

# 2024 NCEA Assessment Report

<b>Subject:</b>	English
<b>Level:</b>	3
<b>Achievement standard(s):</b>	91472, 91473, 91474

## General commentary

In general, the suite of Level 3 papers produced scripts that displayed candidate engagement based on knowledge of texts and / or the aspects of texts, as specified in the curriculum.

Candidates who performed well in achievement standards 91472 and 91473 were often those who selected a statement appropriate to their studied text(s) and paid careful attention to the demands of the statement, using the language of the statement as a support for a detailed and well-structured response. The 'aspects' relevant to 91472 and 91473 are clearly stated in Explanatory Note 3 of the Achievement Standard in each case, and candidates with a clear understanding of structure and / or language features, for example, were able to leverage their understanding for success. The construction of an argument in response to a chosen statement is central to effective responses in these standards, and candidates who considered the potential of their chosen statement and outlined an argument, generally as a starting off point, were advantaged.

A number of candidates penalised themselves by presenting arguments that were at best tangential to their chosen statement, often perhaps as a result of preparing an answer and then attempting to make this fit their chosen statement. Candidates are free to disagree with their chosen statement in part or in whole. Successful examples of disagreement generally involve carefully argued cases explaining an alternative approach to the specified aspect, while unsuccessful examples included those which 'rewrite' the statement wholesale, even to the extent of dealing with an aspect other than that specified in the statement. In many cases, critical and other secondary material seemed introduced for its own sake and therefore was hard to reward.

Across all three standards, 91472, 91473, and 91474, elements of success are a good use of time, response to the statements and questions set on the day, attention to the details of the task and the provision of appropriate but not excessive or repetitious evidence.

## Report on individual achievement standard(s)

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

#### Assessment

The examination presented 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 worthwhile, powerful, significant, etc. The assessment specification states the expectation that a critical response

will take the form of an argument, and be 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

Strong candidates benefitted from seeing the language of their chosen statement as a resource to feed complexity of thought and response. Many candidates seem to have been taught how to structure an essay successfully, although some candidates seemed limited by a formulaic response that did not always fit the potential of their chosen statement. Better answers wove the responsive elements into the essay rather than tacked them on at the end of each paragraph or in the conclusion. While candidates are free to write on more than one text, a useful approach when dealing with short texts such as poems, there is a danger of developing insufficient detail, especially where the argument presented does not convincingly link the multiple texts used. Some candidates struggled with the aspect of structure, and an unfortunate number attempted to twist prepared essays to fit their chosen statement, often with poor results.

Many candidates showed a high level of engagement with the texts they had studied. Over 250 different texts were responded to, with Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" accounting for a good number of the responses. There were several other popular dystopian or speculative texts studied – "Brave New World", "1984", "The Road", "Station Eleven", and "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas". There was a genuine sense of engagement and concern evident in many of the essays on this area. Candidates were also very engaged with issues around colonisation and post-colonialism. Many of the New Zealand texts chosen related to concerns about the impacts of colonialism and racism. Texts such as "Better the Blood", "Bugs", "Auē", "Dinner With the Cannibal", and "Potiki" were popular. Another common thematic approach relates to feminism, with Carol Anne Duffy's poetry and "The Yellow Wallpaper" producing very thoughtful responses. Other popular texts were Tim O'Brien's "The Things They Carried", F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby", Shakespeare's plays (notably "Othello", "Hamlet", and "King Lear"), and classics such as "Pride and Prejudice", "Wuthering Heights", and the poetry of John Donne and William Blake. New offerings amongst the texts studied included Tayi Tibble's poetry, Coco Solid's "How to Loiter in a Turf War", and poetry by Mua Strickson-Pua and Tafea Polamalu.

## Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- paid attention to the key words of their chosen statement, though not always in a balanced manner
- constructed a thesis statement in response to their chosen statement
- wrote an essay that contained a clear introduction and conclusion
- included mostly appropriate textual evidence in support of their argument
- engaged with one part of the essay statement in the final sentence of each paragraph rather than unpacking the whole statement as a focus, leading to an unbalanced response
- presented rote-learned ideas, rather than a crafted argument
- developed ideas that showed understanding at level 8 of the New Zealand Curriculum.

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

- paid clear attention to their chosen statement and constructed an appropriate argument in response
- referenced the argument they were making consistently
- demonstrated understanding of the writer's purpose
- selected appropriate supporting material

- moved beyond simple comparisons between text and world
- gave some evidence of appreciating the author's purpose
- showed a developing understanding of how their text(s) functioned within a context
- demonstrated some awareness of the author's craft, discussing language / techniques etc.

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

- exploited the potential of the key words of their chosen statement
- constructed a thoughtful and incisive argument in response to the statement
- demonstrated flair and style in their command of language
- showed understanding of and familiarity with the breadth of the text by making links across the text
- gave evidence of sophisticated and mature understanding of any themes presented
- unpacked the author's craft and intent perceptively
- showed a nuanced understanding of how readers are positioned
- made connections to human experience and the context in which the text was created and / or read.

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

- lacked understanding of their chosen statement
- did not address their chosen statement
- offered an overly short or incomplete response
- provided little evidence of understanding their studied text
- addressed topics at a level below Level 8 of the curriculum
- wrote a pre-prepared essay that ill-fitted their chosen statement
- offered a very short response.

