

# **National Certificate of Educational Achievement**

## **2013 Assessment Report**

### **English Level 3**

- 91472 Respond critically to specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), supported by evidence**
- 91473 Respond critically to specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence**
- 91474 Respond critically to significant aspects of unfamiliar written texts through close reading, supported by evidence**

## COMMENTARY

This was the first year for examinations to assess these achievement standards.

## STANDARD REPORTS

### **91472 Respond critically to 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:**

- showed a basic understanding of the question
- understood the importance of using textual references to support their argument(s)
- showed a limited knowledge of their text(s)
- could use a satisfactory essay structure
- expressed ideas directly and coherently
- explained their argument(s)
- had few writing convention concerns.

#### **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:**

- provided rote-learned responses
- misunderstood the meaning of the key words of the questions
- showed a narrow understanding of textual aspect(s)
- were unable to use appropriate writing conventions
- provided insufficient evidence from their text(s) to support their points
- did not present a recognisable essay structure.

#### **ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT**

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

- maintained the focus of their response to the chosen question
- showed an in-depth understanding of their text(s)
- had a well-developed ability to control and use language effectively
- presented opinions that were supported by evidence
- consistently and clearly developed their arguments
- were able to use writing conventions with accuracy
- attempted to relate the text to wider society (past or present)
- presented a clear, discernible essay structure.

## **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:**

- integrated references appropriately into their responses
- viewed their chosen text(s) as a vehicle for societal or contextual analysis
- presented a consistent philosophical discussion
- wrote with a fluent, engaging writing style
- linked aspects within the text(s) to beyond the text(s) with consistency
- articulated their personal opinion(s) clearly
- maintained a singular focus on the chosen question
- demonstrated clear, logical and consistent paragraph and essay structure(s).

## **OTHER COMMENTS**

2013 saw a number of texts and approaches that were new and refreshing in response to this standard. The Book Thief, The Bluest Eye and Frankenstein were all used in highly effective submissions. It was also pleasing to see so many students presenting Shakespeare-based responses that consistently were well-aligned to the 2013 examination questions. A large number of quality discussions were presented in response to Yann Martel's Life of Pi. The Great Gatsby was also heavily presented but in a significant number of cases, symbolism was presented without any alignment to the chosen question. This was one text where students struggled to meet the Excellence criteria. Those students who discussed this text in terms of symbolic and metaphorical contexts shone; those who merely focused on the physical aspect struggled. The Road by McCarthy was another text where successful responses focused on non-physical aspects of the text.

Responses were often highly successful when focusing on short written texts. The use of two or more texts allowed effective comparison and contrast to take place. In this respect, Baxter, Owen & Sassoon, Mansfield were all positively used. Where only one short written text was used, there was often a shortfall in evidence, explanation or judgment. It is strongly recommended that where a singular text is used, it is of sufficient depth (Level 8 of the curriculum) and length to enable a judicious and substantial response.

It is also pertinent to note that extensively long essays often did not get above Achieved level due to excessive evidence representation or unnecessary explanations. Students who wrote in excess of one thousand words for the most part, struggled with control and conciseness.

## **91473 Respond critically to 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:**

- demonstrated engagement with and knowledge of the text
- used key words from the question to focus their answer and make connections
- constructed a reasonable argument in response to the question
- used evidence from the text constructively
- structured essays logically
- showed an awareness of the creator's 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:**

- chose a statement that did not apply to their chosen text
- misunderstood, or failed to engage with the question
- displayed limited or inadequate knowledge of the chosen text
- did not construct a reasonable argument based on textual evidence
- focused on plot or character description or an unrelated aspect of the text
- made broad generalisations which lacked sufficient depth
- did not follow the conventions of a literary essay in terms of structure or expression.

## **ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT**

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

- chose to answer a question that best suited their text
- engaged convincingly with the text and the question
- began with and developed a relevant and thoughtful argument
- discussed a range of techniques and provided appropriate evidence
- demonstrated some maturity and perception
- demonstrated a deep understanding of the director's intent
- demonstrated some awareness of the wider issues within, or in the background of, the text.

