

2025 NCEA Assessment Report

Subject:	English
Level:	1
Achievement standard(s):	91925, 91927

General commentary

Candidates who achieved higher grades responded directly to the given question or statement and delivered focused analysis of the techniques the author or creator used to shape the audience's response. Those candidates who wrote in clear, well-structured sentences were awarded higher grades. Candidates achieved well when their responses focussed on the question asked and effectively communicated their understanding of aspects linked to ideas. Responses that developed ideas in depth rather than shifting quickly between examples were better able to address the full question and show convincing, sometimes perceptive, understanding.

Report on individual achievement standard(s)

Achievement standard 91925: Demonstrate understanding of specific aspects of studied text

Assessment

This year marks the first time that standard 91925 has been assessed externally. In this assessment, candidates responded to a question or statement using details from an appropriate text that has been studied in depth in class. Responses are encouraged to show personal engagement and / or other points of view to support an explanation of aspects and ideas.

Commentary

Candidates who showed a clear understanding of their studied text and how techniques were used to engage the audience achieved higher grades. Successful responses engaged directly and thoughtfully with the question and demonstrated personal engagement. Both informal personal responses and formal essay styles could achieve higher grades, if they had addressed the question and included pertinent personal response. The assessment's emphasis on personal engagement rather than rigid essay structure allowed more candidates to experience success and demonstrate genuine understanding.

Stronger responses occurred where there was explicit mention of:

- language devices in novels / novellas (e.g. symbolism, allegory, foreshadowing)
- film techniques and their impact on audiences
- close language interpretation and analysis in short stories
- poetry, while rarely chosen, often produced strong responses.

Many candidates who chose to write on an unfamiliar text from 1927 did not achieve well since this was not a 'studied text'. Candidates are reminded to choose texts appropriate to Level 6 of the New Zealand Curriculum, and texts should be age-inappropriate (including R16 films). Some texts lacked sufficient complexity for in-depth responses (e.g. *Whale Rider*, *Boy*, *On the Sidewalk Bleeding*). Very popular texts included *The Truman Show*, *The Hunger Games*, *The Hate U Give*, *Uproar*, and *Of Mice and Men*. More successful texts included *Lord of the Flies*, *Pleasantville*, *V for Vendetta*, Shakespearean dramas, and *Animal Farm*.

Questions One and Two were the most commonly chosen. Questions One and Four tended to better support higher-level responses, as candidates demonstrated understanding by moving beyond the text and exploring ideas in more depth. Question Two often led to more general or descriptive answers, as candidates did not provide the wider discussion. Question Three was the least popular and was more challenging for many candidates, particularly in clearly defining "conflict" and explaining how they were challenged, rather than focusing only on the character.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- identified relevant features, events, characters, or techniques.
- provided explanations that were often underdeveloped and descriptive, focusing on what happened rather than why it mattered
- relied on plot-heavy description of events or single scenes with limited evidence and little exploration of how aspects worked together
- referred to the text in a general way or small sections of the text
- misread the question and wrote about multiple ideas or characters
- used superficial links to the question by repeating the wording of the question rather than unpacking it
- presented implied response rather than explanation of ideas and emotional response
- implied rather than clearly explained effects on the audience
- made weak or vague connections to the wider world, conflict, emotional response, or purpose of the aspect that were tacked on at the end of the response
- linked historical texts to their original context but then refrained from going on to make clear connections to a contemporary or personal context.

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

- demonstrated a developed understanding of the specified aspect(s) and generally explained how these aspects worked together to answer the chosen question
- wrote responses that moved beyond description into clear explanation, showing how techniques, characters, settings, or ideas contributed to meaning and effect
- explained how aspects worked together, often combining language features or film techniques with discussion of character, setting, or ideas
- selected evidence that was appropriate and used consistently
- showed strong understanding while analysis was sometimes uneven and often lacked the depth or insight required for Excellence
- included less convincing emotional responses, limited exploration of how candidates were challenged by a conflict, or underdeveloped links to their own world, which resulted in unbalanced responses.

