

SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/41

Texts

Key messages

In order to do well in this paper, candidates should ensure that they follow these guidelines:

- Study the chosen texts in depth in order to acquire a detailed knowledge of the plot and content as well as understanding the themes and issues raised.
- Answer only **one** question on each text.
- Read the question carefully and respond to all aspects of the chosen question.
- Plan each response before starting to write.
- Ensure handwriting is legible.
- Option **(a)** questions in *Sección Primera* require more extensive treatment in part **(iii)**, where candidates are expected to refer in detail to the work as a whole, not simply the printed extract.
- Quotations should be brief and relevant and should support the argument being made. Candidates should not copy the notes from the back of the book as part of their essay.
- Avoid re-telling the story of the text.

General comments

There was a wide range of responses this session with the best essays coming from candidates who had read the questions carefully and who had clearly studied the texts and thought about them.

There were a large number of rubric infringements, for example, writing the wrong number of essays, answering two questions on one text or writing about the wrong poem. There were also some instances of poor handwriting which made it very difficult for examiners to decipher what the candidate was saying. Poor labelling of questions also led to confusion in some cases, as did poor planning with many insertions, asterisks and extra comments on different pages making it hard for examiners to follow the flow of the argument. Many essays did not attempt to come to a conclusion at the end of an answer.

Comments on specific questions

Sección Primera

For all option **(a)** questions candidates must answer all three parts of the question. Part **(iii)** is always the most demanding and requires candidates to show knowledge and understanding of the whole text. In many cases candidates did not respond fully to part **(iii)**.

Question 1

Ernesto Sábato: *El túnel*

- (a)** This was a popular question. The best answers commented on the importance of “*levadizo*” in part **(i)**. In part **(ii)**, candidates needed to show why Castel was upset by María’s reaction, rather than just saying why she looked at him with pity. Part **(iii)** asked candidates to consider the relationship between the main protagonists throughout the novel, by analysing the point of view of the narrator, why the story was being told and referring to some key episodes in detail to substantiate the answer.
- (b)** Most answers to this question referred to the practical aspects of Castel’s profession in that he and María met at an exhibition. The most perceptive essays then went on to consider how Castel functions as an individual – his way of life, his interpretation of his surroundings and his interaction with others, how he expresses himself in writing, speech and painting.

Question 2

Pedro Calderón de la Barca: *El alcalde de Zalamea*

- (a) This question was generally well answered with candidates showing good knowledge of the context in answering parts (i) and (ii). In part (iii), some answers were too vague as candidates did not specify what they saw as the essence of the play.
- (b) There were some very perceptive answers which analysed the views of a number of characters in the light of their behaviour, and related this to the ethical issues raised by the playwright. It was important to include reference to the role of the King in justifying Pedro Crespo's actions and to be aware that it is not possible to apply 21st century ideas to, for example, the outcome for Isabel. At the opposite end of the range, candidates responded to the question without clarifying which *normas* were being accepted or challenged.

Question 3

Gabriel García Márquez: *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande*

- (a) Most responses dealt with parts (i) and (ii) effectively, but few showed awareness of the irony inherent in the story and tended to give a factual account of events in part (iii). This meant that the analysis was limited, with some reference to the dictatorial nature of Mamá Grande, but little mention of the criticism of the system. As candidates were not required to make reference to another story from the collection, examiners expected a detailed discussion of the issues.
- (b) This question focused specifically on whether marriages are happy or not, and why, in the collection of stories. Some candidates chose inappropriate stories as examples which weakened their arguments as a result. There were a number of answers on being happy or unhappy in general, ignoring "casarse". When candidates chose wisely and showed understanding, there were some thoughtful essays.

Question 4

Lauro Olmo: *La camisa*

- (a) There were few answers on this text overall. Answers were satisfactory in parts (i) and (ii), but tended to be sketchy in part (iii). It is possible to argue for or against the assertion in the question and the most successful responses took a clear stance from the outset.
- (b) Answers needed to show detailed knowledge of the text and understanding of the range of techniques used by the playwright to maintain the audience's interest. Reference to the text does not need to be lengthy. Success in responding to this question depended very much on the candidate's preparation and ability to analyse rather than narrate.

Sección Segunda

Question 5

Carlos Ruiz Zafón: *La sombra del viento*

Answers on this text raised some specific issues, which need to be addressed before considering the specific questions set. A large number of candidates wrote about how much they enjoyed reading the novel, many saying that it was their favourite book. This enthusiasm was apparent in the candidates' knowledge of the complex plot and empathy with the characters. Candidates must, however, be able to stand back from the novel and analyse it as a literary text in the context of the question being answered. There was much story-telling in responses to this text.

