

National Certificate of Educational Achievement

2013 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

Many candidates are writing lengthy responses. 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, depth, or perception. This does need to be emphasised to candidates.

The addition of the advisory note, printed in red, about which text type to write on meant that far fewer candidates wrote in the wrong booklet. 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. Effective answers saw candidates shape learned material into responses tailored directly to the questions. This explicit linking often saw candidates move to the higher grades.

Many successful answers came from candidates who wrote on texts that were meaningful and relevant to them. These texts tended to be age appropriate, and included relevant and engaging themes, which were often of interest to the candidate. Choice of text is critical if candidates are to reach the highest levels. Texts need to be of sufficient length and depth to enable criteria to be met, and allow candidates to develop a convincing and perceptive response.

Some candidates strayed too far from their text in their responses, which meant that their response read more like current events or issues than an exploration of their understandings of the text itself. While moving beyond the text is an effective strategy for candidates to use to develop convincing or perceptive answers, candidates need to be aware that they must maintain a strong connection and relevance to the text throughout their essay.

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, while still maintaining links to the text itself
- 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:

- answered both parts of the question chosen, although unevenly at times
- incorporated the question's key wording into their responses
- knew their text(s) in reasonable detail
- supported responses with some relevant details/quotations from the text(s)
- wrote structured responses which included an introduction/body paragraphs/conclusion.

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 sufficiently address both parts of the question, or only answered one half of the question – usually the first half
- produced plot summaries rather than directed responses
- wrote on questions that were not in the 2013 paper, or attempted to adapt prepared material that did not fit the question
- ignored the highlighted words which emphasised the question focus
- presented generalised responses without sufficient supporting evidence
- showed insufficient understanding or a poor knowledge of the text(s).

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

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

- produced well organised, well expressed responses
- answered both parts of the question evenly and convincingly
- developed their points reasonably fully and supported them with a range of examples and evidence
- integrated supporting evidence effectively, often by weaving in relevant specific details or quotations with their own comments
- discussed questions in relation to the writer's purpose
- showed some understanding of a key aspect's importance to the text(s) as a whole
- presented individualised and personalised responses to texts that they had engaged with
- used linking phrases to lead to analysis and discussion of the writer's purpose.

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 commonly:

- answered the question's requirements with confidence, insight, perception
- developed a 'beyond the lines' reading centred on the text itself
- answered both parts of the question perceptively, in an integrated way, appreciating the question's implications and nuances within several contexts
- demonstrated genuine understanding of the whole text
- wrote with maturity and fluency revealing an impressive personal understanding
- integrated effective supporting evidence to create clear, compelling arguments
- connected writer's purpose, techniques and appreciation of their impact on readers
- were confident in selecting aspects of their text(s) to illustrate their points
- applied a sophisticated essay structure, rather than using formulaic approaches such as "In this essay I will"
- 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.

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 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.

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 question chosen, although unevenly at times
- incorporated the question's key wording into their responses
- knew their text(s) in reasonable detail
- made reference to one or more visual or oral language features
- supported responses with some relevant evidence from the text(s)
- wrote structured responses which included an introduction/body paragraphs/conclusion, often formulaic in approach.

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 sufficiently address both parts of the question, or only answered one half of the question – usually the first half
- produced plot summaries rather than directed responses, or wrote material irrelevant to 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
- wrote on questions that were not in the 2013 paper, or attempted to adapt prepared material that did not fit the question
- 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 commonly:

- produced well organised, well expressed responses
- answered both parts of the question evenly and convincingly, often linking points to each other
- developed their points reasonably fully and supported them with a range of examples and evidence
- provided multiple examples of visual and/or oral language features, often exploring other features in addition to camera work and dialogue
- discussed question in relation to the director's purpose
- showed some understanding of the text(s) as a whole
- 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 commonly:

- perceptively answered both parts of the question, often integrating or interweaving the two parts of the task
- wrote a focused response that did not contain any erroneous tangents
- created a fluently written essay that makes confident points that are relevant to the question, and show originality in thought or interpretation
- recognised that a director uses techniques, e.g. camera angles and lighting, together and was able to unpack their significance
- wrote an essay that contained sophisticated vocabulary and revealed personal voice
- showed personal engagement with the text
- showed an appreciation of the director/creator to audience relationship

- structured essays in a way that suited their argument, as opposed to a pre-learnt structure
- displayed evidence of insightful and/or original thinking in their analysis of: visual and oral language features; relevance to society; personal engagement or creator's purpose/intentions.

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.

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*, *Boy*, and *Pleasantville*.

Other texts seemed to limit candidates' responses, and included: *Remember the Titans*, *Coach Carter*, *Juno*, *Mean Creak*, *The Lion King*, *The Blindside*, and radio programmes.

90851 Show understanding of significant aspect(s) 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:

- identified a relevant feature/point and provided an appropriate example
- showed understanding of the effect of using the feature/point by discussing the selected example
- understood the terminology of the question e.g. 'language feature' 'example'
- showed some understanding of the text
- showed some understanding of the purpose of the text.

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 understand the text
- did not read questions carefully or misunderstood the requirements of the question
- identified a feature/idea but did not support with an appropriate example
- failed to identify a feature/aspect or chose irrelevant or unhelpful language features and examples in relation to the question asked
- identified a technique incorrectly
- did not use their own words to show understanding of the text and the example
- were vague in their explanation and/or too brief in their explanation e.g. used too long an extract without underlining the relevant parts
- tended to describe what happened rather than how the author had described it.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

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

- identified several relevant techniques with appropriate examples, which were explained with detail and in some depth
- combined relevant quotations or examples to support points made
- showed how and why the techniques were used in the text
- showed understanding of the writer's intention and purpose
- made connections between the meaning of the text and the use of techniques with some appreciation of the overall effect.

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 commonly:

- wrote confident, well-structured answers which were supported by a range of techniques
- understood the purpose of the piece of writing, and made mention of it
- could take their response beyond the text
- showed awareness of the writer's craft
- wrote at length and to the point
- showed insight in understanding of how technique(s) supported ideas/themes
- were able to make links to events 'beyond the text' that were relevant in the context of their interpretation and response
- demonstrated a perceptive understanding of techniques used in the text with an appreciation of the writer's intent and the effect of these techniques in appealing to the reader.

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.

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', 'word choice', 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 show understanding of the content, the writer's skills in describing the content, and an understanding of the writer's purpose.

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