

SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/41
Texts

Key messages

Examiners seek thorough knowledge of the texts chosen and clear essays focussed on the questions set, with detailed references to support the argument presented. The following key messages are intended to help candidates improve their performance further.

Candidates should read the rubric carefully, and only answer one option ((a) or (b)) for each text. In Section 1, (a) questions, candidates are instructed to answer parts (i) and (ii) very briefly. This means that no more than two or three sentences at the most are required. Answers to (iii) must make up the majority of the response. Candidates are advised to number the answers to each part of the question clearly, i.e. (i), (ii), (iii), and focus on each one separately. This should avoid any repetition.

Candidates should read the question carefully. Note key words in the title which define the question precisely.

Candidates are advised to avoid lengthy irrelevant introductory paragraphs with biographical details of the author.

Candidates must address the question directly, defining terms and approach in the introductory paragraph.

Answers should support the argument with appropriate, direct references to the text. These do not need to be long quotations. A key incident does not have to be narrated or quoted at length.

Candidates should re-read the question or devise a plan before beginning to write to avoid going off topic after the first paragraph.

Candidates must ensure that names of characters, places, historical context and author are accurate and that the text is described correctly as '*novela*', '*obra de teatro*' or '*poema*'.

Candidates are reminded to write legibly. Legible presentation of a candidate's work is essential for the Examiner to be able to find evidence of the candidate meeting the descriptors in the mark scheme.

Candidates are asked to avoid asterisks, arrows, writing in the margin (especially if at right angles to printed lines) as this is difficult to reconcile with on-line marking.

It is important for candidates to show that there is an understanding of how to present an argument, with a relevant introduction, development and conclusion. Many candidates were familiar with the PEEL format – Point, Example, Explain, Link (to next section of essay). This was used successfully when repeated throughout the response with frequent links to the text and relevant observations or analysis.

Candidates are advised to plan essays to show depth and breadth of knowledge and

General comments

The overall standard of answers was satisfactory, with most candidates showing knowledge of the texts studied and the ability to select examples to illustrate points or ideas.

Candidates showed good knowledge of the texts in terms of the narrative. Some essays tended to be too focussed on 'telling the story' rather than exploring the themes and ideas and analysing them. It is important to show understanding and critical awareness, which would allow candidates to reap the full rewards of their efforts in studying the texts. The whole essay must be a clear response to the question being answered.

Candidates should be aware that in writing about texts there is not a 'right' or 'wrong' answer. Questions are designed to challenge candidates to use their knowledge and understanding of the text in presenting a coherent argument in response. Examiners are prepared for varied analyses, provided they are direct responses to the question and are rooted in the text.

Comments on specific questions

Sección 1

Please note: comments made here do not constitute the 'correct' answer, but serve as examples of material submitted, and suggestions as to how to approach each question.

Comments regarding (a) options in this Sección:

These questions are all divided in three Parts: (i), (ii) and (iii). Parts (i) and (ii) are designed to be answered briefly, in one or two sentences, with reference to the extract reproduced on the examination paper. Part (iii) requires candidates to refer to the whole text, not simply the printed extract. This part of the answer should make up the vast majority of the response. It is better to answer each of the three sections separately to ensure that answers to (i) and (ii) are kept short and that part (iii) is a full essay.

Question 1 Benito Pérez Galdós: *Misericordia*

- (a) (i) Benina is outside the church with the other beggars.
- (ii) Any two details, for example, she has most of her own teeth, she has a dignified air.
- (iii) Benina, like St Rita, was always ready to help even if this caused her problems. Many examples of her kindness and selflessness to Doña Francisca, Juliana, Ponte, Almudena. Benina looks like the typical impression of a saint – dressed in dark clothes, pleasant, calm and dignified, with a superior demeanour.

Benina exemplifies Christian values and love, helping those cast out by society. Chapter XXX refers to 'Via crucis' – she has a heavy burden to bear. Compare her values to those of Doña Francisca and Juliana. Benina lies to protect Paca and is charitable to Juliana; notice change in form of address at the end of the novel when Benina is no longer a servant to Juliana. Benina is strong, brave and can cope with adversity: Juliana, Doña Francisca and Ponte cannot face reality. Benina sees hope in everything – eating bread with two sauces, hunger and hope. Juliana is surprised to see Benina looking well in the hut she shares with Almudena, even though she has nothing. What is needed to achieve happiness or contentment?

All answers presented the view that Benina was saintly in her actions. She was not perfect, however, which could be said to add to her appeal and the success of Galdós' characterisation of her. It was effective to compare and contrast Benina with other characters to analyse the values and ideas presented in the novel. Reference to religion was relevant here. Many essays simply listed examples of Benina's kindness and generosity; this did not constitute an argument or analysis and limited the marks available.

- (b) The majority of answers to this question presented the premise that Galdós' intention was to expose the scandal of poverty at the time, and that therefore money, or the lack of it, was the motivating force. However the picture could be said to be more complex. What is the value of money? Wealth was important in denoting class, as could be seen in Doña Francisca and Ponte. Those who saw themselves as superior but lacking in funds depended financially on someone poorer than they were, and were self-deluded. Doña Francisca, Ponte and Juliana expected help and displayed no sense of understanding the value of money. Antofito, gambled money away, showing the same lack of responsibility as his mother. When Doña Francisca and her family acquired wealth, through no effort of their own, they dismissed Benina as she was no longer needed and was not good enough for their new status. This emphasised the lack of charity or any true values in those who saw the acquisition of money as an end in itself. Carlos used money to buy redemption – the whole issue of begging could be discussed here. What does being wealthy mean? It does not necessarily bring happiness.

Question 2 Lope de Vega: *Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña*

- (a) (i) Peribáñez has just returned from Toledo.
- (ii) He had taken a painting of Saint Roque to be repaired and believed the Saint had protected him.

- (iii) The conflict between the main characters was inevitable because they had completely different values. Examples of the values of Peribáñez and Casilda – speeches in Act I, values in action when they assist the Comendador in the bullfight. Values of Comendador quickly apparent when immediately attracted to Casilda as she assists him after his fall (symbolic) and he admits that he may be foolish. Comendador influences others to collude in his immoral behaviour. Loyalty to monarch is measure of morality – Casilda and Peribáñez go to see King and Queen from sense of duty and later to plead for justice. They respect order in society, seek to re-establish harmony. Comendador betrays King's trust in him in way behaves to townspeople; prepared to break laws for personal gratification. Peribáñez took law into his own hands when had been given status to do so legally, then presented himself to judgement of the King.

All answers used references to the text effectively. The best responses found a way to integrate examples into an argument analysing the motivation behind the actions of the main characters.

- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse the premise that each individual has a degree of responsibility in creating a stable society. It was helpful in this case to outline the hierarchical, pyramidal structure of society at the time, with the King at the pinnacle and the 'villanos' at the bottom. Peribáñez and Casilda spoke of their place in society and respect for the natural world, those in direct authority over them (Comendador) and the supreme arbiter of justice, the King. The Comendador disrupted the order by lowering himself to the level of those below him in the social structure in his pursuit of Casilda, and possibly in his rewarding of Peribáñez, who ascended society. Harmony is restored by the King, who recognised the errors of the Comendador, and the justifiable action of Peribáñez. The actions of each individual could be measured in terms of the degree of responsibility shown to the greater society, including lesser characters.

