

National Certificate of Educational Achievement

2012 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

The reduced number of standards in the examination has seen an increase in the quality of responses from candidates. Many candidates are writing much lengthier answers. However candidates do need to be reminded that although a well-planned, thoughtful answer is desired, this does not necessarily mean longer answers. In a considerable number of lengthy answers the extra pages used did not improve the quality. Many successful candidates made good use of the planning pages.

A surprisingly high number of candidates wrote in the wrong booklet for the written and visual/oral texts papers, causing some delays in the marking of their papers. This year NZQA redirected the papers, so there was no penalty to the candidate. However, candidates must take responsibility for writing in the correct booklet. Candidates must be prepared for what to expect in the examination, and take their time to ensure that they are following all instructions carefully, or there may be repercussions in the future.

Although the previous year's paper is always a good practice exercise, candidates should not be expecting exactly the same paper each year, and must be prepared to adapt to small changes in styles of questioning across all three papers.

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 candidates 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.

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:

- used key words from the question in their answers
- answered both parts of the question, but at times the second ‘explain’ component was less fully addressed

- used specific details and/or quotations
- structured their responses and included an introduction and conclusion
- attempted to write about the writer's purpose or intention.

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:

- wrote on questions that were not in the 2012 paper, or attempted to adapt prepared material that did not fit the question
- did not address both parts of the question
- ignored the highlighted words which emphasised the question focus
- wrote plot summaries rather than directed responses
- made little direct reference to texts
- wrote generalised descriptions without sufficient supporting evidence.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

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

- used key words from the question in their answers
- answered both parts of the question evenly and convincingly
- presented individualised and personalised responses to texts that they had engaged with
- wrote original essays rather than reworked prepared essays
- developed their points reasonably fully and supported them with a range of examples and evidence
- discussed questions in relation to the writer's purpose
- understood the importance of the question to the text as a whole and often discussed personal relevance.

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:

- wrote sophisticated, original responses
- answered both parts of the question perceptively, appreciating the question's implications and nuances within several contexts
- structured responses with originality rather than using formulaic approaches such as 'in this essay I will describe and explain'
- often referred to the style and form of the text
- demonstrated genuine understanding of the whole text and the writer's purpose
- wrote detailed responses interwoven with well chosen textual references, including beyond-text references
- showed a detailed knowledge of the text, but only included details that were relevant to the question
- referenced with perception; understood and commented on the author's intentions making links to their own world or time
- understood the social/political/historical contexts of the text.

OTHER COMMENTS

Candidates wrote successfully on one short text and were not disadvantaged by selecting a single poem or short story. Including a second text was effective when comparing or contrasting, or to show applicability of points to a wider context than a single text. However, it added nothing to the grade where candidates wrote to the same depth on two texts simply as a means to develop the length of their answers.

Candidates should learn to recognise where a question is requiring recognition of the text's ideas and the writer's purpose, indicated by phrases like 'important in the text(s) as a whole.'

Candidates wrote successfully on texts that were meaningful and relevant to them. These were often texts which were age-appropriate, reflected common teenage themes and were of interest to the candidates.

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 – answered the question 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
- understood aspects of their chosen text and were able to identify and explain 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, wrote a plot summary or recited a prepared essay
- did not address both parts of the question
- struggled to identify and explain the use of language feature(s)
- wrote a disorganised or confused answer with little evidence of planning, or paragraph structure
- used limited or generalised details from their chosen text that focussed 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 identifying the language features used, 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 creator's/director's intention.

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 was 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 (were able to relate it to other texts, world events or personal experience)
- showed a convincing understanding of the way film works as a genre – able to discuss specified aspects and how they fit the creator's purpose.

OTHER COMMENTS

Candidates need to write a balanced response to their chosen question, with equal consideration given to each part of the question. Too many candidates concentrated on the first part of the question and then wrote a superficial response to the second part, often within a conclusion. The second part of the candidate's answer is significant as this is the part that enables candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and insight, discuss ideas and interpret the director's intention, within the constraints of the chosen question.

Candidates need to support their points with visual and/or oral techniques as this is stated as a requirement for each question – “...*supporting your points with examples of visual and/or oral language features*”. Candidates need to write how the selected feature(s) has been used, giving a specific example, and then explaining the impact of the use of this technique within the context of the question. Candidates must be clear that this standard deals with a different (visual and oral) text type than other standards.

A number of candidates tried to respond to the text and engage with the text from a personal point of view – relate it to world events or personal experience – but they did this without the other requirements of a strong answer – e.g. they did not comment on oral/visual language features, or did not discuss the idea(s) in the text. Candidates need to be made aware that this ‘engagement’ with the text needs to be woven within an answer that meets the requirements of the question.

The selection of visual/oral text is important – some texts that were very successful for candidates who gained Merit or Excellence included: *The Truman Show*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Billy Elliot*, *What’s Eating Gilbert Grape?*, *Schindler’s List*, *Gallipoli*, *The Village* and *Boy*.

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:

- understood the terminology of the question e.g. ‘language feature’, ‘example’
- identified a relevant feature/point and chose an appropriate example
- showed understanding of the effect of using the feature/point by discussing the selected example.

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:

- failed to identify an appropriate example of the language feature chosen
- did not adequately begin to explain how the language feature operated in the text
- chose irrelevant or unhelpful language features and examples in relation to the question asked
- simply paraphrased the writer’s statements without linking them to the question
- used generic descriptors for techniques e.g. ‘describing’ words, imagery
- were too vague in providing an example e.g. used too long an extract without underlining the relevant parts.

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 instructions “Explain how and why the writer shows..” and examined both “how” and “why” the writer used language
- selected two or more relevant features which were explained with detail and in some depth
- showed understanding of the writer’s intention and purpose
- showed familiarity with the stylistic features of each genre of text e.g. fiction prose, poetry, non-fiction prose
- 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:

- wrote well-structured answers which were supported by a range of techniques

- used examples of techniques, including language features, and demonstrated a clear understanding of how the techniques and language features were used by the writer for effects throughout the text
- 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 detailed knowledge of the texts 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 texts.
- used the bullet pointed ideas as discussion points
- understood that “how and why” questions required comments on the writer’s craft
- understood the connection between the writer’s craft and purpose
- wrote fluently and coherently
- showed understanding and appreciation of how selected features combined to produce intentional effects.

OTHER COMMENTS

The three texts were accessible for most candidates with enough depth for candidates to be awarded Achieved, Merit or Excellence. The glossary was useful though some candidates did not show understanding but just repeated the definition or part of the definition in their answers without unpacking or showing understanding of how and why the word was used.

The scaffolding for each question helped Candidates. Grades were awarded holistically over the whole question. Some candidates answered only part (c). This was often done very well.

Candidates need to be able 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. Candidates need to be able to specify particular aspects of ‘imagery’ if using ‘imagery as a feature. “Imagery’ or ‘descriptive writing’ on their own without more specificity are not sufficient.

Candidates need to clearly identify the words specific to a language feature by either **quoting the exact words or by underlining the relevant words.**

Candidates need to read questions carefully and answer the requirements of the question. Question 3 required the candidate to use their own words, an instruction which some did not take note of.

A useful approach to unfamiliar texts is to focus on the stylistic conventions of the three genre of text being assessed.