

National Certificate of Educational Achievement

2013 Assessment Report

English Level 2

- 91098 Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), supported by evidence**
- 91099 Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence**
- 91100 Analyse significant aspects of unfamiliar written text(s) through close reading, supported by evidence**

COMMENTARY

Across the three externally assessed standards there has been further improvement in the percentage of candidates who achieved.

For essay-based standards, most candidates showed the ability to analyse texts effectively. To do this often required more than 350 word responses. However, very long answers are not necessarily better: successful responses remain linked to the question. Quality rather than quantity is important.

Questions continue to be framed to encourage the production of original responses that have not been pre-prepared by candidates or others. Well-prepared candidates are those able to discuss all four aspects of texts specified in the New Zealand Curriculum: purposes and audiences, ideas, structure and language features. It is important to note that the term **idea** when used in questions is taken from the New Zealand Curriculum, and can refer to character and setting as well as theme.

The comments included in this report about texts which worked well or not for candidates are merely opinions: markers consider all texts for assessment. It is important teachers hook into student interest and ability when selecting appropriate texts for study. However, it is also important that teachers consider the depth for analysis provided by texts as well as the impact of some texts which have particularly depressing plots and themes.

In the unfamiliar text standard, students continue to develop their strengths in analysis. Students who followed the bullet-pointed scaffolding in particular were able to present well-structured answers.

Candidates should be encouraged to make use of the extra paper available rather than writing in a cramped way that is sometimes difficult to follow. As always, handwriting should be legible. Poor handwriting will not directly affect the grade but it does affect the clarity of the candidate's argument.

STANDARD REPORTS

91098 Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), supported by evidence

ACHIEVEMENT

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

- knew the text well
- used relevant examples and quotations
- wrote a formulaic answer that mentioned aspects of the question but did not fully engage with those aspects
- understood the key words of the question, e.g. personal voice, structure/organisation
- answered both parts of the question, using key words in the opening paragraph
- made statements that covered the **how** requirement of 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:

- wrote a response that was too brief
- wrote a plot summary or a simplistic account without any analysis of it
- relied on a film version of an extended text
- tried to use a prepared essay
- did not address both parts of the question
- did not understand one part of the question
- wrote about the whole text when the question referred to a section of the text
- misunderstood key words (e.g. personal voice or structure) and so wrote an essay that did not answer the question
- confused language techniques with other devices (e.g. structure, parody).

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

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

- engaged with the text on a personal level
- used appropriate quotation and/or close referencing
- kept the focus on the exam question throughout the essay
- used structure effectively to address the question
- showed some fluency and control of expression
- showed some awareness of writer's purpose and the reader/writer relationship
- responded to the question by exploring more than one text and could explain the relevance of discussing both texts.

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:

- demonstrated extensive knowledge of the text, as well as bringing in relevant material about the author and the social/historical context
- integrated apt quotations
- fully understood and responded to all aspects of the question
- wrote with flair and fluency
- used an original viewpoint and explored possibilities of meaning
- showed insight beyond the text
- wrote answers that went well beyond the minimum word requirement.

OTHER COMMENTS:

All of the questions were attempted by candidates and offered students the opportunity to achieve at all levels. Candidates sometimes chose an inappropriate question. Some responses showed a very good knowledge of the text but failed to explore the particular aspect required, e.g. 'choices made by the writer' OR 'how the age or life experience of a

character influenced their understanding of the world around them'. Candidates should be advised to avoid twisting questions so they can write prepared answers, and should also not go beyond the question. Some responses ignored the singular 'an event' which tended to dilute the answer.

Candidates mostly selected novel, drama, short story and poetry; there were fewer responses on multiple texts and very few intertextual responses. Responses based on one very short or simplistic poem or short story tended to limit candidates' ability to achieve with Merit and Excellence.

Text choice is significant. For the most part a good range of texts was studied and most were suitable and demanding enough for Level 2 English. Some texts are too simplistic to show the level of analysis required at this level. Texts that should possibly be avoided include: *Looking for Alibrandi*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*, *Tomorrow When the War Began*, *The Hunger Games*, *Animal Farm*, and *Of Mice and Men*.

