

2024 NCEA Assessment Report

Subject:	English
Level:	2
Achievement standard(s):	91098, 91099, 91100

General commentary

In all three standards, candidates who directly engaged with the questions were rewarded. Successful candidates' responses were focused and precise, and the best responses showed insightful or original thinking, expressed concisely. Teachers should note that candidates will benefit from further teaching and learning about how to develop a concise response that shows a discriminating understanding of the aspects of English, which is a requirement of *The New Zealand Curriculum* at this level. The quality of the analysis is always more important than the length of the response. Lengthy responses were not always focused on the questions and so could not be assessed as being Excellence, because plethora is not the same thing as “perceptive”.

Report on individual achievement standard(s)

Achievement standard 91098: Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), supported by evidence

Assessment

Essay questions are developed from the four aspects stated in *The New Zealand Curriculum*: purpose and audience, ideas, language features, and structure. Candidates can expect some essay questions to be specific rather than general. This is because the essay questions are carefully designed to assess the Achievement Standard, the titles of which are “Analyse *specified* aspects ...” Candidates will benefit from a guided review of recent examination questions and teaching and learning around question selection.

Commentary

Most texts could produce top answers or poor answers depending on the question chosen, level of engagement by the candidate, critical thinking applied beyond the lines, and text of meaning / purpose. Texts taught in class did better than ones self-selected by candidates or that might have come from the Wide Reading or Connections Standard. The best texts seemed to be those whose themes / purpose explored areas that are ‘grey’ or debated in our society, not ideas that are generally agreed on. For example, *Lord of the Flies* exploring humans’ innate tendencies to do good / evil performed better than *The Hate U Give*’s “racism is bad”.

It is crucial that candidates study texts that provide sufficient scope for analysis and exploration at NCEA Level 2. A concerning number of responses dealt with dark and violent themes, both physical and sexual.

Texts that worked well:

- New Zealand authors that enabled candidates to authentically engage with relevant ideas: James K Baxter, Hone Tuwhare, Katherine Mansfield, Karlo Mila, Coco Solid, etc.
- Commonly selected texts included: “Fahrenheit 451”, “1984”, “The Catcher in the Rye”, “The Kite Runner”, “Lord of the Flies”, “The Things They Carried”, “The Road”, “Jasper Jones”, “The Messenger”, “To Kill a Mockingbird”, “The Book Thief”, “An Inspector Calls”, “Frankenstein”, “A Thousand Splendid Suns”, and “The Great Gatsby”.
- Short texts by writers such as Carol Ann Duffy, Sylvia Plath, Maya Angelou, Ray Bradbury, and Witi Ihimaera.
- War poetry by Owen and others.
- Shakespeare is still very popular: “Macbeth”, “Othello”, “The Merchant of Venice”, “Hamlet”, “Richard III”, etc., produced a wide range of responses.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- wrote about texts that were appropriate to NCEA Level 2
- selected a question that aligned with their text knowledge
- used key words from the question to structure their response
- addressed both parts of the question, albeit sometimes unevenly
- understood the aspect being asked about, such as ‘setting’, ‘structure’, or ‘symbolism’
- demonstrated a clear understanding of the text in relation to the question identified
- followed an essay structure
- incorporated some quotations or extremely specific plot points as evidence to support ideas
- unpacked specific evidence in a straightforward manner
- used language of analysis in a suitably accurate manner
- explored context or real-world links in a formulaic or superficial way
- explored aspects in isolation, e.g., three techniques analysed separately rather than connected to each other.

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

- selected a question well-suited to their understanding of the text
- crafted clear thesis statements to remain focused on the question from the outset
- addressed both parts of the question with detailed, specific evidence from the text
- unpacked evidence thoroughly
- linked the ideas together coherently and rationally
- developed two to three key points with depth and understanding
- considered real-world links in a meaningful and relevant way
- incorporated technical language appropriately and confidently to support the exploration of the author’s purpose
- understood the crafting of the text
- provided authentic, genuine, personal engagement with the text and the ideas.

