

Achievement Standard 90849

Show understanding of specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s), using supporting evidence

ENGLISH

1.1

Externally assessed 4 credits



Understanding studied written texts

The Exam

Achievement Standard 90849 (English 1.1) assesses your understanding of, and response to, written texts.

Written texts include the **novel**, **non-fiction**, **the short story**, **poetry/song lyric**, **print media**, **digital/online text** and **drama**, or a combination of the above (inter-textual studies).

You will be required to write an organised written answer of at least 200 words in response to *one* of the **questions** offered in the external Achievement Standard examination – it may be necessary to write more than this to achieve ‘Merit’ or ‘Excellence’.

Choosing a question

Spend some of your time **selecting the best question** to answer. If you have studied and revised thoroughly, you should be able to answer several questions from the options given. For example, information you have learnt about an important character could be used in a question on character, or structure, or language.

You can write about *one* or *more* written texts you have studied. If you choose to write about more than one written text, the texts can be:

- the same text type (e.g. two poems)
- different text types – inter-textual studies (e.g. a poem and a short story)
- by the same or different authors
- compared and contrasted in your answer.

If you write about one shorter text (e.g. a poem or short story), it is especially important to plan your answer before you begin writing to make sure you have enough material to answer the question to the standard required.

Answering a question

Question format helps guide your response.

- “Describe ...” – you should outline how the specified ideas, style or language features apply to the written text on which you are answering (‘on the lines’ – straightforward material).
- “Explain ...” – this part of the question prompts a more convincing and/or perceptive response (‘between or beyond the lines’ – material that shows developed thinking).
- Phrases such as ‘important in the text(s) as a whole’ indicate that you need to write about the ideas in the text(s) and/or the writer’s purpose, in the context of the question.

Answer all parts of the question in order to create a balanced answer.

Use clear, well-chosen points.

Back up your points with reference to relevant and specific details from the text(s).

Relevant and specific details could include:

- summaries of events
- descriptions of characters or places
- direct quotations of text and dialogue from your studied text.

You should spend approximately **60 minutes** answering the question.

Achievement criteria

Show you know the text well and can make some points relevant to the topic.

Make clear points, relevant to the topic, some of which are developed and linked to each other.

Make clear points showing insight or originality, which are developed and integrated.

Achieved	Merit	Excellence
Show understanding of specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s) using supporting evidence	Show convincing understanding of specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s) using supporting evidence	Show perceptive understanding of specified aspect(s) of studied written text(s) using supporting evidence

Well-chosen evidence, with reference to relevant specific details from the text (including quotation).

The answer addresses questions selected from aspects of literary study as follows.

- Purposes and audiences.
- Ideas (character, themes, settings).
- Language (style, vocabulary, figurative language).
- Structures (beginnings and endings, parts and whole texts, narratives).

Study checklist

Following is a list of aspects of written text, most of which you will have covered during your studies. Exam questions could include any of these aspects. For example, a question on 'character/individual' in your studied written text(s) could ask about a character's personality or how the character develops or what challenges or difficulties the character faces, and so on.

It is also very important to be familiar with a text's themes and ideas as most questions will ask you to relate aspects such as character and setting to the text's important or 'key' ideas.

To ensure exam success, you should study and know well all aspects of the written text(s) you have studied.

Task 1: Study checklist – what do you know?

Review your written text study materials (e.g. class notes, study guide, revision notes), and use this checklist to reveal the aspects of written text that you have studied already and those you need to do more work on.

Note that some aspects may not be relevant to your written text(s). Always ask your teacher for guidance.

Aspects of written text	Studied	Study needed
The writer's purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The writer's intended audience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Character:		
Character's/individual's appearance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Character's/individual's development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Character's/individual's challenges, difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Character's/individual's surprising qualities or action	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Setting:			
Setting (time and place)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Description of setting(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Memorable settings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Structure:			
The organisation of the text (story/plot)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Beginnings and endings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Surprising and/or powerful events or moments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Language/style:			
Imagery and/or figurative language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Symbolism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Choice of vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Use of dialogue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Narrative point of view	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Themes/key ideas			
Interesting ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ideas worth learning about	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
The writer's 'message' or 'lesson'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Formula for success – structuring an answer on ONE text

Exemplar: Answer using a novel

► Step 1: Think about the question

Look closely at the question. Look at the key words (in **bold**) and decide how many parts the question has. What sort of information about your written text (what specified aspect) are you expected to describe? How will you relate this information to the ideas in the text you have studied?

