

91100R



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY  
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

QUALIFY FOR THE FUTURE WORLD  
KIA NOHO TAKATŪ KI TŌ ĀMUA AO!

## Level 2 English, 2015

**91100 Analyse significant aspects of unfamiliar written text(s) through close reading, supported by evidence**

2.00 p.m. Monday 9 November 2015  
Credits: Four

### RESOURCE BOOKLET

Refer to this booklet to answer the questions for English 91100.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–4 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: FICTION**

This passage from a novel describes teenaged Will's encounter with an orca whale.

**Singing Home the Whale**

At Brookes Bay he lowered the sail, eyeing the gnarly trees and wind-frayed ferns that lined the rocky shore. He dropped the anchor on the leeside of a shingle bank and baited a hook with scraps of octopus still chilly from Dean's freezer. Cast the line and wedged it through a cleat, then stood balanced in the centre of the yacht and closed his eyes. The lapping water beat a rhythm; birdsong tuned his ear. He filled his diaphragm, ribs stretched wide. Drew the air low into his belly until it pressed against his spine. Now he opened his mouth and released a steady flow, feeling the first note reverberate through his skull. *Ah, home.* 5

With eyes fixed on the sunlit hills he sang his doomed audition piece from the opera *La bohème*. "*Che gelida manina! Se la lasci riscaldar ...*" All the hurt poured out of him: his parents' departure overseas, the YouTube clip of his audition, the headaches, anger, paranoia, the sad farewell to all his friends ... weeks and weeks of humiliation wrapping the bay in heartfelt song. 10

He was halfway through the second verse when something moved. He turned just as a dorsal fin slipped beneath the yacht.

Will lurched backwards, his foot caught in the sheet rope. Stumbled, a comic-book pratfall of flailing limbs as he scrambled to regain his balance. Instead, the rocking yacht pitched him straight overboard. As he resurfaced, something brushed past his thigh. He lunged upwards and vaulted the gunwale, all the time expecting the whomp of jaws connecting with his skin, his bones. 15

That was way too close. He raised himself and peered over the side to see how big a shark it was. A head burst from the water, rounded, soft lined, black and white. 20

It was an orca, a young one, bobbing right in front of him, mewling like a baby in need of milk. Its body mass was not much bigger than a full-grown dolphin. Its mouth, which curled up at the edges, looked for all the world like it was smiling—and that smile served to split the border between black and white. Black above, over its blowhole to its slightly cock-eyed dorsal fin, a yellow-tinged white below, and white-on-black in two neat patches just behind its eyes. Those eyes: they studied him with such intensity, emitted such a desperate loneliness, they drew Will close. 25

They were like no other eyes he'd ever seen; their oily coating glistened as it held his gaze. The shifting liquids changed the colour of its pupil, a subtle kaleidoscope, one moment blue, the next a brownish grey. Longing and sadness lingered there. He dragged his gaze away and scoured the bay and open water for the rest of its pod. The seascape was deserted. 30

"Where's your mum?" Will asked.

Source (adapted): Mandy Hager, *Singing Home the Whale* (Auckland: Random House, 2014), pp. 23–24.

**TEXT B: POETRY**

This poem describes the sky above the city during the transition from day to night.

**City Skies**

The city sky is a book today.  
 Leaves turn pages gathering each story  
 Not in words,  
 But in infinite formations.

The clouds tell tales, 5  
 Of swooning pufferfish swept  
 into awaiting creatures  
 of the deep.  
 Of frisky sheep, herded by howling shepherds  
 Whistling them along 10  
 fields of blue.  
 And tales of smogged ashes,  
 scattered  
 along  
 tattered 15  
 heavens  
 Where a fire once burned.

Then all is gone.

Seas trickle into streams leaking endless yellows  
 Into the light sky. 20  
 The creatures depart,  
 Breathing fiery breath to relight the smogged ashes  
 now burning  
 on the vulnerable horizon.

Silhouettes, dusk's skeletons, 25  
 Cast over the tired land  
 like another night's graveyard.  
 A raging battle succumbs to the sun's defeat.  
 The moon once again rises  
 Commander of the night, 30  
 Watcher of the city skies.

**TEXT C: NON-FICTION**

This passage from an online magazine article explores the powerful physical and emotional effects that Antarctica has on people.

**Falling out the End of the Earth**

In 1910, Robert Falcon Scott and his men sailed from southern New Zealand for Antarctica. It's over a century since those men reached the Pole—only to find the Norwegian flag already flapping, and to die on their way back. Their bodies have sunk slowly under the ice, where they remain today, looking not a day older than when they died in 1912. And the men will stay like this for another two or three hundred years before they make it out to sea. 5

Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen—who was in love with Scott's wife—claimed that what drove men to the polar regions was “the power the unknown exerts on the human spirit”. In our lifetimes, we'll never manage anything quite so spectacular as those explorers, but surely that same power of the unknown is what drives us, too.

For many New Zealanders, Antarctica is a sort of psychic territory—you don't need to go there, but it is somehow there in your mind, part of your inner geography, part of your mental furniture. So, is what we see in the ice merely our own selves? Some have called it a great, distorted mirror. You can examine it all you like, but the outcome will be a better understanding of the civilisation that gazes into it: a reflection of the world we tried to leave behind. 10 15

Of course, now there is a very real human population in Antarctica. At Scott Base, there are scientists, base staff and, over summer, visiting artists and media. But even in this bustling civilisation, the isolation seeps through. People who ‘winter over’ for the four months of ice and darkness, when no planes are able to land on the ice—a small group away from families, fresh food and sunlight—return to Christchurch and bury their faces in any strip of green grass they can find. They're hungry to smell the earth. 20

Outside is beyond alien. The ice grips your imagination and squeezes out the metaphors. Camping out on the Ross Ice Shelf, under smoking Mount Erebus, field trainer Stu Arnold points out ahead of us. “That's White Island,” he says. “And that's Black Island. And that,” he says, flicking his hand towards the remaining stretch of the ice in front of us, “is nothing at all”. 25

Antarctica does not know birth, desire or death; it is not trapped in time. In it we glimpse a world without frames, a world without ends. Not to answer and know, but to celebrate not knowing.

Source (adapted): Alice Miller, “Falling out the End of the Earth”, in *Booknotes Unbound*, 20 October 2012, <http://booknotes-unbound.org.nz/falling-end-earth/>