

A-level

SPANISH

Unit 3 Listening, Reading and Writing
Report on the Examination

SPAN3
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General

This year saw further evidence of the good degree of preparation by the vast majority of students, reflecting the hard work put in by teachers and students alike. However, the evidence of questions 4, 6, 8, 9 and the Cultural Topic essay show the need for greater focus on grammatical accuracy and correct spelling.

Question 1

The overwhelming majority of students scored full marks in this accessible ‘warm-up item, correctly identifying which speaker each statement related to in the item.

Question 2

Most students scored at least five of the six marks available, by identifying the correct statements relating to the report heard concerning the arrest of a drug pusher.

Question 3

In this news report on a campaign to save the planet, students had to identify the correct statements relating to numerical information heard. The majority were able to score full marks.

Question 4

This section, based on a report on scientific innovations, was done very well on the whole although certain questions caused a few problems to some. As regards misspellings, most arose in 4(a), notably with *física*; *medecina* was accepted but not *phisica*, which was discounted because of its closeness to the English spelling. In 4(d) many of the less able students chose the incorrect number, seemingly unable to distinguish between the two available options. In 4(e) and 4(f), a considerable number of students did not include a verb as required for the response to make sense. 4(f) proved the most challenging. Clearly many did not understand the word *desviando*; some chose to use the word *produce* instead. Some had problems with *rayos*, instead producing *rалlos de luz*. There is still a tendency among some students to write too much.

Question 5

This style of task makes demands on the grammatical competence of students. Predictably, therefore, in this item on a protest against racism, the range of student performances was much wider, with fewer than half scoring five or more out of eight.

Question 6(a)

Accuracy was crucial in this first task on an article concerning a protest against nuclear power: students were asked to find the synonym within the printed text and reproduce it exactly. Several students struggled with *rostro* (perhaps not understanding that its synonym *cara* is a noun not an adjective) and others did not score a mark because they did not give *catástrofe* an accent. This was just one example among many of carelessness among some of the less able students with regard to spellings and accents.

Question 6(b)

In most of the elements students managed to match the two halves of sentences correctly; (iii) and (iv) challenged a substantial proportion of students, perhaps because the choice relied more on a thorough understanding of the relevant part of the stimulus text and the first half of the sentence than merely on obvious grammatical correspondence.

Question 7

This article dealt with the topic of aid to the homeless in Madrid, and required students to complete the gapped sentences with the correct option from four offered. 7(c) and (d) proved most challenging to just over half the students, and (f) the most straightforward.

Question 8

Performance in this section overall was disappointing, as was the standard of some students' written English. Among the all-too-frequent misspellings were *boarder*, *trafficking*, *dolars*, *surveyance*, *nationalitys*; whilst most of these were accepted by examiners, the first was not, because *boarder* has a totally different meaning. Some students lost marks by pluralising the word *borders*, which gives a false view of the geographical reality.

Many students seemed to find the translation of *acaba de* quite demanding and gave the inappropriate translation '... have finished...'. It was particularly surprising that some gave inappropriate renderings of *Estados Unidos*, and even *muro* caused problems. Very few students offered appropriate renderings of *cuenta con* and, *aparatos*; significant numbers of students translated *intentan* as *intend*: whilst cognate recognition is an extremely useful skill for language students, they also need to be aware of *falsos amigos*! It was disappointing that many did not notice the pluperfect or to translate the construction appropriately. Very few were able correctly to translate *cuanto antes* and fewer still were able to cope with *lamenta que se haya hecho* even though *lamenta* is a cognate; this may be symptomatic of a lack of experience of certain registers of English. A number of students failed to notice that *lamenta* was in the present tense, not the past. The passive was not translated well and there was confusion as to which personal pronoun to use to translate *se retrasó* and *se haya hecho*, when using the passive voice would have been much more appropriate.

It was apparent that many students had not read back through their work to check that the English was of an acceptable standard and that their meaning was clear. In general, as last year, many failed to gain marks in uncomplicated details such as singular in place of plural, and verb tenses.

Question 9

Question 9 was answered slightly better than 8, but basic errors were made by many, notably with genders (most students thought *planeta* was feminine), accents and misspellings (such as *almenaza*, *proteger*, *creer* for *crear*, *occurido*). Given that students know that the translations will be on one of the three A2 language topic areas, it is surprising that a good number did not know how to translate *threatening*, *measures* and *damage*; one would have thought that these words would come up during study of the topic of the environment. Equally the non-topic-specific word *individual* was often mistranslated with *individual*; again, 'a false friend'. It remains the case that the majority of students are unable to use the verb *gustar* correctly along with the appropriate structure and use of the indirect object pronoun as in *les gustaría crear*. Some avoided the issue by using *querer*, which was accepted if correct.

As mentioned above many students failed to score marks due to a lack of accents on *polución*, *está*, *políticos*, *más*, and *tendríamos*. Most students saw the need for a subjunctive after *quieren que los políticos* and many also correctly translated *si cada individuo reciclara*. The subjunctives in 9(b) and 9(e) were missed by some students, though large numbers managed to produce them. The 'si clause' in 9(e) eluded some students, even though they should have known to expect one.

