frequently without explaining or analysing what the quote(s) actually showed.

### **[English subject page](#)**

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