

Assessment Report

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Part A: Commentary

Examination questions are designed to encourage candidates to truly 'engage' with their chosen texts and to elicit genuine responses; pre-learned responses are therefore not appropriate.

The choice of texts is critical in allowing candidates to engage with and respond to them in order to give genuine personal responses. To gain higher grades, candidates need to show personal engagement with the text(s) to see their relevance in a wider context; for many candidates, this is challenging to do with texts that are over fifty years old.

Essays at this level are essentially two-part questions – describe, then explain – and both parts of any question need to be addressed. Candidates should practise using the key words from the question as 'signposts' throughout their responses to make sure they are addressing both parts of the question.

Candidates should avoid memorising a pre-prepared response. Those who evidently had done this struggled to specifically modify their response to their chosen question.



Candidates need to make sure that they can provide specific and relevant details from their studied text(s). They also benefit from an understanding of distinct uses of punctuation, grammar and word choice and their intended effect.

Some planning pages showed real thought and awareness, and candidates who had evidently taken the time to thoroughly plan their essays were often positively rewarded. Higher achieving responses were inevitably the result of careful planning. A thorough, unhurried plan will help candidates identify irrelevant material and avoid responses that are plot-driven and unduly lengthy.

For candidates to reach Merit or Excellence levels they must refer to the author's or director's purpose. Some candidates wrote detailed responses that showed a solid understanding of the text(s), but did not address the author's or director's purpose, which only allowed them to attain Achievement.

Teachers and candidates are reminded of the statement in the assessment specifications: 'The quality of the candidate's writing is more important than the length of their essay. Candidates should aim to write a concise essay of no more than three pages (or 550–600 words) in length'. Many digital responses unnecessarily far exceeded the recommended word length

Part B: Report on standards

90849: Show understanding of specific aspect(s) of studied written text(s), using supporting evidence

Examinations

The examination required candidates to write an essay on at least one studied written text. It included a range of questions covering several different aspects of texts, from which candidates were required to select one to answer. The response needed to include clear points that were relevant to the topic being addressed and reference to specific details from the text to show understanding. The response needed to be planned and organised in a way that demonstrated the candidate was addressing the question to show understanding of the text. Candidates were encouraged to write a concise response of no more than 550–600 words (3–4 pages).

Observations

As expected, there were the standard Level 1 texts: *Of Mice and Men*, *Animal Farm*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Macbeth*, *Lord of the Flies*, and war poetry. However, many responses showed limited engagement to these texts, as the ideas presented (about e.g. the Great Depression, the Russian Revolution, the Jim Crow era, etc.) seem beyond the understanding of many New Zealand teenagers. It is imperative to choose texts that allow candidates to show an appreciation of and some engagement with the ideas. Candidates can then better show their own personal understanding and insight.

Short texts were again very popular this year, with many candidates providing excellent responses. However, a number of short texts did not seem to have enough depth for candidates to provide more than a simple response, and this was especially evident where candidates referred to only a single poem or song lyric.

Many candidates' responses included very few specific details from the text, especially quotations. To reach Achievement with Merit, a response must show convincing knowledge of the text through the inclusion of 'clear, relevant details, usually using quotations, integrated into the answer'.

Candidates need to remember that their analysis of the text and their response to the question is most important. Linking outside the text, or to their own world or lives can develop their answer, but this should not be the focus of the essay.

Candidates also need to be made aware that to reach Achievement with Merit and Excellence they must address the author's purpose. Candidates need to practise using keywords as 'signposts' throughout their essay to show that they are answering the question.

Essays over four pages in length frequently lacked specificity and cohesiveness and contained superfluous evidence. Many responses in the web-based assessment were unnecessarily long and went well beyond the recommended 550 words.

Candidates need to be aware that if they start to attempt a response but do not wish to complete it, they must cross out their answer (or delete the text in the web-based assessment). Responses with only a few sentences are deemed 'live' scripts and will be marked accordingly.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- shared a straightforward response to a text
- addressed both parts of the question, but with some imbalance, often only referring to the second part of the question in the conclusion
- used some detail from the text, but without quotations
- wrote structured essays
- included supporting evidence from just one aspect of the text, but in some cases did not clearly link this to the question
- did not provide well-understood and relevant links that moved beyond the text (these tended to be superficial or ‘tacked on’ and did not develop the response)
- showed reasonable understanding of the story, and recounted only those aspects relevant to the question
- incorporated at least some aspects of a personal response.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- addressed only one part of the question, usually the ‘describe’ part
- did not provide any specific evidence from the text
- provided a brief and superficial response
- retold the plot
- wrote an essay (presumably pre-learned) that did not address the question.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- gave a detailed account of their text in relation to the question and supported it with specific examples from the text, usually using quotes
- provided a mostly balanced discussion but may have shown a stronger response to one part of the question

- used various language techniques and showed understanding of the crafting of the text
- attempted to link their discussion to aspects beyond the text using a pre-learned phrase that did not show genuine insight
- showed engagement with the text
- structured their essay in a manner that allowed for logical progression of ideas in relation to the question asked
- referred, possibly by implication, to the author's purpose.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- made authentic 'beyond the text' references that were clearly linked to the question and the text
- used plenty of specific evidence to support points made, with quotes woven into the response
- aptly identified the author's purpose, and showed a good understanding of how the writer deliberately crafted their text
- addressed both parts of the question with balance
- used sophisticated and analytical vocabulary
- wrote concise, well-structured, and cohesive essays
- showed a mature personal interest and engagement with the text.

