

Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship English 2024

Performance standard 93001

General commentary

This year's New Zealand Scholarship English examination has once again highlighted the exceptional talent, dedication, and intellectual rigour of candidates and educators across the country. The essays submitted demonstrate a remarkable engagement with the demands of Scholarship-level English, showcasing high-level analysis, critical thinking, and the sophisticated integration of knowledge and skills. Many candidates exhibited a mature appreciation of complex texts and questions, delivering responses that were not only precise and coherent but also insightful and perceptive. These achievements are a testament to the outstanding teaching and learning practices within New Zealand's high schools, as well as the candidates' commitment to mastering the craft of critical response.

As in previous years, a small number of candidates appeared to misinterpret the genre of interactive texts. This genre specifically refers to works that diverge from traditional linear narratives, offering readers agency through choices that influence the direction and outcome of the story. Such texts often blend literary elements with gaming mechanics, creating a dynamic interplay between reader and text that fosters a uniquely immersive experience. It is important to note that interactive texts are distinct from conventional novels or dramatic works, such as those by Shakespeare, which follow a fixed narrative structure. When addressing this genre, candidates should focus on analysing how interactivity shapes meaning and reader engagement, rather than simply summarising gameplay or retelling plot points, as one might with a film or traditional literary work. Encouraging candidates to engage critically with the interactive nature of these texts will ensure a more nuanced and genre-appropriate response.

Legibility was a problem with some candidate scripts. Poor handwriting is an impediment to fluency and coherence, both of which are required to score at Scholarship level.

The quality of each essay is far more important than quantity of words. Candidates would benefit from a greater focus on the judicious selection of the most pertinent details to support a focused argument.

It is encouraging to see candidates engaging enthusiastically with the terminology of language features and demonstrating a willingness to explore a wide range of rhetorical devices. However, it is important to emphasise that the inclusion of accurate and purposeful use of language features, rather than the inclusion of more obscure terms, is key to achieving success. While devices such as asyndetic listing, zeugma, or epistrophe can be effective in certain contexts, their use does not inherently elevate the quality of an essay, particularly if they are applied inaccurately or without clear relevance to the analysis. Scholarship-level responses are distinguished by the depth of insight and precision of expression, rather than the mere mention of advanced terminology. Encouraging candidates to focus on the appropriateness and accuracy of their language analysis will ensure their efforts are both meaningful and impactful.

Similarly, it is gratifying to see that there is considerable teaching and learning of sophisticated vocabulary. Candidates will benefit from further practice and exemplification of how to use (in writing and during class dialogue) such vocabulary accurately, in a correctly nuanced way.

When choosing texts to discuss, a good guideline would be to keep to the curriculum level, similar to the wide reading standards. This should not, of course, discount a rigorous academic discussion of issues like representation in Hollywood films or Netflix sitcoms.

While some essays demonstrated effort in exploring diverse texts, the selection of materials occasionally lacked the depth and thematic cohesion necessary to fully support the thesis. For instance, pairing a light-hearted or juvenile text with a complex work like “1984” created challenges in synthesising ideas effectively. Additionally, some popular films, such as “Shawshank Redemption” and “Hidden Figures”, while valuable in their own right, may not provide the level of analytical rigour typically expected in Scholarship. Encouraging a more deliberate alignment of texts with the thesis would strengthen the overall argument and depth of analysis.

Report on performance standard

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with **Outstanding Performance** commonly:

- demonstrated independent and creative thought
- ‘wrestled’ with the question, demonstrating an innovative non-prepared response
- developed a very coherent, persuasive argument
- wove a wide range of relevant sources into their discussion, demonstrating an excellent knowledge of the context of the text
- integrated contextual knowledge and understanding to support textual discussion and analysis
- showed mastery of writing skills
- unpacked Section A carefully, and used technical language extensively but integrated and synthesised their response to Section A, keeping to the point throughout
- understood that Section B was a discussion of concept of the chosen genre as well as the texts. Candidates showed an awareness of the text type and discussed “the novel” or “film” or “poetry” as a literary genre
- used a vocabulary that was broad, concise, and precise
- maintained a consistent focus on the requirements of each section
- structured a sophisticated and confident argument that showed independent thought
- wrote a perceptive response, synthesising ideas across texts and beyond texts only when relevant
- used evidence judiciously, integrating precise details and / or quotations and unpacked them in relation to the essay’s argument
- wrote precisely and concisely rather than writing everything they could possibly remember about their text(s)
- used the terminology of language features in a precise and relevant way
- wrote legibly and accurately, with confidence and flair.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- addressed the question clearly with a thesis that was developed throughout the essay
- chose texts that were appropriate for arguing their thesis
- synthesised their discussion of texts
- demonstrated writing that was lucid and sophisticated (i.e., their discussion was a thesis-driven response)
- balanced their discussion of Text A and Text B throughout Section A

- demonstrated originality and personalisation in their essay by incorporating ideas or insights that were not pre-prepared or pre-taught, often achieved through a thoughtful and close engagement with the question.

Candidates who were **not awarded Scholarship** commonly:

- wrote responses that did not address the question, or addressed the question in passing in the introduction and conclusion
- made generalisations that were not supported by evidence
- chose texts that did not allow for the sophistication needed for Scholarship or were inappropriate for the statement
- wrote underdeveloped discussions that were structured more like a Level 3 essay with a paragraph per text and little synthesis
- demonstrated difficulty in writing clearly and cohesively, often resulting in overly verbose or illegible content
- had limited proper paragraphing, which frequently reflected a lack of structured thinking.