SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/04
Texts

General comments

The quality of work seen this session was fairly typical for this component. Examiners noted minor differences in that there were fewer 'excellent' scripts and that more candidates were able to answer all three questions equally well.

In terms of preparation for future sessions, it would be very helpful if Centres could encourage candidates to follow the rubric when answering questions in **part (a)** in *Sección Primera* (where candidates are given an extract from the text with three questions). The three questions are designed to elicit short answers for **Parts (i)** and **(ii)**, by asking for specific information, which can usually be found in the extract. **Part (iii)** seeks a much longer response and requires candidates to refer to the **whole** of the text, as indicated in such phrases as '*con referencias detalladas a la obra entera'*. This means that the allocation of time and words should be heavily weighted to **part (iii)**. A large number of candidates either spent too much time on the first two parts and had to rush or limit the answer to **part (iii)**, or they did not make reference to the text beyond the printed extract. It is not possible to access the higher bands of the mark scheme if the answer is limited to material in the printed extract.

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

1 Mariano Azuela: *Los de abajo*

(a) This was a popular question and most candidates dealt with it well. The best answers referred to examples of amoral behaviour on the part of the revolutionaries and the army, and showed how the attitude of Demetrio's men changes for the worse as the novel progresses. Some characters manage to maintain a kind of morality and this was discussed also.

(b) The majority of candidates who chose this question were of the opinion that Azuela gave a true account of the Mexican people, and that it was rather depressing. A few essays went beyond this to show how the author had taken a snapshot of his countrymen at a moment of crisis and that this inevitably affected how objective his depiction could be.

2 Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna*

(a) This novel is always a popular choice. The responses to **parts (i)** and **(ii)** were good. A considerable number of candidates did not maintain this standard in answering **part (iii)** – they tended to state that the quotation was apt but did not give examples of how Eva had shown herself to be proactive and prepared to fight for what she wanted.

(b) This was also chosen by a large number of candidates. The best answers dealt with both Eva and Rolf fairly equally and although some background was given, went on to show how both characters had always looked to the future, the next opportunity, and learned from past experiences. Eva, in particular, did not forget what she had been through. Rather this became the raw material for her writing and helped significantly to form her character.

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

(a) This was probably the question which produced the greatest range of marks. The best answers acknowledged that Baltazar had lied to his companions and that he would wake from the dream to a hard reality. These candidates empathised with his wish to be accepted and feted and that he had achieved a kind of victory over Montiel – but that the whole episode was a transitory period of happiness. Mention was often made of other stories which showed that what we think will make us happy often does not – or that what we thought was happiness turns out to be something different

altogether. The weakest answers gave the impression that Baltazar had sold the cage and then went on to give a personal interpretation of the nature of happiness.

(b) This was the less popular option on the text but there were some good answers. The nature of the political analysis was understood in Márquez's criticism of the dictator-type figure. Many examples of irony could be found in the reaction of the people and the guest list for the funeral, where hyperbole was effectively used.

4 Antonio Buero Vallejo: *Hoy es fiesta*

(a) There were relatively few answers on this text, and a number of candidates relied too much on the printed extract. The importance of the extract in relation to the whole text was often not explored in sufficient depth. Candidates were expected to discuss the whole nature of truth and lies, the importance of appearances and human relationships.

(b) Most answers to this question focused mainly on Silverio. There was much material to be discussed in the whole premise of the play – what is said about chance/fortune and recognising real opportunities, for example.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

5 Carlos Ruiz Zafon: *La sombra del viento*

(a) This resulted in a few very good answers where candidates discussed the whole atmosphere of the novel – foggy, damp, cheerless – and made political references to the strength of the police force and its unorthodox and cruel methods and the lack of freedom of speech and action which reflects the dictatorship and the aftermath of the Civil War.

(b) This question was answered well by virtually all who chose it. Candidates seemed to be able to empathise with Fermín Romero de Torres and recognised how he used his skills learned in his previous experience of espionage, as well as his strong sense of humanity and the importance of finding out the truth in helping in Daniel's quest.

6 Lope de Vega: *Fuenteovejuna*

(a) Many candidates answered this question fully. They examined the treachery of the Comendador, both in relation to the women of the village and to the King of Spain. In addition, the role of the men in the village was seen to have let the women down. There were some detailed discussions of the various aspects of the question, well-supported by quotations.

(b) This question also attracted a large number of good answers. Candidates examined the different types of love apparent in the play and showed how love inspired characters to achieve challenging goals and withstand personal threats.

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

(a) This text always attracts a very large number of answers. The best essays in response to this question examined the way the play developed, seeking clues in the imagery, the plot and the setting as to the nature of the outcome. Adela's relationship with Martirio was a key element as was the fate of the woman who had killed her baby. María Josefa's 'madness' gave us insight into the minds of the daughters and the increasing desperation and tension within the house. Most came to the conclusion that Adela's suicide was not expected and that Lorca had managed to shock the audience.

(b) This was an extremely popular choice and resulted in many good answers. Candidates examined the importance of the word '*Silencio*' from the point of view of Bernarda's obsession with *'el que dirán'* as well as her inherent need for absolute control. The idea of silence being what was not said or repressed also resulted in many thoughtful discussions.

8 Rubén Darío: *Una selección de poemas*

(a) The majority of candidates who opted for this text chose this question. Candidates were well prepared for the examination and were able to give much detailed analysis of the required number of poems. Most were in agreement with the statement made but examined the presentation of women from a number of perspectives and showed understanding and sensitive reading of the poems.

(b) This was answered by a very small number of candidates and presented a number of challenges in asking for an appraisal of Darío's approach to poetry in general, with specific reference to *Era un aire suave.* Candidates were able to examine the versification and the themes and relate these to other poems. It is pleasing that although a relatively small number of candidates choose to study the poetry text, those who do are usually very well prepared.

Final comments

It has been encouraging to note the increased level of knowledge and understanding of the texts shown by candidates overall. Centres are to be congratulated on careful preparation. Candidates in future sessions are advised to take note of comments made with regard to *Sección Primera* questions and to try to keep a close focus on the title of all questions tackled to enable them to achieve the highest possible grades.