



National 5 English: Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation, Critical Reading and Portfolio–writing

Overview of Understanding Standards resources

This document provides an overview of Understanding Standards resources that are available for National 5 English: Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation, Critical Reading and portfolio–writing, which may be useful in supporting marking and moderation.

You can find the resources on the [National 5 English Understanding Standards](#) page of our website.

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Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (2024)

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
1	1	3 out of 3	Includes example of two marks awarded within one bullet point of the response.
1	2	4 out of 4	Appropriate references and analytical comments – full marks.
1	3	2 out of 2	Successful response to structural link question.
1	4	4 out of 4	Appropriate references and analytical comments – full marks.
1	5	3 out of 6	Includes examples of points being repeated.
1	6	4 out of 4	Appropriate references and analytical comments – full marks.
1	7	2 out of 3	Third bullet point is too close to the wording of the question.
1	8	2 out of 2	Full understanding of key ideas shown.
1	9	2 out of 2	Appropriate reference selected, paired with suitable reference from earlier in passage.
2	1	2 out of 3	Both successful and unsuccessful use of own words.
2	2	4 out of 4	Appropriate references and analytical comments – full marks.
2	3	1 out of 2	Several attempts at answering the question. One correct point.
2	4	4 out of 4	Correct reference and comment demonstrated twice.
2	5	3 out of 6	Example of how marks are unpicked from candidate's response.
2	6	4 out of 4	Correct reference and comment demonstrated twice.
2	7	3 out of 3	Some responses repeated.
2	8	2 out of 2	Sufficient understanding of key ideas shown.
2	9	2 out of 2	Multiple selection offered, full marks achieved.
3	1	2 out of 3	Some of this response relies too heavily on language from the passage.
3	2	4 out of 4	Appropriate references and analytical comments – full marks.
3	3	0 out of 2	Correct selection from passage made, but incorrect structural comment.
3	4	4 out of 4	Appropriate references and analytical comments – full marks.
3	5	3 out of 6	Includes examples of too much reliance of language from the passage.
3	6	4 out of 4	Appropriate references and analytical comments – full marks.
3	7	2 out of 3	Both complete and incomplete understanding shown.
3	8	1 out of 2	Includes an example of reliance on a key word from the passage.
3	9	2 out of 2	Correct reference and structural comment.

Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (2023)

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
1	1	2 out of 2	Full understanding shown.
1	2	4 out of 4	Just enough in analytical comment for final (fourth) mark.
1	3	2 out of 2	Successful response to structural link question.
1	4	5 out of 5	Example of how marks are unpicked from candidate's response.
1	5	1 out of 2	Insufficient understanding shown in one of the points.
1	6	4 out of 4	Appropriate references and analytical comments – full marks.
1	7	2 out of 4	Both successful and unsuccessful use of own words. Includes example of candidate repeating the same point.
1	8	5 out of 5	Full marks achieved but includes examples of too much reliance on lifts from the passage.
1	9	2 out of 2	Good analytical comment on conclusive effect of writer's use of language.
2	1	2 out of 2	Clear understanding shown for full marks.
2	2	1 out of 4	Includes example of both an insufficient reference and insufficient analytical comment.
2	3	2 out of 2	Begins with inappropriate quotation of whole sentence but goes on to make successful selections.
2	4	2 out of 5	Contains examples of response demonstrating insufficient understanding.
2	5	0 out of 2	Example of a response relying too heavily on lifts from the passage.
2	6	1 out of 4	Example of unsuccessful analytical comment on the writer's use of a list.
2	7	3 out of 4	Contains examples of key elements of understanding not sufficiently addressed.
2	8	2 out of 5	Good example of the extent to which full understanding of writer's ideas is required.
2	9	2 out of 2	Accurate response to question about effective conclusion.
3	1	1 out of 2	Insufficient understanding shown for second mark.
3	2	2 out of 4	Example of both successful and unsuccessful reference plus comment.
3	3	2 out of 2	Successful response to structural link question.
3	4	3 out of 5	Example of candidate repeating material within response.
3	5	2 out of 2	Full understanding shown.
3	6	4 out of 4	Correct reference and analytical comment demonstrated twice.
3	7	2 out of 4	Examples of key aspects of understanding not being demonstrated.
3	8	4 out of 5	Four clear points of understanding shown.
3	9	1 out of 2	Correct reference only – insufficient comment.

Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (2022)

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
1	1	2 out of 2	Full understanding shown.
1	2	4 out of 4	Correct reference and analytical comment demonstrated twice.
1	3	5 out of 5	Very full understanding of key points shown.
1	4	2 out of 2	Successful response to structural link question.
1	5	2 out of 2	Good example of how judgements are made about sufficient 'own words.'
1	6	4 out of 4	Correct reference and comment demonstrated twice.
1	7	4 out of 4	Interesting commentary on additional material provided by the candidate.
1	8	5 out of 5	Full marks achieved but includes commentary on places where the points made by the candidate are not quite sufficient to demonstrate full understanding.
1	9	2 out of 2	Accurate response to question about effective conclusion.
2	1	2 out of 2	Full understanding shown.
2	2	2 out of 4	Second reference is too close in meaning to first reference – so no further marks.
2	3	2 out of 5	Examples of showing insufficient understanding by relying too much on lifts from the passage.
2	4	2 out of 2	Successful response to structural link question.
2	5	2 out of 2	Full understanding of expression shown.
2	6	4 out of 4	Example of fine judgement being applied to analytical commentary.
2	7	3 out of 4	One analytical comment relies too heavily on lifts from the passage.
2	8	5 out of 5	Full understanding shown.
2	9	1 out of 2	Mark for reference only. Comment doesn't address the question in a relevant way.
3	1	2 out of 2	Full understanding shown.
3	2	4 out of 4	Example of how to unpick relevant and appropriate comments from a candidate's response.
3	3	3 out of 5	Contains examples of both complete and incomplete understanding.
3	4	0 out of 2	Response doesn't deal with structural aspects.
3	5	0 out of 2	Understanding of expression not demonstrated.
3	6	2 out of 4	Marks awarded for relevant references only – analysis insufficient.

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
3	7	3 out of 4	Example of analytical comment that is too vague and lacks relevance.
3	8	5 out of 5	Includes example of how to unpick relevant and appropriate points of understanding from a candidate's response.
3	9	0 out of 2	No selection offered.

Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (2021)

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
1	1	1 out of 2	Example of fine judgement being made when awarding marks.
1	2	0 out of 4	Imprecision in the response; too much reliance on wording of the passage.
1	3	2 out of 4	Marks awarded for references only, comments insufficient.
1	4	2 out of 4	Marks awarded for references only, comments insufficient.
1	5	1 out of 4	One relevant point only.
1	6	0 out of 2	Response not sufficiently relevant to question.
1	7	4 out of 6	Includes example of carefully considering and assessing the wording of candidate's response.
1	8	1 out of 2	Some understanding shown.
1	9	1 out of 2	Mark for reference only. Comment doesn't address the question in a relevant way.
2	1	1 out of 2	Some understanding shown.
2	2	3 out of 4	Example of pinpointing exactly where mark should be awarded.
2	3	3 out of 4	Analysis marks partially achieved.
2	4	3 out of 4	Analysis marks partially achieved.
2	5	1 out of 4	Example of too much reliance on lifts from the passage.
2	6	0 out of 2	Response not sufficiently relevant to question.
2	7	3 out of 6	Some understanding shown – reliance on lifts from the passage.
2	8	2 out of 2	Full understanding shown.
2	9	2 out of 2	Accurate response to question about effective conclusion.
3	1	1 out of 2	Some understanding shown.

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
3	2	3 out of 4	Three concise, relevant points made.
3	3	4 out of 4	Successful analysis demonstrated.
3	4	4 out of 4	Successful analysis demonstrated.
3	5	3 out of 4	Contains an example of a response that does not adhere to stated line references.
3	6	1 out of 2	Insufficient analytical comment.
3	7	6 out of 6	Full understanding shown.
3	8	2 out of 2	Example of fine judgement being made when awarding marks.
3	9	2 out of 2	Accurate response to question about effective conclusion.

Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (2019)

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
A	3	2 out of 4	Third bullet point of response relies too much on lifts from the passage. Fourth bullet point – no relevant understanding shown.
A	5	2 out of 2	Correct response (2 marks) for 'link' question.
A	6	3 out of 6	Candidate offers lots of material, but some is based on lifts and repetitions from the passage, and knowledge from outwith the passage.
A	9	2 out of 2	Responds to question 9 by correctly summarising main ideas of the passage.
B	5	0 out of 2	0 marks for 'link' question because no directional comment offered.
B	6	3 out of 6	Response contains lifts from the passage, material that is insufficiently relevant, and one occasion where candidate (successfully) has a second attempt at one particular aspect.
B	7	0 out of 2	Relies too heavily on lifts from the passage.
B	9	1 out of 2	Comment is not sufficiently close to 'effective conclusion' (writer's use of structure).
C	3	4 out of 4	Marking of bullet point 3 demonstrates how 2 marks can be awarded in one part of a candidate's response (the 'condensed answer').
C	5	2 out of 2	Unpicking of marks for 'link' question.
C	8	2 out of 4	An imprecise reference in second half of response.
C	9	1 out of 2	1 mark for correct reference, but 0 marks for general comment 'the writer recaps the main points,' because no explanation given of what main points are.

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
D	1	3 out of 4	Insufficient analysis offered by candidate for second reference.
D	2	0 out of 2	No selection from the passage offered, so 0 marks.
D	5	0 out of 2	Reference supplied, but no directional comment made – 0 marks. Uses material from outwith the parameters of the question.

Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (2018)

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
A	1	1 out of 2	Relies too much on lifts from the passage.
A	2	2 out of 5	Relies on lifts from the passage.
A	4	2 out of 2	Correct response for 'link' question.
A	7	1 out of 4	Insufficient analysis offered.
A	9	1 out of 2	A correct selection but deals with meaning only in accompanying comment.
B	1	1 out of 2	In second point, candidate does not show enough understanding of ideas to be given a mark.
B	5	1 out of 2	Correct reference identified, but insufficient analysis.
B	6	2 out of 4	Deals with material that is not sufficiently relevant to question.
C	1	2 out of 2	Full explanation of writer's developed idea in second bullet point of response.
C	2	4 out of 5	Example of how two bullet points from a candidate's response can be considered for the awarding of mark.
C	4	2 out of 2	Correct response for 'link' question.
C	9	2 out of 2	Relevant selection related accurately to earlier reference.
D	1	1 out of 2	Partial understanding of writer's developed idea shown.
D	2	5 out of 5	Full marks for 'high mark' understanding question.
D	4	2 out of 2	Correct response for 'link' question.
D	8	4 out of 5	The first part of the candidate's answer relies too heavily on material lifted from the passage; however, this is followed by valid responses.

Critical Reading (2024)

Candidate	Scottish text	Scottish text mark	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Comments
1	n/a	n/a	<i>The Lottery</i>	13 out of 20	Response on character. The response can be described mostly by the 13–10 mark range, but there are some indications of the 17–14 mark range.
2	n/a	n/a	<i>Gladiator</i>	16 out of 20	Good understanding of the central concerns of the text, and the line of thought is relevant throughout. The response can be described by all of the statements in the 17–14 mark range.
3	n/a	n/a	<i>The Crucible</i>	20 out of 20	A thorough, well-constructed and consistently relevant response which clearly satisfies all aspects of the 20–18 mark range.