- (a) Many candidates answered this question very well. There are many examples of how Daniel learns and develops as a person in different ways throughout the novel. Candidates generally used examples from the text to good effect in their essays.
- (b) It was important for candidates to clarify their interpretation of destiny at the outset and analyse how the lives of characters are affected, rather than simply narrate the story.

Question 6

Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

This text was very popular. Candidates generally knew the novel well, although some reference to the film suggested that Centres may need to emphasise that the text itself must be the focus of study. Also, candidates tended to refer to some well-prepared aspects of the text, rather than focusing specifically on the question set.

- (a) Most responses agreed with the assertion in the question and then told the story. It is too simplistic to see Tita as a rebel without considering the extent of her rebellion and also taking Gertrudis's role into consideration. References made to the Mexican Revolution tended to indicate sketchy understanding of the conflict and its outcome. Examiners do not expect detailed historical knowledge, but any use of such background material should be accurate.
- (b) This question attracted some very good answers, where candidates were able to show the importance of Alex's parentage as well as other aspects of the fulfilment and continuation of Tita's hopes.

Question 7

Federico García Lorca: *Yerma*

This text attracted a very large number of answers. In general terms, candidates knew the play well but many lacked depth of understanding and expressed inappropriate contemporary views on a work set over 70 years ago. In addition, there was some confusion regarding the historical context of the play.

- (a) This was generally well answered. Most candidates were able to take a wide view of the alternatives which Yerma rejected, and why. Weaker essays only saw the situation from Yerma's personal point of view. The nature of the relationship between Yerma and Víctor was often not fully understood. Comments tended to be lacking in subtlety and informed by inappropriately modern interpretations.
- (b) The best answers to this question showed an ability to apply the idea of a '*visión pesimista*' in a wide sense. These took into consideration the reasons for unhappiness or lack of fulfilment, analysed social issues and went beyond a discussion of Yerma alone.

Question 8

Alfonsina Storni: *Selección de poemas*

There were very few answers on this text for either option.

- (a) This question required candidates to demonstrate their ability in presenting a detailed critical analysis of the poem, with specific reference to the theme of suffering. Candidates are encouraged to show appreciation of the writer's use of poetic technique and to present their own interpretation of the theme, provided points are substantiated with reference or quotation from the text.
- (b) In this question, candidates were given the freedom to choose a series of poems which, in his or her view, best demonstrate the poet's development as a writer. Examiners sought engagement with the poetry and the ability to analyse and evaluate poetic technique and expression.

SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/42

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General comments

There was a wide range of responses this session with the best essays coming from candidates who had read the questions carefully and who had clearly studied the texts and thought about them.

There were a large number of rubric infringements, for example, writing the wrong number of essays, answering two questions on one text or writing about the wrong poem. There were also some instances of poor handwriting which made it very difficult for examiners to decipher what the candidate was saying. Poor labelling of questions also led to confusion in some cases, as did poor planning with many insertions, asterisks and extra comments on different pages making it hard for examiners to follow the flow of the argument. Many essays did not attempt to come to a conclusion at the end of an answer.

Comments on specific questions

Sección Primera

For all option **(a)** questions candidates must answer all three parts of the question. Part **(iii)** is always the most demanding and requires candidates to show knowledge and understanding of the whole text. In many cases candidates did not respond fully to part **(iii)**.

Question 1

Ernesto Sábato: *El túnel*

- (a)** This was a popular question. Candidates were able to give full answers to parts **(i)** and **(ii)**. In part **(iii)**, the best answers gave detailed consideration to the fact that the extract is one of the few episodes in the novel when María expresses herself directly. The effect of the first person narration and the motivation for the writing of the novel also required careful analysis.
- (b)** Many candidates chose this question. There were some perceptive answers where the importance of the “*túnel*” was analysed in detail beyond the obvious image described by Castel himself. The fact that he chose the image, in a story narrated from his point of view, was also explored.

Question 2

Pedro Calderón de la Barca: *El alcalde de Zalamea*

- (a) This question was generally well done with candidates showing fair knowledge of the context in answering parts (i) and (ii). In part (iii), a number of essays were too vague, as Don Mendo's attitude was not always well interpreted and then related to the wider issues and the central conflict in the play.
- (b) There were some very perceptive answers to this question, where candidates analysed the dénouement of the play from the perspective of a number of characters. It was important to show understanding of the differing aspects of justice apparent in the play and the underlying ethical issues. There were some inappropriate modern interpretations, in particular with relation to Isabel's fate.

