

2025 NCEA Assessment Report

Subject:	Drama
Level:	3
Achievement standard(s):	91514, 91518

General commentary

A confident use of drama terminology enables insightful explanations and evocative descriptions of what was seen in the performance by the audience of the day. The assessment specifications and the explanatory notes in the standard are useful guides to the terms that can be expected in questions.

Having a comprehensive understanding of the context of the text or performance studied is essential at Level 3. Candidates need to be able to provide well-supported evidence with examples and details from the text, as it would have been typically performed or from within the live theatre performance. Candidates need to make clear links between the work studied and the wider context for the higher grades.

Report on individual achievement standard(s)

Achievement standard 91514: Interpret a text from a prescribed playwright to demonstrate knowledge of a theatre form or period

Assessment

The examination included three questions, each with two parts; candidates were required to respond to all three questions. The questions covered the requirements of the 2025 assessment specifications, which state that candidates need to be familiar with features of the form – these may include performance space, acting style, themes and ideas, use of conventions and technologies, and the historical and social context of the theatre form or period.

The questions required the candidate to provide coherent and relevant examples from the text to make connections to the theatre form or period.

Commentary

This standard requires candidates to demonstrate understanding of the typical performance style of a text as an example of a specific theatre form. Detail on the text in a typical performance that demonstrates understanding of its form/period is vital.

Texts grounded in strong social and historical contexts were much more suitable for this standard. For example Absurdism, Epic Theatre, or Greek Theatre forms generally led to more detailed and knowledgeable responses. Strongly unpacked Feminist Theatre and Elizabethan texts also worked well.

Less perceptive responses were seen where a range of different texts and forms from a single centre suggested that candidates were self-directed in their learning.

Candidates who had performed their texts needed to ensure they were also familiar with the original context, performance features, and technologies of the form. They needed to be able to discuss this in relation to the text rather than their own understanding of the form within their performance work.

When studying a text for this standard, candidates need to read the play and study the form. Often a live viewing gave a modern context and candidates talked about production choices rather than knowledge of a form or period.

Some candidates chose texts that were not examples of the theatre forms that they thought they were, and so evidence relating to typical features was either very general or incorrect.

New Zealand theatre was a popular choice, but many of the texts were discussed in a way that was not suitable for the standard. New Zealand theatre was often discussed as realism, then undermined by discussion of clear shifts in time, place, and conventions that deliberately broke the fourth wall. “Unseasonable Fall of Snow” is an example that was incorrectly identified and discussed.

Many candidates would have benefitted from looking at Māori or Pacific forms as typical of their chosen text. For example, Niu Sila was identified as an example of Realism rather than NZ/Pacific Theatre. Candidates who discussed the eclectic mix of forms and styles within the NZ Theatre genre generally did better.

The definitions and understanding of realism varied widely, and often the details were incorrect. Realism was often named as a convention. In some cases, it appeared that candidates had performed a scene or scenes from a range of texts, and then Realism was chosen as the default form for this text, due to the style of performance. This often meant that candidates misidentified the form of the text and the typical features of that form. For example, responses discussed acting style and process conventions such as emotional memory. This meant candidates generally discussed their own performance or plot details, which was not necessarily relevant to the wider theatre form.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- gave plot-based evidence rather than specific quotes or evidence tailored towards the question
- gave less detail about the social or historical context
- demonstrated more familiarity with the text than context
- included material that did not address the question
- gave responses that were less confident with terminology.

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

- provided evidence and knowledge of terminology that was accurate
- provided a range of detail to support their answers, such as quotes from the text, or specific plot and character information
- discussed with a clear understanding what was seen in performance and in the text, and the purpose of it
- showed understanding of social and historical influences on the text / playwright
- discussed the text as a performance rather than analysing the work as a written text
- provided information in response to a question that wasn't always well chosen or relevant to the question.

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

- provided a range of supporting detail
- made detailed connections between the text and context

- made comments that showed thinking about the form or text beyond the facts
- included understanding of the audience and the role this played in purpose and production choices
- perceptively discussed links between the text and the context in which it was first written and performed
- demonstrated a wider understanding of other plays, playwrights and / or events of the time, and were able to discuss this in relation to their text and the question.

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

- did not answer all sections of the exam
- misread or misunderstood the question being asked
- identified the incorrect form for the text discussed
- gave very limited or incorrect text-based evidence to support knowledge of the form or period
- provided incorrect information for the theatre form; this was most commonly done with Realism, American Realism, and NZ Theatre
- discussed live theatre or their own performance work with no relevance to the original form or context
- referred to their own performance work which was, more often than not, quite different to the original social / historical context
- discussed one section of the text as if it were the whole play and that section were in fact true of the whole form
- needed to demonstrate clearer understanding of drama terminology through correct use.

Achievement standard 91518: Demonstrate understanding of live drama performance

Assessment

The examination included three questions, each with two parts; candidates were required to respond to all three questions. The questions covered the requirements of the 2025 Assessment Specifications, which are that candidates need to be familiar with the use of drama components such as: elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies. The questions required the candidate to make connections between the director's / designer's concept(s) and the performance seen.

Commentary

The paper elicited a range of responses from candidates and enabled candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the live performance, using drama terminology and selecting evidence from the performance to support their explanations and discussions.

Candidates need to be able to both comprehensively explain what they saw on stage and discuss their ideas by providing strong, detailed examples from the performance. It is important to be able to explain the synthesis between drama components.

Candidates who clearly noted key words and requirements of questions provided stronger answers, by using relevant examples from the performance.

Candidates are strongly advised to make use of the sketch boxes provided. They are useful tools to develop / enhance their answers.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- explained what they saw without unpacking the question
- gave explanations with rudimentary descriptions of what they saw on stage
- gave short and simple explanations supported by limited evidence
- provided wider context without linking it to their explanation or the question being asked
- demonstrated some understanding of what they saw.

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

- gave detailed explanations with supporting evidence
- supported their written answers with sketching and annotations
- provided supporting evidence that linked to the unpacking of the question
- demonstrated a purposeful understanding of live performance components
- used drama terminology with confidence.

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

- outlined the live performance with clarity and detail
- gave detailed explanations with well-chosen evidence to support their ideas
- sketched, with detailed annotations that provided extra information
- wove drama terminology into their answers with confidence
- discussed the purpose of the performance and its impact on the audience
- demonstrated perceptive understanding of the intentions and concepts of the live performance.

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

- lacked understanding of the question's intention
- gave a summary of the plot of the performance
- described the use of drama components without explanation or evidence from the performance, so were not able to indicate they had watched the live performance
- did not answer all the questions
- showed a lack of knowledge of drama vocabulary.