

SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/41

Texts

Key messages

- Candidates must abide by the rubric and only answer the required number of questions. A number of candidates answered both options (a) and (b) on a text. In **Sección Primera** option (a), all subsections (i), (ii), and (iii) must be answered.
- Candidates must read the question carefully, be sure they understand it, and respond to all aspects of their chosen question.
- Each answer must be directly relevant to the question asked and should include specific, accurate references to the text.
- Option (a) questions in **Sección Primera** require more extensive treatment in part (iii), where candidates are expected to refer in detail to the work as a whole, not simply the printed extract.
- Essay planning is essential, especially where two sides of an argument are being presented. The introduction could be used to define the key words in the question and outline the structure of the answer. A generic introduction covering biographical details of the author and general comments on his or her work is not helpful.
- Handwriting must be legible.

General comments

The overall standard was at least satisfactory with some good essays. Most candidates had prepared well for the paper; they knew the texts and were generally aware of what was expected of them. The weakest area of the paper was in **Sección Primera**, option (a), the extract-based question. Candidates often spent too long on parts (i) and (ii), with much storytelling, and did not include enough material in part (iii) relating to the whole text (not just the extract printed on the Question Paper). There was a tendency for candidates to present essays that were either too long or, more commonly, too short. Some essays were around 200 words only; it is not possible to present a convincing argument with substantiation from the text in so few words.

Comments on specific questions

Sección Primera

Question 1 Ernesto Sábato: *El túnel*

- (a) Candidates responded well to (i) and (ii). Part (iii) required analysis of the relationship between Castel and María throughout the novel in the light of the traits evident in the printed extract. This meant that candidates needed to find other instances of, for example, Castel's aggressive questioning of María, his possessiveness and María's reaction. Understanding of point of view was also important.
- (b) Fewer candidates chose this option. Most were able to discuss Castel's unhappiness and tended to focus on his relationship with María. Few went into more depth by, for example, referring to his sense of social alienation shown in the dreams he recounts.

Question 2 Calderón de la Barca: *La vida es sueño*

- (a) Answers to this option tended to focus too much on the printed extract without showing detailed knowledge of the text as a whole. The response to part (iii) should form the majority of the essay.
- (b) This question gave much scope for discussion and candidates were able to identify the key issues.

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

- (a) This was a popular question. Candidates showed a good level of knowledge of the text and understanding of the main themes. Some answers did not address the reference to 'nostalgia' in the question and simply described the presentation of the *shuar*.
- (b) This question was open to a number of interpretations, from the personal to the environmental and social. Responses were generally focused although sometimes lacking in detailed references to the text.

Question 4 Antonio Buero Vallejo: *El concierto de San Ovidio*

- (a) Few candidates answered this question but those who did tended to focus on the printed extract too much.
- (b) This question gave candidates the opportunity to focus on the central themes of the text and this was the more popular of the two options. The attitude of sighted people to the blind was the most obvious issues, but the position of women in society was also discussed.

Sección Segunda

Question 5 Carmen Laforet: *Nada*

- (a) Candidates discussed Román's character and relationships but did not always relate this to the reference in the question to the '*mensaje central*' of the novel. See key messages above regarding essay planning.
- (b) More candidates chose to answer this option on the text. The majority of the answers concentrated on the negative, discussing why it was a '*liberación*' to leave the apartment. There was another more subtle part to the question, focussing on Andrea's greater maturity in having fewer expectations for her future life in Madrid.

Question 6 Isabel Allende: *La casa de los espíritus*

- (a) This text was a very popular choice. Candidates responded well to the text with a good level of knowledge. The majority of answers listed examples of '*la magia y la fantasía*'; the best essays also addressed the importance of these elements in the novel, both with reference to character and plot.
- (b) There were some thoughtful responses to this question. Many candidates contradicted the statement, showing that there were signs of hope for the future in the changes in Trueba's attitude and in the person of Alba, for example. Some essays looked at both positive and negative outcomes; planning was important here in presenting an effective argument.

Question 7 Federico García Lorca: *Yerma*

- (a) This was the most popular text on the paper, and the majority of candidates chose this option. There were some sensitive responses where candidates understood the pressures affecting Yerma and how these were in conflict with her own feelings. Weaker answers tended to interpret the situation as if it were a modern soap opera, with completely different and inappropriate values. Candidates sometimes need to be reminded that they are analysing a work of literature, of the author's imagination, which has a specific social and historical context.
- (b) A smaller number of candidates answered this question. Most were able to discuss the role of the *lavanderas* and the prevalence of gossip. There was also the opportunity to analyse the preconceived ideas of the role of women in that society, alongside other interpretations.

Question 8 Pablo Neruda: *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada*

- (a) This question required practice in critical analysis with specific reference to poetic technique and candidates are advised to make sure they have sufficient experience before choosing this question type.

- (b) This question refers specifically to the use of symbolism in Neruda's work. Some essays were detailed, with understanding, but only referred to themes. It was possible to integrate both approaches, but the focus must be on the question as set. Quotations were well chosen.

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SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/42

Texts

Key messages

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- Each answer must be directly relevant to the question asked and should include specific, accurate references to the text.
- Essay planning is essential, especially where two sides of an argument are being presented. The introduction could be used to define the key words in the question and outline the structure of the answer. A generic introduction covering biographical details of the author and general comments on his or her work is not helpful.
- Candidates should be familiar with literary terms often used in questions, such as *símbolo*, *protagonista*, *recurso estilístico*.

