2022 NCEA Assessment Report

Subject: **English**

Level: **1**

Standards: **90849, 90850, 90851**

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 and respond in order to give genuine personal responses. To achieve higher grades, candidates need to show personal engagement with a text to see its relevance in a wider context, and this is hard for many to do using texts that are over fifty years old.

For Achievement Standard 90851, candidates should try to respond personally to the unfamiliar texts and make links to wider society.

Some planning pages showed real thought and awareness, and higher-achieving responses were inevitably the result of careful planning. Preparing a thorough, unhurried plan should help candidates identify relevant material in order to avoid writing essays that are plot-driven and unduly lengthy.

Essays topics at this level are essentially two-part questions – "describe", then "explain" – and both parts of the 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 prepared response beforehand as this inhibits their ability to respond directly to the question they choose in the examination. Candidates need to make sure that they can provide specific and relevant details from their studied texts.

For Achievement Standard 90851, candidates need to understand and be able to discuss literary devices and their intended effect. They also need to understand distinct uses of punctuation, grammar, and word choice.

For a response to be awarded Achievement with Merit or Excellence, it must refer to the author's or director's purpose. Some candidates wrote detailed responses that showed a solid understanding of a text without addressing the author's or director's purpose, which only allowed them to attain Achievement.

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 greatly exceeded the recommended word-length without presenting evidence that would justify the award of a higher grade.

Part B: Report on standards

90849: Show understanding of specified aspect(s) of selected written text(s), supported by evidence

Examination

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. To show understanding, a response needed to include clear points that were relevant to the topic being addressed, and reference to specific details from the text. The response needed to be planned and organised in a way that demonstrated that the candidate was addressing the question to show understanding of the text. Candidates were encouraged to write a concise response.

Observations

It is imperative that candidates write about texts which allow them scope to demonstrate appreciation and some engagement with the ideas within. Candidates can then better show their own personal understanding and insight. There was an increase from previous years in the number of candidates writing on New Zealand authors, and candidates generally demonstrated a good connection with these texts.

Short texts were again popular this year, with many candidates providing excellent responses to these. When writing about short texts, however, candidates need to be able to develop their answers and still include plenty of relevant text details. A few short texts used did not seem to have enough depth to provide more than a simple response (*On the Sidewalk Bleeding* (Evan Hunter) was one such). Responses that examined several short texts were often insightful when the texts were drawn together to build on ideas. Some graphic novels, such as *Mophead* (Selina Tusitala Marsh), were discussed as written texts when they are more properly considered visual texts.

Some candidates struggled to write accurately about a turning point, often identifying this as the ending of the text. Candidates also need to understand how aspects can affect the text as a whole. This was the focus of two questions that tended to be answered poorly or not addressed at all.

Many candidates produced responses that included very few specific details from the text, especially quotations. To even reach Achievement with Merit, convincing knowledge of the text is expected to be shown by the inclusion of "clear, relevant details, usually using quotations, integrated into the answer".

Interpretation of the text and a response to the question are most important. Linking outside the text, or to the world or life, can develop an answer but should not be the main focus of the essay.

Candidates need to practise using key words as 'signposts' throughout their essay to show that they are answering the question. Some candidates did not engage with key words from the question, such as "important to the text as a whole". This prevented them from gaining Achievement results as they had not answered the question.

Essays longer than four pages tended to lack specificity and cohesiveness and to contain superfluous evidence. Digital responses were typically unnecessarily long and tended to go well beyond the recommended 550–600 words.

There appeared to be an increase from previous years in the number of candidates who started a response but did not complete it. Candidates need to be aware that if they attempt a response but do not wish to complete it, then they must cross out their answer. 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 or as an addition 'tacked on' at the end of each paragraph
- used some detail from the text, but usually not quotes
- wrote structured essays
- included supporting evidence from just one aspect of the text that was not always clearly linked to the question
- lacked well-understood and relevant "beyond-the-text" links – where these were attempted, they were often superficial or 'tacked on' and did not develop the response.

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

- did not address the question and ignored key words
- 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, e.g. started the response with "The story began with …"
- wrote a pre-learned essay that did not fit 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, mostly using quotes
- provided a mostly balanced discussion

- referred to the use of a range of language techniques and showed they understood the crafting of the text
- attempted to link discussion to beyond the text, although this tended to be in the form of an obviously learned phrase rather than a genuine show of insight
- showed engagement with the text
- structured their essay in a manner that assisted the logical progression of ideas in relation to the question
- referred to the author's purpose.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:
- were usually able to make authentic 'beyond-the-text' references that were clearly linked to the question and the text
- used plenty of specific evidence to support points, with quotes woven into the response
- aptly identified the author's purpose and showed a firm understanding of how the writer deliberately crafted the text
- addressed both parts of the question with balance
- used sophisticated and analytical vocabulary, showing depth
- wrote concise, well-structured, and cohesive essays
- showed a mature personal interest and engagement with the text.