Example question	Question analysis	
Describe the most important thing that happened to a main character in the text(s) and explain , with detailed reasons, why it was important .	This question has two parts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the most important thing that happened to the character. Explain why it was important. 	Information required: An important event or realisation or change or challenge involving a main character. Ideas: why this event was important to the character.

► Step 2: Think about the ideas and plan your answer

Aim to write 4 or 5 paragraphs – brainstorm what the focus of each paragraph will be and make specific notes related to your text.

Check that you have covered all aspects of the question in your plan. This question requires you to choose the important ‘thing that happened’, the main character’s involvement and why the event was important to the character (the ideas).

Focus of paragraph	Example plan using the text, <i>Krystyna’s Story</i> , by Halina Ogonowska-Coates
Paragraph 1 Describe the most important thing that happened to the character.	Forced to leave childhood home. Given half an hour, only allowed to take 100 kg of possessions.
Paragraph 2 Explain the first reason that this is important.	The event changes Krystyna emotionally. She witnesses death, cruelty, deprivation (Ciepluszki + camp); brother and sister die at the camp.
Paragraph 3 Explain a second reason that this is important.	The event forces Krystyna to develop independence. She ends up alone. Her brother, sister and mother all die and she is forced to steal food to survive.
Paragraph 4 Explain a third reason that this is important.	The event leads to Krystyna finding a new life. She settles in New Zealand.

(In the table above, Paragraph 1 relates to the first part of the Example question, while Paragraphs 2–4 relate to the second part of the Example question, as outlined in the Question analysis.)

► Step 3: Think about the structure of your answer

Write your answer using the PDR structure. This is one of a number of effective structures for answering essay questions.

The PDR paragraph structure

A paragraph should be focused, coherent, and well developed. Paragraphs are unified around a main point, and all sentences in the paragraph should clearly relate to that point in some way. The paragraph’s main idea should be supported with specific information that develops or discusses the main idea in greater detail.

Exam markers are looking for developed points that show your ability to do the following.

- You should be able to read your studied written text ‘between the lines’; that is, to infer ideas in the immediate context of the studied text. For example, in *Krystyna’s Story*, the difficult events Krystyna endures result in her development as an independent young woman. You ‘infer’ this idea from the story and the main character’s actions.
- You should be able to read your studied written text ‘beyond the lines’; that is, to connect the text’s ideas and/or purpose to your own world, to other texts and other ideas or events beyond the text. For example, *Krystyna’s Story* helps readers learn one way to respond to traumatic events of the kind that are occurring in the present day.

Answers that demonstrate ‘between-the-lines’ and ‘beyond-the-lines’ thinking will gain higher grades.

Each new paragraph should begin with a clear point (P). This point should then be followed by appropriate development (D) and specific reference to the text (R).

- P** Point is made – a single sentence which sets up the focus of the paragraph.
- D** Develop the point – explain clearly what you mean in at least 2 or 3 sentences, including ‘between-the-lines’ and ‘beyond-the-lines’ material as appropriate to the question..
- R** Refer to specific relevant details such as a moment/event/conversation/quotation from the text.

Using the PDR structure

Example question:

'Describe the most important thing that happened to a main character or individual in your text and explain, with detailed reasons, why it was important.'

Example answer:

Your first sentence should identify the text and author, as well as address the specified aspect of the question (important thing).
Next, describe the thing/event.

'Point' is in **bold**

'Development of the point' is in standard font

'Refer' is in *italics*

The most important thing that happens to Krystyna, the main character of Krystyna's Story, by Halina Ogonowska-Coates, occurs when the Russian soldiers order her family to leave their home. Krystyna was from a farming family and the land was their livelihood. Krystyna has fond memories of her life before the war and comments, "It was a happy childhood." However, on 1 September 1939, Poland is attacked by both Russia and Germany. Krystyna and her family are removed from their home in Poland by Russian soldiers and Krystyna's life is changed forever. The Russian soldiers initially vandalise Krystyna's home and later they attack the family physically, kicking Mama repeatedly with their heavy boots. Finally, the family is given 30 minutes to pack up 100 kilograms of their possessions and leave their house for good.