Some of the non-Shakespearean drama texts did not appear to be well understood or appreciated by candidates, e.g. *The Pohutukawa Tree*. Some short texts did not generate in depth responses, e.g. *The Geranium*, *In the Rubbish Tin*, *A Great Day*, *The Lottery* and some short stories by Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera. Song lyrics also did not always allow for the depth of analysis required or lead to insightful responses.

Texts that generated solid responses included *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Othello*, *Mr Pip*, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Book Thief*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *My Sister's Keeper*, *The Secret Life of Bees*, *Montana 1948*, and *Purple Hibiscus*.

Some more adult texts – *The Colour Purple*, *Angela's Ashes*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* – might more appropriately extend students at Level 3.

91099 Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence

ACHIEVEMENT

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

- showed some engagement with the text
- included straightforward analysis of their examples, linked to the topic
- supported ideas with relevant evidence
- showed (some) understanding of an aspect of the text
- addressed all aspects of the question
- used keywords from the question to structure their response
- structured ideas logically
- wrote in excess of 350 words
- showed some awareness of the text being crafted for a particular purpose.

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:

- relied on plot
- described events as opposed to providing analysis
- showed little personal engagement with the text
- did not cite enough detail from the text to support claims
- did not link examples to a particular purpose or effect
- wrote a pre-learned response that failed to address the question
- did not engage the question
- showed little understanding of the aspect specified in the question
- provided insufficient analysis or did not make clear enough causal links
- showed limited awareness of deliberate choices made by the creator of the text
- wrote answers lacking in depth and detail.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

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

- showed clear engagement with the text
- used several examples, or one well developed example, to support each main idea
- analysed evidence fully
- demonstrated more depth and/ or breadth of understanding of the text
- analysed with confidence and detail, offering detailed explanations
- demonstrated clear understanding of the question and remained focused on the question throughout
- wrote a well-structured answer
- showed a strong sense of audience being deliberately influenced by director for a particular purpose
- demonstrated understanding of the creator's purpose and craft
- wrote clearly and with confidence.

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:

- showed meaningful engagement with the text throughout the essay, providing genuine, personal response
- set up a personal argument in the introduction and consistently addressed the question as related to the argument established
- used a wide range of evidence that exemplified several techniques
- embedded relevant quotation seamlessly into their discussion of the question
- wove analytical statements into each point seamlessly
- wrote a cohesive integrated response with apt examples
- provided thought-provoking conclusions with answers showing evidence of original independent thinking
- articulated a sophisticated or detailed point of view on the text

- used beyond the text comments purposefully
- demonstrated whole-text awareness
- evaluated the effectiveness of the choices made in the construction of the text
- included unique/original reflection on the director's craft
- wrote fluently; essays were often eloquent and compelling.

OTHER COMMENTS

The film genre dominates this standard, with only a few students using television programmes or radio productions.

Candidates responded positively to the range and focus of the questions presented in the 2013 paper. Responses revealed some fresh independent thought and engagement.

While it is excellent to see candidates connecting the text to their world, experiences and real life events, students must be careful not to focus too heavily on beyond the text comments without first fully developing the textual analysis

Question interpretation and question engagement was notably stronger this year, with fewer rote learned essays evidenced. Some candidates rely on description in the development of their written answer. At Level 2 it is important that responses hinge on analysis.

As in previous years, the nature of visual and oral text makes it difficult to write successfully about creator purpose and the shaping of audience response without reference to genre specific techniques, such as film shot or use of sound techniques. Candidates should be encouraged to discuss text with reference to such techniques.

Texts that have strong stylistic elements lend themselves to a higher level of analysis and discussion. Texts such as *Atonement*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Schindler's List*, *The Dark Knight*, and *Slumdog Millionaire* are good examples of this.