Candidates who were successful in this question understood the nature of society and were able to evaluate the effects of the behaviour of individuals on society and analyse the outcome.

Question 3 Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

- (a) (i) Tita had been on the patio with the hens, in a scene of chaos.
- (ii) The argument with Rosaura centred on Tita's relationship with Pedro. Rosaura felt humiliated and forbade Tita to have further contact with Esperanza.
- (iii) The original aspects of food preparation in the novel were introduced here via the 'frijoles'. Tita was reminded of the 'tamales' which would not cook properly for Nacha if there was an argument in the house. Tita had to remedy the situation by transmitting a sense of love to the food, which she did by remembering her first meeting with Pedro. This episode presented the concept that the food was permeated by the feelings of the person cooking it. Here, Tita consciously attempted to affect the cooking process. In other examples the outcome was a reflection of her state of mind or even a means of communication, but this happened without any conscious intervention on Tita's part. Most candidates interpreted this as an aspect of magical realism and discussed how this technique was integrated into the narrative. Other instances of food expressing emotion were given. Many referred to the importance of the relationship between Tita and Nacha, and emphasised that Tita was born and grew up in the kitchen. It was her spiritual home. The fact that each chapter of the text had a recipe as part of the title was mentioned as another significant element to show that food preparation was central to the development of the narrative and the themes.
- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse how the theme of revolution was presented both historically and in the family home. The best essays gave a brief overview of the Mexican Revolution, pointing out that Zapata and Villa and their followers fought to defeat Huertas' totalitarian government. The family had first hand experience of the violence when the house was attacked. The whole of Mexican society was affected by the revolution, not only those fighting as part of the organised forces. Within the family itself, most essays identified Gertrudis as the most revolutionary character as she left to join the armed struggle and became a general. This could be seen as a defiant gesture challenging Mama Elena's authority, mirroring the actual Revolution. Gertrudis was then disowned by her mother, emphasising the gravity of her decision to rebel. Tita seemed to accept her mother's authority but her challenges and self expression came through in the subconscious effects of her cooking and the way she determined that Esperanza would not suffer in the same way she had, opposing Rosaura who wished to follow the tradition established by Mamá Elena. Her love for Pedro did not dim either. At the end of the novel Tita achieved her freedom and banished the malevolent influence of her mother's ghost.

It was important that candidates understood the motivation for the Mexican Revolution but detailed accounts were not needed. In order to attain the higher mark bands, essays had to combine both historical and domestic manifestations of revolution. Some interesting subtle distinctions could be made, showing that although Gertrudis achieved high rank in the army, as a woman, she still felt vulnerable when her baby was born mixed race. Tita saved Gertrudis' relationship with the baby's father by revealing that they had a black ancestor. Tradition and conservative ideologies are difficult to defeat.

Question 4 Fernando Fernán-Gómez: *Las bicicletas son para el verano*

- (a) (i) Luis and Don Luis agreed that Luis could have his bicycle for the summer if he promised to pass his Physics examination in September.
- (ii) Luis is immature and impatient, failing to understand the practicalities of the purchase of the bicycle, losing his temper and behaving childishly.
- (iii) Luis was perhaps the character who changed the most over the course of the play. At the beginning he was 14, played like a child with his friend and behaved like one with his father. At the end, Don Luis shared a cigarette with him, treating him like an adult, and Luis accepted the fact that he would have to behave as an adult, at 17, taking his father's place in the home if Don Luis were imprisoned. Many essays focussed mostly on the prologue and epilogue and compared and contrasted his demeanour in those scenes. This was accurate as far as it went, but did not fully trace Luis' psychological development. Virtually all mentioned the move from innocence to experience – the difference in his relationships with Charo and María. There was a more complex change in his attitude, understanding and sense of responsibility to others shown in the episodes of the lentils, the bullet and his defence of Manolita when she was threatened. He attained self awareness seen in his rueful comment in the final scene when he said that the bicycle, which he had wanted to go out with girls, would then be much more useful in his job. He did not have the bicycle, however. Summer, like his lost childhood, would not return.
- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse whether the focus of the play was more rooted in the political aspects of the Civil War, or in the human experience of the conflict. All agreed that the strength of the play lay in the way the audience experienced the effects of the war alongside the family. The events of the war were in the background, communicated via the radio, stories from other characters and occasional breakthroughs, for example the sound of machine guns, the bullet entering the room and events such as the death of Manolita's partner and the air drop of bread. The political view was not neutral; the family and others benefited from laws passed by the Republic and Don Luis' involvement in trade unions pointed to a socialist viewpoint. With the exception of the prologue and epilogue, the action of the play was set inside a flat or basement, creating a sense of claustrophobia. Within the home, life went on as much as possible. Characters seemed impotent and resigned; pawns in the greater historical reality. It was dangerous to go outside and horizons were narrowed alongside opportunities for work and education. The personal stories of lack of food and education and the general struggle to survive were the most significant. War is not necessarily dramatic and those away from the front also suffer as the fabric of society collapses around them.

Most answers gave examples of the way the family coped throughout the war and the best responses analysed how the events and effects of the war were used to maintain the atmosphere of tension and loss of control. The fact that Don Luis expressed that the end of the war did not bring peace, left the audience with an overwhelming sense of the personal consequences of the conflict.

Sección 2

Question 5 Gabriel García Márquez: *El coronel no tiene quien le escribe*

- (a) This question asked candidates to analyse how the author used humour in the novel. The point for discussion was whether the author made readers cry rather than laugh, using humour as a way of highlighting the sadness of the reality described in the novel.

Candidates therefore had to focus primarily on humour, finding examples of irony and self parody. Most essays referred to humour as a release from a difficult reality, perhaps a way of surviving. At

the same time black humour served to highlight the actual situation; the violent society (el primer muerto de muerte natural); the health of the colonel (la fábrica de clarinetes); the impenetrable bureaucracy (será cuestión de siglos); the colonel's inherent optimism (sirve para contar las estrellas); the colonel's wife's point of view (ese número ha salido dos veces en la lotería). Satire was used to comment on the censorship of the media, as expressed in the conversation between the doctor and the colonel.

A number of answers showed detailed knowledge of the text, but focussed on 'tristeza' rather than 'humor', with few examples of humour, which did not fully meet the demands of the question. The best responses showed that there was a tragicomic tone to the novel. It was possible to smile while at the same time feel sympathy for the characters. The sadness of the couple's situation was somehow made more poignant as the reader appreciated their wit and resilience, even as they moved toward a crisis. The apparently light comments hid a darkness which was experienced in many parts of Latin America.

- (b) This question asked candidates to show how the author used the colonel's ill health to highlight the main themes of the novel.

The best essays gave examples of the colonel's symptoms which were mostly linked to poverty; poor housing and a deficient diet. They then went on to show how the author compared the colonel to Sabas. As a wealthy man he had access to luxury – sugar – but this had made him ill. The corruption which led to his wealth was manifested in diabetes and obesity. By contrast the colonel's honesty, which meant that he returned the funds he was in charge of, made him ill. The reader sympathises with the colonel and not Sabas.

