

FIRST LANGUAGE SPANISH

Paper 8665/21
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question. Candidates should take care not to omit words or include extra words.
- **Question 2:** rewrite the phrases to include the word(s) in brackets. A grammatical manipulation will be required, and candidates should take care to ensure that the answer fits back into the original text, retaining the same meaning.
- **Questions 3 and 4:** comprehension of texts. Candidates should attempt to answer in their own words. Direct copying of five or more words from the text will usually invalidate an answer.
- **Question 5(a):** summary of relevant details from both texts in answer to the question set. Introduction, conclusions and vague generalisations are not required. Specific, relevant details attract marks.
- **Question 5(b):** personal response. Candidates should give a point of view and, if possible, offer ideas which have not appeared in the texts.
- **Language:** when preparing for the exam, candidates should revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

The two texts dealing with the prospects for people reaching retirement age were accessible to most, with the subject matter being familiar to all. The comprehension questions afforded candidates not only the opportunity to show understanding, but also the chance to display skills in paraphrasing original text. This often proved to be a discriminating factor between the varying ability levels.

All scripts were generally well presented, and there was only very occasional evidence of difficulty with time management.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

The majority of candidates were aware of the required technique, with many taking the trouble to copy the paraphrase in the question before writing their answer on the line beneath. As it is important to answer with a phrase from the text which is a precise match to that of the question, this is a good way to check at a glance that an answer contains no extra words or omissions.

Additional or omitted words invalidate otherwise correct answers. Instances of this were most likely to be found in:

- (a) omission of *los...* or addition of *de la mina o de la construcción*.
- (b) omission of *originaban...*
- (c) omission of *es considerado...*
- (d) addition of *para aumentar su nivel de ingresos*.

For the vast majority of candidates this exercise proved to be a sound start to the exam, with the target phrases being readily identified. Occasionally *pide el derecho a hacer justamente lo contrario* was offered as an incorrect answer to (d).

Question 2

In addition to performing the language manipulations required in this question, it is important to check that the answers fit back into the original text and retain the same meaning. The technique mentioned above of copying out the phrase as it appears on the question paper before writing the answer underneath can help to ensure that this is the case.

- (a) Most candidates were successful with this manipulation. Occasionally answers were invalidated by the use of the wrong tense and, although not a frequent answer, *se es considerada una conquista* was not accepted either.
- (b) Only a very small number of candidates rendered this correctly. The huge majority wrote *que les gustaría dejar de trabajar* which was grammatically incorrect. A few disregarded the rubric and answered *me gustaría que quisieran dejar de trabajar*.
- (c) The linguistic manipulation required here using *tienen* to express age proved to be very accessible.
- (d) The majority of candidates were able to supply a suitable subjunctive construction after *para que*.
- (e) There were a considerable number of ways in which this phrase could be re-constructed using *agotados* and most candidates were successful in their attempts. Unacceptable answers either omitted *los*, e.g. *agotados por su vida laboral*, did not convey the whole meaning of the target phrase and simply offered *los que se encuentran agotados*, or changed the target word, e.g. *las personas agotadas por sufrir una vida laboral*.

Question 3

This text, about the prospects for Spanish workers when they reach retirement age, was generally well understood and candidates who gave clear, detailed answers in their own words achieved high marks. Some candidates lost marks when they copied more than four words directly from the text.

