

2015 NCEA Assessment Report

English Level 3 91472, 91473, 91474

Part A: Commentary

Comment on the overall response of candidates to 2015 examinations for all achievement standards covered by this report.

Teachers are clearly planning and teaching well: there is abundant evidence of this. Candidates know what is meant by “respond critically” and how it is a step up from “analyse how” at Level 2. Across the country, students are exposed to a wide range of texts and approaches to them, such as various reader response theories, structuralism, and feminism and through the use of critical texts. It was also heartening to see many texts that were not used last year, and a growing number of New Zealand texts used

Part B: Report on standards

1. Report for 91472: Respond critically to specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), supported by evidence

Achieved	<p>Candidates who were assessed as Achieved commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• used a text which allowed good interpretation; if using short texts, the candidate may have chosen two and compared and contrasted them• demonstrated understanding of the statement and the text• focused more on the ideas than the writer's craft• demonstrated understanding of the temporal setting of the text and tried to relate it today and/or to current events• demonstrated understanding of the writer's purpose and intended audience• gave limited supporting evidence, often using only one good piece per discussion point• analysed the text with some critical response• used some critical response language to evaluate the techniques and/or ideas• remained focused on the statement• wrote a straightforward critical response• showed that they engaged with the text at a basic level• wrote a structured response.
Not Achieved	<p>Candidates who were assessed as Not Achieved commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provided a commentary that was based on well-learned notes on the text(s)• summarised the content of the text(s)• attempted to adapt a previously written essay to this year's statements• were unable to unpack a key word in the statement• did not demonstrate familiarity with the chosen text(s)• were unable to engage with statement/question• provided little evidence and made unsubstantiated claims• provided a simplistic argument that could not be considered a 'critical response'.
Achieved with Merit	<p>Candidates who were assessed as Achieved with Merit commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• constructed a focused argument• demonstrated a familiarity with their chosen text(s)• showed discrimination in what material they selected to support their argument• successfully related their argument to relevant wider context(s) and text(s).• demonstrated precision with language for example they used terminology more subtle

	<p>than “positive” and “negative”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> presented a thorough discussion of the text in relation to the statement chosen provided ample evidence in the form of quotations woven into the essay were able to put their text(s) into context and discuss change or continuity of setting were often able to include an integrated analysis from respected critics.
Achieved with Excellence	<p>Candidates who were assessed as Achieved with Excellence commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> constructed a fluent and persuasive argument showed evidence of independent thought showed genuine engagement with both the text and the chosen statement demonstrated flair in their use of language, most noticeably, via a sophisticated vocabulary perceptively integrated their argument with wider context(s) and other text(s) wrote succinct and lucid responses which were clearly mindful of the statement throughout wrote with insight, perception, and maturity were generous in providing relevant detail which they wove into their argument.
Standard specific comments	<p>Some texts were excellent vehicles to allow candidates to achieve at the higher grades. These include Shakespearean texts, including sonnets. The Handmaid’s Tale remains popular and successful as do The Crucible, Death of a Salesman, and the short stories of Katherine Mansfield, Janet Frame and Owen Marshall. The poetry of Sylvia Plath, T S Eliot, Wilfred Owen and Carol Anne Duffy were used well.</p> <p>Some texts seemed to limit candidates’ responses. Of particular note are song lyrics by Beyonce and Tupac Shakur, and texts that are more commonly taught to younger students, such as The Whale Rider.</p> <p>Candidates will benefit from further teaching and learning around how to “show a discriminating and insightful understanding” as explained in the Level 8 AOs of NZC, from which this Achievement Standard was derived. Many candidates wrote excessively long essays in which they wrote seemingly everything they had ever learned about their chosen text(s) rather than select relevant information to support their argument. Such essays typically lacked the perceptiveness needed for Excellence.</p>