This event is important because it changes Krystyna's personality and outlook on life. Once she has been forced from her home, she is taken to a Russian labour camp. She suffers cruelty, misunderstanding and deprivation at the hands of the Russian soldiers on her journey on the *ciepluszki* (cattle wagon), and later in the camp itself. *On the ciepluszki she has to survive on a portion of bread each day. There is no room to lie down and lice and disease fill the wagon. She witnesses people dying, bodies being thrown from the wagon and cold-blooded murder. The situation in the camp is not much better. She must complete a set quota of work each day if she is to eat.* As a result, she changes from a bright, bubbly and innocent child to a depressed and broken person who is made to grow up too fast. This all starts with her removal from her home.

This event is also important because Krystyna loses her family and is left alone in the world as a result of it. At the camp both Felix, her brother, and Marysia, her sister, die. *Marysia dies in childbirth and there is no medical help for her. Felix dies in the cellar prison, where he is thrown along with Krystyna for telling people about the amnesty. The survivors of the camp are eventually released. Krystyna walks out of the camp with only her mother and her aunt. Her mother soon dies on the disease-ridden trains they are forced to travel on. Krystyna's aunt is left behind at a station and Krystyna is then all alone.* As a result, she is forced to look after herself and she learns to steal to survive. She is alone in the world.

The final reason that Krystyna's removal from her childhood home is so important is that it brings her to New Zealand – this is a new life for her, along with a new culture. It is because she is forced from her home that night that her own family is destined to grow up as New Zealanders. It is sad, however, that what seems to be the simplest part of her long journey, turns out to be as challenging and upsetting as her earlier experiences. *Krystyna attends school in New Zealand and again faces deprivation; she is not allowed to speak Polish, is forced to clean and do laundry for her board and is not allowed to return 'home' to the Pahiatua camp during the holidays. Eventually, however, Krystyna settles at the Polish hostel in Lyall Bay, Wellington; she finds the new home she has been searching for since the night she was ordered to leave her family home. "Here was a place where I belonged, with people who had become my family in New Zealand."*



Task 2: Using a PDR template

Using a text you have studied in class, such as a novel, poem, short story or non-fiction text, answer the same question as is modelled above. Follow the structure and guidance given by the template.

Question:

'Describe the most important thing that happened to a main character in your text(s) and explain, with detailed reasons, why it was important.'

The answer template is set out in the following manner:

- PDR is indicated by **Point**, **Develop** and **Refer**
- the beginning of each paragraph has been started for you; this is in **bold**
- the text in *italics* is guidance on how to continue, what to add, etc.

In the text, (title) _____, **by (author)** _____,

a main character/individual is (*name a main character/individual*) _____.

The most important thing that happens to (*name of character/individual*) _____
is (*Make Point – summarise the 'most important thing that happens to your chosen character/individual', in one sentence.*)

(*Develop this sentence with a full description of the event/happening and Refer to specific moments/details from the text*)

This is important because (*summarise the Point in one sentence*)

(*Develop further what you mean and Refer to specific moments/details from the text*)

Achievement Standard 90851

Show understanding of significant aspects of unfamiliar written text(s) through close reading, using supporting evidence

ENGLISH

1.3

Externally assessed 4 credits



Understanding significant aspects of unfamiliar written texts

Achievement Standard 90851 (English 1.3) assesses your ability to read and show understanding of unfamiliar written texts.

This chapter will focus on skills required, and provide practice tasks for reading unfamiliar written texts.

The Exam

Written texts include prose and poetry and could be short texts or extracts from longer texts.

The examination will comprise short and paragraph-type answers on three pieces of unfamiliar written text – one poetry, two prose: there will be at least one fiction and one non-fiction text.

You should spend 60 minutes on the external examination for this standard – 20 minutes on each written text.

The questions on each text are divided into three parts. To gain 'Achieved', you must be able to 'explain' your understanding of a significant language feature or technique in parts (a), (b) or (c) of the question.

You will gain 'Merit' if your answer is convincing and if you can explain both *how* and *why* the writer used particular language features or techniques, making connections between them.

You will gain 'Excellence' if you can explain both *how* and *why* the writer used a range of language features or techniques in a well-structured and fluent answer, linking and synthesising points from across the text and showing recognition of the writer's purpose.

Each question is marked holistically, i.e., one overall grade is awarded for answers to (a), (b) and (c).

Achievement criteria

Explaining significant aspect(s) in terms of meanings and effects created.

Explaining how significant aspects work together to create meaning.