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

### Assessment

The examination presented 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 effective, successful, significant etc. The assessment specification states the expectation that a critical response will take the form of an argument, and be 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

This year's examination provided opportunities for candidates to show an understanding of the texts they had studied. There were a good range of statements, some of which were more specifically targeted in terms of their ideas, and others which were much broader and generally applicable. Candidates who carefully considered specific words and phrases in the statements were led towards

the convincing and perceptive responses needed for M and E. As always, a careful reading of the statements is essential if candidates are to succeed well.

The ability to read and understand the question and form an argument in response to it, is key. If candidates can do this and provide evidence (even thin and plot based), they can achieve the standard. Length of response does not necessarily equate to quality. Many essays were over 2,000 words – but contained much irrelevance and / or repetition and so were hard to reward.

The most commonly used films were “Parasite”, “The Joker”, “Get Out”, “Atonement”, “Mad Max: Fury Road”, “Barbie”, “Snowpiercer”, and “Blade Runner”. Responses to these films often seemed similar across schools, for example, dealing broadly with social class and economic disparity in “Parasite”, racism in “Get Out”, and gender issues in “Barbie”. Such obvious thematic ideas sometimes appeared to limit candidates’ ability to respond in an original or statement-specific way. There also some strong New Zealand texts in evidence, such as “Cousins”, “Waru”, “The Orator”, “The Piano”, “In My Father’s Den”, and “Heavenly Creatures”. In general, candidates seemed to find it possible to engage authentically with these texts. Spoken word / oral performance texts often supported good levels of achievement, as did some “Black Mirror” episodes.

Part of the expectation of a Level 3 assessment is that the text used is able to facilitate thought at level 8 of the curriculum. Some candidates wrote on texts that made the appropriate level of complexity hard to reach. These included “The Lego Movie”, “Spiderman”, some texts that commonly feature at lower curriculum levels, and various Disney movies which do not lend themselves to analysis at the required depth.

## Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- wrote straightforward, explanatory responses
- showed some insight
- wrote generally coherent responses, although occasionally the responses were unbalanced
- relied on plot description
- provided analysis at the end of each paragraph with just one or two sentences
- employed generic phrases about concepts that needed more detail for Merit.

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

- showed clear understanding of their studied text
- showed an understanding of the aspects specified in their chosen statement
- provided strong evidence to support their answer
- explained how specific elements assisted the director / creator in conveying their ideas
- provided links beyond the text, often in a straightforward way
- made basic use of relevant critical lenses or tropes.

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

- created, developed, and sustained an insightful argument
- showed consistent engagement with the text and their chosen statement
- integrated technical analysis relevant to their argument
- linked the text to human concerns in ways that were on topic and engaging
- adapted their textual knowledge skillfully to respond appropriately to the statement
- used evidence selectively to enhance their argument
- did not over produce by avoiding irrelevance and repetition.

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

- ignored or misunderstood their chosen statement
  - addressed only some aspects of their chosen statement
  - provided insufficient or no relevant details from their studied text(s)
  - used overly simple studied texts, disadvantaging them
  - provided a very short response.
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## **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

In general, candidates appeared to find the texts and questions accessible. There were some good responses, particularly from candidates who judiciously chose aspects, exemplified these, and explained the author’s purpose and how the text developed. However, some candidates did not identify at least two aspects per question, particularly for Question 3, while some identified a quote as an aspect, thereby limiting the quality of their response. Explicit knowledge of aspects and / or language techniques and how they have been crafted within the text to create impact is vital. Candidates are well-served when they are confident in presenting comparison and contrast. Whilst some used the text(s) as a springboard for discussion of real-world events and personal experiences, candidates need to bring this discussion back to a close reading of the text. The paper examines critical understanding of unfamiliar text and candidates need to remember that they are being examined on their understanding of the crafting and meaning of the texts supplied.

### Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- attempted all three questions
- identified accurately and exemplified at least two aspects
- began to engage with the text while critically responding to the question
- provided relevant detail and exemplification
- identified key ideas, often in a simplistic and undeveloped manner
- incorporated the keywords from the question(s) into their answer(s)
- offered an literal analysis
- focused on sections of the text(s) rather than the text(s) as a whole.

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

- answered the question directly and wove in a range of supporting evidence
- identified two or more relevant aspects of the text

- provided a valid and convincing discussion of aspects with at least one example and a relevant comment for each
- developed confident explanations of why and how an aspect was used to create impact
- traced the development of ideas within the texts
- attempted to use varied vocabulary
- made convincing links to human nature / the wider world, bringing this discussion back to the text
- attempted to explain how the aspects linked together for a common purpose
- used a clear structure
- integrated a comparison of the two texts in answers to Question 3.

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

- responded consistently across all three questions
- identified at least two aspects in each answer
- embedded relevant, concise, and judiciously chosen examples
- wove the question into every part of their answer to create a coherent and cohesive whole
- analysed and perceptively discussed how techniques were combined for effect
- articulated fluently using a rich and nuanced vocabulary and style
- offered perceptive insights in some or all of their answers
- provided authentic links to universal issues without losing focus on the text(s)
- positioned the reader, and built on an idea of how the text impacted the audience and why.

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

- did not address the question(s)
  - did not attempt all questions or did not identify two aspects for each answer
  - provided limited or no examples to support their claims
  - gave quotes from the text but did not identify the relevant aspect(s)
  - showed a limited understanding of the texts and / or their relationships with the question(s)
  - provided simplistic answers that were not relevant to the question
  - provided overly short answers
  - discussed irrelevant personal experiences or real-world issues without links to aspects of text.
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