

# **Assessment Report**

## **Scholarship, 2007**

### **English**

## English, Scholarship, 2007

### Commentary:

Overall, the examination paper was a good, challenging paper with a very broad range of questions covered by the candidates.

Sections A and C provided discriminating elements in the paper, and each section required some independent thinking by candidates.

In Section B, the best candidates showed clear evidence of reworking textual knowledge and study. The very best here had adaptable reading experience and an ability to work beyond what they had been taught or had previously thought.

The very best candidate answers were extremely good indeed.

### Section A

The texts were accessible and yet challenging.

On the surface level, the passages provided easy initial discussion targets – the polar bear analogy / confinement in Passage A, and sensual, superficial / sensational resort in Passage B. They also offered deeper content on a structural / stylistic and content / meaning level that the more thoughtful candidates were able to tease out. Both passages rewarded the considered approach rather than the jump-in-and-write tendency.

The continuation of the practice of providing one non-New Zealand sourced passage was positive and serves to encourage candidates and teachers to work with a wide range of passages for close reading.

Many candidates need to develop ways of **comparing** texts, however.

### Section B

Questions set covered the range of genres and allowed scope for candidates who had worked outside the main areas of Level 3 teaching. The move to shorter quotations focused candidates on the thrust of the genre, which led to more being aware of the focus of both genre and question. The downside to this was a tendency for the less able candidate to simply offload Level 3 learnt material without fully acknowledging the direction of the question itself.

Questions 3, 7, and 11 were the most popular; language and e-text questions were rarely chosen.

Candidates need to ensure they unpack the key words of quotations in order to make the most of the possibilities offered within questions, eg “enthralled” in question 7 was too often simply glossed over, as was “reality” in question 11.

### Section C

Questions 16, 17, and 20 were the popular choices, but there was wide coverage of all options (unlike the previous year).

In this section, the performance differential remains the extent to which candidates discriminate the thrust of the question spine (the how and why) and are able to construct a cogent text-supported argument.

There was strong evidence that many of the best candidates were very well prepared. They were able to move through their texts and connect with them in lateral ways (as opposed to linear). Equally apparent, however, was evidence of well prepared and reworked responses to previous / other questions on the general themes of literature’s merits / timelessness / moral power, etc. These were often well written and well referenced essays, but they failed to show candidates being able to engage at a high level with **new** questions or ideas as they related to the texts they had read; they failed to demonstrate true Scholarship standard.

**The best performing candidates most commonly demonstrated the following skills and / or knowledge:**

- an ability to analyse the question and present a clear thesis, often original, or sustained argument throughout the essay
- an ability to pace themselves across the whole paper, dealing well with close analysis and reading in Section A, the familiar genre work in Section B, and finally the demanding reconfiguration work in Section C
- an ability to make a judicious choice of question and follow the instructions inherent in the individual question, whilst bringing relevant and focused knowledge and experience of texts to support their argument
- an ability to structure a fluent argument and discussion which moved from reference and quotation to applied readings and analyses while still driving relevant points through a strong literary discussion
- an ability to go beyond the texts themselves, use critical commentaries, and reformulate what had been read
- an ability to write with flair and fluency and to use language to convey insight, passion, and understanding as well as original thought.

**In Section A, the best candidates demonstrated:**

- an ability to deal with both content and crafting in a balanced discussion
- an ability to **compare** unfamiliar passages with perceptive analysis that illustrates without resorting to paraphrase or commentary, and works towards a synthesised appraisal of the writers' work
- an ability to apply their knowledge of techniques in a relevant and productive way to draw out the crafting or ideas of writers
- an ability to achieve an overview of both texts to compare general effects and the implications of those effects for the reader.

**In Section B, the best candidates demonstrated:**

- an ability to balance both general and particular responses to their studied texts
- an ability to extract from the given quotations and questions the focus of the required argument
- an ability to reconsider, rework, and even refresh learned materials and familiar texts in the light of the topics given so that materials were brought to support topics in relevant and purposeful ways.

**In Section C, the best candidates demonstrated:**

- an ability to combine breadth and depth in their discussion so that enough detail of the text(s) chosen was included to support their understandings, whilst also showing evidence of the ability to move across texts and genres to make comparisons
- an ability to choose appropriate texts for inclusion or reference.

**Candidates who did NOT achieve scholarship lacked some or all of the skills and knowledge above and in addition they showed:**

- an inability to pace themselves across the whole paper; consequently, these candidates produced unbalanced responses lacking scope, focus, or depth
- a failure to respond to the true topic as stated; consequently, these candidates redirected learnt materials to pre-worked essays and arguments
- an inability to work beyond the literal or the obvious
- an inability to write well, or fluently, or clearly enough.

**In Section A**

- an inability to work confidently with unfamiliar texts; consequently, these candidates focused on spotting techniques (or their absence) rather than dealing with the crafting of the ideas
- an inability to analyse texts in any coherent or integrated way; consequently, these candidates resorted to repetitive straightforward explanations of the relatively simple and obvious to which they added very obvious or slight references.

**In Section B**

- an inability to respond specifically to the question as stated
- an inability to self-edit extraneous detail or quotation that did not pertain to the topic or quotation, or even the candidate's own argument
- an inability to move beyond the confines of the studied text(s), or a "past essay" written in response to another topic.

**In Section C**

- an inability to reference a wide range of relevant or pertinent texts
- an inability to move beyond a "universal / timeless" approach to the ideas in their texts; consequently, these candidates twisted their chosen question to "suit" this pre-determined approach to their learnt content
- an inability to delve into texts in terms of the quotations and questions given. The weakest merely produced transactional writing on a general theme.

**Other Comments:**

**Texts:**

- Candidates need to be encouraged to read widely and choose texts that are new and challenging. Often, the texts handled most deftly by candidates are those that do NOT have a huge body of critical appraisal to get in the way of fresh and original thinking. The best candidates create new knowledge and thinking in relating their new texts to older materials with well established critical reputations and thus are able to apply the principles of universality almost implicitly. In short, these candidates **think**.
- Candidates need to be encouraged to select across genres in Section C and to "go wide and deep".

**Skills**

- Too many Section A answers are too linear. Section A requires a comparison. Candidates should compare using linking words between the two texts, eg conversely, both, also, whereas, while, similarly, on the other hand, in a similar way, et al, are words which help to convey the sense of fluency and purpose that is rewarded.
- Handwriting must be legible. Too much handwriting is indecipherable. This disrupts the flow of an argument, which in turn reduces the potential for awarding of Scholarship marks.