Achieved	Merit	Excellence
Show understanding of significant aspects of unfamiliar written texts through close reading using supporting evidence.	Show convincing understanding of significant aspects of unfamiliar written texts through close reading using supporting evidence.	Show perceptive understanding of significant aspects of unfamiliar written texts through close reading using supporting evidence.

Using specific and relevant details from the text to support ideas.

Selected from purposes and audiences, ideas (characters, theme, setting), language features (e.g. figurative language, style, syntax/grammar, symbolism, vocabulary), structures (e.g. part text, whole text, narrative), text conventions (the features of a text which suit it for purpose; e.g. a news feature often begins with an anecdote to personalise the story and gain reader attention).

Explaining how significant aspect(s) communicate ideas about wider contexts; e.g. the whole text and/or human experience, society and the wider world.

Strategies for success – answering the questions

Attempt all questions to give yourself the best chance of success.

▶ Step 1: Key words and parts of the question

- Read the question and underline the key words. Key words might be the specific aspects of written language or a language feature you are asked to identify, or directions you need to follow. For example, 'Describe one aspect of setting ...', 'In your own words ...', 'explain how the writer shows you ...', 'Identify ONE language feature', and so on.
- Identify whether the question has one or more parts. Make sure the language feature or technique you choose for (a) will allow you to adequately answer the other parts of the question that relate to it.

▶ Step 2: Read the unfamiliar text

Read carefully, looking for the answers to the questions as you go. You can write notes on the provided resource text or you can highlight pieces you will want to come back to when writing your answer. You will need to read each piece of text more than once.

▶ Step 3: Write your answers

Be careful to follow the instructions. Answer all the questions. Answer all parts of each question. Use the words of the question to help shape your answer, especially at the start. Try to express your answers clearly. To achieve 'Merit' and 'Excellence', you will be required to write answers that show how significant language features and/or techniques work to create effects (Merit) and how the meanings they convey relate to the text as a whole and wider contexts (Excellence). If necessary, use more paper to continue your answers.

▶ Step 4: Re-read the question and answer

- Have you done what was asked of you?
- Is your answer easy to understand?
- Have you explained how the language features and/or techniques work, and how its effects work together to create meanings that relate to wider contexts, to gain Merit/Excellence?

Revision

The best way to prepare for this Achievement Standard's exam is to practise by reading texts and answering questions. A good knowledge of language features and syntax is very important. Complete the following tasks to help you revise this knowledge.

Task 1: Study checklist – what do you know about *language features*?

Following is a list of language features. You need to

- be able to define them
- be able to identify examples of them in the unfamiliar prose and poetry texts
- understand how they create effects in a text.

Complete the following table, using resources such as your class notes, study guide and revision notes to help you.

Some examples are completed as model answers.

Note: names of language features – this table gives alternatives for some features. Exam markers will accept definitions, or descriptions of a feature (e.g. 'metaphor' or 'comparison between'). However, a description must show clear understanding of how the language feature works.

Language feature	Definition and effect (in general terms)	Example
Simile/comparison	A comparison between two things using 'like' or 'as' Effect: to describe vividly	The sinking sun looked like a ball of fire
Metaphor/comparison		
Extended metaphor / Extended comparison		
Personification		
Symbol/symbolism		
Image/imagery e.g. visual imagery	Words or groups of words that describe by using the five senses Effect: to create word 'pictures'	The crashing waves sent white foam flying up the yellow cliffs.
Connotation		
Alliteration		
Consonance	The repetition of similar consonant sounds within words or in words near each other Effect: to emphasise, to create rhythm and/or sound	He struck a streak of bad luck
Assonance		
Onomatopoeia		
Sibilance		
Dialogue		
Direct speech		

Colloquial language / Slang		
Imperative	A command or instruction Effect: depends on context but often creates personality or tone/mood	'Take my bags to the car.'
Jargon/Specialised speech		
Repetition		
Listing		
Contrast/Juxtaposition		
Narrator/Story teller	The person who tells the story Effect: the narrator's personality, ideas and beliefs can influence how the story is told	Scout Finch in <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> by Harper Lee. Her child-like voice influences how we see Maycomb and the events of the novel.
Rhyme		
Rhythm		
Run-on line/ Enjambment		
Adjective	A word that describes a noun (object, thing or idea/concept. Effect: to modify and make more precise the description of something	The <i>pale green</i> leaves.
Noun		
Verb		
Adverb		

Answers and explanations

Achievement Standard 90849 (English 1.1)

Understanding studied written texts

1.1 Task 4

p. 9

Example question	Question analysis	
Describe an important event in the texts and explain why it is important .	This question has two parts: Describe an important event. Explain why the event is important.	Information required: Details of the important event. Information on why the event is important in the text.