Critical Reading (2023)

Candidate	Scottish text	Scottish text mark	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Comments
1	<i>Tallys Blood</i>	18 out of 20 Final question 6 out of 8	n/a	n/a	Candidate approaches theme of national identity through characterisation.
2	<i>Edwin Morgan</i>	20 out of 20 Final question 8 out of 8	n/a	n/a	All aspects of question addressed – candidate brings in Glasgow Sonnet (i) as the other poem referenced.
3	<i>The Cone-Gatherers</i>	19 out of 20 Final question 8 out of 8	n/a	n/a	Candidate responds on both setting in time and place.
1	n/a	n/a	<i>Shooting Stars</i>	10 out of 20	Some familiarity with text and understanding of central concerns. Some understanding of techniques. Just enough for 10 marks.
2	n/a	n/a	<i>The Truman Show</i>	13 out of 20	Some elements of 17–14 mark range, but more from 13–10 range. Some good use of critical terminology. Awarded 13 marks.
3	n/a	n/a	<i>The Hate U Give</i>	15 out of 20	Example of response on a text which promotes diversity. Good understanding of central concerns.

Critical Reading (2022)

Candidate	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Comments
1	<i>Shutter Island</i>	19 out of 20	Thorough, detailed and relevant response on a media text.
2	<i>Mrs Tilscher's Class</i>	12 out of 20	Some familiarity with the text as a whole and some understanding of the central concerns. There is an awareness of the writer's techniques (for example word choice, pathetic fallacy), and some commentary, but this is not developed into detailed explanation.
3	<i>Letter to an MP</i>	16 out of 20	Example of response to question from the language section.

Critical Reading (2021)

Candidate	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Comments
A	<i>Of Mice and Men</i>	10 out of 20	Some familiarity with the text, some understanding of central concerns and some awareness of the writer's techniques. Just enough for 10 marks.
B	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>	15 out of 20	This essay is described fully by the statements in the 17–14 mark range.
C	<i>The Solution</i>	13 out of 20	Example of a response on a text which is fairly new to N5, on the subject of an abusive relationship.

Critical Reading (2019)

Candidate	Scottish text	Scottish text mark	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Total	Comments
1	<i>Tally Blood</i>	15 out of 20 Final question 4 out of 8	<i>On the Sidewalk Bleeding</i>	11 out of 20	26 out of 40	Candidate repeats material in final question of Scottish text. Decision as to where to award marks is explained as the critical essay is relevant but thin in analysis.
2	<i>The Way My Mother Speaks</i>	20 out of 20 Final question 8 out of 8	<i>A View from the Bridge</i>	19 out of 20	39 out of 40	Very detailed critical essay. Good example of 20–18 mark range.

Candidate	Scottish text	Scottish text mark	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Total	Comments
3	<i>Tally's Blood</i>	20 out of 20 Final question 8 out of 8	<i>Shooting Stars</i>	15 out of 20	35 out of 40	In Scottish text final question, the candidate uses characterisation to explore the theme of war. In critical essay, good understanding of central concerns, reasonably developed commentary on text. Clear example of 17–14 mark range.
4	<i>My Grandmother's Houses</i>	17 out of 20 Final question 6 out of 8	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>	17 out of 20	34 out of 40	In Scottish text final question, candidate makes no reference to extract – all marks for commonality and work done on other poem ('Gap Year'). Strengths of critical essay are relevance and very good understanding of central concerns.
5	<i>Bold Girls</i>	17 out of 20 Final question 8 out of 8	<i>The Pedestrian</i>	12 out of 20	29 out of 40	Critical essay – relevant line of thought, some familiarity with text, some awareness of techniques.
6	<i>Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde</i>	18 out of 20 Final question 6 out of 8	<i>Mid-Term Break</i>	11 out of 20	29 out of 40	In Scottish text final question, candidate provides relevant references, but some analytical comments are not successful. Critical essay contains some familiarity with text and central concerns, but weaknesses in analysis.
7	<i>The Way My Mother Speaks</i>	18 out of 20 Final question 8 out of 8	<i>Of Mice and Men</i>	11 out of 20	29 out of 40	In critical essay, some familiarity with text is shown – candidate is selective, picking a few aspects to deal with. Analysis is based mostly on characterisation – lacks in detail at times.
8	<i>Brooklyn Cop</i>	20 out of 20 Final question 8 out of 8	<i>A Hanging</i>	19 out of 20	39 out of 40	Very detailed and consistently relevant critical essay.