The whole environment in which the colonel lived was challenging. The weather affected his symptoms, the tension within society and the need he had to keep hope alive was draining. The sense of constant struggle against forces beyond the control of the individual was sometimes overwhelming. The corruption and rottenness of society was reflected in the way the colonel was effectively rotting alive.

Question 6 Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna*

- (a) This question asked candidates to challenge or agree with the view that the novel is essentially superficial, like a television soap opera.

One of the keys to produce a good answer to this question was the ability to define themes or issues dealt with in the novel. The success or otherwise of the author's treatment of these themes would then lead to the conclusion. Many candidates were too tempted to narrate the events of the novel, without sufficient analysis.

An example of thorough response could be to define 'telenovela' in the first place. This is one of the most current and lively means of communication as well as entertainment seen in Latin America. Many of the series are popular in other parts of the world also. This cultural context is reflected in Isabel Allende's own approach to literature, which can be used as an agent of change, educating readers in actual history, both social and political, which is not taught in schools. The author also aimed to make literature accessible. The references made to popular culture in general contribute to this, such as radio stories, songs and even fairy tales – Eva's own story is likened to Cinderella. The novel includes melodrama, a love story and a political message. It is easy to read with a lively narrative, and colourful characters who are sometimes larger than life. It is up to the candidate to analyse whether these characteristics make the novel superficial.

The best essays showed how Eva herself saw the power of the 'telenovela' in the novel. The themes explored included social change, the acceptance of 'alternative' lifestyles, the increasing freedom and power of women, abuse of power and generally that determination and persistence will bring success

- (b) This question required candidates to analyse whether the political message of the novel is a portrayal of the time at which it was written.

As with the other option on this text, many candidates were keen to show their detailed knowledge of the story and included too much narrative without a well argued analysis. The best answers defined the key political message, usually described as the struggle for freedom by means of

revolution. It was not necessary to give a lot of historical background to respond to the second part of the question. Most essays referred to the prevalence of autocratic governments throughout Latin America with a strong military, oligarchy and church. Society was very divided by class, wealth and gender, and conservative in nature.

The answer then developed with an analysis of how the status quo was challenged within the narrative, from Eva emptying the chamber pot over the minister's head to her stand against General Tolomeo in revealing the truth about the prison breakout in her 'telenovela'. Many other examples could be included.

Question 7 Federico García Lorca: *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

As in previous Sessions, virtually every candidate chose to write on this text.

- (a) This question asked candidates to analyse the importance of the family house itself in the text.

This was a very popular question and the majority of candidates were able to respond with understanding and illustration. Most essays described the house as a prison, separating the family from the outside world. The 'muros gruesos', the heat, the closed and locked doors created a sense of claustrophobia and enclosure. Many showed how the colours of the walls subtly changed over the course of the play and analysed the effect created by the author. All details were considered, including the significance of the picture on the wall.

The outside world only intruded via sounds through the windows and the daughters had to hide in case they were seen as they watched the life outside. La Poncia brought news from the real world and ironically did not present an idyllic picture. Marriage was not necessarily happy and society was cruel to those who went against the rules. The Abuela was physically restrained as Bernarda feared humiliation if her 'mad' mother was seen. The daughters were only permitted to sew as this was an activity done inside.

Bernarda was forcibly enclosing her daughters in the house but did not recognise the danger of this, which was ironically compared to her reaction to the horse, which she ordered to be freed when it tried to break out of its stall.

This was a house of secrets and unfulfilled potential.

- (b) This question asked candidates to respond to the assertion that Bernarda was motivated by love for her daughters.

Most candidates found some truth in this but concluded that she was primarily concerned with her own reputation and status in society. The argument that Bernarda showed love for her daughters included reference to the rigid society of the time, where parents were expected to protect their children's reputation in order to secure a suitable marriage. There were few choices for women of some rank, and those who challenged society were cruelly punished, as seen in the fate of the woman who had an illegitimate child. Interestingly, La Poncia also advised Adela not to rebel, as she was concerned to protect her own reputation as a servant employed by Bernarda.

The opposing stance emphasised Bernarda's unsympathetic treatment of her daughters. Examples included the way she did not permit weeping at the funeral, informed her daughters that they would be effectively sealed inside the house for a lengthy period of mourning, physically assaulted Angustias for wearing makeup and whose only concern in finding her youngest daughter hanged was to insist that Adela had died a virgin. Other examples of Bernarda's callousness could also be included.

The best answers covered both aspects of the question, with relevant references, and came to a balanced conclusion.

Question 8 Rosalía de Castro: *En las orillas del Sar*

This text was chosen by a small number of candidates, making it difficult to comment on performance.

- (a) This option asked candidates to write a critical analysis of the poem 'A La Luna', emphasising the main theme and the use of imagery.

The central theme was likely to have been identified as Galicia, the poet's pride in her homeland and appreciation of the natural world, and the effects of emigration. Candidates have a degree of flexibility in the way the analysis of poetic imagery may be interpreted, provided the argument is fully supported by references to the text.

- (b)** This question asked candidates to analyse to what extent Rosalía de Castro could be described as a romantic poet, with detailed references to at least three poems.

It was helpful to define the characteristics of a romantic poet and the nature of the poems written by such an author. These could include romantic love and the romantic expression of religious experience. In addition, the tone may be elegiac or nostalgic. Some may refer to the search for happiness, which is elusive, and the interpretation of death as a form of liberation.

Candidates were free to choose the poems which best illustrated the argument presented. It was preferable to use only three or possibly four so that the poems could be analysed in some detail, rather than listing titles without close study.

SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/42
Texts

Key messages

Examiners seek thorough knowledge of the texts chosen and clear essays focussed on the questions set, with detailed references to support the argument presented. The following key messages are intended to help candidates improve their performance further.

Candidates should read the rubric carefully, and only answer one option ((a) or (b)) for each text. In Section 1, (a) questions, candidates are instructed to answer parts (i) and (ii) very briefly. This means that no more than two or three sentences at the most are required. Answers to (iii) must make up the majority of the response. Candidates are advised to number the answers to each part of the question clearly, i.e. (i), (ii), (iii), and focus on each one separately. This should avoid any repetition.

Candidates should read the question carefully. Note key words in the title which define the question precisely.

Candidates are advised to avoid lengthy irrelevant introductory paragraphs with biographical details of the author.

Candidates must address the question directly, defining terms and approach in the introductory paragraph.

Answers should support the argument with appropriate, direct references to the text. These do not need to be long quotations. A key incident does not have to be narrated or quoted at length.

Candidates should re-read the question or devise a plan before beginning to write to avoid going off topic after the first paragraph.

Candidates must ensure that names of characters, places, historical context and author are accurate and that the text is described correctly as '*novela*', '*obra de teatro*' or '*poema*'.

Candidates are reminded to write legibly. Legible presentation of a candidate's work is essential for the Examiner to be able to find evidence of the candidate meeting the descriptors in the mark scheme.

Candidates are asked to avoid asterisks, arrows, writing in the margin (especially if at right angles to printed lines) as this is difficult to reconcile with on-line marking.