- (a) This was a fairly accessible opening question and it was well answered in general. Occasionally, candidates needed to convey the idea of hard work instead of simply suggesting that 65-year-olds were tired due to a life in the country. Most conveyed the idea of illness but perhaps the most missed point was that it had been unusual to live much more beyond 70. Some candidates gave answers that were too vague e.g. *la población sufría* or *las enfermedades abundaban*.
- (b) Most candidates appeared to understand the three scenarios that created the different attitudes towards retirement, but often they were unable to convey the attitude. For example, many wrote *una de las actitudes es dejar de trabajar luego de los 65 años* which actually made no mention of the gratitude felt at being able to retire. The third point was sometimes not clearly stated when candidates wrote *desean jubilarse, la pensión no les alcanza* without mentioning *anticipadamente*.
- (c) Candidates provided satisfactory answers, but in many cases did not specify that some people over 65 worked legally. Fewer still conveyed this first point successfully without copying *contribuyen a la Seguridad Social* directly from the text. Most candidates scored two marks for conveying the idea of retired people helping in the home or in the family business. Occasionally candidates attempted to answer by picking up a word which did not convey the whole meaning, e.g. *algunos trabajan como suplentes*, without mentioning where, i.e. *en un negocio familiar*.
- (d)(i) On the whole, candidates managed to convey the idea of illegality, but there was a substantial number who seemed not to understand what *economía sumergida* meant and either copied or got into a muddle about retired people having their own economy or such like.
- (ii) Two marks were scored by most. There were quite a few instances of copying *precios de los productos básicos* from the text. Also, a few candidates gave information that did not answer the question, e.g. *ha subido el porcentaje porque los jubilados cada vez buscan tener más ingresos* or *el trabajo de un 20% de los mayores de 65 se enfocaba en una economía destinada a ganar más dinero*.

- (e) The point that it was people who had worked hard who felt most affected by the proposal was understood by the majority, but some disregarded the fact that three details were necessary for full marks and did not mention the physical deterioration or the increased possibility of accidents in the workplace. Some answers did not give specific details, e.g. *las personas cuya vida laboral fue sufrida son las más tocadas por esta propuesta ya que tendrán que continuar sufriendo por unos años más.*

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The second text, concerning far better prospects for those pensioners who could afford to live out their retirement in Costa Rica, provided a similar degree of challenge.

- (a) This was a fairly accessible opening question, and most candidates were able to provide answers relating to increased revenue for Costa Rica and more jobs. However, a number of candidates lost the first mark either through copying more than four consecutive words, or by missing out one of the elements from *jubilados, ricos, extranjeros*.
- (b) Three marks were commonly recorded here. Almost all mentioned the good weather all year round, but a few confused the *lazos de transporte aéreos internacionales* with links between airlines and the government. Not all candidates mentioned the environmentally-friendly approach of the Costa Rican government.
- (c) (i) Most candidates referred to the situation of the villages close to beaches and national parks but many stumbled on the second point by not conveying the idea of *servicios personalizados en medicina*.
- (ii) Almost without exception, candidates answered this part of the question correctly.
- (d) Apart from those who copied *es la principal actividad económica* from the text, it did not appear too difficult for most candidates to express the idea of medical tourism being the most important sector. However, very few managed to mention the large number of tourists who came last year. Some candidates did not answer the question by saying: *la importancia de Costa Rica son los variados tratamientos que uno puede hacerse, generalmente cuando llega a la tercera edad, or la importancia es porque los visitantes superan los 65 años y van a hacerse tratamientos.*
- (e) A good number of candidates managed to score on the first point referring to the real-estate sector being boosted but a lot fewer explained how its figures were now three times those of the tourist real-estate sector. Many mentioned that *los ingresos serán mayores* without giving the idea of considerably larger or making the relevant comparison.
- (f) This question was answered well, although a recurrent 'lift' from the text was *la estabilidad política y social*. Some candidates did not mention the second point relating to the benefits for Costa Rica, but specified the financial benefits already stated in the question, i.e. that retired people would have no obstacles to buying property in Costa Rica, or that Costa Rica would find the situation profitable: *será beneficiosa para el país ya que había una amplia expansión en distintas actividades económicas.*

Question 5

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks awarded. Most candidates were aware of the need to keep to the limit of 140 words for both parts of the question. Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for the part (b).

- (a) Candidates who had achieved good or even excellent marks elsewhere on the paper frequently struggled to score half marks here. The problem was invariably a lack of familiarity with the required technique, which is probably very different from the technique which candidates have been encouraged to use in other forms of summary writing.

