

A-level

SPANISH

Unit 1 Listening, Reading and Writing
Report on the Examination

SPAN1
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Question 1

This question was generally well answered by the majority of students. However, despite the rubric, some still answered in English and were therefore unable to score.

Question 1a

Many students gave *quemado* as their answer, which was probably derived from the word *sol* in the exercise. A high proportion misunderstood the idea of ‘sunburn’ thinking the answer involved ‘seeking the sun’ or ‘sunbathing’. A similar issue occurred with *borracho* with students assuming the young Britons were ‘drinking in the streets’ and not ‘drunk in the streets’.

Question 1b

This question was well answered.

Question 1c

Surprisingly, very few students recognised *desagradable* as unpleasant. There were many translations of the Spanish word which students put down instead, eg disagreeable, displeasing, annoying, disgraceful and unagreeable.

Question 1d

This question was well answered. The only issue being the English translation of *consumo excesivo del alcohol* - some students putting ‘consumption of excessive alcohol’, which was not accepted.

Question 1e

Many students recognised *ahogaron* but did not include the fact that the young Britons *estaban borrachos cuando entraron en el agua*, and so did not score.

Question 1f

Some students misinterpreted *caer del balcón* and answered ‘they jumped off’. As this was a two mark question, many were able to score one mark by putting ‘from the apartment’s balcony’.

Question 1g

This question was not answered well. A large majority understood ‘in street fights’ (*en peleas callejeras*), for which they scored one mark, but failed to understand *cuchillos* and the fact that many had been stabbed / attacked with knives. Students were also able to score a mark from *rompieron piernas o brazos* but surprisingly many who included this did not know what these parts of the body were or wrote bones instead.

Question 2

This question was well answered by the majority of students. The main issue was many students who chose ‘M’ as an answer thinking that it had been the boxers who had given each other the boxing gloves, when the transcript stated *Un momento agradable fue cuando Cristina Fernández aceptó como regalo unos guantes de boxeo*.

Question 3

Overall this question was well done. Issues still occur with either larger numbers or, those that include *sesenta* and *setenta*. This was evident in parts (c) and (d). Another problem area was the spelling of *millones* for part (f). Students are reminded that these questions do require an answer in Spanish and therefore *milliones* was accepted but *millions* was rejected as it is an English word. In these types of questions where the question is in Spanish, it is recommended that students do not put anything English in the answers which can negate it, for example in part (a) some students

included the word years in their answer. These would make the response an answer in English and it was therefore marked as wrong.

Question 4

Unfortunately, some students did not read the rubric and answered the questions in English not Spanish. Generally, this question was well answered with students learning to lift answers from the exercise and not put extra information that would cause the answer to be wrong. There were various spelling of *docena* (eg *dozena / dothena*) for part (e), *contraseñas* (eg *contrasenas*) (f) and *invitación* (*invidación*) (i). Answers were accepted as long as the response was understandable to a native speaker.

The main issue came in (g) when students wrote more than necessary or misunderstood what they had heard. For example many students wrote, *datos personales de los conocidos* instead of *de los desconocidos*.

Question 5

Another well answered question by most students. The main issue was part (c) when students, on seeing the words *huevos fritos* and *patatas fritas* wrongly assumed that this was referring to *Comida* and not *Hogar*. The key words in the question to look out for were *sartén* and *cocinas*.

Question 6

Despite the fact that this was the first time this type of question had been seen in this exam, only a few students did not do well. Students were asked to find similar word / phrases in the text to the ones in the question. It was heartening to see that a lot of students performed well with many getting full or near full marks.

Less able students did lose marks here due to writing too much or by copying down wrongly what they had found. The main problem was (e) where *retrasó tanto* was not accepted as the *se* was crucial and (i) where *te quiero mucho* was a common wrong answer.

It was good to see that many students understood *saltaron las lágrimas* and found *empezaron a llorar* as its similar phrase (part h).

Question 7

This was the first time this type of question had appeared in an AS Spanish exam. Nevertheless, students performed well and appeared to have little problem answering this question. The main issue appeared in part (f) where A was the correct answer. Schools and students should be aware that new question types will be introduced from time to time to avoid repetition.

Question 8

The majority of students did well in this question. Students are reminded that this type of exercise is testing both their grammatical knowledge as well as how well they understand the article and the options. The main problems occurred in part (d) where less able students assumed the answer was *celosa* as they assumed that the adjective was describing the noun *la vida* when in fact the article was referring to the fact that the writer was *cansado de la vida*.

Question 9

As in previous series in this grammar question, students were required to write down **exactly** the form of the word in brackets correctly. This includes any accents needed or added when not needed. Many students still are unsure of basic grammatical concepts and formation.

The most common mistakes were as follows:

Question 9a

Using the verb *estar* instead of *ser* and conjugating the verb in the third person singular rather than the third person plural form, were the most common mistakes made in this question.

