

2023 NCEA Assessment Report

Subject:	English
Level:	Level 3
Achievement standard(s):	91472, 91473, 91474

General commentary

In general, many candidates produced responses that demonstrated engagement with the texts chosen or provided.

For achievement standards 91472 and 91473, a key ingredient of candidates' success is their selection and understanding of an appropriate statement for the text studied and the argument to be developed. The "aspects" central to 91472 and 91473 are clearly stated in Explanatory Note 3 of the Achievement Standard in each case. Candidates well-schooled in these aspects were positioned to offer relevant responses. Where candidates knew their text but lacked clarity about the aspects (for example, confusing ideas such as "setting" with "scene", or language features such as "symbolism" with "theme"), this detracted from the quality of their responses.

Candidates benefitted from approaching their chosen statement on its merits and constructing an argument around the opportunities it offered. As always, candidates did not do so well when they attempted to introduce a prepared argument that did not fit the chosen statement. This included cases where candidates disagreed with their chosen statement without clear justification and without offering a counter-argument, instead presenting an unrelated and therefore irrelevant response.

Where candidates used material prepared for other standards such as 91478 and 91479, the benefits were related to the degree to which an argument developed from the statement underpinned the response. Relevant thinking from a critical perspective can be very useful; material introduced for its own sake is unhelpful.

Across all three standards, the most successful candidates appeared to have generally organised their time and efforts constructively, planned to respond to statements and questions set on the day, paid attention to the requirements of the task as well as 'big ideas', and made sure to include relevant detailed examples as evidence.

Report on individual achievement standards

Achievement standard 91472: Respond critically to specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), supported by evidence

Assessment

The examination offered eight statements from which candidates were required to select one as a basis for a critical response to a studied text or texts. The statements addressed a range of "aspects" as specified in *The New Zealand Curriculum* and restated in Explanatory Note 3 of the Achievement Standard. These include language, purpose, structure, and ideas. Each

statement was designed to provide opportunities for candidates to evaluate how and why they consider texts to be valuable, challenging, enlightening, etc.

The assessment specification states the expectation that a critical response will take the form of an argument, communicated clearly and coherently through a structured written answer that follows the conventions of an essay format. Evidence is expected to be presented in the form of relevant detail which may include quotations and other forms of detailed observation.

Commentary

Overall, the quality of the responses for this paper was high, and many candidates presented worthwhile, detailed, and engaged responses.

As in previous years, candidates who offered a prepared answer ill-matched to their chosen statement produced irrelevant material.

Candidates benefited from having studied texts with clear and well-developed ideas. Those who responded to a song lyric or simple short story or poem often struggled to produce worthwhile responses.

A good deal of engagement with a wide range of chosen texts was evident. Although much international material was cited, New Zealand and Pacific texts were also well represented. Among texts with which candidates were successful were poems by Carol Anne Duffy and Tusiata Avia, and long texts such as *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood), *Red Hibiscus* (Wendt Young), *Better the Blood* (Bennett), *1984* (Orwell), *Bugs* (Hereaka) and a range of Shakespeare's plays.

As in previous years, some candidates presented material from research. The key to success here was in selecting material made relevant by the chosen statement, not regurgitation. The strongest candidates challenged or defended material made relevant in this way.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- used the words or ideas of the statement as a foundation for their response
- offered a straightforward, appropriate thesis statement
- provided an introduction that took account of their chosen statement
- provided evidence of textual knowledge appropriate to chosen statement
- made basic connections to themselves as a reader or life beyond the text
- used a clear (but possibly formulaic) structure.

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

- selected a statement that was appropriate for their text
- engaged with both the statement and their chosen texts
- provided evidence of understanding of the writer's purpose
- showed understanding of how language and other aspects of the text were used to express ideas, character, setting etc.
- developed a complex theme through critical response
- incorporated plenty of relevant evidence, such as quotes
- used the text to explore bigger ideas in their world.

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

- demonstrated that they knew their chosen text well and had thought carefully about their chosen statement
- used the statement as a springboard to explore the text
- supported their response with judiciously selected evidence
- used criticism in relevant ways
- showed evidence of deep understanding of the text
- reflected on the human condition in general as well as on personal examples
- wrote in a nuanced and mature style.

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

- wrote a brief response
- did not address their chosen statement
- focused on plot, author, or a literary 'lens' instead of the chosen statement
- provided little evidence of critical engagement with text or statement (possibly presenting a rote-learned essay)
- included little or no relevant evidence, such as quotes
- presented a response that lacked a helpful structure.