For this task the technique required for achieving a good mark is to note, in the very limited number of words available, details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. Generalisations, often required by other forms of summary writing, are usually too vague to score. It is the relevant specific details which score the marks. Introductions, such as *Luego de la lectura de*

ambos textos, podemos llegar a la conclusión de que la gente mayor tiene muchas opciones para ver qué hacer con su vida waste twenty-eight words and score nothing, apart from contributing to the Quality of Language mark.

Candidates should also refrain from offering personal opinions in this part of the question.

- (b) In the two or three sentences available for this second part of the question the vast majority of candidates wrote good answers, giving insight into how they felt older people were treated in their respective countries. Most included opinions and backed these up with examples.

Quality of Language

The quality of candidates' written Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally well up to the standard required by this examination, with most marks in the Very Good or Good bands.

FIRST LANGUAGE SPANISH

Paper 8665/41

Texts

Key messages

- Candidates should study the stylistic and thematic qualities of the text and not simply the storyline.
- Candidates should ensure that they read the question carefully and plan the essay to address directly the issues raised.
- Essays should be well-structured with an introduction, development and conclusion.
- Essays should include detailed references to the text to support the argument without retelling the whole story.
- References to the text must be correct, for example names of characters.
- Any background to the text must be accurate, for example the date the text was written.
- In **Sección Primera**, part (iii) of **Question (a)** is designed to be the main focus of the task. The best essays give brief answers to parts (i) and (ii), and discuss part (iii) in depth, with reference to the text as a whole.

General comments

Examiners commented that the general standard of work was good; candidates had studied the texts carefully and presented answers legibly. However, greater focus on the question set and improved essay-writing skills would benefit a large number of candidates.

In some cases candidates did not clearly indicate which question they had chosen to answer and Centres are requested to remind candidates to write the question number, e.g. '2(b)', before they start their essay.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1 Ernesto Sábato: *El túnel*

- (a) Many candidates answered this question. Parts (i) and (ii) were well answered although some responses were too long, and included a lot of storytelling. The best answers to part (iii) found a number of examples of key dialogues in the novel that displayed how the author used this technique. This may have been to deepen the reader's understanding of Castel, or to allow the reader to witness the relationship between María and Castel, for example. Answers needed to go beyond a discussion of the dialogue in the Post Office in the printed extract. Some very good answers also discussed the use of interior monologue. In any case, the answer required reference to the '*técnica literaria*' and not simply a list of conversations.
- (b) This was also a popular question. There were some very interesting essays where candidates were able to balance the presentation of Castel as an individual reacting to experiences which affect many and analyse the extent to which the author focuses on one rather than the other. Weaker answers tended to over-generalise the '*temas universales*' issue and made little reference to the text.

Question 2 Pedro Calderón de la Barca: *El alcalde de Zalamea*

- (a) This question attracted many responses. Answers to parts (i) and (ii) were generally good and many explained the conflict of interests clearly. In response to part (iii), Examiners rewarded essays which analysed how individuals use their power or authority and assessed to what extent this was a poisoned chalice. High-scoring answers also referred to the role of the King. Essays which reflected on the nature of power in general, without specific reference to the text, could not achieve high marks.

- (b) This question focused on the issue of justice. The best answers analysed who had committed an injustice in the play and how he or she had been punished. Some candidates were not sure about Pedro Crespo's position as *alcalde* and the extent of his legal powers. The best answers included reference to Isabel's fate and the role of the King. Some candidates took the view that this was not the '*tema clave*' and then wrote an essay on honour. It is possible to compare and contrast more than one aspect, provided the essay is focused on the theme referred to in the question. Rewriting the question with no reference to the central issue raised in it does not fulfil the requirements of the paper.

Question 3 Luis Sepúlveda: *Un viejo que leía novelas de amor*

- (a) This was chosen by a large number of candidates. Parts (i) and (ii) were generally well answered, although some did not understand exactly what was happening and few recognised the humour at the *alcalde*'s expense. Many essays in part (iii) made no reference to the novel as a whole, basing the argument on the printed extract only. The best answers showed a deeper understanding of the conflict between '*los blancos y los indígenas*' and the ability to relate this to the author's overall intentions.
- (b) There were some very good responses to this question, where candidates analysed the meaning of '*un mundo diferente*' in the context of the novel and made perceptive comments. Other essays were too general, discussing the environment and related issues, without making sufficient connections and references to the text.

