

# **Scholarship**

## **2014 Assessment Report**

### **English**

## **COMMENTARY**

This paper provided real challenges for candidates, as well as providing tasks and questions that were accessible to a range of candidates – a wide choice of statements provided opportunities for candidates to structure independent and mature arguments through discussion, which reflected a high level of critical response and an individual selection of texts. Candidates were able to identify key elements, demonstrate their knowledge of a range of texts and how they were crafted and show personal reflection.

Candidates were able to argue for and against statements. This resulted in excellent academic writing where candidates displayed perception and discrimination.

### **Section A**

The two texts had accessible differences which allowed candidates to make critical and thoughtful comments about them. There was a sense of real engagement with some scripts and an awareness of the way both texts were firmly rooted in the actual landscape. Those who used the prompts at the top of the page were provided with a degree of structure and the opportunity for sustained and insightful comment. These candidates realised the connections between people and places and were able to construct and substantiate some striking responses.

Many ignored the prompts and the structure of these responses was often clumsy and did little to allow exploration of the statement. They gave a lot of information about the texts, often involving large tracts being quoted and lacked a holistic response, often resorting to a paragraph on structure, then one on vocabulary etc. The point of view or stance was therefore never clear.

There were many unbalanced responses on the texts, mostly more time being spent on the prose which seemed to be more accessible.

Section A is a true test of their ability to handle an argument, to propose and deal with one based on text and it provides a practical application of purpose and audience.

Section A is often the determiner of whether a candidate gets a Scholarship or not, so students are advised to give enough time and effort into completing it. Section A is the section more often than not which is either ignored or not given equal time for completion.

It needs to be practiced in class time, looking at both poetry and prose extracts

### **Section B**

A wide range of genres was made available in Section B and again this is the section where students perhaps feel most confident, being closest to the standard of AS Level Three. A range of texts appeared but there was a noticeable lack of NZ literature.

There are still a number of candidates who respond in a way that is applicable to Level Three, but not for Scholarship. These responses tend to be learned and formulaic, following lines that are not established by engagement with the statement before them, but rather with a practised pre-conceived notion of what the text is about and what the examiner wants to know about it. Often these responses give huge plot summaries, concentrate on filmic techniques, for example and allude only to the statement to be discussed, with tenuous end sentences often precluded by 'this shows....'

Section B requires depth rather than breadth in the exploration of the statement and the text. Texts need to be chosen with care and candidates who did well limited the number of texts they chose to look at and examined them in depth. More is not necessarily better in terms of words and texts. Warping of the statement was unproductive, taking the line ‘the statement does not apply to short stories but does to novels’, with a statement based on the short story and then going on to ignore short stories and concentrate on novels was no successful.

Those candidates who approached the statements with an independent viewpoint, engaged with it and then explored their chosen text(s) in depth did well.

Those who integrated the comments from critics and literary theory rather than just stating ‘he says.....’, a Freudian examination shows.....’and referred to modern critics as well as older ones to support their argument wrote well.

Those candidates, who engaged with the question, established what it meant to them, took a clear stance, had a clear understanding of the nature of the genre they chose and chose texts which would suit their argument, generally did very well. Often this was accomplished in the introduction leaving a clear path for the marker to follow.

### **Section C**

A wide range of challenging and accessible statements were provided which allowed candidates to articulate their individual perceptions of the nature of literature, their interpretation of it and the relationship between literature, themselves and others. This section is wider in scope than Section B. The statements encouraged independence of thought, demanded a response to the essence of the question and encouraged reference to a range of independent readings.

Those candidates, who engaged with the question, established what it meant to them, took a clear stance and chose texts which would suit their argument, generally did very well. Often this was accomplished in the introduction leaving a clear path for the marker to follow. It is advisable to avoid referencing an over large numbers of texts, which often prevents synthesising.

Candidates did not help themselves by providing long-winded rambling introductions with little reference to statement and/or chosen text. Candidates are reminded the introduction needs to introduce key ideas relating to the statement, the stance taken and the texts which will be used.

Candidates need to be sure they are dealing with the whole of the statement when they establish their stance.

## **SCHOLARSHIP WITH OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE**

### **Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:**

- chose a statement they could respond to and clearly understood
- engaged with the statement, keeping to a sophisticated central discussion which they set up effectively
- showed ‘freshness’ of response in working with their own readings and their reinterpretation of the chosen statement
- were driven by the statement and not by the text(s)
- mounted vigorous and confident response with zest, wit, acumen and panache
- brought relevant and focused knowledge of texts to support their response

- synthesised information and response
- showed personal insight and independent, critical thought about text and genre
- formed strong, well-supported conclusions about texts in relation to the statement
- structured fluent discussion which moved from reference/quote to applied readings/analysis
- wrote with flair, sophistication, and eloquence
- sustained the ability to write well across the whole paper

### **Section A**

- dealt with both content and crafting of the two texts in a focussed and balanced discussion
- explored unfamiliar passages with perceptive analysis, receptive to nuance and author's intention
- applied their knowledge of crafting methods in a relevant and productive way to draw out the purpose or ideas of writers.
- produced a response which was independent, insightful, synthesised and creative.