Critical Reading (2017)

Candidate	Scottish text	Scottish text mark	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Total	Comments
1	<i>War Photographer</i>	20 out of 20 Final question 8 out of 8	<i>The Dark Knight</i>	14 out of 20	34 out of 40	Unpicking of marks – explanation of how marks for ‘commonality’ can be awarded from the body of the candidate’s response and not where the candidate has labelled it. Media critical essay.
2	<i>Aunt Julia</i>	20 out of 20 Final question 8 out of 8	<i>The Ferryman’s Daughter</i>	11 out of 20	31 out of 40	Use of more than one ‘other’ poem in final question.
3	<i>Sailmaker</i>	13 out of 20 Final question 6 out of 8	<i>A Hanging</i>	12 out of 20	25 out of 40	In Scottish text question 7, candidate responds on area outwith specified line references.
4	<i>Tally’s Blood</i>	15 out of 20 Final question 6 out of 8	<i>Animal Farm</i>	14 out of 20	29 out of 40	In Scottish text responses, the candidate sometimes goes outwith specified line references. Marking of critical essay has some elements of both 13–10 and 17–14 mark ranges.

Portfolio–writing (2023)

Candidate	Title	Broadly creative/ broadly discursive	Mark	Comments
1	My childhood	Creative	8	Personal writing, solidly in middle of 9–7 mark range.
2	Are fireworks worth it?	Discursive	9	Contains a few indications of the 12–10 mark range, but on balance more elements of 9–7 range.
3	Ballet - behind the curtains	Creative	11	Personal writing, solidly in middle of 12–10 mark range.
4	Ebbing away	Creative	14	Very good creativity, language used to create effects.
5	The British Empire - benevolent or brutal?	Discursive	15	Powerful and highly effective discursive writing.

Portfolio–writing (2022)

Candidate	Title	Broadly creative/ broadly discursive	Mark	Comments
1	I hate school	Creative	8	Personal writing, solidly in middle of 9–7 mark range.
2	Why you should adopt from animal shelters	Discursive	11	Persuasive writing – two main, relevant points made. Overall, language is effective.
3	Tea for two	Creative	14	Short fiction. Very good creativity – stylish, effective use of language.

Portfolio–writing (2019)

Candidate	Title	Broadly creative/ broadly discursive	Mark	Comments
A	A millionaire’s dream	Creative	7	Useful example of borderline piece. A mixture of personal material with ‘what if?’ imaginative explorations.
B	Goal line technology	Discursive	8	Good benchmark example of 9–7 mark range discursive writing.
C	I have seen how disabilities affect...	Creative	11	Reflective piece with good degree of insight and self-awareness.

Candidate	Title	Broadly creative/ broadly discursive	Mark	Comments
D	Should there be dedicated parking	Discursive	10	A piece where aspects of 12–10 mark range outweigh those from 9–7 range.
E	Pablo Escobar	Discursive	11	Biographical report. Relevant research presented in clear sequence.
F	The light side to dark humour	Discursive	15	Very effective persuasive writing. Very good writing for National 5 level.
G	Jane Doe	Creative	13	Opening chapter of piece of prose fiction. Very good creativity but occasions where writing is less successful.
H	I was within and without	Creative	15	Poem. Very good creativity.

Portfolio–writing (2018)

Candidate	Title	Broadly creative/ broadly discursive	Mark	Comments
A	Holiday to Blackpool	Creative	7	This piece and one below (candidate B) just meet standard for 9–7 mark range. Good benchmark pieces.
B	School Uniforms	Discursive	7	Good benchmark piece.
C	The Long and Winding Road	Creative	12	Top of 12–10 mark range, contains some elements of 15–13 range.
D	Childhood beauty pageants	Discursive	14	Strong persuasive piece. Clearly indicative of 15–13 mark range.
E	My Story	Creative	9	Very securely in 9-7 mark range, with some elements of 12–10.
F	New Punishments for Hacking	Discursive	10	Shows elements of both 12–10 and 9–7 mark ranges. More indications of 12–10, therefore 10 marks.
G	The Loft	Creative	15	Vivid characterisation and effective use of language throughout.
H	The Life of Robert So Far	Discursive	9	Biographical report.