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

- demonstrated command of their knowledge by selecting a question that suited their argument and text type
- expressed nuanced and mature understanding of the context surrounding the texts’ interpretation and / or construction

- structured the essay in response to the question, building and controlling the thesis, rather than relying on a rote-learned response
- demonstrated understanding of the larger significance of their text in terms of ideas and relevance, with real-world connections interwoven where relevant
- displayed a thorough understanding of the text and a strong appreciation of the author's purpose
- engaged with the text in a mature and perceptive manner
- integrated evidence and explanation seamlessly within paragraphs
- displayed both high level literacy and mature thinking skills that were adapted to the question
- used precise language features linked to author purpose
- referred to sophisticated techniques used by the author and demonstrated a convincing understanding of the impact of these techniques.

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

- responded using texts that did not allow for sufficient development of ideas
- attempted to discuss “independently” selected texts, e.g., song lyrics or online fan fiction
- provided a plot summary
- selected a question poorly suited to their text or understanding
- ignored or misunderstood the aspect being asked about, e.g., ‘setting,’ ‘structure,’ or ‘symbolism’
- supplied a rote-learned response
- wrote well under the word recommendation
- used vague and unqualified statements, such as: “So that’s how the character helped the audience to understand the message.”
- lacked understanding or analysis of the texts
- addressed only part of the question
- provided little or no evidence or irrelevant evidence to support their argument
- were unaware of crafted or deliberate use of language by the author.

Achievement standard 91099: Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied visual or oral text(s), supported by evidence

Assessment

The essay questions are developed from the four aspects stated in the curriculum: purpose and audience, ideas, language features, and structure. Candidates can expect essay questions to be specific rather than general. This is because the essay questions are carefully designed to assess the Achievement Standard, the titles of which is “Analyse *specified* aspects ...” Candidates who only prepared to answer on a single aspect are likely to be disadvantaged. Some candidates seemed to have a weak understanding of key terms used in questions (e.g., “structure”, “setting”, and “symbolism”). Ongoing teaching and learning about question selection will benefit candidates.

Commentary

Many candidates treated film as if it were the same as written texts, often relying too heavily on dialogue as a language feature. While candidates could identify language features, many struggled to analyse the techniques in terms of the director's purpose. It is crucial for candidates to fully understand what constitutes ‘language features’. This lack of understanding and application led to responses that, despite showing the depth and maturity for Merit, were graded as borderline passes

or N2. The Assessment Specifications for this standard list the commonly used visual and / or oral features.

The films that consistently generated Achieved / Merit level responses were: “Shawshank Redemption”, “Gran Torino”, “The Talented Mr Ripley”, “Eye in the Sky”, “Ladybird”, “The Truman Show”, “V for Vendetta”, “Hacksaw Ridge”, “Green Book”, “Hidden Figures”, “Crash”, “Uproar”, “Jojo Rabbit”, “Pride”.

The films that most consistently generated Excellence level responses were: “Gattaca”, “Get Out”, “The Dressmaker”, “Bridge of Spies”, “Children of Men”, “Black Mirror (Nosedive)”, “Suffragette”, “Everything, Everywhere All at Once”, “Mad Max: Fury Road”, “Pan’s Labyrinth”, “Whiplash”, “I am Legend”.

The films which consistently generated Not Achieved level responses were: “The Blind Side”, “Dark Horse”, “The Help”, “Fish Skin Suit”.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- addressed the key words of the question, although often unbalanced
- understood which question suited their text, generally
- used straightforward terminology
- did not address the wider purpose of the text
- focussed on plot at the expense of analysis
- explored at least one main idea.

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

- selected questions appropriate to the text studied
- wrote a detailed, comprehensive response
- demonstrated an awareness of the text as a whole / made reference to director’s intent / purpose
- offered personal opinion or connection to the wider world where relevant
- demonstrated convincing understanding of the text, incorporating relevant details integrated into the response
- referred to relevant visual and / or oral language features
- wrote with some perception, although not sustained.

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

- focussed on the question and went straight to relevant detail from the text, with a focused analysis of the impact on the audience
- provided an insightful appreciation of the links to modern society
- chose questions which were appropriate to their text and allowed for sufficient depth of analysis
- established a strong thesis on the question and sustained discussion on this
- made clear, convincing, and insightful links between the language features and the relevant points made in the analysis
- wrote an analysis that showed an awareness of the text as a whole with extensive discussion of the director’s purpose or intent
- showed a mature appreciation for the wider context of the text, and often went beyond the text to include societal / pop culture implications and / or the candidate’s own personal understanding of the director’s intent or purpose.