It is important for candidates to show that there is an understanding of how to present an argument, with a relevant introduction, development and conclusion. Many candidates were familiar with the PEEL format – Point, Example, Explain, Link (to next section of essay). This was used successfully when repeated throughout the response with frequent links to the text and relevant observations or analysis.

Candidates are advised to plan essays to show depth and breadth of knowledge and

General comments

The overall standard of answers was satisfactory, with most candidates showing knowledge of the texts studied and the ability to select examples to illustrate points or ideas.

Candidates showed good knowledge of the texts in terms of the narrative. Some essays tended to be too focussed on 'telling the story' rather than exploring the themes and ideas and analysing them. It is important to show understanding and critical awareness, which would allow candidates to reap the full rewards of their efforts in studying the texts. The whole essay must be a clear response to the question being answered.

Candidates should be aware that in writing about texts there is not a 'right' or 'wrong' answer. Questions are designed to challenge candidates to use their knowledge and understanding of the text in presenting a coherent argument in response. Examiners are prepared for varied analyses, provided they are direct responses to the question and are rooted in the text.

Comments on specific questions

Sección 1

Please note: comments made here do not constitute the 'correct' answer, but serve as examples of material submitted, and suggestions as to how to approach each question.

Comments regarding (a) options in this Sección:

These questions are all divided in three parts: (i), (ii) and (iii). Parts (i) and (ii) are designed to be answered briefly, in one or two sentences, with reference to the extract reproduced on the examination paper. Part (iii) requires candidates to refer to the whole text, not simply the printed extract. This part of the answer should make up the vast majority of the response. It is better to answer each of the three sections separately to ensure that answers to (i) and (ii) are kept short and that part (iii) is a full essay.

Question 1 Benito Pérez Galdós: *Misericordia*

There were few answers on this text in this Session, so it is not feasible to comment on candidates' performance.

- (a) (i) Benina and Almodena had just been released from prison, for begging, and Benina was keen to check that Paca was well and to ask that Almodena could stay with her, in her room at Paca's as he was ill.
 - (ii) Doña Francisca was shocked by Benina's appearance and could not accept Almodena in the house. She reproached Benina for abandoning her.
 - (iii) The main theme seen in this extract could be 'misericordia'. Benina was not concerned about herself, even though she was in a poor state, thin and barefoot. She felt responsible for having left Paca without explanation and for Almodena, who could not manage alone. Benina showed Christian charity and selflessness throughout the novel. Paca and her family, however, were happy to take from Benina when they had no other resources and saw that as their due, but once they had wealth she was replaced and rejected. Candidates would trace the presentation of the theme throughout the novel, showing how Galdós revealed the hypocrisy in society and the suffering of the poor.
- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse to what extent characters in the novel live under false pretences to avoid facing the reality of their wretched lives.

Answers could follow a number of approaches. Perhaps the most likely would be to analyse how the main characters dealt with poverty and deprivation, comparing and contrasting. All would include studies of Benina and Doña Francisca, and then the wider range of individuals connected with them. The best arguments would show how there was an element of deception in the behaviour of most characters. Some individuals embellished the truth and colluded in the pretence while fully aware of reality. Others preferred to pretend that circumstances were very different to the reality.

Question 2 Lope de Vega: *Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña*

- (a) (i) Peribáñez had just seen a portrait of his own wife, painted for the Comendador. He therefore feared that he had been betrayed by Casilda and consequently had been dishonoured.
 - (ii) Antón behaves with great presence of mind. He recognised Casilda but reacted diplomatically, saying that Peribáñez must find the portrait beautiful, hinting that he knew who it was.
 - (iii) The main theme presented in the extract must be that of honour. Candidates would be able to define both 'honor' and 'honra' and show how these concepts are presented and developed by Peribáñez and the Comendador, and analyse how their different attitudes to the concept determine the inevitable conflict.
- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse how the author used symbols and images to emphasise the themes of the play. This answer needed planning and careful choice of examples, first in identifying the themes, then selecting quotations or references and analysing how the author used

symbols and images. Most answers began with Peribáñez and Casilda's speeches in Act I. The Comendador's accident was seen as a symbol of the beginning of his moral fall. The main focus was generally on the move from harmony to chaos which was then resolved by the judgment of the King and Queen. The balance of society was threatened by the Comendador and although justice meted out may have seemed harsh, it was necessary to protect the system as a whole.

Question 3 Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

- (a) (i) The narrator is Esperanza's daughter.
- (ii) This tells the reader what has happened at the ranch – everything has been burned to ash, set on fire by Tita.
- (iii) This question asked the reader to analyse whether the novel celebrates life, even though there is so much sadness and so many deaths in the narrative.

A starting point could be a phrase from the published extract, 'bajo las cenizas floreció todo tipo de vida, convirtiendo ese terreno en el más fértil de la región'. The positive force of the love of Tita and Pedro meant that the apparent destruction of the fire resulted in renewal. It would then be possible to analyse how Tita always had a positive, life-affirming influence, even though she suffered as she could not change the underlying tradition enforced by her mother. This could be traced through her nurturing of the family in her cooking and the way she ensured that the next generation of women would not be subject to the same rules as she was. Death was also portrayed in different ways. In the case of Roberto, it was a tragedy caused by jealousy and control. Nacha, however, continued to help and influence Tita after her death and this was welcomed. Mamá Elena also attempted to interfere with Tita's life but her tormenting spirit was successfully banished. Some essays also focused on the changing role of women, seen in Gertrudis.

- (b) This question asked candidates to discuss the premise that both past and present coexist in this novel, as if in a never-ending circle.

This gives scope for a wide-ranging analysis of a number of elements of the novel. The fact that it is structured in twelve chapters corresponding to the months of the year is important. This is the way everyone moves through time. However the reader needs to examine the time scale continuing beyond the grave, in the book of recipes magically saved from the flames. Tita was born crying, in the kitchen, which could be seen as significant in foretelling the sadness of her life which would be lived out in that room. The 'pastel de boda' united past, present and future as Tita's tears caused the guests to vomit, Nacha to retreat into nostalgia and fired desire in Gertrudis, reflecting Tita's feelings for Pedro. The reaction of Pedro and Rosaura's guests could presage the failure of the marriage; Nacha was left feeling so sad remembering past loves that she died and Gertrudis escaped from the ranch to fulfil herself in a new and exciting life. Other essays referred to the use of magic realism, the presence of spirits and ghosts and the sense of continuity in tradition. Most felt that this was a fair assessment overall, but that the author also showed how small changes affected the cycle and changed the course of events. It was seen as a strength in terms of literary technique, also giving interest and originality in the presentation of the themes.

Question 4 Ferdinando Fernán-Gómez: *Las bicicletas son para el verano*

- (a) (i) Anselmo is Luis' cousin, he is an anarchist, has been at the front and in Valencia, where the Government was based.
- (ii) Anselmo is an anarchist and idealist, focusing on the freedom of the individual. His comments seem unrealistic.
- (iii) There had been little direct commentary on the possible outcome of the war. This soldier, with his colourful language, gave a picture of a libertarian society free from any constraints of morals or authority. This could be seen as an extension of the ambitions of the Second Republic, the government in place when the conservative forces led by Franco rose up and initiated the Civil War. It was however an extreme view. The play portrayed the experience of the war in the centre of Madrid. In the midst of such chaos it was impossible to understand what was happening elsewhere in the country, to what extent the events in Madrid were typical and what the eventual outcome could be. Anselmo seemed to be optimistic about a socialist victory, and that there was a rosy future near at hand. This grated with the privations suffered by the family. The description of life in

Valencia raised a number of questions also. Ironically, as Anselmo left, a bomb landed near the house, sending the neighbours to the basement. It did not seem to echo Anselmo's assertion that victory was close. Candidates generally understood the point being made but needed to organise and select material to make the strongest argument possible.

