

2025 NCEA Assessment Report

Subject:	Drama
Level:	2
Achievement standard(s):	91215, 91219

General commentary

Candidates who read, understood, and responded to the entire question, rather than answering individual bullet points in isolation, provided stronger answers. Bullet points are a guide to the selection of relevant information and are designed to support scaffolding of a comprehensive answer but are not to be treated as the question.

A confident grasp of drama terminology saw candidates reach higher levels of achievement through accurate, well-composed answers. When submitting evidence for achievement standard 91215, candidates needed an accurate and in-depth knowledge of a typical performance of the text, not a modern interpretation or their own performance of scenes from the play of the selected theatre form or period. For achievement standard 91219, understanding of the terms 'elements', 'techniques', 'technologies', and 'conventions' support accurate responses. There is a concerning trend of some candidates demonstrating that they are unfamiliar with the drama terminology employed within both standards.

Candidates were expected to show an understanding of a theatre form (AS 91215) or a live performance (AS 91219). To do so successfully, and gain higher levels of achievement, candidates needed an accurate and in-depth knowledge of the text or the performance, supported by detailed evidence.

Report on individual achievement standard(s)

Achievement standard 91215: Discuss a drama or theatre form or period with reference to a text

Assessment

The examination included three questions, and candidates were required to respond to all three. Each question had two parts, with a response required for both. All three questions required candidates to apply their understanding of the theatre form or period with reference to a text, from which they were to provide detailed evidence.

Commentary

The forms or periods successfully written about were Epic theatre, Commedia dell'Arte, and Absurd theatre. In all these forms, candidates were rewarded at all levels of achievement. Candidates who wrote about Melodrama, musical theatre, and New Zealand theatre typically did not reach Excellence, due to a lack of perceptive understanding of the typical performance space and historical / social context.

Candidates should be encouraged to choose theatre forms or periods where there are typical and traditional texts that can be perceptively linked to the specific historical and social context. To achieve at higher levels, candidates had to be able to insightfully connect their discussions of features to the greater purpose of the text and form.

The exploration of traditional texts, rather than modern adaptations of a text, or texts that combined more than one theatre form, often created a deeper and more accurate understanding of the traditional historical/social context.

Candidates needed an accurate and in-depth knowledge of a typical performance of the text, not a modern interpretation or their own performance of scenes from the play. It should also be noted that only Commedia dell 'Arte allows for performances developed by students; all other forms should be discussing an existing text from the theatre form they have studied.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- referred to a text relevant to the drama or theatre form or period
- produced generalised responses with limited reference that lacked detail
- demonstrated understanding of the typical performance space for Question 1, but could not show adequate understanding of the effect of its use, i.e. how it impacted the performance or the audience's experience
- identified a character and their obstacle for Question 2, but could not show adequate understanding of how the response to the obstacle showed the playwright's purpose
- demonstrated understanding of an idea for Question 3, but could not show adequate understanding of how technology conveyed this idea.

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

- produced responses that showed clear knowledge of the drama or theatre form or period and their chosen text, and responded to both parts of the questions in detail
- demonstrated clear understanding of the effect of the typical performance space in question 1
- demonstrated clear understanding of the effect of the response to the typical obstacle in question 2
- demonstrated clear understanding of how the use of technology conveyed the idea
- showed developed understanding of the form or period, enough to provide further details in their answers, but did not consistently discuss the purpose of the text with insight.

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

- produced original and insightful comments
- used specific, well-considered evidence to support their responses, providing relevant, meaningful references to the text that were well-chosen to articulate an insightful point
- produced responses that demonstrated insightful understanding of a drama or theatre form or period, and how the text reflected these
- demonstrated perceptive understanding of features of the form or period and why they were utilised, and the impact on the traditional audience.

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

- produced responses without any reference to, or providing any evidence from, the text
- interpreted the questions incorrectly, especially in regard to key terms of drama language, such as technology

- produced responses that did not refer to how the text would be performed in the typical performance space in question 1
 - produced responses that did not link or discuss how the obstacle was typical of the form in question 2
 - produced responses that did not accurately identify an idea within the text in question 3.
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Achievement standard 91219: Discuss drama elements, techniques, conventions and technologies within live performance

Assessment

The examination included three questions, and candidates were required to respond to all three. Each question had two parts, with candidates being required to respond to both. All three questions required candidates to apply their understanding of drama elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies within a live performance(s), from which they were to provide detailed evidence.

