

SPANISH

<p>Paper 8665/02</p> <p>Reading and Writing</p>

General comments

This session's paper was handled well by candidates of all levels of ability and there were many very good performances. Most appeared to be familiar with the format of the paper and with the techniques which are required to answer it. There were fewer instances of candidates copying more than four words of the text in their answers to comprehension questions, thereby demonstrating not only good comprehension skills but also linguistic competence.

Very few candidates omitted answering part of a question, although there was an occasional tendency to answer comprehension questions with information which, although valid, had not appeared in the texts and therefore could not be credited. Marks were occasionally lost in **Question 5** either by failure to observe the word limit or by over-generalising in the summary.

Centres should be congratulated on the general presentation of the candidates' work. Leaving extra space between questions made reading easier.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

This question contained some good discriminatory items. Only the very best candidates displayed sufficient depth of vocabulary to score maximum marks. Items **(a)** and **(b)** caused problems, with many falling into the trap of *matrimoniales* for *consortes*, and perhaps being unable to work out the meaning of *acuciante* in the text. In this type of test candidates should always consult the text to see whether the answer they are considering will fit and retain the meaning.

Question 2

The transformation exercises also discriminated well. There were occasional instances of candidates offering alternative answers. When this occurred only the first answer was marked, regardless of whether the second answer was correct or not. Candidates should be aware that their answers must be able to fit back seamlessly into the passage.

- (a)** If the meaning of *dejar de* was known, then this item caused few problems.
- (b)** The conversion of *cuando* to *al + infinitive* appears regularly in this type of exercise. A number of candidates wasted a mark by omitting *tener que*.
- (c)** This was a fairly easy transformation. Candidates who used a construction with the infinitive failed to score as this answer would not fit back into the original text.
- (d)** A passive construction is another regular item in transformation exercises. Answers were sometimes invalidated by the omission of *pueden*.
- (e)** Many variations of the correct answer were possible here. Answers such as *Yo siento aprensión*, which omitted the elaboration, did not score.

Question 3

A few candidates clearly had their own ideas about childcare and lost marks when these were offered rather than what was stated in the text. This was noticeable in (a) e.g. *salir una noche es importante para mantener el matrimonio*, (c) and (e).

- (a) A lot of candidates scored only one mark for *dejan a los padres trabajar*. As this question was worth three marks more was needed. Very few candidates scored the maximum by mentioning *las largas horas de trabajo* or *les permiten pagar las cuentas*.
- (b) Most candidates scored both marks, mentioning the brevity of the maternity leave and the problem of what to do with the child.
- (c) There were a number of very good, high-scoring answers to this item and also many excellent examples of re-wording quite difficult concepts. However, some candidates lost a mark by directly lifting *entre el bien y el mal*.
- (d) Items (i) and (ii) were both fairly accessible to candidates, testing information which could be readily identified in the texts. In (ii) a few candidates only supplied one piece of information for a question which was worth two marks, or there was the occasional misinterpretation e.g. *porque son extranjeras*.
- (e) This item attracted many full, well-written answers which, provided that the explanations of the three adjectives were drawn from understanding of the text, scored well. No matter how appealing other ideas might have seemed e.g. *una niñera debe ser joven porque, si no, el niño va a tener ideas de la generación pasada*, they could not be rewarded.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

Candidates responded well to this second text which showed how work can affect children in a less privileged society.

- (a) All the evidence needed to answer this item was to be found in the first paragraph of the text. A personal opinion such as *representa algo malo de nuestra sociedad* was not being sought. A few candidates confined their answers to the number of children working and missed the marks being offered for the ways in which work blights their lives.
- (b) If candidates failed to score the full three marks on this two-part question it was usually because they lifted rather than explained *el Día Mundial de Lucha contra el trabajo infantil* or, in item (ii), failed to mention that in Argentina the focus was to be on children working in agriculture.
- (c) This item was generally answered very well with the majority of candidates able to identify the dangers and the adverse conditions experienced by child labourers.
- (d) Although this item was more a test of ideas, unlike the factual content of the previous one, it also attracted some very good answers. Marks were lost when candidates copied directly the phrase *la pobreza y la falta de oportunidades*.
- (e) This question was a bit more demanding and discriminated well between the different levels of ability. The less able candidates were usually able to pick up at least one of the marks, whereas the better candidates scored all three. There was the occasional misinterpretation e.g. *cuando un niño trabaja, esto causa esperanza para la familia ya que así alimentará a la familia*.

Question 5

The combined mark of this question amounts to more than twenty-five per cent of the total available for the paper and yet candidates, often the very able ones, still persist in wasting marks here. If a candidate writes 140 words or more for **part (a)**, then **part (b)** will not be marked, thus forfeiting five marks. Introductions, conclusions, opinions, generalisations or even much in the way of eloquence are not required in **part (a)**. They waste words and generally cut down on the number of facts that can be mentioned.

- (a)** What was required here was not a piece of free writing but a factual summary of what was said in both texts about the effects of work on children. There was no need to worry about copying, if necessary, phrases of more than four words from the texts. A comparison of the plight of the children in the two societies was not required.

Candidates who were aware of the technique required scored well.