General focus of paragraph	
Paragraph 1	Describe the important event.
Paragraph 2	Provide first reason that the event is important. <i>State the point, develop the point with discussion, and refer to specific moments in the text.</i>
Paragraph 3	Provide second reason that the event is important. <i>State the point, develop the point with discussion, and refer to specific moments in the text.</i>
Paragraph 4	Provide third reason that the event is important. <i>State the point, develop the point with discussion, and refer to specific moments in the text.</i>

An important event in the novel *Water in the Blood* by Alan Bunn is when Liam opposes Dave's authority by demanding to be let out of Dave's car on the way to the Daytona Raceway, after Dave causes an accident. This is important because it splits the friendship between Dave and Liam and leads to conflict. Up until this point Liam had accepted Dave's irresponsible behaviour.

One way that this event is important is that it is Liam's first step to individuality. Before this, Liam was content to follow Dave's lead; for example, when he pulled a motorcyclist off her bike because Dave demanded it. However, at this point in the novel Liam takes a responsible stance by walking home and declaring he wasn't going to live with "one foot in the grave".

Another reason is that further conflict arose from this event. Dave hated Liam for undermining his perceived authority and tried to beat him up at school because Dave believed Liam had reported him to the police. This fight led to Dave's expulsion and Liam's suspension. During his time away from school, Liam had time to

think about his future and committed himself to his schoolwork. "Somehow Liam had cracked the cast he had been set in and Dave didn't like it."

A third reason why this event is so important is that it allowed Liam to take up canoeing, a sport that Dave hated. Liam was looking for ways to develop new friendships and move away from Dave and Blair. Because Liam took up canoeing he developed better friendships with Anne and Craig and matured more. "The difference, he thought, was how Craig treated other people."

The final reason why this event is important is that this event and the resulting conflicts lead to the conclusion of the novel, with Dave realising he doesn't have a positive future and choosing to commit suicide by ramming into a roadblock. "My spots are stuck fast." This reveals to the reader how Liam's life may have taken a different direction if he had not turned his back on Dave at the start. Liam still feels guilty about Dave's death, but as Craig tells him, "you didn't choose his life for him, he did." (E)

1.1 Task 5

p. 10

Example question	Question analysis	
Describe at least ONE important conflict in the text(s). Explain why the conflict helped you understand a key idea(s) in the text(s).	This question has two parts: Describe an important conflict. Explain why the conflict helped me understand a key idea or ideas.	Information required: Details of the important conflict. What at least one key idea is in the text and how the conflict helped me understand the idea (or ideas).

General focus of paragraph	
Paragraph 1	Describe an important conflict in the text.
Paragraph 2	Describe at least one key idea in the text and explain the first reason that the conflict helps you understand the key idea. <i>State the point, develop the point with discussion, and refer to specific relevant moments in the text.</i>
Paragraph 3	Explain a second way in which the conflict helps you understand the key ideas in the text. <i>State the point, develop the point with discussion, and refer to specific relevant moments in the text.</i>
Paragraph 4	Explain a third way in which the conflict helps you understand the key ideas in the text. <i>State the point, develop the point with discussion, and refer to specific relevant moments in the text.</i>

The short story 'The Sniper' by Liam O'Flaherty is based around the conflict between "the sniper" and his "enemy". The sniper is a Republican, one of the groups involved in the Irish civil war, or 'Troubles', which lasted throughout the first half of the twentieth century. He holds a position on the rooftops of Dublin in the heavily disputed "Four Courts" zone. His role is to pick off enemy "Free Staters" from his hidden position. His enemy, who is never named, is also a sniper. He begins shooting at the Republican sniper and wounds him in the forearm. The sniper realises that he will have to kill the enemy sniper before he can escape the rooftop: "Morning must not find him wounded ... The enemy on the opposite roof covered his escape." The wounded sniper thinks of a plan to fool his enemy into revealing himself on the opposite roof. The plan works and the sniper kills his enemy. The body falls into the road and as the sniper returns to report to his company commander he becomes curious about the identity of his now dead enemy. The story ends dramatically as the sniper turns the dead body over and looks "into his brother's face".

