



New Zealand Qualifications Authority
Mana Tohu Matauranga O Aotearoa

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Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship English 2016

Standard 93001

Part A: Commentary

The paper provided challenges, as well as providing tasks and questions that were accessible to a wide range of candidates. A wide choice of statements provided ample opportunities for candidates to structure independent, critical and mature wide ranging arguments through discussion. Some candidates, however, chose to state and ‘brain dump’ rather than unpacking the statements.

Successful candidates were able to bring their knowledge of key elements, a range of texts and of how they were crafted, and their personal reflection and engagement to critical discussion. These candidates were able to argue for and against statements, resulting in some excellent writing which displayed perception and discrimination.

Section A

The focus on the essence of poetry interrogating life was the one which candidates obviously felt engaged with and resulted in some sound responses. The differences between the two texts allowed candidates to make critical and thoughtful comments about the contrasts, many of which were strikingly original and highly insightful.

Some candidates were able to reference the wider ramifications of the ideas in each text and showed competency in their textual knowledge and ability to critically evaluate the texts. Those who were prepared to compare and contrast provided insightful and eminently readable discussions.

The best responses concentrated on only a few of the aspects and considered them in depth, creating a holistic, rather than a shopping list approach. This ability to consider a range of aspects rather than just concentrating on the language features is essential and should reflect the progression of skill from Level 1 to Scholarship. Unfortunately, there seems to be a focus on language features and this hampers the response. (Think Unfamiliar Level 1 and 3 this year).

Section B

There were a wide range of possible genres to choose from and again there was a clear focus on Shakespeare and the novel, however it was pleasing to see candidates tackling other genres, including those provided by television series.

Some candidates responded in a way that is applicable for level 3 but not for NZ Scholarship. These responses tended to be learned and formulaic, not following an engagement with the statement before them, but rather a practised pre-conception about the text and what the examiner wants to know about it. Often these responses involved large plot summaries, focusing on film techniques and alluding to the statement to be discussed with tenuous end sentences, often precluded by, 'this shows..'. There was often a lack of unpacking of what the statement meant.

Candidates who achieved well, actively engaged with the statement first and foremost, establishing what it meant to them and the parameters they would use, took a clear stance, had a clear understanding of the nature of the genre they chose and selected texts which would support their argument. Often this was clearly established in the introduction leaving a clear path for the marker to follow.

Section C

A wide range of accessible and challenging statements were provided which allowed candidates to articulate their individual perceptions of the nature of literature, their interpretation of it and the relationship between literature and themselves, others and society. The statements encouraged real independence of thought and encouraged reference to a range of independent readings. However, the statements were also taken often at face value and not unpacked in any depth.

Again, candidates who achieved well, made the statement their 'own' at the start of the response, established a clear stance and parameters, and chose texts which supported their views. The best of these discussions avoided reference to an overly large number of texts and were well synthesised, rather than relying on a conclusion to make their point.

Part B: Report on performance standard

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship with Outstanding Performance** commonly:

- chose a statement they could respond to, clearly understood it and felt challenged by it
- engaged with the statement, keeping to a sophisticated central discussion and establishing clear parameters for the ensuing argument
- showed 'freshness' of response in working with their own readings and their reinterpretation of the chosen statement
- were driven by the statement and not by the text
- provided vigorous and confident response with zest, wit, acumen and panache
- brought relevant and focused knowledge of texts to support their response
- synthesised information and response
- showed personal insight and independent, critical thought about text and genre.
- formed strong, well-supported conclusions about texts in relation to the statement.
- structured fluent discussion which moved from reference or quote to applied readings or analysis
- wrote with flair, sophistication, and eloquence
- sustained the ability to write well across the whole paper.

Section A

- dealt with both content and crafting of the two texts in a focused, thoughtful, holistic and balanced discussion, showing understanding of all aspects
- explored unfamiliar passages with consistent and cohesive perceptive analysis, receptive to nuance and author's intention
- applied their knowledge of crafting methods in a relevant and productive way to draw out the purpose or ideas of writers
- produced a response which was independent and creative, offering original insights, which was expressed fluently

Section B

- focused their response on the statement
- judiciously chose texts which were used to support the development of the discussion
- responded with a clear understanding of the genre
- developed and supported a cogent and effective thesis with the judicious selection of references from the start
- demonstrated the ability to reconsider, rework and even refresh learned materials and familiar texts so that materials were brought cogently and judiciously to support chosen topic.
- produced an engaging and fluent response

Section C

- focused their response on the statement
- demonstrated a powerful independence and conviction of thought
- combined consistent and cohesive breadth and depth in their discussion
- used specific and appropriate details of the well-chosen text(s)
- sustained their discussion in a perceptive and engaging way
- showed a high level of integrated synthesised response.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- selected appropriate statements
- wrote a response which included critical analysis
- wrote solid essays which were fluent and well-constructed
- engaged with the statement in their response
- structured discussions with supporting and relevant reference
- showed personal insight and independent thought
- formed strong, well-supported conclusions about texts.