91100 Analyse significant aspects of unfamiliar written text(s) through close reading, supported by evidence

ACHIEVEMENT

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

- showed understanding of the text, though this may have lacked depth
- wrote in clear detail and provided some knowledge/understanding of the text
- wrote formulaic responses e.g. this technique was used to do this, covering a limited number of techniques in their discussion
- offered pedestrian, obvious answers
- identified at least one technique from the text and attempted to explain its effect
- explained aspects of the text and used techniques and detail for support
- were able to link their discussion of techniques (may have been implied) to ideas
- paraphrased the writer's ideas
- linked their response to the question
- answered at a literal level rather than metaphorically

- explained rather than analysed aspects of the text
- explained the text showing very limited understanding of craft and/or purpose– may have misinterpreted the author’s purpose
- answered with a structured response and used the bullet point support to structure their answer
- identified text purpose and main idea but did not expand
- understood one text better than the others, which helped them to get over the line
- often did not answer both parts of the question but addressed at least one part
- had limited knowledge of the writer’s subject matter.

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:

- indicated that they did not understand the text
- summarised “what happened” in the text instead of answering the question
- copied out whole passages of the source text
- did not answer the question at all – wrote an answer that was unconnected to the text
- paraphrased parts of or the whole question or parts of the text
- used words from the text, the question and the explanatory notes for the text but did not interpret the writer’s ideas in their own words
- focused on a small aspect of the text e.g. the narrator’s environment
- wrote too little and failed to develop their answers sufficiently
- answered with only one or two bullet points
- identified techniques but did not write about the writer’s ideas or purpose
- wrote with limited understanding of language techniques
- followed evidence with a definition of the technique, rather than an explanation/analysis of author’s purpose in using the technique
- gave explanation of ideas or author’s purpose but did not use supporting evidence
- misunderstood the author’s purpose/ideas
- did not address the writer’s purpose
- did not understand the ideas/vocabulary used by the author and therefore wrote incomprehensible responses
- wrote very short answers (but this did not necessarily guarantee an N)
- did not attempt all three questions
- wrote a superficial response and/or listed techniques and examples with no real understanding of how they were used and what effect/purpose they have
- did not recognise mood or tone.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

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

- showed a greater depth of understanding when analysing aspects of the text
- showed convincing understanding of the writer’s ideas and purpose
- identified techniques and were able to unpack their meaning, often going “beyond the lines”

- showed development of ideas by using multiple examples
- filtered through various language uses to discuss the ones relevant to the question and the ones most significant in terms of showing an idea
- often gave lots of examples
- provided strong analysis in terms of language techniques and linked these to the ideas of the piece
- wrote longer answers (but this did not guarantee a higher grade)
- went into more depth thus creating a more convincing response
- wrote more developed responses, linking discussion of techniques throughout their response
- wrote more detailed and structured answers
- wrote with some originality and had some awareness and/or limited insight about the text
- inferred awareness of craft and purpose
- tailored responses to the questions being asked and used scaffolding statements provided by NZQA to structure the answers
- usually answered both parts of the question.

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:

- clearly understood the text
- indicated real engagement with the text
- provided unique and insightful interpretations
- let their personality shine through with a lively and insightful response
- understood nuances of the text and uncovered deeper meaning
- unpacked the meaning of techniques
- showed sophisticated understanding when analysing author's use of techniques
- integrated evidence from the text to skilfully support their points
- demonstrated insightful observation of the writer's crafting
- showed insight and original thinking about the writer's ideas and purpose
- taught the marker something new about the text
- moved beyond the text (e.g. relevance to own life) while remaining connected to it
- showed insight by linking their discussion to relevant ideas beyond the text
- explained how the text was important to them or humanity in general (wider context)
- showed a sophisticated understanding of the ideas/author's purpose
- gave analysis that was developed/thorough and tended to address the whole text
- showed flair and fluency in writing
- wrote with confidence and perception
- used a wide, interesting vocabulary
- recognised and analysed the text in context of its text type.

OTHER COMMENTS

Candidates did well when they made use of the information and guidelines provided in both the resource booklet and the question paper.

Good responses focused on the key aspects of ideas, technical crafting, and writer's purpose, and structured their responses around the ideas contained within the text, rather than responding with a formulaic discussion of techniques that were not directly linked to the ideas.

Candidates who were confident in offering an interpretation of the text, suggested that they had experience (i.e. plenty of practice) dealing with 'unfamiliar' texts in a variety of genres.