One key idea in 'The Sniper' is the extent of damage to society that is caused by a civil war. The shocking discovery that the Republican sniper makes at the end of the story emphasises the idea that civil war can tear families apart, causing brothers to kill each other. The Republican sniper is in no doubt that his brother would have killed him if he could have. During their conflict, the sniper has thought of his opponent as his "enemy". Families are not only torn apart, they turn into mortal enemies who will try to kill each other because of a political belief.

The conflict between the two snipers also helps us understand how brutal and bloody civil wars are. The Republican sniper kills the driver of an enemy armoured car and a civilian, "an old woman, her head covered by a tattered shawl," who tries to tell the armoured car driver of the sniper's location. The sniper has no regard for the sex or age of his victims and shows no remorse when shooting the old woman. She is an "informer" and must die. Another way the conflict helps us understand key ideas is that the way the Republican sniper acts during the battle with the Free Stater sniper shows us the effect of war on personality. The sniper is described as "fanatical". He has "cold" gleaming eyes and "the face of a student, thin and ascetic". The civil war has made this young man almost less than human. Republican ideas are more important than anything else and he will kill for them. After he kills his enemy, he feels briefly "bitten by remorse", but this is presented as weakness, caused by the wound and "the long summer day of fasting and watching on the roof". Feelings of remorse are soon laughed off as he swigs from his whiskey flask.

O'Flaherty's story uses conflict between two brothers to show readers the shocking reality of civil war in which families and society are destroyed for the sake of political and religious beliefs. (E)

1.1 Task 7

p. 13

Example question	Question analysis	
Describe the most important relationship in your text. Explain how this relationship influences events.	This question has two parts: Describe the most important relationship in the text. Explain how this important relationship influences events.	Information required: Details of the most important relationship. Details of how the relationship influences events in the text.

General focus of paragraph

Paragraph 1	Describe the most important relationship
Paragraph 2	Explain the first way the relationship influences events. <i>State the point, develop the point with discussion, and refer to specific moments in the text.</i>
Paragraph 3	Explain the second way the relationship influences events. <i>State the point, develop the point with discussion, and refer to specific moments in the text.</i>
Paragraph 4	Explain the third way the relationship influences events. <i>State the point, develop the point with discussion, and refer to specific moments in the text.</i>

The most important relationship in the text 'Spider' by William Taylor is the one between Spider and his beloved piano. Spider shares a special bond with the piano, which is recognised by Bea McKenzie, Spider's piano teacher. Spider devotes a great deal of his time to practising his chosen art form and never complains about it, which displays his commitment.

Spider sacrifices a lot of the usual habits teenagers indulge in, for example 'having a social life'. Spider hardly ever goes out, and has very few close friends. But this doesn't seem to bother him. Spider sacrifices playing rugby in order to focus entirely on the piano. Although rugby meant a lot to Spider, he realises that without making sacrifices he wouldn't have been able to achieve such a close bond with his piano, and this is how one of the main themes, that of sacrifice, is revealed. Spider says, "I am doing what I have to do. As I say, to do what I want to do, I've got to run those miles."

Spider shares such a close relationship with his piano his mates consider him a bit 'woosy', particularly Bryson Brown. Spider gets given a hard time by Bryson because Bryson thinks he should be following something manly, like rugby. Bryson then makes it his duty to teach Spider how to be a 'real man', and consequently takes him out to town on his birthday to all the popular strip clubs. While they are at one particular club, Spider discovers, to his absolute horror, that his mother is the star attraction. Had Bryson not felt the need to make Spider more 'manly' and banish his piano-playing habits, Spider would never have found out about his mother's secret.

Because Spider is so devoted to practising the piano, he tends to isolate himself from the real world and the people around him. His school principal, Miss Simmonds, also allows him the time off school to continue to practise, particularly before his final performance in the Helene Goldman Piano Competition. Spider practises so much that his tutor, Bea McKenzie, has to force him to have a break and get out for a while. Spider doesn't seem to notice how isolated he has become because he is so devoted and committed to playing his piano.

Spider's relationship with his piano plays an extremely influential part in him winning the Helene Goldman Piano Competition. While the other top three finalists were all very talented piano players, they did not share the same passion that Spider had while he was performing. The incredible amount of time Spider had spent practising the piece of Beethoven he performed was clearly evident in his performance. Because he knew the piece off by heart, bar by bar, note for note, he could give a much more passionate performance. All he wanted to do was share with the audience a favourite piece of music, composed by his idol, Ludwig van Beethoven. (E)