- (b) This question focused on the moral decisions which have to be made in a crisis situation, asking candidates to consider how these were explored in the play. Two scenarios were frequently chosen to analyse this, the 'lentejas' scene and the relationship between Luis and María. Essays began by showing that the main characters lived in a family where there was fairness, mutual love and respect, and that each individual seemed to be responsible in terms of their role in the family and in society. Don Luis worked hard to provide for his family and had had to forego personal ambition. There was a strong sense of moral awareness. This, however, changed as the situation became more difficult. Don Luis admitted that he should not dismiss María as Pedro was equally guilty in their relationship. María became a victim of circumstances as the situation could not be allowed to continue and there was no way of distancing the pair in any other way. The stealing of the lentils was a more powerful scene again. Here the individuals are forced by hunger to cheat other members of their own family of the only food available for them all. It was made as sad as it could be in the way the scene developed. Initially there was suspicion that a neighbour had taken the lentils, but then each person admitted their guilt, and remorse. This was a crisis and everyone had behaved in what was essentially a selfish way in order to survive. Other examples could be included, such as Manolita's decision to marry. Candidates responded well to the question.

Sección 2

Some questions were answered by a small number of candidates, so comments describe the kind of response which could be expected.

Question 5 Gabriel García Márquez: *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba*

- (a) This was a popular question. Candidates were asked to analyse the importance of the description of the town and the society depicted in the novel.

The best responses found a way to present this in terms of a theme. The town was isolated, neglected and corrupt, subject to authoritarian rule by the mayor, a soldier, and there was a gulf between rich and poor.

Candidates then proceeded to analyse the effects of the environment on those living there; violence, clandestine groups distributing uncensored news, no progress, legal system stagnant, imposition of censorship by church, corruption and inequality. Many examples could be given. Society was seen as generally unjust but with some kind individuals who showed compassion. The colonel was stoic in the face of his interminable wait, and suffered embarrassment at his plight, as did his wife who boiled stones so that the neighbours did not know they had no food to cook. At the same time Agustín's friends tried to help the couple by giving food for the cockerel, and sympathised with the colonel's determination to keep his son's memory alive by refusing to give up the bird. The doctor was thoughtful and found a way to help the couple without accepting payment. The harsh situation had not killed off human kindness all together. Many answers analysed the role of Sabas, wealthy due to corruption and collusion with the government, but ill with diabetes due to excess living and unable to be charitable. Candidates understood the text and were able to select appropriate references.

- (b) This was another popular question, asking to what degree the cockerel was a divisive force in the novel.

It was logical to explain the presence of the cockerel in the novel first, linking it to Agustín, the colonel and his wife, Agustín's friends and the wider range of townspeople. It was then possible to analyse what it represented to each group and show whether this was divisive or unifying. Candidates felt that the cockerel was a focus politically for change, uniting those opposed to the government. It was more complicated when considering the colonel and his wife. The best essays did not simply trace what had happened to Agustín, but analysed the subtleties of the feelings of responsibility for the cockerel which were expressed by the colonel and his wife, and the tension caused. Most candidates had understood and appreciated the text. There were some instances where an essay described the circumstances of the cockerel in general terms without sufficient

focus on the question set. Careful planning and noting the key words in the question could help here.

Question 6 Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna*

- (a) This option asked candidates to react to a statement about the characters in the novel. Most essays stated that there was some element of truth in the comment, and that some individuals were not fully developed, but that most of Allende's protagonists were rounded characters who drew the reader in to the narrative.

This question gave a wide scope to candidates. Responses worked best when candidates compared some of the more one dimensional characters, such as Rolf's father, with Rolf himself. Unpleasant individuals were present, but readers generally identified with the more complete characters, who changed and developed throughout the novel. It was somewhat surprising that many individuals resisted cynicism despite the problems they encountered in a reactionary society. Overall, the consensus was that the tone was more positive than negative, and that the characters were sufficiently individual, with interesting lives and the motivation to achieve change to capture the reader's interest and to maintain it through a complex narrative.

- (b) This question dealt with the theme of friendship in the novel. Candidates needed to find an argument which would be the framework for the answer. Those who listed friendships and described the nature of the relationship without analysis missed the opportunity to use their knowledge to best effect.

The majority of essays traced Eva's life, mentioning how and when she met new friends. This approach becomes a temptation to narrate unless the candidate shows what Eva learned from that relationship and how it affected her or influenced her behaviour in later. Most focused on the friendships between Eva, Humberto and Rolf, and Mimi. Candidates responded well to the text.

Question 7 Federico García Lorca: *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

Virtually all candidates chose to answer on this text. The key to a good essay was to analyse and not simply list examples. Candidates knew the text well and responded to the themes.

- (a) The sense of claustrophobia is strong in the text. Candidates were asked to show how the author created it and some essays missed this element. One effective way of demonstrating this was to separate physical and emotional claustrophobia. Colours were often analysed. All referred to the setting of the play, which is always inside the house. The stage directions and details of the set are relevant. Few mentioned the picture, however. The 'muros gruesos' are powerful symbols of incarceration and separation. Answers then included other examples which underlined the image of the house as a prison. References to locked doors, the daughters glimpsing and hearing sounds from the outside world but being careful that they were not seen were relevant. María Josefa was physically locked up but had not lost her dreams of freedom – many contrasted her situation with that of the daughters. The emotional claustrophobia was possibly more powerful than the physical. This was conveyed in many ways. The male guests at the funeral were kept away from the family so that the daughters were only allowed to mix with the women. They only knew about 'real' life from la Poncia and occasional gossip from others. This was clearly reinforcing the idea that women's lives were generally unhappy. The enclosed way of life meant that there was no escape from the rest of the family and the tensions between the daughters grew as the marriage of Angustias to Pepe el Romano was announced and jealousies caused increasingly violent and spiteful reactions. As La Poncia stated, 'hay una tormenta en cada cuarto'. This was intensified by the heat and thirst, particularly demonstrated by Adela, who was also spied on by La Poncia and Martirio, who wanted to ensure that since her suitor had been sent away by Bernarda as too common, no one else would achieve happiness. The tragic suicide of Adela was interpreted as an escape.

As knowledge of the text was sound, the quality of answers was generally determined by the way candidates selected and used examples, within an argument and with a logical conclusion.

- (b) This question asked candidates to comment on the statement that the physical absence of men in the play actually gave them a more powerful presence.

