

90724R



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

Level 3 English, 2009

90724 Read and respond critically to unfamiliar prose and poetry texts

Credits: Three

9.30 am Wednesday 18 November 2009

RESOURCE BOOKLET

Refer to this booklet to answer the questions for English 90724.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–3 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

YOU MAY KEEP THIS BOOKLET AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.

TEXT A: *A Winter's Tale* (written text – prose)

Read Text A, then answer Questions One and Two.

A Winter's Tale

In Russian literature, stars in the sky have been described as resembling frost on the blade of an axe. That image resounds, strikes me as entirely apt if you live in my part of the world, the inland spaces of southern New Zealand.

5 It's brisk, bristly and bright in the morning as I write this. There are no clouds anywhere over Rough Ridge to the east or Blackstone Hill to the west. I imagine diamonds are glinting in the snow on my back lawn. I'm sitting here in my possum socks. On my head I have one of my several woollen beanies. My stringy frame hosts a singlet, a very thick lined "bush" shirt, and over that two woollen jerseys. For the time being I've lost my fingerless woollen mittens. In my "main" room is a small woodburner that, years ago, I
10 put in what was previously an utterly useless, ineffectual fireplace.

I live in a tiny house, a shoebox, and have the unenviable distinction of hunkering in a very small town, Oturehua (population 30–40), near the head of the Ida Valley in the Maniototo region of Central Otago. A few kilometres up the road are the snow-draped and pleated slopes of my beloved Hawkdun range, and a bit further off, in the northwest, is
15 that wonderful mammoth, Mt St Bathans. In every direction are high hills and mountains, their shapes and hues often replicated by the most wonderful and startling skylines I have seen anywhere.

People have said bluntly that I must be mad living here, which reminds me of Yeats reflecting on who might be "Mad as the mist and snow". Well, half those I know
20 everywhere strike me as a bit mad, and I'm sure I'm no different. It's the so-called sane I fear most, those afflicted with rational-itis laced with vanity and self-delusion. They're much in evidence among the "we-will-do-betters" who seldom do, and who yap more loudly in the lead-up to election times.

One feels of and in this land, challenged by it often, and a certain distaste for pretension or
25 affectation. In my case there's a disinclination, too, to listen to too much whingeing about rights and entitlements driven by unreasonable or unsustainable expectations. Living here helps emphasise the difference between needs and wants, forces me to learn how to get by and make do.

Often, I'm reminded of Thoreau who, for a time, learned from nature, set out "to live
30 deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life". He was looking for ways to apprehend the essence of what is less grasping, and hoped to become more appreciative of simpler, respectful pleasures.

Source (adapted): Brian Turner, *A Winter's Tale*. <http://www.stuff.co.nz/sunday-star-times/features/529394> (28 May 2009).

TEXT B: *Autumn* (written text – poetry)

Read Text B, then answer Questions Three and Four.

Autumn

Fruitlessly I fall once more in love with the barren tree.
Her cold arms grip the sun in a perpetual autumn
of age-worn friends, of sad reminiscence, of the worn art
that hauls its wares like a patient down the street,
5 of age and the pain of rediscovering old pain
in a sunless world, there in the garden in the damp.
Where her shadow lingers lies my heart's presentiment;
I have dug among hook-grass and wilding bulbs,
hoping for warmth that might be intrinsic to the loam;
10 but the dew comes quickly, dark falls off the stars
like the leaves that slipped from her unrelenting limbs.
The awareness grows that I am nothing to her;
I retread the mashed grass that my first forays made,
and wish only to hide in the ignorance of sleep.

Source: Richard Reeve, "Autumn", from *Best New Zealand Poems 2007*, International Institute of Modern Letters.
<http://www.nzetc.org/iiml/bestnzpoems/BNZP07/t1-g1-t21-body1-d1.html> (5 June 2009).