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

- demonstrated a perceptive and insightful understanding of the specified aspect(s) and how they interacted to create effect or meaning
- wrote responses that were confident, controlled, and detailed, showing awareness of the author's / creator's purpose, the impact on the audience, and the text as a whole
- engaged nuanced analysis of language features, film techniques, character development, or thematic conflict, even beyond what the question required
- integrated evidence smoothly throughout, supporting points consistently and thoroughly
- responded to the second part of the question (ideas, emotional response, personal connection) throughout the response, not just added on at the end
- had strong personal engagement, linking the text to self or wider world, often with specific examples
- were structured, fluent, and focused, including clear opinions and sustained discussion of ideas or emotional responses
- demonstrated deep knowledge of the text, linking examples back to overall meaning and author's / creator's purpose.

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

- demonstrated limited or inaccurate understanding of the specified aspect(s) and / or minimal engagement with the text
- focused on plot summary rather than addressing the aspect or question
- had limited or no explanation of the aspect; evidence was often absent, inappropriate, or incorrectly used
- misunderstood or did not fully engage with the question, particularly the second part (emotional response, connection to own world, or personal challenge)
- produced a structured, "learned" essay on the text without engaging with the question
- misread the questions and discussed multiple conflicts / ideas / characters, focused on characters' challenges rather than their own
- responded emotionally in a way that did not answer the question
- wrote responses that were short and lacked specific textual details to demonstrate sufficient understanding.

Achievement standard 91927: Demonstrate understanding of significant aspects of unfamiliar texts

Assessment

This assessment required candidates to read three different texts of different types which they had not previously read or studied. Candidates were then required to answer one overarching question per text. Each question has been scaffolded with optional bullet point suggestions to guide candidates' discussion of the individual text. All three questions should be attempted.

Commentary

All three texts provided candidates the opportunity to respond in a range of ways. In the two prose texts, most candidates were able to identify a range of imagery used and accurately identify language features. Successful candidates were able to elaborate on the ideas prompted in the question by giving specific detailed ideas and naming the moods and tones created, or the effects of the language. General statements such as "This helped create a tone" or "This helped us understand

what the author was feeling” can be strengthened by explaining *how* and *why*, using specific details from the text to clearly show candidates’ understanding.

Across all three questions, many candidates did not respond to the question but instead focused on the bullet points provided as a guide. This resulted in some candidates writing long answers which provided clear examples and understanding but did not meet the criteria for Achieved due to them not responding to the specified aspect of the question. Many candidates also opted to write on the first, or most obvious, language feature they could identify, often using long quotes of two sentences or more. Those candidates who gained higher grades were able to select language which was clearly related to their point and often provided shorter quotes with more focused interpretation leading into analysis.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- responded to the specific question in a straightforward manner
- provided detail from the text which was linked to the question through explanation
- stated the connection between language and ideas without providing any unpacking of how this was shown
- identified a wide range of language, some of which did not relate to the question, and wrote brief explanations of their meaning
- wrote interpretation of language which mainly focused on meaning and literal interpretation.

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

- responded clearly to the question, moving past straightforward understanding to discuss language choices and their purpose
- wrote well-structured paragraphs, including short introductions which outlined the wider purpose of the text and linked this to the specific question
- discussed examples in combination, not only within paragraphs, but across the entire response, linking these to the wider purpose
- used shorter quotes from the text and provided specific, focused explanations which used the language of interpretation.

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

- provided detailed interpretation and analysis of language, making logical links between the ideas of the texts and wider contexts and purpose
- used carefully selected, relevant evidence
- interpreted a range of language techniques and discussed sophisticated aspects of the text, such as tone and mood
- wove their discussion of purpose and wider contexts into their responses, rather than adding it at the end of the response
- gave wider contexts which were clearly linked to the interpretation of language used throughout the response.

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

- responded to the bullet points rather than the question itself
- wrote very short responses which either included no evidence or give evidence without any further explanation
- left one or more of the responses blank.