- (b)** This brief, final section of the exam, as always, produced some interesting answers. Candidates sometimes denied themselves the opportunity of the full five marks either by writing about the customs in their family, rather than in their country, or by failing to offer a personal opinion.

SPANISH

Paper 8665/04

Texts

General comments

Examiners reported that the majority of candidates had been well prepared for this examination, with a good knowledge of the texts. It was pleasing to note a rise in the number of candidates choosing the poetry text, otherwise all questions attracted many answers, as in previous sessions. The main difference in awarding marks was the way in which each candidate tackled the question set – how well they were able to use their knowledge of the text to substantiate an answer and put across an argument showing considered reflection of the text.

Comments on individual questions

Sección Primera

Question 1 Azuela: *Los de abajo*

- (a) This was well answered, with candidates generally making good use of the extract to show the poverty of the way of life, but the generosity towards guests. In answering **part (iii)**, candidates needed to give detailed answers to explain Demetrio's sadness, heralding the outcome of the struggle.
- (b) Most candidates agreed with the proposition put forward in the question. Few were able to show much historical knowledge of the revolution but, concentrating on the attitudes of the different characters, found plenty to say. Some essays showed more subtlety in assessing Demetrio's motives.

Question 2 Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna*

- (a) All candidates were able to answer **part (i)** though some answers were very brief; **part (ii)** proved more difficult, with a variety of evidence taken from the extract, and a few candidates not really being able to see the humorous aspect of the description. Disappointingly, no candidates thought of commenting on why the author might have wanted to include the comic touches. **Part (iii)** was often dealt with rather briefly, simply referring to the incident quoted. The best essays showed how politics played an increasingly large part in Eva's life, both personal and professional.
- (b) The many stages of Eva's life provided a wealth of material for candidates to draw on in answer to this question. There were also a lot of observations made about the 'meaning' behind them. Virtually all candidates were, therefore, able to come up with an answer at some level: the weaker ones did not get much further than listing the events of Eva's life chronologically; the better ones could achieve an overview, and the best were able to speculate about Allende's intentions. It is important to emphasise that candidates cannot score highly simply by listing events from a text. They must analyse such incidents or experiences within the context of the question.

Question 3 García Márquez: *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande*

- (a) All three parts of this question attracted reasonably full answers. Generally, candidates showed that they knew the story, but there were different interpretations of the priest's reaction for **part (ii)**, suggesting some did not really understand the author's intentions. Weaker candidates were hazy about picking out examples for **part (iii)**. Many candidates referred to one or two other stories in their answers to this part of the question, the most popular being *La prodigiosa tarde de Baltazar*.
- (b) This was well answered and candidates had no difficulty finding two or three stories to draw on.

Question 4 Buero Vallejo: *Hoy es fiesta*

- (a) There were many lengthy and excellent answers to this question. Candidates at all levels could find plenty to say and showed detailed knowledge of the text.
- (b) Again, there were many good answers to this question. The more confident candidates pointed out that there were other themes too. The best candidates could see that the theme of '*dinero*' was a device and was symbolic, and could use this as a way of further analysing character and motive within the text.

Sección Segunda**Question 5** Ruiz Zafón: *La sombra del viento*

- (a) Considering this text is long and complicated, it seems to be surprisingly popular. Weaker answers tended to be overly descriptive (consisting of a list of all the bad things Fumero does), while better candidates described these events as a progression that build up the reader's opinion of the character. Many candidates could also point to Fumero's childhood as causal in his personality.
- (b) Here again, weaker answers spent too long enumerating the negative (so remaining too descriptive), while better answers balanced this by pointing to the positive elements.

Question 6 Lope de Vega: *Fuenteovejuna*

- (a) All candidates were able to respond with plenty of material. The better ones were able to describe a development (i.e. the community *became* united; it was not so at the start) and key moments in this, emphasising the role of the women. The best candidates commented that the revolutionary connotations of the quotation did not really apply to the inhabitants of Fuenteovejuna as loyal subjects of the monarchy, happy to serve a just Comendador.
- (b) Even weaker candidates could distinguish between different kinds of '*amor*', and this question attracted full answers showing good knowledge and understanding of the play.

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

- (a) As with other questions, the weaker candidates tended to simply agree with the proposition put forward in the question and list evidence to support it, while stronger responses tended to give more qualified agreement. Some Centres seemed to have prepared answers on Bernarda which did not quite 'fit' the question set and involved a degree of extrapolation beyond the text.
- (b) Some candidates fell into the trap of spending too much time on generalisations about the present day and failed to balance this with sufficient material from the play. There was a general tendency for answers to consist of a list of themes (freedom, place of women, etc.), that were discussed one by one, resulting in a fragmented essay; only the better candidates achieved a flowing structure.

Question 8 Rubén Darío: Una selección de poemas

- (a) This question worked well with candidates able to focus clearly on the three elements in the poems.
- (b) There were fewer answers to this question, but candidates approached the critical analysis well.

Concluding remarks

Examiners would like to remind candidates of the importance of legible handwriting. Some scripts were extremely difficult to decipher and if the work cannot be read, it cannot be awarded marks.

It was encouraging to note that there were few instances of candidates losing marks by answering both alternative questions on the same text, or by choosing all their questions from one section of the examination paper only.