Question 4 Lauro Olmo: *La camisa*

- (a) There were only a few answers to this question. Candidates used the extract fairly well in part (i) although some details were missed. Part (ii) was fully answered. Part (iii) asked candidates to consider both political and economic aspects and essays focused mostly on the economic, as this is probably the most predictable issue. In order to reach the higher mark bands, candidates needed to respond to all parts of the question and therefore some reference to politics was essential. The best essays referred to the news, for example, and indications of censorship.
- (b) There was a small number of responses to this question. The main criterion for success here was careful reading of the question. Candidates were not asked to give a character study of Juan, rather to consider how his role is central to the play as a whole. Candidates need to be sure they are writing an answer to the question set and not reproducing a pre-prepared response. Many good answers also considered the role of other characters, widening the analysis, but kept the focus firmly on Juan.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 5 Carmen Laforet: *Nada*

- (a) There were very few essays on this question. The answers showed understanding of the post-war situation and most related this to the conflict between Ramón and Juan.
- (b) This question elicited few responses. Essays studied the nature of religion as evidenced in the life of members of Andrea's family, and considered the morality of decisions made in difficult circumstances. Death was analysed from a number of points of view including the effects of the Civil War and Ramón's suicide.

Question 6 Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

- (a) This question attracted a large number of responses and many candidates wanted to show their detailed knowledge of the text. However, it is important to select examples to support an argument rather than retell the whole story. The best answers presented a view, for example that unhappiness was due to love, unrequited love, social norms or traditions, and then illustrated this with references to the text. Most focused on Tita, Pedro and Rosaura, with the more thoughtful responses including Gertrudis, Esperanza and Alex.
- (b) This was also a popular question. The majority of candidates chose to blame Mamá Elena, others focused on social expectations. The most successful answers took a wider view and analysed to what extent a number of influences or individuals contributed to '*la maldad*'. As with the previous question on this text, it was tempting for some candidates to list events which could be described as bad without analysing them. This type of essay cannot access the higher mark bands.

Question 7 Federico García Lorca: *Yerma*

- (a) This question was well answered by candidates who understood the nature of traditional society. There are many references in the text to illustrate this, and examples of individuals who took a more liberal view. Candidates who wrote about Lorca's examination of society and its effects on the individual characters in the play achieved a higher mark than those who concentrated on the author's personal experiences and difficulties.
- (b) A very large number of candidates chose this question. The most perceptive essays were structured so that they traced the way the portrayal of Yerma changes throughout the play separately from the way that she comes to terms with her situation. A significant number of essays demonstrated some misunderstanding of the play: many believed that Yerma killed Juan in order to begin a new relationship with Víctor. Yerma's situation was often discussed in a modern context, missing the point of her distress. This text is the one that attracts most speculation beyond the play itself, which is not relevant. Candidates must concentrate on the text, and show detailed knowledge of the narrative and ideas, within the context in which it is set. There were still many examples of essays referring to the play being written during the Franco dictatorship. Well-prepared candidates reacted to the issues with passion and understanding, producing some powerful essays.

Question 8 Alfonsina Storni: *Selección de poemas*

- (a) The responses to this question were either very good, showing careful preparation of the poems, or weak, suggesting an off-the-cuff answer. The best essays addressed all parts of the question, identifying the main themes and giving a critical study of the poetic language. Candidates do not need to copy out many lines of poetry; a brief quotation is sufficient.
- (b) The quality of answers to this question mirrored that of (a). Many candidates had studied the work in great detail and were able to select and analyse appropriate poems. The essays also included relevant references to the life and times of the author. Centres who chose to prepare this text equipped candidates with the specific skills necessary to write about poetry effectively. This is essential for success in relation to poetry more than to prose or drama.

Resources

A selection of Example Candidate Responses together with revised and updated Schemes of Work are now available to download from the Teacher Support website <http://teachers.cie.org.uk>.