### **Section B**

- focused their response on the statement
- responded with a clear understanding of the genre
- developed and supported a cogent, synthesised and effective thesis
- showed a depth of knowledge and understanding of the text(s) referred to
- demonstrated the ability to reconsider, rework and even refresh learned materials and familiar texts so that materials were brought cogently and judiciously to support chosen topic.

### **Section C**

- focused their response on the statement
- were able to demonstrate an independence of thought
- combined breadth and depth in their discussion
- used specific and appropriate details of the chosen text(s)
- sustained their discussion in a perceptive and engaging way.

## **SCHOLARSHIP**

### **Candidates who were awarded Scholarship but not Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:**

- selected appropriate statements
- wrote a response which included critical analysis.
- wrote solid essays which were fluent and well-constructed
- engaged with the statement in their response
- structured discussions with supporting and relevant reference
- showed personal insight and independent thought
- formed strong, well-supported conclusions about texts.

### **Section A**

- were able to respond to the prompt given
- were able to make reference to purpose, techniques and meaning in the given extracts
- showed understanding of techniques and their use
- compared elements of the texts and were able to discuss similarities and differences.

### **Section B**

- responded to the statements
- took time to wrestle with the statement and understand it in their terms rather than assuming that the meanings were given
- used their understandings and experience of texts and genres to shape developed and linked discussion
- showed a depth of knowledge and understanding of their chosen text(s).

### **Section C**

- responded to the statements
- recognised with a degree of discrimination the thrust of the statement, producing relevant and fluent discussion.
- included textual evidence fluently, selecting details rather than summarising.

### **OTHER CANDIDATES**

#### **Candidates who were not awarded Scholarship or Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:**

Candidates who were not awarded Scholarship typically:

#### *Generally*

- were unable to respond to the statement and redirected materials to pre-worked /essays
- did not fully engage with the statement
- lacked a sense of personal voice or ownership of argument
- worked at a superficial level of understanding of the statement
- produced responses which were literal rather than analytical
- lacked a clear command of their chosen texts and readings
- wrote literary essays that were not fluent or lucid
- produced work which 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 focused on spotting effects or their absence
- 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
- were inaccurate in knowledge and identification of language features
- were unbalanced in their response to both texts.

## Section B

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

## Section C

- misunderstood the thrust of the statements, without using knowledge of texts or their own reading experience
- retained ‘pocketed’ discussion of individual texts or authors without blending their readings/responses in a relevant discussion
- were unable to show or develop a personal response.

## 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 and insightful comment.

Examiner’s Advice as in past years.

For candidates to succeed at this level they need five key components.

- a tool kit of techniques
- academic writing skills
- a background of detailed text knowledge including wide independent text reading
- a real interest and engagement with various ideas and texts
- an understanding of themselves and the position they hold as a reader.

The **tool kit** needs to consist of a thorough knowledge of literary terms and grammatical techniques. Candidates need to practise these skills, particularly in the response to the texts in Section A. The skills need to be developed so they can be used with confidence and accuracy, with both prose and poetry,

**Academic writing skills** will also require practice. 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 practice in non-prepared academic writing would be beneficial. The structure of written responses also needs practice.

**Detailed text background** is as essential as selecting the appropriate exam statement 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 statements 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. The need is for candidates to engage with the question and then use the texts they have at their disposal.

**Ideas** are fundamental. Candidates' responses need to engage with the statements, and then advance their own take on what that means. The evidence of independent thought and the creative response is vital.

**Responsive Reader:** Candidates who respond well are those who have a real understanding of where they are, what the world is all about, and how people respond to it. 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 appropriate literary theory, the position of the reader, the position of the text in time and the inter-relation of that text to others. The development of an independent perspective is critical at this level and the self-confidence to articulate this. The interest and engagement with the argument and the genuine development of an argument with supporting details is crucial.

In an examination of this type and standard, time is of the essence. It is vital that candidates avoid over long expository introductions and generalized discussions. Candidates would be better served by dealing with the statement and how they perceive it and then enforcing this with textual details. They also need to understand that responses to all three sections are required and this means sensible allocation of time to each section.

Candidates also need to have a good knowledge of the current assessment schedule.