

National Certificate of Educational Achievement

2011 Assessment Report

English Level 1

- 90849 Show understanding of specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), using supporting evidence**
- 90850 Show understanding of specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), using supporting evidence**
- 90851 Show understanding of significant aspects of unfamiliar written text(s) through close reading, using supporting evidence**

COMMENTARY

Clearly, the reduced number of standards in the examination has been beneficial for candidates. There were considerably fewer Standard Not Attempted papers across all three standards, and candidates tended to write much lengthier answers as well. However, candidates do need to be reminded that the reduction in standards assessed is to allow for thoughtful, well-planned, quality, and not necessarily longer, answers.

A surprising development this year was that a number of candidates wrote on the wrong genre, confusing standards 90849 and 90850, particularly candidates writing a response to a visual/oral text in the written texts paper. Students must be prepared for what to expect in the examination, and take their time to ensure that they are following all instructions carefully.

Candidates can be assisted to develop the skills and knowledge required to achieve by:

- learning to recognise the purpose and audience of texts, whether familiar or unfamiliar, so they can understand why writers/directors manipulate language
- becoming familiar with the language and ideas needed to show understanding of texts such as the terminology used to describe features of language and how these features work to reveal purpose and audience
- becoming familiar with the idea of reading “on the lines,” for literal meaning; “between the lines,” to infer ideas in the immediate context; and “beyond the lines” connecting the text to the candidates’ own world, to other texts and beyond
- practising selecting the best question for their text – many students find the concept of setting particularly problematic – and would clearly have done better choosing another option
- practising planning and shaping their learned material into a personal response to the question, rather than reproducing pre-learned material and trying to twist the topic or question to fit
- ensuring that they give a balanced response to their chosen question, rather than concentrating on the first part of the question, and then tagging on a superficial response (a short paragraph or concluding statement) for the second part of the question.

STANDARD REPORTS

90849 Show understanding of specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), using supporting evidence

ACHIEVEMENT

Candidates who were awarded Achievement for this standard demonstrated the required skills and knowledge. They typically:

- addressed both parts of the question, but not necessarily in a balanced manner
- incorporated the question’s key words to structure their responses and to show understanding of the question’s requirements
- supported points with specific details from the text(s)

- repeated their structural framework to make sure the marker saw that the question had been answered.

NOT ACHIEVED

Candidates who were assessed as Not Achieved for this standard lacked some or all of the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement. They typically:

- did not address both parts (or any) of the question and did not focus on the key words
- delivered a plot summary
- relied on rote-learned answers and, at times, did not attempt to alter the key words used to cover this year's questions
- gave generalised descriptions and/or explanations with insufficient or no supporting evidence
- made inaccurate comments which revealed a lack of understanding/knowledge of the text
- addressed the question but the response remained superficial/insufficiently developed for achievement.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

In addition to the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement, candidates who were awarded Achievement with Merit typically:

- answered both parts of the question convincingly
- produced effectively structured and well expressed responses
- integrated relevant textual details and accurately reproduced quotations which supported points convincingly
- showed clear understanding of the question and text(s) and often of their wider context /relevance
- began to analyse and draw judgments about the text(s)
- recognised and explicitly acknowledged/discussed the writer's purpose
- presented a definite voice and personal engagement and response.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH EXCELLENCE

In addition to the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement with Merit, candidates who were awarded Achievement with Excellence typically:

- used formal and precise language
- wrote with impressive flair, fluency, and style
- revealed perception and understanding of the text as a whole
- presented fully developed arguments that were sustained and thoroughly supported from the text(s) – details and quotations woven into the response were impressively sophisticated
- displayed original thinking, individual interpretation, and maturity in placing the text(s) in a wider personal and societal context to prove relevance and importance to themselves and their world.

OTHER COMMENTS

Candidates often wrote successfully and perceptively on one short text and were not disadvantaged by selecting a suitable single poem or short story.

Some extended texts seemed inappropriate for NCEA Level 1, because in several instances candidates struggled to relate to these texts as they stretched their limits. These included *King Lear*, *View from the Bridge*, *The Crucible*, and *The Great Gatsby*. On the other hand, texts such as *The Outsiders* and *The Wave* did not provide suitable opportunities for candidates to show their understanding at Level 1.

Popular texts included *Noughts and Crosses*, *The Hunger Games*, and *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas*. Strong answers were written on *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Animal Farm*, and *Montana 1948*. The large number of *Of Mice and Men* and *Animal Farm* answers proves that some texts just stay popular for a long time.

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

ACHIEVEMENT

Candidates who were awarded Achievement for this standard demonstrated the required skills and knowledge. They typically:

- answered both parts of the selected question, even though this may have been unbalanced
- wrote with relevance to the question, and answered the question set rather than reciting a prepared essay
- wrote a planned and organised response
- used clear evidence – specific details and quotes to support points and show understanding
- showed understanding of aspects of their chosen text and identified and explained the use of language feature(s).