## **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 perception and critical thinking skills
- constructed a cogent argument around well-chosen evidence
- wrote fluently and linked their own experience or that of the world/society to aspects of the studied text
- embedded their analysis and integrated relevant quotations or examples seamlessly
- demonstrated an awareness of the creator's crafting of the text
- integrated insightful judgements throughout their discussion.

## **OTHER COMMENTS**

Candidates mostly understood the need to write succinctly but there were a quite a number of very long essays where the thinking didn't lift above Achieved level. Candidates should be reminded to aim for quality rather than quantity. Candidates are encouraged to use the planning page. Where planning was evident the arguments tended to have a better sense of direction.

The choice of text is crucial to student success. Candidates who studied texts which did not have enough depth in terms of ideas or techniques often struggled to make a critical response. Some candidates who found unpacking the question more difficult with such texts, tended to rely on plot summary. This year there was an increase in responses that referred to pairs of films, or a body of work by a particular director. A significant number of students had real issues with writing conventions.

## **91474 Respond critically to significant aspects of unfamiliar written texts through close reading, supported by evidence**

### **ACHIEVEMENT**

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

- wrote a straightforward but accurate answer often structuring the answer through clear paragraphs
- used relevant examples of the chosen aspects
- made some attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the chosen aspects
- discussed the aspect and its effect with some confidence
- discussed a straightforward comparison of the texts
- discussed a similarity or a difference between the texts and summarised the comparison/contrast
- showed a reasonable understanding of what each text was about.

### **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:**

- were unable to identify any aspects
- were unable to correctly identify aspects
- were unable to support their answer with correct or relevant evidence from the text
- misinterpreted what they had quoted
- quoted at great length without answering the question
- repeated material and/or rambled, rather than attempting to structure a clear answer
- were unable to respond critically.

### **ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT**

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

- referred to the aspects and explained the effects of these clearly and convincingly
- showed an appreciation of the writers' crafting and purpose
- selected appropriate evidence from the texts to support their ideas
- discussed the change or development evident in the text
- structured their answer in a clear and detailed manner
- wrote a convincing comparison of the two 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:**

- built a strong case for their discussion, weaving in a variety of evidence, writing fluently
- discussed a range of aspects, including both language features and structures
- evaluated the effectiveness of the chosen aspects, often comparing them

- wrote at some length, often in a sophisticated way, building and arguing a case
- evaluated consistently, presenting and weighing up both negative and positive findings
- integrated their analysis of the poem
- showed insight/perception in their analysis
- communicated their ideas clearly and with flair
- went beyond the text to reinforce their interpretation of the poem.

## **OTHER COMMENTS**

The majority of students who answered this standard had a good understanding of the basic aspects of unfamiliar text. Some students, however, did not understand that the advice given about the *aspect* was meant to be unpacked; for example, they tended to write about figurative language, rather than name a specific type of figurative language. Candidates must discuss the ‘aspects’ of written texts in detail, rather than merely use the term ‘figurative language’ or ‘diction.’ The headings were there as a guide and some students were unable to move past this terminology to discuss the style of the writer using more precise or accurate terminology.

Many candidates took the ‘point of view’ of the text to be the writer’s opinion, rather than a specific first or third person narrative style and had little understanding of syntax. A large number of candidates were unable to discuss sentence structure with confidence or accuracy. Many candidates saw ‘short’ sentences as simple sentences and long sentences as complex sentences. A large number of candidates were unable to accurately discuss the structure of either text (whether it was the shape of the whole text or a more specific structure such as a particular type of sentence). Very few candidates were able to discuss structure beyond describing the beginning, middle and the end of the text(s). While many students were able to discuss the metaphorical journey of the character in Text B, very few saw the journey as merely a man shifting a chair across the room.