Question 3

Gabriel García Márquez: *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande*

- (a) Candidates were able to deal with parts (i) and (ii) effectively. Answers to part (iii) were more varied in depth; some essays were perceptive and thoughtful, analysing how much awareness the widow had of her late husband's activities, in light of the role of women in society at that time. Most showed some sympathy with her, particularly with regard to her children's attitude. The best essays took a wider view.
- (b) This question focused specifically on how the author uses references to the weather in the stories. Most candidates who chose this question were able to give a list of these, largely examples of heat. The most successful answers showed how the theme of the story was enhanced by reference to the heat, as an image of repression and oppression in a number of stories, for example. Some candidates also considered how the lethargic effects of heat contributed to the sense of helplessness and acceptance of the status quo as part of the political comment.

Question 4

Lauro Olmo: *La camisa*

- (a) There were few answers on this text. Answers were satisfactory to parts (i) and (ii), but tended to be sketchy in part (iii). The best answers focused on the humour brought into the play by the younger characters, and also discussed how they represent the future of Spain.
- (b) This answer required detailed knowledge of the text and some understanding of the historical context in which it is set. This does not mean that examiners expect to see a history essay, rather that candidates are able to give an outline of the issues which form the basis of the play. Effective essays made reference to the use of vernacular speech as well as topical themes. The setting of the play was also well analysed.

Sección Segunda

Question 5

Carlos Ruiz Zafón: *La sombra del viento*

Answers on this text raised some specific issues, which need to be addressed before considering the specific questions set. A large number of candidates wrote about how much they enjoyed reading the novel, many saying that it was their favourite book. This enthusiasm was apparent in the candidates' knowledge of the complex plot and empathy with the characters. Candidates must, however, be able to stand back from the novel and analyse it as a literary text in the context of the question being answered. There was much story-telling in responses to this text.

- (a) Many candidates answered this question very well. There were good essays both in agreement and disagreement with the statement given. The best responses showed the ability to select the most effective examples or incidents and relate them directly to the analysis. Candidates overall displayed very good knowledge of the text.

- (b) This question gave rise to varied interpretations, some very interesting and thoughtful. Many felt that “*arduo*” referred to the complex plot whereas others took the view that it was a harrowing experience in places. Again, the most impressive answers were well organised with a clear focus and aptly chosen quotations. Those who simply stated that they had enjoyed the book and found it compulsive reading but did not give any detailed analysis were not able to achieve a high mark.

Question 6

Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

This text was very popular. Candidates generally knew the novel well, although some references to the film suggested that Centres may need to emphasise that the text itself must be the focus of study. Also, candidates tended to refer to some well-prepared aspects of the text, rather than focusing specifically on the question set.

- (a) Most candidates were able to give an account of John Brown’s part in the plot and the best answers then went on to consider the effect he had on Tita, and his unselfishness in accepting her preference for Pedro. His role as a doctor was considered, as was his legacy in the person of the narrator – his granddaughter.
- (b) This question elicited some very good answers, where candidates were able to show how freedom, lack of it, or control of others’ freedom was central to the lives of all the characters.

Question 7

Federico García Lorca: *Yerma*

This text attracted a very large number of answers. In general terms, candidates knew the play well but many lacked depth of understanding and expressed inappropriate contemporary views on a work set over 70 years ago. In addition, there was some confusion regarding the historical context of the play.

- (a) This was generally well answered with regard to the aspects relating to sterility, but the quotation given refers to the contrast between “*lo estéril y lo vivificante*” as the basis for the tragedy. This was a telling example where a number of candidates did not read the question carefully enough and answered what they thought was there – either the theme of sterility alone or the fact that the play is a tragedy. There were some good responses where all aspects were discussed sensitively.
- (b) The best answers to this question showed sensitivity to the pace, poetry, characterisation, setting and use of dramatic devices such as the chorus. Some candidates had prepared the technical aspects of Lorca’s work as well as the thematic and poetic and were able to answer well.

Question 8

Alfonsina Storni: *Selección de poemas*

There were very few answers on this text for either option.

- (a) This question allowed candidates to demonstrate their ability to present a detailed critical analysis of the poem, with specific reference to the importance of creativity. Candidates are encouraged to show appreciation of the writer’s use of poetic technique and to present their own interpretation of the theme, provided points are substantiated with reference or quotation from the text.
- (b) In this question, candidates were given freedom to choose poems which, in his or her view, best demonstrate the poet’s development as a writer. Examiners sought engagement with the poetry and the ability to analyse and evaluate poetic technique and expression.