

2025 NCEA Assessment Report

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

General commentary

Overall, the papers proved accessible. For standards 91472 and 91473, many candidates demonstrated good knowledge of their chosen text(s) and the ability to use information from those texts to engage with the given statements. Most of the statements required the candidates to think widely. That meant that texts which involve ‘big’ ideas such as colonialism, capitalism, technology, feminism, and environmental issues generally provoked candidates to explore the statements in detail.

Some candidates sought to use material garnered from standard 91479 in their responses. This sometimes detracted from candidates’ own arguments, particularly when theoretical constructs such as Marxism, psychoanalysis, and the various waves of feminism were only appreciated at superficial levels. Learned answers were often unhelpful to candidates because this resulted in partial or weak attention to the chosen statement.

As is to be expected, there was evidence of a wide range of written fluency, with some outstanding academic writing submitted. However, there was also evidence of poor writing skills, limiting candidates’ ability to convey complex ideas in a controlled manner. Similarly, the way candidates understood the statements varied, and those who used the resources of the statement to unpack and explain why their chosen aspect was ‘captivating’ or ‘key’, ‘skilful’, ‘challenging’, and ‘interesting’ were often able to gain higher grades.

Responses to standard 91474 showed that candidates generally engaged well with the assessment. While as expected there was a wide range of responses, some were of very high quality. To maximise success in standard 91474, candidates should attempt all three questions and consistently name and exemplify aspects in their responses.

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 assessment 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

Written texts that worked particularly well for candidates attempting 91472 included Shakespearean plays such as *Richard III*, *Othello*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Macbeth*; classics such as *The Great Gatsby*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, *Brave New World* and *1984*; and locally originating works by Tina Makareti, Whiti Hereaka, Katherine Mansfield, Selina Tusitala Marsh, and Tusiata Avia. A significant number of candidates were observed not to have taken advantage of the inbuilt spell check to correct incorrect spelling. Some scripts would have been stronger if they were more concise, allowing the main argument to come through more clearly and effectively. In some cases, including too much material made it harder for key ideas to stand out. Candidates are encouraged to focus on quality over quantity, as keeping responses tightly focused helps the argument remain clear and purposeful.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- offered a basic understanding of the meaning of their chosen text(s)
- concentrated on plot when forming their response
- responded to the keywords of their chosen statement in a limited way
- produced an argument of limited depth.

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

- understood the purpose and / or audience of the text(s)
- made connections within the text(s) – such as between ideas or characters
- provided a nuanced and holistic response to the keywords of their chosen statement
- attempted to use theoretical constructs but with limited depth or succinctness
- included personal response that demonstrated engagement.

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

- used a clear thesis to set up their argument based on the whole of their chosen statement
- wove insightful remarks and analysis together, judiciously selecting supporting evidence
- employed sophisticated vocabulary, illustrating strong engagement with the text(s)
- reflected on relevant links such as to human nature and wove these into their response
- understood the context of their chosen text.

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

- misunderstood or did not apply the intent of the statement
 - provided few or no specific textual details
 - wrote short or insufficient responses
 - provided simplistic analysis and / or relied on superficial, unsupported statements
 - chose a statement that did not fit their text, often twisting a prepared answer.
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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

Visual / oral texts that generally supported achievement in 91473 included *Parasite*, *Zone of Interest*, *The Substance*, *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, *Triangle of Sadness* and *In My Father's Den*. Texts that address current issues often engaged candidates, such as *Blade Runner* and *Ex Machina* which deal with the implications of artificial intelligence. Some candidates struggled to create a succinct foundation for discussion where several episodes in a series were referenced. Some films such as *Star Wars*, *Moana*, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* limited discussion at level 8 of the curriculum. ‘Setting’ and ‘scene’ continue to be confused by candidates. Technique-focused questions were sometimes answered simplistically by candidates, at times with a response below that expected for NCEA Level 3. Some scripts would have been stronger if they were more concise, allowing the main argument to come through more clearly and effectively. In some cases, including too much material made it harder for key ideas to stand out. Candidates are encouraged to focus on quality over quantity, as keeping responses tightly focused helps the argument remain clear and purposeful.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- addressed their chosen statement in a straightforward and simple manner
- demonstrated basic familiarity with their chosen text(s)
- used specific examples from the text to exemplify their ideas
- wrote in an appropriately formal and organised style.

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

- demonstrated depth of knowledge of their chosen text(s)
- included ample evidence, often referencing the craft of an oral / visual text
- commented on the creator’s / director’s purpose in the light of the statement
- attempted to use theoretical constructs but with limited depth or succinctness
- linked their discussion to elements of the world using strategies beyond simple comparison.

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

- established a sophisticated line of argument that aligned with their chosen statement
- structured their response to develop their argument and evaluate their chosen statement
- articulated their ideas with flair, style, command of language, confidence, and perception

- demonstrated insight and genuine understanding of sophisticated constructs
- provided judiciously selected evidence
- showed a nuanced understanding of how audiences are positioned.

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

- misunderstood or did not address their chosen statement
- showed little knowledge of their chosen text(s)
- produced a very short response and / or little appropriate evidence for their argument
- appeared to attempt to twist a pre-prepared essay
- attempted to use theoretical constructs but with limited depth or succinctness.

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, a prose extract and a poem, 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 seemed better prepared to discuss aspects of poetry than of prose, suggesting that further attention to how meaning is constructed through prose could be useful. This might include an understanding of narrative perspectives – first, second, and third person. As in previous years, Question Three involved comparison and thus offered a greater challenge. Candidates who focussed their comments across the two given texts often did well when answering this part, although time management seemed a problem for some candidates.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- attempted all three questions
- demonstrated understanding of the two texts and the three questions
- identified and exemplified at least two relevant aspects per answer
- supported commentary in their answers with details relevant to the question(s).

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

- showed convincing understanding and engagement with the texts
- accurately identified relevant aspects of texts and the writer’s purpose
- unpacked well-chosen quotations / textual details, weaving this evidence into commentary
- offered balanced, well-structured, in-depth discussion for all questions
- gave personal interpretations and investigated relevant and well-considered implications
- evidenced the development of ideas across both texts.

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

- offered perceptive insights across all questions, demonstrating depth of original thought
- identified relevant aspects throughout, consistently referring to the question(s)
- embedded well-chosen, unpacked examples and commented combinations of aspects
- explored different authorial viewpoints, providing links to societal and personal issues
- demonstrated sophisticated appreciation of language as choice
- used analytical language and critical commentary to develop a coherent argument
- provided adequate and balanced answers to all three questions.

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

- did not answer all three questions or provided limited or no relevant response
- did not identify or exemplify aspects as required, even in well-written answers
- showed limited understanding of the texts and their purpose
- provided summary instead of analysis
- focused on one aspect only per question, often without relevant commentary.