90850: Show understanding of specific aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), using supporting evidence

Examinations

The examination required candidates to write an essay on at least one studied visual or oral text. It included a range of questions covering several different aspects of texts, from which candidates were required to select one to answer. The response needed to include clear points that were relevant to the topic being addressed and reference to language features of visual or oral texts to show

understanding. The response needed to be planned and organised in a way that demonstrated the candidate was addressing the question to show understanding of the text. Candidates were encouraged to write a concise response of no more than 550–600 words (3–4 pages).

Observations

Common films were *Jojo Rabbit*, *The Truman Show*, *V for Vendetta*, *Hidden Figures*, *Freedom Writers*, *The Blind Side*, *The Dark Horse*, *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, *Billy Elliot*, and *The Help*. Of these, *Jojo Rabbit*, *Hidden Figures*, and *Billy Elliot* seemed to yield the most consistent and strongest responses, and candidates tended to move ‘beyond the text’ best with these films. For certain films, most prominently *The Blind Side*, *Remember the Titans*, *Boy*, *The Help*, *Divergent*, and *The Maze Runner*, candidates seemed to repeat themselves or demonstrate only a limited understanding. A number of short films were chosen, and candidates tended not to do as well with these.

The length of responses that gained Achievement with Excellence were often well above the suggested word limit and did not need to be – the assessment is based on the quality not the quantity of the answer. The award of Excellence depends on the candidate developing an argument, and formulaic responses – such as a series of formatted paragraphs with ‘tacked on’ sentences at the end to link to the main idea – tended to be limiting.

Some candidates did not read the question carefully, or appeared to wilfully ignore parts of their chosen question to enable them to use rote-learned notes. Candidates should avoid memorising a prepared response. Those who evidently had done this struggled to specifically modify their response to their chosen question. Candidates should practise highlighting the key words within the question parts and writing a response that addresses these.

Candidates need to be specific in their use of film terminology (for instance “low and high contrast lighting” rather than “dim and bright”).

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- shared a straightforward response to a text
- addressed both parts of the question, but with some imbalance, often only referring to the second part of the question in the conclusion
- used the key words from the question to structure their essay

- used some relevant quotes or examples to support their key points
- may not have specifically mentioned language features, but implied them clearly
- discussed their own experiences more than the details of the studied text
- used quotations without identifying other verbal and visual techniques.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- addressed only one part of the question, usually the 'describe' part
- cursorily addressed the second part of the question
- did not provide any specific evidence from the text
- provided a brief and superficial response
- retold the plot
- wrote an essay (presumably pre-learned) that did not address the question.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- wrote fluently, in a clear paragraph structure, including a clear introduction that specifically referred to their chosen question
- provided a mostly balanced discussion but may have shown a stronger response to one part of the question
- identified verbal and visual techniques
- included discussion of the director's purpose
- used specific and relevant detail, frequently with more technical vocabulary
- knew the text well and made thoughtful and deliberate comments that showed a thorough understanding of the film
- linked examples back to what the question asked
- showed a solid understanding and appreciation of deliberate crafting
- showed understanding and appreciation of the impact of ideas on the viewers and the relevance of this to today's world.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- made authentic ‘beyond the text’ references that were clearly linked to the question and the text
- used plenty of specific evidence to support points made, with quotes and evidence of visual / verbal techniques woven into the response
- aptly identified the director’s purpose, and showed a good understanding of how directors deliberately crafted their text
- addressed both parts of the question with balance
- used sophisticated and analytical vocabulary
- wrote concise, well-structured, and cohesive essays
- showed a mature personal interest and engagement with the text
- had a good understanding of technical vocabulary and used this effectively
- accurately adapted their existing knowledge to the question
- showed a thorough understanding of the implications of the text and its place in society.

90851: Show understanding of significant aspects of unfamiliar written text(s) through close reading, using supporting evidence

Examinations

The examination required candidates to respond to questions on three texts of the following types: narrative prose, non-fiction prose, and poetry. Candidates needed to show an understanding of purposes and audiences, ideas, language features, and / or structures, based on a close reading of significant aspects of these unfamiliar texts.

Observations

For candidates to do well in this standard, the ability to use correct terminology is critical, as is the ability to explain clearly why the relevant language features are used.

Successful candidates appeared to have strategised, reading the passages carefully and unpacking the specific key words in the task, and this enabled them to show a convincing and perceptive understanding of the texts.

Lastly, candidates should see each text as a mirror on society, and consider a personal response backed by evidence from the text and their knowledge of wider society.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- referred to only one or two language features, despite often showing some understanding of the ideas in the texts
- identified one or more language features, provided examples, and offered a simplistic explanation of their use
- were able to correctly identify language features relevant to the question
- were able to paraphrase the words of the question and / or the words of the texts
- were able to understand metaphor at a basic level
- were able to select information that was relevant to the question
- presented clear explanations.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- identified a language feature but did not address why or how it was used
- did not accurately identify language features relevant to the question
- did not understand the question(s)
- did not use terminology accurately
- did not make sufficient reference to the text(s).

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- showed some insight and awareness of the context of the text(s)
- showed good understanding of the poem and its ideas without their discussion straying too far from it
- explained how language features worked together to create an effect or achieve a purpose
- could accurately identify language features relevant to the question, and provide some extrapolation of how these features linked to the theme or ideas in the texts
- could identify tone
- were able to discuss poetic devices and their intended effect
- attempted to link the ideas in the text to wider society or human experience, or to their own experiences.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- identified language features and how they worked together to achieve a purpose
- tended not to refer to too many language features; those they did choose suited the points they developed
- had vocabularies and used them proficiently, not only to paraphrase but to analyse with some sophistication how language was used for a particular purpose
- identified and showed appreciation of tone
- focused on the overall purpose of the text, taking a philosophical approach to looking at the wider world context
- insightfully linked ideas in the text to wider society / wider human experience in an elegant / seamless and relevant way.

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