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

- selected questions inappropriate to the text
 - did not address the question and / or did not seem to understand the question
 - had responses driven through plot and general descriptions
 - lacked enough fluency to convey ideas to the level of the standard
 - wrote very little
 - used inaccurate or vague language features with no supporting detail.
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Achievement standard 91100: Analyse significant aspects of unfamiliar written text(s) through close reading, supported by evidence

Assessment

All three questions began “Analyse how...”, inviting candidates to examine the techniques used to create the text, and to link them to ideas, purpose, and effects. It is important that candidates relate their discussion directly to the question posed in the examination, and that they focus their discussion on the techniques employed by the writer. The number of techniques mentioned in an answer is much less important than the quality of analysis of each technique; answers benefit from discussion of fewer techniques and more analysis of how they work in the context of the text and in relation to the question. Candidates are not required to write essays. Lengthy introductions including the title of the text and the author’s name are not necessary and could inhibit candidates from gaining higher grades.

Commentary

Overall, most candidates did attempt all questions. The variety in the question type / focus across the three texts provided a good challenge for candidates. Some candidates who did not achieve or gained Achieved, did not fully answer all three questions or unpack the main ideas that they were asked to analyse in the question. This was particularly common in question 1, where candidates tended to focus on the protagonist rather than his relationship with his mother. There was also some confusion around the author’s response and audience response in question 3, and this hindered the level of analysis that candidates were able to give.

Candidates who achieved Excellence tended to do a thorough analysis of the whole text for each question whereas Merit tended to focus on one or two key points.

Many candidates did not identify language features correctly, or identified language features rather than analysing their effects.

Cutting and pasting large amounts of text does not necessarily increase the quality of the response.

Some candidates’ handwriting is not legible.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- framed their answer around the wording of the question and delivered a straightforward formulaic response, often paraphrasing the text
- engaged with the text, addressing the question clearly and exploring at least one relevant idea from the text
- showed evidence of their understanding of the text and the author’s purpose, e.g., by quoting evidence from the text to support their points
- answered on one or more language techniques

- addressed the question and used relevant quotations from the text to give a simple but clear response
- attempted to explain the writer's purpose and audience
- gave some analysis and unpacked the key ideas simply
- made some generalisations
- identified a language feature but did not draw conclusions related to that language feature
- included a "shopping list" of responses without any mention of audience or purpose
- showed an understanding of the text and the question.

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

- had a clear link between the feature used and why it was used, e.g., enjambment was often dealt with well because they could match the lack of punctuation to the stress of the poet
- started responses with a thesis statement, and made a claim about the text
- answered on multiple language techniques, linking them back to the question, each other, and the writer's purpose
- reframed the question rather than simply repeating it, making a clear and direct response to the question
- engaged clearly with the text and showed an understanding of the writer's purpose
- wrote a well-structured and articulate response
- made generalisations or relevant links to the wider context of the text and gave a personal response
- clarified their answer in a direct way at the beginning of the answer or at the end
- understood and explained the examples from the text well – they didn't just quote the text to use it as the answer, but unpacked the evidence
- showed some mature understanding of purpose.

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

- showed understanding of the piece as a whole rather than dissecting each specific feature individually
- wrote original responses and sometimes challenging responses supported by evidence from the text
- drew on multiple language techniques working together for effect
- developed a sophisticated and original response to the text
- provided a mature and insightful response to the text, the writer's purpose, and the writing
- generalised about the themes underpinning the texts, and sometimes, where relevant, linked the texts to the wider world and society, showing an awareness of different perspectives, as well as their own personal response
- evaluated techniques by comparing, contrasting, or combining language features
- wrote fluently, using sophisticated and mature vocabulary and a wide range of imagery, structures, language features, and sentence types
- developed an idea throughout their response in a sophisticated way
- provided original ideas and perspectives on the text and related it back to the question
- were comfortable with using analysis-related terminology and weaving evidence through the discussion
- explored the author's purpose, linking to other contexts and texts only where relevant
- unpacked the author's craft in depth to show how language features worked together to create mood and nuance.

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

- copied a piece of text and rephrased it
 - wrote short responses that showed some understanding but did not develop or unpack the text
 - did not address the question or give adequate evidence from the text
 - did not address the key words in the questions
 - identified relevant techniques but did not comment enough on their effects
 - paraphrased the text
 - did not show understanding of the text
 - did not answer all three questions
 - lacked detail to support their points
 - gave their opinion on the content of the text rather than answering the question or discussing the author
 - repeated the words of the question but did not engage with them.
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