Section A

- explored different aspects of the texts and understood the relationships between them
- compared elements of the texts and discussed similarities and differences.
- showed a degree of insight in the response
- produced a fluent response

Section B

- responded to the statements
- took time to wrestle with the statement and understand it in their terms rather than assume that the meanings were given
- used their understandings and experience of texts and genres to shape developed and linked discussion
- used appropriate texts and references to support their arguments

Section C

- responded to the statements
- recognised with a degree of discrimination the thrust of the statement, producing relevant and fluent discussion
- included textual evidence fluently, selecting details rather than summarising.

Other candidates commonly:

- did not pace their work across the paper, spending too much time on one section and rushing or leaving out other sections.
- were unable to respond to the statement and redirected materials to pre-worked essays often from other subject areas
- did not fully engage with the statement
- lacked a sense of personal voice or ownership of argument
- worked at a superficial level of understanding of the statement
- responses were literal rather than analytical
- lacked a clear command of their chosen texts and readings
- wrote literary essays that were not fluent or lucid.
- produced work which was unbalanced and lacked the scope to provide Scholarship level responses.

Section A

- misunderstood the unfamiliar texts, or did not compare the texts in any way
- were too focussed on spotting language techniques and restricting their responses to comments on a singular effect rather than a holistic one
- resorted to paraphrased commentaries rather than analysis
- relied on explanation and repetition
- did not develop and structure a coherent discussion
- made general assumptions about genre and shaped their discussion by this, rather than what they found in the texts.

Section B

- pieced together passages of pre-worked materials rather than adapting or responding to the given statement

- often included extraneous reference, detail or quotation which did not pertain to the chosen statement
- did not move beyond particular studied or prepared “past-essay” areas of a text or texts, producing generic genre related discussions
- did not develop the response
- focused on literary theory as a means to an end rather than using it to support their answer.

Section C

- misunderstood the thrust of the statements, without using knowledge of texts or their own reading experience
- retained ‘pocketed’ discussion of individual texts or authors without blending their readings/responses in a relevant discussion
- were unable to show or develop a personal response in relation to the argument
- used texts as stand-alones rather than synthesising them and often included too many.

Further comments

For candidates to succeed at this level they need five key components.

- an understanding of the aspects
- academic writing skills
- a background of detailed text knowledge including wide independent text reading.
- a real interest and engagement with various ideas
- an understanding of themselves and the position they hold as a reader

This understanding of the aspects involves an awareness not only of what they are, but of how they work together.

Academic writing skills will also require practise. Candidates need to be able to write academic discussions on unfamiliar topics within an exam time frame. It is clear that while many candidates know their material and write well, more practice in non-prepared academic writing would be beneficial.

Detailed text background is as essential as selecting the appropriate exam statement for those text(s). It is essential that texts chosen for study permit a degree of analysis and discussion appropriate to the level of statements in the examination. It is not the range and quality of the text that is necessarily the issue. What is of crucial importance is that subsequent study and discussion allows candidates to respond appropriately in the Scholarship exam. Candidates need to be encouraged to widen their independent choice of texts as well and synthesise this in their discussion. The need is for candidates to engage with the question and then use the texts they have at their disposal.

Ideas are fundamental. Candidates’ responses need to engage with the statements, and then advance their own take on what that means. The evidence of independent thought and the creative response is vital.

Responsive Reader: Candidates who respond well are those who have a real understanding of where they are, what the world is all about, and how people respond to it. This development of an independent perspective is critical at this level.

In an examination of this type and standard, time is of the essence. It is vital that candidates avoid long winded introductions and generalised discussions. Candidates would be better served by dealing with the statement and how they perceive it and then enforcing this with textual details.

Until the examination is conducted in a digital format candidates would be well advised to ensure that their handwriting is legible.

Candidates also need to have a good knowledge of the current assessment schedule.

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