2. Report for 91473: Respond critically to specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence

Achieved	<p>Candidates who were assessed as Achieved commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> showed some understanding of a specified aspect of the text(s) and were able to develop a relevant and often focussed argument showed evidence of familiarity and engagement with the text(s) and were able to use examples/specific evidence from the text(s) to support the discussion and argument communicated a critical response to the statement demonstrated the ability to use writing conventions and were able to follow the format of an essay structure in a focused manner and address the statement.
Not Achieved	<p>Candidates who were assessed as Not Achieved commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> showed some limited understanding of a specified aspect of the text(s) and attempted to develop an argument focused mainly on summarising or describing the content of the text used simple vocabulary, often wrote simplistically with many errors and weakness in style to discuss the text(s) included some evidence relevant to the discussion.
Achieved with Merit	<p>Candidates who were assessed as Achieved with Merit commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> showed a sound and convincing understanding of a specified aspect of the text(s) were able to develop a convincing argument demonstrated some maturity and perception in evaluating the text(s)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • showed an accurate knowledge of and convincing engagement with the text(s), which may move beyond the text(s) in critical analysis • developed an informed critical response (inferences are made based on personal understanding and awareness of themes, craft, and purpose) • made some accurate use of academic writing conventions and style features, and wrote with a sense of deliberate crafting. Wrote a structured answer that had an introduction, linked paragraphs, and a conclusion • provided a range of appropriate detail and evidence woven into the response that supported the discussion.
<p>Achieved with Excellence</p>	<p>Candidates who were assessed as Achieved with Excellence commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employed a good vocabulary • showed insight and perception about a specified aspect of the text and how it relates to the rest of the text(s), or to other context(s) such as human experience, society, and the wider world. Responded critically and thoughtfully to the statement and were able to offer their own interpretation and definition of key words • developed an insightful argument or interpretation • demonstrated maturity and insight in evaluating the text(s) in terms of the statement • showed insight in engagement with the text(s), and often made links between the statement and context(s) outside of the text(s). Showed an awareness of the societal context of the text in terms of setting and ideas • made a strong personal response to the text(s), demonstrating some critical insight and appreciation. They showed a personal and confident understanding of the director's purpose • made mostly accurate use of academic writing conventions in a fluently written, sophisticated and articulate response that showed some originality of expression • wrote a cohesive, deliberately planned and considered response with scope and focus • provided insightful detail and evidence woven into the response that supported the discussion. • displayed extensive knowledge of the aspects of visual and/or oral texts and were often able to include insights from beyond the text • took an unusual position at times or offered a fresh perspective • backed up their unusual position with evidence and a clear sense of the directors' purpose • expressed themselves fluently.
<p>Standard specific comments</p>	<p>Candidates often appeared to not read the entire statement and then struggled to comprehend vocabulary used in some statements; “timeless”, “dynamic”, “satisfying”, “successful”. It would be useful to for candidates to be taught to focus on the interpretation of the statement and vocabulary used, and to be provided with some strategies of how to weave these words into their analysis.</p> <p>Television series were generally inadequate to provide candidates with critical analysis – Call the Midwife, Breaking Bad – were obviously enjoyed by candidates, but there was little depth in their analysis.</p> <p>Visual texts that were used by capable candidates with success: Anna Karenina, Pans Labyrinth, No Country for Old Men, The Piano, In My Father's Den, Atonement, The Constant Gardener, Apocalypse Now, Black Swan, The Pianist, Crash, The Lives of Others, Fight Club, Children of Men, Psycho</p> <p>American Beauty was selected by a large number of candidates, but did not provide many answers that showed critical insight and maturity. The Book Thief, The Matrix, Avatar, V for Vendetta, The Blindside, Full Metal Jacket and The Truman Show were similar in this manner.</p> <p>Visual texts with complicated plots were quite difficult for less-skilled candidates as they tried to explain the plot rather than address the question or deal with the purpose or ideas of the director. Shutter Island, Gone Girl, Inception fell into this category.</p> <p>There were a number of texts selected that were R18 or very 'grim' – Django Unchained, Inglorious Basterds, 12 Years a Slave, Fight Club – although candidates tended to answer the statement on 'grim moments and the engagement of the audience', they could describe these moments well, but struggled to discuss the director's intention or the reason for engagement.</p>

