Scholarship

2010 Assessment Report

English

COMMENTARY

This paper provided challenges as well as providing tasks and questions that were accessible to a range of candidates – a choice of stimulating questions provided opportunities to develop discussion, allowing candidates to identify key elements and bring their experience of texts through relevant reflection. This resulted in excellent academic writing where candidates displayed perception and discrimination.

Section A

Together both texts provided a challenge, drawing a wide range of responses. Those who took the time to propose a considered and reflective response were well rewarded.
Text A was more accessible with its strong imagery. The poetry in Text B required closer reading. Candidates who were prepared to contrast and compare produced insightful discussion. Some candidates only discussed easy connections and did not fully cover the extent of both texts.

Section B
The range of genres allowed scope for candidates who had undertaken independent readings beyond those studied in class.

For Shakespeare candidates have to be encouraged to think within the frame of the genre as they develop their own study and independent readings. Hence directed lateral connections and considerations on elements of a genre have to be encouraged. For example 'characterisation' rather than 'specific characters', 'comparative structuring' of texts rather than 'structure of a given work'…..hence the focus needs to be on the genre rather than an exclusive focus on particular text(s).

Section C

This section allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and skill in providing reasoned discussion. The topics allowed for the exposition of a balance of discussion and close reading. The Outstanding responses showed regard to all aspects of the topic and wove a supported and connected discussion through their presented readings.

SCHOLARSHIP WITH OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:
• selected challenging texts or those which allowed for sufficient critical analysis
• made judicious topic choices following the topic areas signalled in the question
• engaged with the topic keeping to a sophisticated central discussion
• showed 'freshness' of response in working with their own readings and the chosen topic
• brought relevant and focused knowledge and experience of texts to support their discussion
• understood and referred to current literary theory and other theoretical frameworks, to support and extend their arguments where appropriate
• went beyond the texts to the world we live in and referred to current discourses and popular culture
• were able to critically analyse texts in depth and detail, and quoted well in support
• showed personal insight and independent, critical thought about text and genre
• made connections between texts and compared them
• formed strong, well-supported conclusions and judgements about texts
• wrote with flair, sophistication and eloquence

- demonstrated the ability to write well across the whole paper
- structured fluent discussion which moved from reference/quote to applied readings/analysis.

Section A
- dealt with both content and crafting in a balanced discussion
- took on unfamiliar passages with perceptive analysis that worked toward synthesised appraisals of the writers' work
- applied their knowledge of techniques in a relevant and productive way to draw out the crafting or ideas of writers
- provided an overview of both texts which compared/contrasted more general effects and implications for a reader.

Section B
- balanced both general and particular response to text(s)
- extracted from the given topics the thrust of the required discussion
- demonstrated the ability to reconsider, rework and even refresh learned materials and familiar texts so that materials were brought cogently and judiciously to support the chosen topic.

Section C
- chose appropriate texts
- combined breadth and depth in their discussion so that detail of the chosen text(s) supported understandings
- provided evidence of the ability to move across texts/genres to make comparisons
- were able to show clear response to all aspects of the topic and to sustain this response throughout their discussion.

SCHOLARSHIP

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship but not Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:
- selected topics that suited their readings
- wrote on challenging texts or those which allowed for critical analysis
- were able to balance the demands of all three sections producing discussions that responded well to chosen topics
- engaged with the question and kept the argument central with a degree of sophistication in their discussion
- structured discussions with supporting and relevant reference
- produced responses that developed some ideas and showed knowledge of texts
- were able to critically analyse texts in depth and detail
- showed personal insight and independent thought
- went beyond the texts to the world we live in by referring to current discourses and popular culture
- made connections between texts and compared them
- formed strong, well-supported conclusions about texts
- wrote with flair and sophistication
- wrote THREE solid essays which answered the questions.

Section A
- were able to make reference to both techniques and meaning in the given extracts
- discussed the texts with linked and responsive reference to content
- showed understanding of techniques
- compared elements of the texts and were able to discuss similarities and differences.

Section B
- responded to the topics in the content of their discussion
- showed evidence of understanding of texts by discussion and reference
- used their understandings and experience of texts to shape developed and linked discussion.

Section C
- chose appropriate texts
- were able to take on the broader nature of the questions and evidence answers with relevant reference
- recognised with a degree of discrimination the thrust of topic producing relevant and fluent discussion.

OTHER CANDIDATES

Candidates who were not awarded Scholarship or Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:
- did not pace their work across the paper, spending too much time on one section and rushing/leaving out other sections
- were unable to respond to the topic and redirected materials to pre-worked/essays
- did not fully engage with the topic
- worked at a superficial level of understanding of the topics and or the studied texts. Responses were literal rather than analytical
- lacked a clear command of their studied texts and readings
- wrote on low-level or inappropriate texts which did not challenge or allow for sufficient critical analysis
- wrote literary essays that were not fluent or lucid
- produced work was unbalanced and lacked the scope to provide Scholarship level responses.

Section A
- misunderstood the unfamiliar texts, or did not compare the texts in any way
- were too focussed on spotting effects or their absence
- did not fully understand the ideas of both passages
- resorted to paraphrased commentaries rather than analysis
- relied on explanation and repetition
- did not develop and structure a coherent discussion
- made general assumptions about genre and shaped their discussion by this rather than what they actually found in the texts.

Section B
- pieced together passages of pre-worked materials rather than adapting/responding to the given topic
- often included extraneous reference, detail or quotation which did not pertain to the chosen topic
- could not move beyond particular studied or prepared "past-essay" areas of a text or texts, producing generic genre related discussions.

Section C
- misunderstood the thrust of the topics, without using knowledge of texts or their own reading experience
- retained "pocketed" discussion of individual texts or authors without blending their readings or responses in a relevant discussion.

OTHER COMMENTS

The exam continues to provide evidence that there are some very able thinkers and writers who can construct sophisticated responses in exam conditions with sustained eloquence.

EXAMINER'S ADVICE

For candidates to succeed at this level they need three key components:
- a tool kit of techniques
- academic writing skills
- a background of detailed text knowledge including wide independent text reading.

The tool kit needs to consist of a thorough knowledge of literary terms and grammatical techniques. Candidates need to practise these skills.

Writing skills will also require practise. Candidates need to be able to write academic discussions on unfamiliar topics within an exam time frame. It is clear that while many candidates know their material and write well, more practise in non-prepared academic writing would be beneficial.

Detailed text background is as essential as selecting the appropriate exam topic for those text(s). It is essential that texts chosen for class study permit a degree of analysis and discussion appropriate to the level of topics in the examination. It is not the range and quality of the text that is necessarily the issue. What is of crucial importance is that subsequent study and discussion allows candidates to respond appropriately in the Scholarship exam. A thematic approach to a year's English course coupled with a personal reading programme facilitates this.

Responses at this level need to include more than just – plot, character, theme – what is required is a deeper or more intense understanding. This can include literary theory, the position of the reader, the position of the text in time and the inter-relation of that text to others. This development of an independent perspective is critical at this level.

In an examination of this type and standard, time is of the essence. It is vital that candidates avoid expository introductions and generalised discussions.

Candidates also need to have a good knowledge of the current assessment schedule: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/awards/scholarship/scholarship-subjects/scholarship-english/#assessment