Question 10 – Question 14: The Cultural Topic essays

Examiners felt that there was a general improvement in essays this year, particularly in respect of structure. However, there are some students who are obviously good linguists but who seem to

want to reproduce their 'pre-learned' essay without any thought for the title. Among the most covered topics – drama and film, Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba* continues to be a firm favourite alongside Almodóvar's *Volver*. There were more essays on painters this year, notably on Picasso, Dalí and Frida Kahlo. Handwriting continues to be an issue. A few students wrote answers to the wrong questions, and two wrote on ineligible topics – *Londres* as a Hispanic region, and the Napoleonic War in Spain as a period of 20C history; these essays were unable to score any marks.

Question 10

Most students who studied a region answered 10(a). Andalucía was the region most often studied, followed by Cataluña, but there were also some essays on La Comunidad de Madrid, La Comunidad Valenciana, Castilla y León and Mexico. Most of the essays were of the 'beach, paella and good weather' variety, and so scored low marks for Content, but those which went into greater depth and answered the second part of the question offered some pertinent suggestions as to how the region could improve its offering for tourism; extending airports and better advertising were the most commonly cited.

Question 11

There were some very good essays on the period of 20C history, particularly some well-focussed essays on question 11(a) on *la Transición*, covering Juan Carlos, Adolfo Suárez and *el Tejerazo*; others wrote about Spain during and after the *Guerra Civil*. They were able to identify key events during the period but had more difficulty explaining why they were either *interesante* or *sorprendente*. In 11(b) there were some good responses covering Chile and Cuba. In fact most students chose 11(b). There were some very good examples of how the lives of citizens changed in Chile in the '70s and in Colombia in the '80s. However, only the most able students went on to explain whether they thought these changes had been for good or ill.

Question 12

Como agua para chocolate, *Réquiem por un campesino español*, *el Coronel no tiene quien le escriba* and *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* were the texts most often studied by students choosing these questions; few students appear to have studied collections of short stories. There were several very fine essays on Delibes's *El Camino*. Both 12(a) and 12(b) proved equally popular. In 12(a) many students compared Mama Elena and Tita from *Como agua* or Mosén Millán and Paco from *Réquiem*; most covered similarities successfully, but few offered significant differences. In 12(b), many explored the themes of social class, friendships and death in *El Camino*, and in the case of other novels the obvious themes were usually included.

Question 13

La Casa de Bernarda Alba, *Yerma*, *Bodas de Sangre*, and the poetry of Pablo Neruda were the mainstays of this question; a very few ventured away from Lorca and studied *Las bicicletas son para el verano* or *Historia de una escalera*. Less able students struggled to extricate *ideas positivas y negativas* and *elementos* from themes and consequently ended up listing the themes of the plays with a brief description of which they felt positive or negative, or appreciated most or what impact they had had on them. Most students chose 13(b), and correctly included as *elementos* not just themes, but also use of symbols, characters and techniques. Strong students were able to incorporate an understanding of the impact of set design, costumes, movement on and off stage, and the visual and auditory impact of the work as a play, and analyse the effect these had on their understanding of the play; less able students tended to view the play as a written document.

Relatively few essays earned Content marks in the Very Good band, largely one suspects because so many students studying this cultural topic have been trained to answer the predictable

questions and rely using on pre-learnt material rather than adapting it to the particular question chosen.

Question 14

Both questions allowed for similar material to be included, but each question demanded a different focus: focus on the question is paramount and best achieved by planning and clear structure. Thus there were many very poor essays on *Volver*: with too many hackneyed responses about the use of the colour red, strong women and the traditions of La Mancha. *Volver*, *El laberinto del fauno*, Dalí, Picasso and Kahlo were most often cited in answer to these two questions.

Almodóvar was predictably popular – perhaps even more than in previous years; there was much mention in response to both questions of use of the camera, colours and polemical themes. Amenábar was also popular, mostly on the theme of euthanasia, characters and landscapes, and as ever Guillermo del Toro with the focus on special effects, the worlds of fantasy and reality, and the theme of the Guerra Civil. For Dalí the main topic was surrealism, for Picasso *Guernica*, for Gaudí use of nature, Catalanism, and new techniques, and for Kahlo her very personal approach to art.

Of those attempting 14(a) the students who chose to view their painter as a pioneer in his/her times fared best, but generally this question was not well coped with; 14(b) proved most popular and proved the most straightforward to answer. However, less able students struggled to explain what their 'artist' had contributed to their art or what was impressive about the aspects they were describing. Students need to be reminded, again, to answer the question set and focus on the relevance of what they are writing to the title of the essay they have chosen.

Cultural Topic essays: general

There were relatively few 'Poor' essays this year as far as Content mark was concerned, and the quality of language seems to have improved slightly. However, once again there were students whose answers displayed excellent knowledge, and a high level of discipline in producing well-planned and well-reasoned essays which were not excessive in length; indeed, the length of essays seems to be decreasing and the level of focus of answers increasing, which is a pleasing trend.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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UMS conversion calculator aqa.org.uk/umsconversion.