	<p>The majority of candidates knew their selected text well and could provide evidence to support their thinking, but they became 'lost' when they were required to apply this knowledge and understanding to a statement.</p> <p>Candidates need to practise agreeing/disagreeing with a statement so they are able to fluently discuss their individual premise as too many candidates tried to write paragraphs based on techniques used by the director or 'learnt paragraph starters' from the classroom, rather than forming their own perspective. The teaching of critical thinking in terms of the film is important, so candidates are able to evaluate, judge and argue the film in terms of the statement, rather than 'describe' the film. Candidates who had read critical commentaries or who were exposed to varying interpretations of the text were better equipped to discuss their personal viewpoint in terms of the film and the statement provided.</p> <p>The director's selection of film techniques were used appropriately when carefully selected and woven within a paragraph to support the discussion of ideas.</p> <p>There is no need for students to use two (or more) texts in their discussion as this often tended to cause students to repeat analysis, rather than use the opportunity to compare and contrast the texts in response to the statement.</p> <p>Poor and often illegible handwriting caused markers considerable difficulty. It is important that candidates are made aware that their writing needs to be legible, and language conventions should be used appropriately. Candidates who wrote precise and effective essays did not have to use the extra space provided in the script or ask for supplementary pages; length often equated with poor writing and considerable repetition.</p>
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3. Report for 91474: Respond critically to significant aspects of unfamiliar written texts through close reading, supported by evidence

Achieved	<p>Candidates who were assessed as Achieved commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understood what the text/s were about and could make a straight-forward comment about the nature of childhood/being an outsider/relating to other generations • provided example/s of TWO aspects for Questions 1 and 2, and one for each text for Question 3 • often provided evidence or aspect discussion that was inconsistent • usually answered all three questions • answered the question directly • Followed instructions – for example provided two aspects for analysis for each answer • did not go "beyond the text" • were very light in detail and/or explanation, commentary • did not explicitly refer to the text in terms of evidence.
Not Achieved	<p>Candidates who were assessed as Not Achieved commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • failed to grasp the main idea of the texts e.g., the nature of childhood, being an outsider, how the writers related to other generation • did not name and/or give clear evidence of TWO aspects for Questions 1 and 2, or one aspect for each text in Question 3 • did not attempt all three questions • provided little content in their answers in term of evidence • did not use correct terminology in discussing "aspects" • did not answer the questions clearly • did not explain the evidence they provided in their answer.
Achieved with Merit	<p>Candidates who were assessed as Achieved with Merit commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provided a convincing discussion showing signs of 'moving beyond the text' to a more sophisticated understanding of the writers' ideas • were able to both answer the question and understand the intent of each extract • ensured their opinion, explanations were clear and well-evidenced • presented a logical structure to their response • fully discussed two aspects for the first two questions and one for the third • showed maturity and insight in their response • chose evidence that clearly supported their statements.

Achieved with Excellence	<p>Candidates who were assessed as Achieved with Excellence commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• made links between the text and New Zealand or the world at large, often making perceptive and insightful comments linked to the writers' ideas• Identified and provided examples for more than two aspects for Questions One and Two and more than one aspect for Question Three• often wrote extensive answers in terms of detail, discussion and opinion• wrote perceptively and persuasively about how language conveys meaning• used the two texts as the basis for societal discussion• used vocabulary that accurately conveyed perceptive understanding• engaged in wide ranging discussion• were able to answer why was the author motivated to write the text• discussed the nature of childhood or being an outsider that demonstrated that they could mentally 'climb into the skin of the narrator and walk around in it.
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