NOT ACHIEVED

Candidates who were assessed as Not Achieved for this standard lacked some or all of the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement. They typically:

- did not answer the actual question – wrote material irrelevant to the question or recited a prepared essay
- did not address both parts of the question
- had difficulty identifying and explaining the use of language feature(s)
- wrote a disorganised or confused answer with little evidence of planning
- used limited or generalised details from their chosen text that focused on plot, rather than supporting points made.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

In addition to the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement, candidates who were awarded Achievement with Merit typically:

- demonstrated a convincing understanding of their chosen text by applying their knowledge to both parts of the question
- planned a series of coherent points and supported these with relevant details from their text

- wrote using fluent expression
- moved from just identifying the language features to a more detailed discussion of each feature and how it was used in context of the question being discussed – showed some understanding of the director's/creator's intention
- discussed ideas in their essay.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH EXCELLENCE

In addition to the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement with Merit, candidates who were awarded Achievement with Excellence typically:

- developed a well-planned answer that built a coherent case or argument where all points and evidence were linked to the question
- wrote fluently and with a sense of maturity in their analysis – some with flair and originality
- demonstrated perception by responding to the text and engaging with the text from a personal point of view – candidates were able to relate their text to other texts, world events, or personal experience
- showed a convincing understanding of the way film works as a genre – discussed specified aspects and how they fit the director's/creator's purpose.

OTHER COMMENTS

It is fundamental that students understand that their essay requires discussion of visual and oral techniques. Candidates must write how the technique has been used, with a specific example(s), and why they have been used, namely the impact these visual/oral techniques have on the viewer's understanding of the film. Many candidates did not refer to techniques, or did so at only a simplistic level. Visual/oral techniques need to be selected by the student to support their comments – in context of the question, not just techniques they have learnt in class. Candidates must be clear that this standard deals with a different (visual and oral) text type than the other standards.

The selection of the visual text is important – there is a huge range of texts being taught, but not all were used successfully by candidates, especially those that are too simplistic. Some examples of texts that were used very successfully were: *Slumdog Millionaire*, *The Truman Show*, *Schindler's List*, *Billy Elliot*, and *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*.

Students should be encouraged to develop their own responses to the texts studied, as many students appeared to be re-writing what they had been taught in class, with a heavy reliance on examples from well-known film guides.

In approaching this standard, candidates should emphasise the exploration of a director's/creator's deliberate use of visual and oral techniques and how these techniques are used to convey ideas and meanings for the viewer to interpret.

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

ACHIEVEMENT

Candidates who were awarded Achievement for this standard demonstrated the required skills and knowledge. They typically:

- showed understanding of the meaning of the terms 'language feature' and 'example'
- identified a relevant feature and chose a suitable example
- showed understanding of the feature's effect in the text by discussion of the selected example
- showed understanding of the text and the question.

NOT ACHIEVED

Candidates who were assessed as Not Achieved for this standard lacked some or all of the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement. They typically:

- went beyond the text and made claims that were not present in the text, or summarised the text
- did not understand the requirements of the question
- identified a language feature but could not explain the chosen language feature
- did not correctly identify or describe a language feature
- were vague in specifying the supporting example e.g. used too long an extract without underlining the relevant parts
- simply paraphrased the writer's statements without linking them to the question.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

In addition to the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement, candidates who were awarded Achievement with Merit typically:

- took note of the instruction 'Explain how the writer shows ...' and had some understanding of writing craft
- selected two or more relevant features and examples that were explained in some depth and detail
- showed understanding of the writer's intention and purpose
- used relevant quotations or examples to support points made.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH EXCELLENCE

In addition to the skills and knowledge required for the award of Achievement with Merit, candidates who were awarded Achievement with Excellence typically:

- appreciated the purpose of the writer across the text as a whole, and explored 'beyond the lines' in terms of response
- answered in some length and depth, showing insight and perception
- demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the text based on analysis of the language features, identifying more than one feature and detailed how they were used, including a range of examples
- showed engagement with the text
- used the bullet-pointed ideas as discussion points

- showed understanding that ‘how’ questions required a comment on the writer’s craft
- wrote fluently and coherently
- understood the connection between the writer’s craft and purpose
- gave evidence of independent and sympathetic reading.

OTHER COMMENTS

The scaffolding for each question helped candidates. Grades were awarded holistically over the whole question. Most students found the bullet points useful. However, candidates needed to use the bullet-point suggestions and still answer the question.

Candidates need to explain what language features do, to identify the feature, and to show understanding as to why the feature was used in the given context. Identification must be specific – candidates need to be able to select particular aspects of ‘imagery’ if using ‘imagery’ as a feature.

It is essential that candidates read questions carefully and answer the requirements of the question. When providing examples, candidates need to clearly identify the words specific to a verbal feature by either quoting the exact words or by underlining the relevant words in a longer statement.

A useful approach to unfamiliar texts is to focus on the stylistic conventions of the three genres of texts being assessed: fiction prose, poetry, and non-fiction prose. Candidates should be aware that understanding and explaining the writer’s craft and purpose are the keys to answering the questions fully for this standard.