

National Certificate of Educational Achievement

2014 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

For essay-based standards, most candidates showed the ability to analyse texts effectively. This generally required more than 350 word responses. However, there seemed to be a trend to longer responses that did not progress or develop the argument in a more insightful way, but merely analysed more evidence in the same vein. Therefore it is suggested that an essay length of four to five pages is appropriate for all levels of achievements.

Despite the framing of questions in a way designed to produce original responses, there are still a number of candidates entering the examination with a pre-prepared response that sets the candidate up to not achieve. Candidates who are able to discuss purposes and audiences, ideas, structure and language features will be well-prepared. Candidates should also keep the writer's purpose at the forefront of their minds. Finally, analysis is the key at Level 2: descriptions are not sufficient to achieve. Candidates should think carefully about what it is they are being asked to analyse.

In the unfamiliar text standard, candidates continue to develop their strengths in analysis. Candidates who followed the bullet-pointed scaffolding in particular were able to present well-structured answers. While the use of taught scaffolding in responses such as "PILATES" can assist weaker candidates, it can also preclude more able candidates from developing Excellence level responses. Candidates should also be exposed to a variety of unfamiliar text genres in their preparation for the standard.

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 commonly:

- knew the text well
- wrote a formulaic answer
- answered both parts of the question, by using key words in the opening paragraph, and making statements that covered the "how" requirement of the question.
- understood the key words of the question e.g. "shifts in power", "shapes reaction", "cruel or kind behaviour" and "satisfying"
- used relevant examples and quotations.

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 commonly:

- wrote a plot summary
- wrote a response that was too brief
- tried to use a prepared essay
- relied on a film version of a written text
- did not address both parts of the question
- did not understand one part of the question

- wrote a simplistic account of the text without showing any analysis of it
- misunderstood key words, e.g. "shifts in power", "satisfying outcome"
- confused language techniques with other devices e.g. point of view
- struggled due the text they were writing on lacking substance.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

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

- showed some awareness of writer's purpose and the reader/writer relationship
- used structure effectively to address the question
- kept the focus of the exam question throughout the essay
- engaged with the text on a personal level
- showed some fluency and control of expression
- used appropriate quotation and/or close referencing.

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:

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

OTHER COMMENTS

Most candidates answered on novel, drama, short story and poetry.

All of the questions were attempted by candidates and offered candidates the opportunity to achieve at all levels. Fewer candidates selected Q8; a number of candidates clearly wanted to discuss symbolism and answered Q2 or Q5, with symbolism being the only language feature discussed.

A wide range of texts were studied and most were suitable for Level 2 English. However, some of the short stories provided limited opportunity for analysis at Level 2 English.

Texts that should possibly be avoided at this level because the analysis of them limits the candidate's opportunity to achieve at all levels - In the Rubbish Tin, A Great Day, Looking for Alibrandi, Of Mice and Men, and The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time.

Some of the non-Shakespearean drama texts did not appear to be well understood or appreciated, e.g. An Inspector Calls.

Texts that generated solid responses included Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Mr Pip, Lord of the Flies, The Book Thief, To Kill a Mockingbird, Purple Hibiscus, Purple Heart, Carol Ann Duffy poetry, The Road, The Room, War poetry, The Kite Runner, Katherine Mansfield stories.

It is important to keep the focus on analysis. For example in Question 1, candidates needed to appreciate why the shift in power occurred and not simply describe what happened. Some simply talked about a "change" in power. Similarly in Question 4: some candidates chose setting but were unable to analyse its significance as anything more than the place where something happened. In Question 6, it was easy for candidates to slip into a plot summary.

Finally in Question 8 - Most responses to this question were not successful, as candidates often described the entire plot rather than focussing on the ending. Some simply stated what happened at the end and whether or not they found it "satisfying" without any explanation either as to why or of the writer's intent.