Commentary

The assessment results this year indicate a significant opportunity for growth across the cohort, particularly as Level 2 is now the first opportunity for candidates to engage with this type of examination. While the assessment questions were appropriately pitched, the percentage of responses achieving the higher Merit and Excellence grades was lower than in previous years, reflecting a need for more comprehensive preparation. A key factor identified is the cohort's lack of previous experience with a similar external Drama examination format, necessitating a more structured approach to exam-specific skills. The primary focus for future success is improving candidates' exam technique and analytical precision, ensuring they carefully unpack questions, address all parts of the prompt, and provide the level of specific, detailed evidence required for Level 2 achievement.

The success of candidates relies on their careful selection of live performances. It is essential that students are guided to discuss performances (whether seen or performed in) that provide rich opportunities to write about the specific aspects outlined in the assessment specifications. The choice of production significantly impacted the depth and detail of responses.

Demonstrating a sophisticated understanding requires candidates to make clear connections across part (a) and part (b) of the questions. When responses successfully integrated the two parts, a more insightful understanding of the drama aspects in the live performance was consistently demonstrated. Consequently, candidates must be guided to unpack the questions carefully, ensuring they clearly understand what is required for each part and how the responses provided can be complementary to one another, avoiding isolated discussions. Candidates are strongly encouraged to use the sketch boxes effectively. Detailed responses were often achieved by those who included quality annotations alongside their sketches, using these visual aids to both support and extend their analysis. It is important to remind candidates that their sketches are not marked on artistic merit, but on the quality of the annotations and their ability to clarify performance details.

Successfully addressing part (b) remains a crucial requirement, demanding that candidates proficiently connect the insights from the performance to relevant issues in the wider world. Responses that made deep and authentic connections to relevant current events or societal issues achieved higher levels of success. Achieving the required standard demands that candidates show understanding of and use accurate, specific Drama terminology. A solid grasp of terms such as 'elements', 'techniques', 'conventions', and 'technologies' is fundamental, allowing candidates to confidently provide accurate and detailed responses throughout the assessment.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- identified and described simply
- responded to the question in a generic manner, with a focus on plot description
- discussed the impact of the drama aspect with limited evidence
- provided limited specific detail in part (a) of the question which impacted the overall grade, regardless of the quality of the response to part (b)
- used basic annotations in sketches
- addressed some aspects of the question, using the key words in their response.

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

- generally chose plays that had depth to write about
- clearly identified the connection to what the audience understood or what was communicated to the audience
- used the sketch boxes with drawings and annotations to support and cement what they had described
- provided relevant and detailed evidence from the performance
- used drama terminology accurately and with assurance
- wrote detailed discussions that communicated a depth in understanding of the performance
- provided layers of interpretation, weaving relevant evidence throughout
- used examples to clarify points being made.

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

- responded fully to all parts of all questions
- produced responses that were well structured and fluently written, and that integrated well-chosen evidence, from both within and outside of the performance, to show comprehensive understanding
- made clear and insightful links between different drama aspects which were supported by specific and relevant evidence
- established connections between the specific moment/scene discussed and the broader themes of the play
- made perceptive links between the live performance and the wider context of the theatrical work, including an understanding of the history and purpose of the work itself
- supported responses with highly appropriate evidence from their performance that linked their knowledge of the performance to their own experiences and/or wider world issues
- communicated a strong understanding of the relationship between a performance and audience.

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

- provided incomplete responses, or failed to answer the questions
- provided responses that did not identify a convention, technique, or technology
- wrote too briefly, simply, or generically to demonstrate understanding at an achievement level
- focused on the plot of the performance
- used statements that were very generalised, discussing the wider world context instead of details from the performance
- did not use drama terminology, used it incorrectly, or without specific detail

- wrote about too many moments in the performance broadly, without focusing on a specific moment in questions one and three.