90850: Show understanding of specified aspect(s) of selected visual of oral text(s), supported by evidence

Examination

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. There was a fair selection of questions for candidates to choose from. These provided sufficient scope for candidates to show the perceptive understanding required for Excellence. To show understanding, a response needed to include clear points that were relevant to the topic being addressed and reference to language features of visual or oral texts. The response needed to be planned and organised in a way that demonstrated that the candidate was addressing the question to show understanding of the text. Candidates were encouraged to write a concise response.

Observations

The examination questions covered a range of aspects that provided a opportunities for some fresh thinking and some adapted essays. Candidates were confident when describing the technical elements of the text, but some essays did not sufficiently address the "why" or "how" parts of their chosen question, meaning they could not achieve.

Candidates need to understand how aspects can affect the text as a whole. This was the focus of two questions that tended to be answered poorly or not addressed at all.

Some techniques, such as mise-en-scène, tended to be used without understanding, meaning the reference did not contribute meaningfully to discussion.

Many of the very heavily used texts have been around for a long time, and it was apparent that newer films in particular are offering opportunities for fresh thinking. Taika Waititi's films were popular. Whilst most answers were on films, there were also television series, computer games, and podcasts. Responses on computer games tended to lack depth.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- wrote close to 600 words
- made two or three key points and supported them with relevant explanations and examples
- used the key words from the question to focus the answer and make links
- included visual or verbal techniques and had some understanding of their effect
- addressed both parts of the question; a weaker response typically focused on the first part of the question
- wrote an 'on-the-lines' response, and rather than an equal balance between "describe" and "explain", focused on the "describe" aspect of the question, only touching on the "explain" aspect in the conclusion
- knew the key details of the text, e.g. characters' names, settings, themes
- included some quotes and visual or verbal techniques.

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

- focused on plot rather than analysis
- ignored the second part of the question
- did not develop their key points in sufficient depth
- did not answer the whole question.

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

- developed two or three key points, in detail
- made good comments about the second part of the question
- knew the text well and wrote confidently about key scenes, incorporating techniques and quotes
- made appropriate and natural connections / links beyond the text, rather than just tagging them on at the end of each paragraph.

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

- wrote with insight and perception
- showed a clear personal connection with the text
- wrote fluently with mature vocabulary and expression
- had a clear thesis
- incorporated a personal voice and / or engagement.

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

Examination

The examination required candidates to respond to specific questions on three pieces of unfamiliar text: narrative prose, non-fiction prose, and poetry. Successful responses showed an understanding of how authors used aspects of language to create effects and communicate meaning to the reader. Candidates were expected to use close-reading skills to discuss the author's purpose, and to make links between the text and wider contexts.

Observations

Successful candidates were able to engage with the specific questions for each text, rather than simply summarising the overall ideas. Candidates who demonstrated a careful reading of the question and planned their responses, often using prepared paragraph structures that emphasised the linking of specific detail to the question, tended to complete answers that showed convincing and perceptive understanding of the texts.

Candidates who were able to engage with the specified aspects of the texts were more able to communicate a relevant understanding. Candidates who could confidently use the language of literary analysis and could apply it correctly to specific examples performed well.

The perceptive responses that gained the highest grades were those in which candidates integrated their personal thoughts and links to wider contexts throughout the answer, demonstrating a connection between particular aspects of the text and wider ideas and purpose.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- identified at least one individual language feature or quote from the text and discussed it in relation to the questions
- worked through the text providing a literal interpretation of the events, which they linked to the questions
- made clear and brief comments on the relevance of evidence to each question

- made simple connections between the question and the bullet-point suggestions provided
- used paraphrasing of examples rather than analysis of the language
- began to engage with and explain the use of examples of figurative language.

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

- provided plot summaries that did not engage with the questions
- structured their responses around the bullet-point suggestions without specifically addressing the questions
- identified a language feature without accurately connecting it to the question
- copied a selection of quotes from the text without any accompanying analysis or commentary linking to the questions
- responded to questions without providing evidence or detail from the text.

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

- correctly identified language features and discussed how these worked together to create effects related to the questions
- selected convincing evidence carefully
- used a structure which focused their analysis of language on to specific questions
- provided analysis of technical aspects of the texts such as structure or genre
- began to demonstrate a personal engagement with the text or ideas, often through anecdote
- made comments on author's purpose in separate paragraphs, without clear links to specific detail from the text.

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

- made a clear and detailed analysis of carefully chosen short pieces of evidence from the text
- used evidence from the text, and gave more lengthy analysis of the use of language
- took analysis of the use of language features as a starting point for a discussion of wider contexts and the author's purpose that was integrated into the whole response
- made their personal response to the text clear through fluent writing and sophisticated analysis of language
- wrote insightfully about the author's purpose, often engaging with subtle meanings or sophisticated interpretations.