Achievement standard 91473: Respond critically to specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence

Assessment

The examination offered eight statements from which candidates were required to select one as a basis for a critical response to a studied text or texts. The statements addressed a range of "aspects" as specified in *The New Zealand Curriculum* and restated in Explanatory Note 3 of the Achievement Standard. These include language, purpose, structure, and ideas. Each statement was designed to provide opportunities for candidates to evaluate how and why they consider texts to be valuable, challenging, enlightening, etc.

The assessment specification states the expectation that a critical response will take the form of an argument, communicated clearly and coherently through a structured written answer that follows the conventions of an essay format. Evidence is expected to be presented in the form of relevant detail which may include quotations and other forms of detailed observation.

Commentary

Candidates presented responses that showed what they knew of the visual and oral texts they had studied, and many of the responses for this paper were of a high quality. There were some truly outstanding responses were a real pleasure to read.

It was disappointing that some key words used in the statements (such as "setting") that should be familiar from the study of English appeared not to be well understood.

As in previous years, some candidates appeared to have rote-learned a prepared essay and manipulated their chosen statement just enough to suit this approach, and as usual, this limited their possible level of achievement.

Many essays were well over 2000 words, with some nearing 3000. This is simply unnecessary for an Excellence response – a focused and concise response is more likely to result in a higher level of achievement.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- responded to all parts of their chosen statement
- included relevant details from the text
- included some (possibly limited) technical analysis of the visual or oral aspects of the text
- argued against the statement without fully developing their argument for doing so
- provided an unbalanced response that only tangentially or incidentally addressed some element of the statement.

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

- clearly addressed their chosen statement
- adequately addressed all parts of their chosen statement
- provided evidence of a good understanding of their chosen text
- included relevant or appropriate examples from the text
- explored one element of their chosen statement more than others
- showed a confident understanding of both the statement and the text.

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

- used texts that had depth and complexity
- engaged fully with their chosen statement
- provided evidence of careful thought about the relevance of their chosen statement to the text
- set up a clear argument that was then logically developed
- included strong technical analysis and showed how techniques were used to enhance ideas in the text
- related evidence and details directly to the statement
- conveyed genuine personal engagement with the ideas in the text
- presented insightful discussion including relevant social commentary.

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

- wrote a brief response
 - did not address (all parts of) their chosen statement
 - ‘rewrote’ the statement to suit a pre-planned essay
 - wrote about a text that was unsuitable at this level, such as a children’s movie.
-

Achievement standard 91474: Respond critically to significant aspects of unfamiliar written texts through close reading, supported by evidence

Assessment

The examination featured two unfamiliar texts and three questions: one for each text and one requiring a comparison of both. The assessment requires candidates to apply their knowledge of “aspects” as specified in *The New Zealand Curriculum* and restated in Explanatory Note 4 of the Achievement Standard to an analysis of how these are used in the texts. Candidates who did not refer to appropriate aspects, despite showing good understanding of the text, were disadvantaged.

Commentary

Most candidates attempted to answer all three questions. Although some candidates provided literal readings of the texts, many advanced beyond this to show a depth of appreciation of the quality and effectiveness of language used by the writers. Candidates are assessed on their understanding of the crafting and meaning of the poetry and prose texts, and those who weave discussion of real-world events and experiences into a critical response to the texts are likely to be awarded a higher grade.

In their responses to Question Three, candidates continue to show that the skill of comparing and contrasting is a challenging one to develop.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- attempted all three questions, showing understanding
- identified a clear key idea from their reading of the text(s)
- took a ‘broad brush’ approach to aspects of the text(s), showing a basic understanding of how these had been technically crafted
- gave relevant examples of aspects of the text(s)
- showed an awareness of impact.

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

- responded to all three questions in detail
- developed critical discussion by making some convincing judgements
- provided evidence of their appreciation of the writers’ craft
- discussed a range of aspects of language use, highlighting understanding of writers’ choices
- explored evidence through discussion that alternated ‘in’ and ‘out’ of the text
- showed understanding of the impact of the relevant examples of language use
- traced and analysed the development of ideas throughout the text(s).

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

- deliberately analysed the aspects used in the text(s)
- used appropriate terminology well

- unpacked language use in a way that revealed sophisticated understanding
- traced the deliberate crafting of the author
- wove strong links between the text and their own world
- showed an understanding of language as it impacts on the reader, the lens of the writer, and the position of the reader.

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

- did not answer all questions
- did not address the question(s) answered
- did not identify or give examples of aspects of language use in the text(s)
- showed a limited or literal understanding of the text(s)
- provided commentary 'outside' the text without linking it back to the text
- In the response to Question Three, did not synthesise material.