A starting point could be to define women's role in society at the time, to emphasise how dependent they were on men. A woman went from her father's house to her husband, provided a suitable match could be found by her parents, with no other options. This point could be supported by references from the text. Candidates sometimes then considered the role of the recently deceased father. He was mourned by his daughters and the Criada, with whom he had a relationship. Bernarda took on his role as head of the household but indicated that she would be more strict than he was. His absence therefore deprived the daughters of any parental affection but helped Angustias as her inheritance meant that she was an attractive option for marriage. In terms of prospective husbands, some good essays quoted María Josefa who accurately summed up the daughters' predicament 'Son mujeres sin hombre, nada más.' The irony in her exchanges was powerful, as her presumed madness revealed more sense and insight than many other characters. Lorca also used irony in the references to the 'caballo garañón', and Bernarda's comments regarding her vigilance and 'Mis hijas tienen la respiración tranquila'. Men were the only hope of escape and as they were unseen, they remained idealised. The daughters were being deprived of natural feelings and fulfilment by rigid rules set by society and those who infringed these were cruelly punished – but not the men. Forbidden fruit is always the most attractive. Candidates showed sensitivity to the themes and language. As emphasised earlier, they need to plan and focus carefully in order to make full use of their close study of the text.

Question 8 Rosalía de Castro: *En las orillas del Sar*

There were a small number of responses to this text so that comments on candidates' performance is not appropriate.

- (a) This question gave candidates a clear framework for the answer. The main focus had to be the religious references, showing how the poet used these and possibly linking them to other themes. A critical analysis must also include appreciation of poetic language and style.
- (b) This option gave candidates the opportunity to focus on their own choice of poems from the published list. The focus was on the most effective images and symbols, in the candidate's opinion. This had to be organised into an argument, most commonly following one or two themes, showing how the poet used poetic technique to express ideas powerfully. The question asked for a minimum of three poems, and candidates perform best by analysing three or possibly four poems in detail, rather than quoting from a greater number.

SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/43
Texts

Key messages

Examiners seek thorough knowledge of the texts chosen and clear essays focussed on the questions set, with detailed references to support the argument presented. The following key messages are intended to help candidates improve their performance further.

Candidates should read the rubric carefully, and only answer one option ((a) or (b)) for each text. In Section 1, (a) questions, candidates are instructed to answer parts (i) and (ii) very briefly. This means that no more than two or three sentences at the most are required. Answers to (iii) must make up the majority of the response. Candidates are advised to number the answers to each part of the question clearly, i.e. (i), (ii), (iii), and focus on each one separately. This should avoid any repetition.

Candidates should read the question carefully. Note key words in the title which define the question precisely.

Candidates are advised to avoid lengthy irrelevant introductory paragraphs with biographical details of the author.

Candidates must address the question directly, defining terms and approach in the introductory paragraph.

Answers should support the argument with appropriate, direct references to the text. These do not need to be long quotations. A key incident does not have to be narrated or quoted at length.

Candidates should re-read the question or devise a plan before beginning to write to avoid going off topic after the first paragraph.

Candidates must ensure that names of characters, places, historical context and author are accurate and that the text is described correctly as '*novela*', '*obra de teatro*' or '*poema*'.

Candidates are reminded to write legibly. Legible presentation of a candidate's work is essential for the Examiner to be able to find evidence of the candidate meeting the descriptors in the mark scheme.

Candidates are asked to avoid asterisks, arrows, writing in the margin (especially if at right angles to printed lines) as this is difficult to reconcile with on-line marking.

It is important for candidates to show that there is an understanding of how to present an argument, with a relevant introduction, development and conclusion. Many candidates were familiar with the PEEL format – Point, Example, Explain, Link (to next section of essay). This was used successfully when repeated throughout the response with frequent links to the text and relevant observations or analysis.

Candidates are advised to plan essays to show depth and breadth of knowledge and

General comments

The overall standard of answers was satisfactory, with most candidates showing knowledge of the texts studied and the ability to select examples to illustrate points or ideas.

Candidates showed good knowledge of the texts in terms of the narrative. Some essays tended to be too focussed on 'telling the story' rather than exploring the themes and ideas and analysing them. It is important to show understanding and critical awareness, which would allow candidates to reap the full rewards of their efforts in studying the texts. The whole essay must be a clear response to the question being answered.

Candidates should be aware that in writing about texts there is not a 'right' or 'wrong' answer. Questions are designed to challenge candidates to use their knowledge and understanding of the text in presenting a coherent argument in response. Examiners are prepared for varied analyses, provided they are direct responses to the question and are rooted in the text.

Comments on specific questions

Sección 1

Please note: comments made here do not constitute the 'correct' answer, but serve as examples of material submitted, and suggestions as to how to approach each question.

Comments regarding (a) options in this Sección:

These questions are all divided in three Parts: (i), (ii) and (iii). Parts (i) and (ii) are designed to be answered briefly, in one or two sentences, with reference to the extract reproduced on the examination paper. Part (iii) requires candidates to refer to the whole text, not simply the printed extract. This part of the answer should make up the vast majority of the response. It is better to answer each of the three sections separately to ensure that answers to (i) and (ii) are kept short and that part (iii) is a full essay.

Question 1 Benito Pérez Galdós: *Misericordia*

- (a) (i) Benina is outside the church with the other beggars.
- (ii) Any two details, for example, she has most of her own teeth, she has a dignified air.
- (iii) Benina, like St Rita, was always ready to help even if this caused her problems. Many examples of her kindness and selflessness to Doña Francisca, Juliana, Ponte, Almudena. Benina looks like the typical impression of a saint – dressed in dark clothes, pleasant, calm and dignified, with a superior demeanour.

Benina exemplifies Christian values and love, helping those cast out by society. Chapter XXX refers to 'Via crucis' – she has a heavy burden to bear. Compare her values to those of Doña Francisca and Juliana. Benina lies to protect Paca and is charitable to Juliana; notice change in form of address at the end of the novel when Benina is no longer a servant to Juliana. Benina is strong, brave and can cope with adversity: Juliana, Doña Francisca and Ponte cannot face reality. Benina sees hope in everything – eating bread with two sauces, hunger and hope. Juliana is surprised to see Benina looking well in the hut she shares with Almudena, even though she has nothing. What is needed to achieve happiness or contentment?

All answers presented the view that Benina was saintly in her actions. She was not perfect, however, which could be said to add to her appeal and the success of Galdós' characterisation of her. It was effective to compare and contrast Benina with other characters to analyse the values and ideas presented in the novel. Reference to religion was relevant here. Many essays simply listed examples of Benina's kindness and generosity; this did not constitute an argument or analysis and limited the marks available.

- (b) The majority of answers to this question presented the premise that Galdós' intention was to expose the scandal of poverty at the time, and that therefore money, or the lack of it, was the motivating force. However the picture could be said to be more complex. What is the value of money? Wealth was important in denoting class, as could be seen in Doña Francisca and Ponte. Those who saw themselves as superior but lacking in funds depended financially on someone poorer than they were, and were self-deluded. Doña Francisca, Ponte and Juliana expected help and displayed no sense of understanding the value of money. Antofito, gambled money away, showing the same lack of responsibility as his mother. When Doña Francisca and her family acquired wealth, through no effort of their own, they dismissed Benina as she was no longer needed and was not good enough for their new status. This emphasised the lack of charity or any true values in those who saw the acquisition of money as an end in itself. Carlos used money to buy redemption – the whole issue of begging could be discussed here. What does being wealthy mean? It does not necessarily bring happiness.