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 commonly:

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

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 commonly:

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

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

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

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

- set up a personal argument in the introduction and consistently addressed the question as related to the argument established
- wove analytical statements into each point seamlessly
- provided thought-provoking conclusions with answers showing evidence of original independent thinking
- provided insightful analysis throughout essay
- wrote a cohesive integrated response with apt examples
- used a wide range of evidence that exemplified several techniques
- embedded relevant quotation seamlessly into their discussion of the question
- articulated a sophisticated or detailed point of view on the text
- evaluated the effectiveness of the choices made in the construction of the text
- included unique/original reflection on the director's craft
- used beyond the text comments purposefully
- demonstrated whole-text awareness
- showed meaningful engagement with the text throughout the essay, providing genuine, personal response
- wrote fluently; often eloquent and compelling.

OTHER COMMENTS

The film genre continues to dominate this standard, with only a few candidates using television programmes or radio productions. An increasing variety of titles are in evidence, highlighting more confidence across the country with regards to selecting text appropriate to class type and focus. Some newer texts that worked particularly well included *Philomena*, *The Book Thief*, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and *The Silver Linings Playbook*.

As mentioned 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. It is excellent to see candidates increasingly discussing text with reference to such techniques.

The scope and parameters of the role of a director caused some candidates difficulty. Many candidates seemed unclear about the line between the screen play writer and the director. These candidates tended to discuss the director's choice of characters or dialogue, or limited themselves to purely discussing camera shots.

Additionally, some candidates struggled with the concept of symbolism. Simply asserting something is symbolic is not sufficient. The explanation of cause and effect is what lies at the heart of analysis. Equally, many candidates discussed literal meaning only.

Candidates who attempted the structure question tended to demonstrate a stronger understanding of this aspect than in previous years. This suggests focused teaching and learning around the structure and organisation of text.

Few candidates chose to write about setting. Of those who did, some failed to actually address setting, writing instead about characters or events that happened in a place/location/era without providing a causal link between the place/location/era and their understanding of character.

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 commonly:

- understood the subject matter in a basic, unimaginative way
- had some understanding of techniques used
- wrote answers that were often confined to only one or two sections of the text
- focused on identifying techniques used as opposed to building an argument
- explained what the text was about but had little awareness of how it had been crafted or why it was significant
- addressed the overall question, using the scaffolds but often in general or self-evident detail.

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 commonly:

- did not realise that there was a question they had to answer
- used no evidence to support their argument
- listed techniques and explained the effect of techniques without specifically linking it to the text
- gave a brief statement about one idea in the text with no supporting evidence
- just 'described - explained', with no attempt to discuss (show 'analysis')
- did not use the suggested scaffolds as 'bullet-pointed' on their answer page
- re-wrote or paraphrased the question without any real discussion of it
- lacked any discussion of crafting or techniques.

ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT

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

- wrote with some skill and understanding of techniques and linked these to the development of ideas
- offered insightful comments on the particular texts but could have developed their answers further
- missed opportunities to discuss the whole text
- provided strong analysis in terms of language techniques and linked these to the ideas of the piece
- had limited original insight
- tailored responses to the questions being asked
- used scaffolding statements provided by the examiner to structure their answers
- used language terminology confidently and accurately
- discussed the language features most relevant to the question and the ideas being conveyed.

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:

- identified the key ideas and issues in the text and wrote with very clear insight
- were able to discuss the text with considerable sophistication
- read the passage thoroughly and knew how to structure an answer
- were sufficiently knowledgeable and well read themselves to allow a discussion of the broader application of the text
- contained sophisticated vocabulary
- commented on the broader social implications of the text
- had a wider critical argument:
- analysed the purpose of the text as a whole
- analysed structure and tone in a perceptive and insightful manner
- acknowledged the subtleties of the text
- structured their responses with flair and originality and were not dependent on 'taught' structures, such as TEXAS, PILATES, etc.

OTHER COMMENTS

Candidates should have some awareness of different text types, for example, a review, as in this paper.

Many candidates used an acronym/ mnemonic device as an aid to structure and checklist their answers (e.g.: PILATES, TEEPE, TEXPEL, PUTTS, etc.). While these helped the students to include key elements, they also often limited them to an Achievement grade.

More successful candidates used the suggested scaffolding and ideas in both the Resource Booklet and the Question Paper to guide their answers.

Candidates should make every effort to answer all three questions.

Poor/illegible handwriting, while obviously not directly affecting the grade, will have an impact on the marker's ability to understand the candidate's response.