General comments

The overall standard was at least satisfactory with many good and some very good essays. Most candidates had prepared well for the paper; they knew the texts and were aware of what was expected of them. The weakest area of the paper was in **Sección Primera**, option (a), the extract-based question. Candidates often spent too long on parts (i) and (ii), with much storytelling, and did not include enough material in part (iii) relating to the whole text (not just the extract printed on the Question Paper). There was a tendency for some candidates to prepare generic responses, triggered by names or reference to themes in the question. By their very nature these essays were too generalised with insufficient focus on the question being answered.

Comments on specific questions

Sección Primera

Question 1 Ernesto Sábato: *El túnel*

- (a) This was the more popular of the questions on this text. Most candidates identified the location correctly. In (iii) the better essays distinguished between Castel's circumstances and what he has made of them rather than simply discussing his personality or writing about his solitude.
- (b) This often led to rather general essays on the meaning of the novel. The best answers analysed the meaning of 'ciegos' in the context of the novel, frequently focussing on Allende, who, though blind, can 'see' or understand more clearly than Castel. The issue of darkness and the tunnel was dealt with more effectively.

Question 2 Calderón de la Barca: *La vida es sueño*

- (a) This question elicited a wide range of answers. The best gave superb responses, encompassing the whole breadth of meaning of the play. Others concentrated on the actions of Basilio and referred very briefly or not at all to Clotaldo, or were caught up in narrating the plot in detail with little reference to the rest of the play in part (iii).
- (b) Candidates were able to respond to this question on a number of levels. Some good answers showed that candidates appreciated the play as a piece of theatre. Weaker essays focused on narrative with little analysis of Clarín's actions.

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

- (a) The best answers here appreciated the irony of the situation. In general there were several interpretations of 'protagonista' in (iii) and some confusion as to the subject of (i) and (ii). This is a good example of one of the key points mentioned above – candidates need to understand common literary terms.
- (b) Most answers concentrated on the white man's respect, or lack of it, for the jungle. This was often presented in a clear argument structured around the idea of contrast between the personalities and actions of the protagonist and the mayor. Some candidates chose to dismiss this topic and write about other central themes. This can only be acceptable if the main focus of the answer remains the topic referred to in the question, which is then compared to another.

Question 4 Antonio Buero Vallejo: *El concierto de San Ovidio*

- (a) As in other cases, many candidates spent too long in answering (i) and (ii), often leading to much storytelling. In (iii), many answers were clear on the contrast in meaning between realising yourself as a human being and as a blind person; others found this more difficult to discuss, or indeed argued that they are the same thing. The weakest essays simply recounted the theme and plot of the play.
- (b) This question was well answered overall. Some very good essays discussed Adriana's role in political or historical terms. Others were able to analyse how she played a figurative role with regard to the situation in Spain at the time the play was written.

Sección Segunda

Question 5 Carmen Laforet: *Nada*

- (a) Unfortunately, there was a typographical error in this question for which we sincerely apologise. Answers were generally well-informed and focused. The better essays charted developments in the relationships of the characters. Weaker answers placed too much emphasis on narrative or a character study of Román.
- (b) This question was interpreted in a number of ways and produced a wide range of answers. Most compared and contrasted the beautiful and ugly in the novel, with better answers going beyond the more obvious to refer to beauty in the goodness of Gloria and *la abuela*, for example. Those pre-prepared essays on the misery and ugliness of the flat and its inhabitants were less impressive.

Question 6 Isabel Allende: *La casa de los espíritus*

- (a) There are a number of specific points to bear in mind when approaching a question on this novel. Candidates need to be able to focus on the question as it is printed and to sustain the argument on those precise issues. It is tempting for candidates to pick up an aspect of the question and pursue a tangential argument, perhaps trying to include all the references they can recall on a theme or character. Following on from that observation, it is essential that candidates can select effectively from the text, (not the film version), to substantiate the argument.

Answers to this question interpreted '*historia*' as either the plot of the novel or as history (social and political). Either reading is acceptable. Most essays dealt with the notion of repetition, but some were challenged by the concept of change. Examples were seen of candidates who focused only on Esteban Trueba and the extent to which his personality changes throughout the novel. Another very good answer dealt with the cycle of oppression of women through the course of the novel. The weakest answers dismissed the question and listed what they thought were the themes.

With a long text, candidates are advised to use the introduction to their essay to define the scope of the analysis and to have a clear focus and closely argued answer which is fully relevant to the question set.

- (b) Fewer candidates chose this question on the text. There were some excellent appreciations of the narrative technique of the novel but many gave straightforward character studies of Clara, ignoring the question.

Question 7 Federico García Lorca: *Yerma*

- (a) This was a very popular choice. The best candidates were able to discuss the various pressures on Yerma, appraise her character, her relationships and her predicament in a sensitive and nuanced way. It was also possible to take a chronological approach, showing how Yerma changes over the course of the play and analysing why. Those candidates who presented Juan as a victim and discussed simply whether Yerma was justified in killing him, or interpreted the events in the play in their own context, almost as if it were a modern soap opera, were less successful.
- (b) Many candidates also chose this question. For some candidates the term '*símbolos*' was not fully understood, and those essays tended to focus on themes only. There was a broad interpretation of the term, with the *lavanderas*, María and Víctor being included in the discussion. Candidates justified this by pointing out that the washerwomen represent public opinion and Víctor represents '*lo deseado/prohibido*', thus making it valid. Some excellent essays linked symbols sensitively to themes.

Question 8 Pablo Neruda: *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada*

- (a) Responses were relatively few in number. Candidates tackled the critical analysis fairly well but needed to keep a closer focus on the question and concentrate more on '*la naturaleza*'.
- (b) The small number of essays indicated that candidates found it more difficult to select poems to support a thematic argument and to construct an effective response.

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