Question 2 Lope de Vega: *Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña*

- (a) (i) Peribáñez has just returned from Toledo.
- (ii) He had taken a painting of Saint Roque to be repaired and believed the Saint had protected him.

- (iii) The conflict between the main characters was inevitable because they had completely different values. Examples of the values of Peribáñez and Casilda – speeches in Act I, values in action when they assist the Comendador in the bullfight. Values of Comendador quickly apparent when immediately attracted to Casilda as she assists him after his fall (symbolic) and he admits that he may be foolish. Comendador influences others to collude in his immoral behaviour. Loyalty to monarch is measure of morality – Casilda and Peribáñez go to see King and Queen from sense of duty and later to plead for justice. They respect order in society, seek to re-establish harmony. Comendador betrays King's trust in him in way behaves to townspeople; prepared to break laws for personal gratification. Peribáñez took law into his own hands when had been given status to do so legally, then presented himself to judgement of the King.

All answers used references to the text effectively. The best responses found a way to integrate examples into an argument analysing the motivation behind the actions of the main characters.

- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse the premise that each individual has a degree of responsibility in creating a stable society. It was helpful in this case to outline the hierarchical, pyramidal structure of society at the time, with the King at the pinnacle and the 'villanos' at the bottom. Peribáñez and Casilda spoke of their place in society and respect for the natural world, those in direct authority over them (Comendador) and the supreme arbiter of justice, the King. The Comendador disrupted the order by lowering himself to the level of those below him in the social structure in his pursuit of Casilda, and possibly in his rewarding of Peribáñez, who ascended society. Harmony is restored by the King, who recognised the errors of the Comendador, and the justifiable action of Peribáñez. The actions of each individual could be measured in terms of the degree of responsibility shown to the greater society, including lesser characters.

Candidates who were successful in this question understood the nature of society and were able to evaluate the effects of the behaviour of individuals on society and analyse the outcome.

Question 3 Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

- (a) (i) Tita had been on the patio with the hens, in a scene of chaos.
- (ii) The argument with Rosaura centred on Tita's relationship with Pedro. Rosaura felt humiliated and forbade Tita to have further contact with Esperanza.
- (iii) The original aspects of food preparation in the novel were introduced here via the 'frijoles'. Tita was reminded of the 'tamales' which would not cook properly for Nacha if there was an argument in the house. Tita had to remedy the situation by transmitting a sense of love to the food, which she did by remembering her first meeting with Pedro. This episode presented the concept that the food was permeated by the feelings of the person cooking it. Here, Tita consciously attempted to affect the cooking process. In other examples the outcome was a reflection of her state of mind or even a means of communication, but this happened without any conscious intervention on Tita's part. Most candidates interpreted this as an aspect of magical realism and discussed how this technique was integrated into the narrative. Other instances of food expressing emotion were given. Many referred to the importance of the relationship between Tita and Nacha, and emphasised that Tita was born and grew up in the kitchen. It was her spiritual home. The fact that each chapter of the text had a recipe as part of the title was mentioned as another significant element to show that food preparation was central to the development of the narrative and the themes.
- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse how the theme of revolution was presented both historically and in the family home. The best essays gave a brief overview of the Mexican Revolution, pointing out that Zapata and Villa and their followers fought to defeat Huertas' totalitarian government. The family had first hand experience of the violence when the house was attacked. The whole of Mexican society was affected by the revolution, not only those fighting as part of the organised forces. Within the family itself, most essays identified Gertrudis as the most revolutionary character as she left to join the armed struggle and became a general. This could be seen as a defiant gesture challenging Mama Elena's authority, mirroring the actual Revolution. Gertrudis was then disowned by her mother, emphasising the gravity of her decision to rebel. Tita seemed to accept her mother's authority but her challenges and self expression came through in the subconscious effects of her cooking and the way she determined that Esperanza would not suffer in the same way she had, opposing Rosaura who wished to follow the tradition established by Mamá Elena. Her love for Pedro did not dim either. At the end of the novel Tita achieved her freedom and banished the malevolent influence of her mother's ghost.

It was important that candidates understood the motivation for the Mexican Revolution but detailed accounts were not needed. In order to attain the higher mark bands, essays had to combine both historical and domestic manifestations of revolution. Some interesting subtle distinctions could be made, showing that although Gertrudis achieved high rank in the army, as a woman, she still felt vulnerable when her baby was born mixed race. Tita saved Gertrudis' relationship with the baby's father by revealing that they had a black ancestor. Tradition and conservative ideologies are difficult to defeat.

Question 4 Fernando Fernán-Gómez: *Las bicicletas son para el verano*

- (a) (i) Luis and Don Luis agreed that Luis could have his bicycle for the summer if he promised to pass his Physics examination in September.
- (ii) Luis is immature and impatient, failing to understand the practicalities of the purchase of the bicycle, losing his temper and behaving childishly.
- (iii) Luis was perhaps the character who changed the most over the course of the play. At the beginning he was 14, played like a child with his friend and behaved like one with his father. At the end, Don Luis shared a cigarette with him, treating him like an adult, and Luis accepted the fact that he would have to behave as an adult, at 17, taking his father's place in the home if Don Luis were imprisoned. Many essays focussed mostly on the prologue and epilogue and compared and contrasted his demeanour in those scenes. This was accurate as far as it went, but did not fully trace Luis' psychological development. Virtually all mentioned the move from innocence to experience – the difference in his relationships with Charo and María. There was a more complex change in his attitude, understanding and sense of responsibility to others shown in the episodes of the lentils, the bullet and his defence of Manolita when she was threatened. He attained self awareness seen in his rueful comment in the final scene when he said that the bicycle, which he had wanted to go out with girls, would then be much more useful in his job. He did not have the bicycle, however. Summer, like his lost childhood, would not return.
- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse whether the focus of the play was more rooted in the political aspects of the Civil War, or in the human experience of the conflict. All agreed that the strength of the play lay in the way the audience experienced the effects of the war alongside the family. The events of the war were in the background, communicated via the radio, stories from other characters and occasional breakthroughs, for example the sound of machine guns, the bullet entering the room and events such as the death of Manolita's partner and the air drop of bread. The political view was not neutral; the family and others benefited from laws passed by the Republic and Don Luis' involvement in trade unions pointed to a socialist viewpoint. With the exception of the prologue and epilogue, the action of the play was set inside a flat or basement, creating a sense of claustrophobia. Within the home, life went on as much as possible. Characters seemed impotent and resigned; pawns in the greater historical reality. It was dangerous to go outside and horizons were narrowed alongside opportunities for work and education. The personal stories of lack of food and education and the general struggle to survive were the most significant. War is not necessarily dramatic and those away from the front also suffer as the fabric of society collapses around them.

Most answers gave examples of the way the family coped throughout the war and the best responses analysed how the events and effects of the war were used to maintain the atmosphere of tension and loss of control. The fact that Don Luis expressed that the end of the war did not bring peace, left the audience with an overwhelming sense of the personal consequences of the conflict.

Sección 2

Question 5 Gabriel García Márquez: *El coronel no tiene quien le escribe*

- (a) This question asked candidates to analyse how the author used humour in the novel. The point for discussion was whether the author made readers cry rather than laugh, using humour as a way of highlighting the sadness of the reality described in the novel.