Question 9b

Many students did not know how to conjugate *ponerse* in the preterite, not realising that the verb was irregular. *Puso* was written with an accent on the majority of incorrect answers and others forgot to include the *se*. A few students used a different form and answered *se había puesto* which was accepted.

Question 9c

Many students did not realise that *volver* has an irregular past participle and therefore a common wrong answer was *volvido*.

Question 9d

This was well-answered by the majority of students.

Question 9e

The most common incorrect answer here was forgetting the accent on *peleábamos*.

Question 9f

This was well answered with many students recognising the need for a subjunctive.

Question 9g

Another well-answered question. The most common incorrect answer being *irían*.

Question 9h

Many students found this question to be challenging. They did not recognise that *veces* was not only plural but more importantly feminine. This meant that *cuantos* (either with or without an accent) was a common but incorrect answer.

Question 9i

A well-answered question. The most common mistake was not changing the 'z' at the end of *infeliz* to a 'c' before making the adjective plural.

Question 9j

This question produced the most incorrect answers with different variations of *cien* offered, eg *cientas*, *cientos* and *ciento*.

Essay Questions

There were some very good essays but there were also many average responses. Some students were able to produce complex language but did not back this up with relevant content. In addition some students spent a lot of time producing a lengthy introduction which did not add any real value or a conclusion which was very repetitive.

In the diet essay many students wrote about sport and exercise as well which was not credited. There were some good essays on problems faced by families and only a few chose the fashion essay but some of those who did write well with good examples.

A recurring problem with the essays is when students do not manipulate the information they have learnt in class and use it to answer the question set. This was most obvious in Q10 about *nuestra dieta hoy en día*. Here many students included elements of *la vida sana* or *el bienestar*, such as

doing exercise / sport, a *couch potato* lifestyle and ‘being on the computer too long’ which are not examples of an unhealthy diet. Students are reminded to make their answer relevant to the question and not include extraneous material about a unhealthy lifestyle in general. Some students wrote about what we should do to lead a healthy lifestyle but did not focus on the good and bad things about our diet today.

Question 10

This was the most popular choice but also one that was not well answered. Students focussed on a healthy / unhealthy lifestyle and not on diet, which meant that a lot of essays had to be placed in the Limited or Sufficient bands for Content.

Amongst the good points mentioned by students was that, there was little time to cook nowadays due to our hectic lifestyles (*la vida rápida por lo que no hay tiempo para cocinar, por eso se consume más comida basura* and *falta de tiempo para cocinar*). Other credited ideas were that there had been an influx of fast food restaurants springing up now, (*muchos restaurantes de comida basura han abierto*) and the problems of obesity, (*la obesidad*) and anorexia. Other students mentioned government campaigns, labels on food packaging promoting healthy food choices and calories, more variety in our food and the campaigns led by Jamie Oliver in schools.

Question 11

This question was the least popular choice of question and those who opted for Q11 produced, on the whole, less successful responses. Ideas for the good side of fashion was limited to student’s choice of clothing; eg *me gusta el pelo largo en las chicas, no encuentro atractivo los piercings en los chicos, pero sí los tatuajes* and *me gustan los pantalones azules con camisetas blancas*. These answers are not of the level expected from AS students in their essay writing. Nevertheless, the main positive aspects of fashion that students put across were that; it supplied jobs and helped the economy, it helped people increase their self-esteem and it was a way of expressing your individualism. To answer the question well, students needed to exemplify and justify their thoughts.

Question 12

This was the second most popular essay question and many students structured their essays, correctly, with both the problems and solutions a family faces. Some answers lacked any real depth with little in the way of examples and justifications. Others were more suited to a GCSE level answer with problems mentioned such as, *me peleo con mi hermano para ver quien va primero al baño o quien escoge el canal de la tele*. However, there were also some good quality answers with ideas that included; *la falta de comunicación, la falta de tiempo en la familia por la vida rápida, los padres trabajando mucho así que los chicos están solos en casa sin nadie y usan internet, la influencia de la tecnología, las peleas entre los padres, los divorcios, la influencia de los amigos o/y novios, el abuso de género* and *la barrera generacional*. Solutions included: *pasar más tiempo juntos, no pelearse delante de los hijos, la comunicación* and *consultar a un experto*. It is worth reminding teachers of the following:

- Letters need to be clearly written, especially a, o, m, n, and t
- over-writing cannot always be distinguished e.g. Is it an o or an a?
- size of writing: examiners must be able to read the script easily
- there is no need for students to count the number of words they have written, everything will be marked.

As long as the essay is answered, there is no right or wrong answer. It is the student's point of view and as long as they can support their arguments in a fluent and coherent manner, they should be able to achieve a good score. No view-point is better than another.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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UMS conversion calculator aqa.org.uk/umsconversion.