Candidates therefore had to focus primarily on humour, finding examples of irony and self parody. Most essays referred to humour as a release from a difficult reality, perhaps a way of surviving. At

the same time black humour served to highlight the actual situation; the violent society (el primer muerto de muerte natural); the health of the colonel (la fábrica de clarinetes); the impenetrable bureaucracy (será cuestión de siglos); the colonel's inherent optimism (sirve para contar las estrellas); the colonel's wife's point of view (ese número ha salido dos veces en la lotería). Satire was used to comment on the censorship of the media, as expressed in the conversation between the doctor and the colonel.

A number of answers showed detailed knowledge of the text, but focussed on 'tristeza' rather than 'humor', with few examples of humour, which did not fully meet the demands of the question. The best responses showed that there was a tragicomic tone to the novel. It was possible to smile while at the same time feel sympathy for the characters. The sadness of the couple's situation was somehow made more poignant as the reader appreciated their wit and resilience, even as they moved toward a crisis. The apparently light comments hid a darkness which was experienced in many parts of Latin America.

- (b) This question asked candidates to show how the author used the colonel's ill health to highlight the main themes of the novel.

The best essays gave examples of the colonel's symptoms which were mostly linked to poverty; poor housing and a deficient diet. They then went on to show how the author compared the colonel to Sabas. As a wealthy man he had access to luxury – sugar – but this had made him ill. The corruption which led to his wealth was manifested in diabetes and obesity. By contrast the colonel's honesty, which meant that he returned the funds he was in charge of, made him ill. The reader sympathises with the colonel and not Sabas.

The whole environment in which the colonel lived was challenging. The weather affected his symptoms, the tension within society and the need he had to keep hope alive was draining. The sense of constant struggle against forces beyond the control of the individual was sometimes overwhelming. The corruption and rottenness of society was reflected in the way the colonel was effectively rotting alive.

Question 6 Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna*

- (a) This question asked candidates to challenge or agree with the view that the novel is essentially superficial, like a television soap opera.

One of the keys to produce a good answer to this question was the ability to define themes or issues dealt with in the novel. The success or otherwise of the author's treatment of these themes would then lead to the conclusion. Many candidates were too tempted to narrate the events of the novel, without sufficient analysis.

An example of thorough response could be to define 'telenovela' in the first place. This is one of the most current and lively means of communication as well as entertainment seen in Latin America. Many of the series are popular in other parts of the world also. This cultural context is reflected in Isabel Allende's own approach to literature, which can be used as an agent of change, educating readers in actual history, both social and political, which is not taught in schools. The author also aimed to make literature accessible. The references made to popular culture in general contribute to this, such as radio stories, songs and even fairy tales – Eva's own story is likened to Cinderella. The novel includes melodrama, a love story and a political message. It is easy to read with a lively narrative, and colourful characters who are sometimes larger than life. It is up to the candidate to analyse whether these characteristics make the novel superficial.

The best essays showed how Eva herself saw the power of the 'telenovela' in the novel. The themes explored included social change, the acceptance of 'alternative' lifestyles, the increasing freedom and power of women, abuse of power and generally that determination and persistence will bring success

- (b) This question required candidates to analyse whether the political message of the novel is a portrayal of the time at which it was written.

As with the other option on this text, many candidates were keen to show their detailed knowledge of the story and included too much narrative without a well argued analysis. The best answers defined the key political message, usually described as the struggle for freedom by means of

revolution. It was not necessary to give a lot of historical background to respond to the second part of the question. Most essays referred to the prevalence of autocratic governments throughout Latin America with a strong military, oligarchy and church. Society was very divided by class, wealth and gender, and conservative in nature.

The answer then developed with an analysis of how the status quo was challenged within the narrative, from Eva emptying the chamber pot over the minister's head to her stand against General Tolomeo in revealing the truth about the prison breakout in her 'telenovela'. Many other examples could be included.

Question 7 Federico García Lorca: *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

As in previous Sessions, virtually every candidate chose to write on this text.

- (a) This question asked candidates to analyse the importance of the family house itself in the text.

This was a very popular question and the majority of candidates were able to respond with understanding and illustration. Most essays described the house as a prison, separating the family from the outside world. The 'muros gruesos', the heat, the closed and locked doors created a sense of claustrophobia and enclosure. Many showed how the colours of the walls subtly changed over the course of the play and analysed the effect created by the author. All details were considered, including the significance of the picture on the wall.

The outside world only intruded via sounds through the windows and the daughters had to hide in case they were seen as they watched the life outside. La Poncia brought news from the real world and ironically did not present an idyllic picture. Marriage was not necessarily happy and society was cruel to those who went against the rules. The Abuela was physically restrained as Bernarda feared humiliation if her 'mad' mother was seen. The daughters were only permitted to sew as this was an activity done inside.

Bernarda was forcibly enclosing her daughters in the house but did not recognise the danger of this, which was ironically compared to her reaction to the horse, which she ordered to be freed when it tried to break out of its stall.

This was a house of secrets and unfulfilled potential.

- (b) This question asked candidates to respond to the assertion that Bernarda was motivated by love for her daughters.

Most candidates found some truth in this but concluded that she was primarily concerned with her own reputation and status in society. The argument that Bernarda showed love for her daughters included reference to the rigid society of the time, where parents were expected to protect their children's reputation in order to secure a suitable marriage. There were few choices for women of some rank, and those who challenged society were cruelly punished, as seen in the fate of the woman who had an illegitimate child. Interestingly, La Poncia also advised Adela not to rebel, as she was concerned to protect her own reputation as a servant employed by Bernarda.

The opposing stance emphasised Bernarda's unsympathetic treatment of her daughters. Examples included the way she did not permit weeping at the funeral, informed her daughters that they would be effectively sealed inside the house for a lengthy period of mourning, physically assaulted Angustias for wearing makeup and whose only concern in finding her youngest daughter hanged was to insist that Adela had died a virgin. Other examples of Bernarda's callousness could also be included.

The best answers covered both aspects of the question, with relevant references, and came to a balanced conclusion.

Question 8 Rosalía de Castro: *En las orillas del Sar*

This text was chosen by a small number of candidates, making it difficult to comment on performance.

- (a) This option asked candidates to write a critical analysis of the poem 'A La Luna', emphasising the main theme and the use of imagery.

The central theme was likely to have been identified as Galicia, the poet's pride in her homeland and appreciation of the natural world, and the effects of emigration. Candidates have a degree of flexibility in the way the analysis of poetic imagery may be interpreted, provided the argument is fully supported by references to the text.

- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse to what extent Rosalía de Castro could be described as a romantic poet, with detailed references to at least three poems.

It was helpful to define the characteristics of a romantic poet and the nature of the poems written by such an author. These could include romantic love and the romantic expression of religious experience. In addition, the tone may be elegiac or nostalgic. Some may refer to the search for happiness, which is elusive, and the interpretation of death as a form of liberation.

Candidates were free to choose the poems which best illustrated the argument presented. It was preferable to use only three or possibly four so that the poems could be analysed in some detail, rather than listing titles without close study.