

A-level Spanish

Unit 3 Listening, Reading and Writing
Report on the Examination

SPAN3
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General

The high quality of many responses this year reflect the hard work, careful preparation and effective revision undertaken by students. As in previous reports, the areas of greatest improvement are the translation questions (8 and 9) and the Cultural topic essay.

Question 1

Question one dealt with the topic of immigration of four Spaniards to London. Question 1(c) proved to be the most challenging part..

Question 2

The vast majority of students scored either 5 or 6 marks on this question about new technology at airports

Question 3

These questions about Greenpeace launching a new environmental campaign caused few problems to the majority of students who identified the correct element with which to answer the individual sections and did so with variable, but generally acceptable, spelling. Amongst students' misspellings were *tropheos*, *vertaderos*, *recicable*. 3(f) proved the most difficult. Many students did not understand the phrase *de alto valor*; many chose to use the neologism *de altobalor*. Frequent practice will give students the necessary skills to identify the individual units within particular phrases and help them avoid such mistakes in future (showing them the transcript after practising listening in class is also good for developing this key skill).

Question 4

Question 4, regarding crime in Mexico, was done extremely well and most students scored either 4 or 5 marks. The most challenging question proved to be question 4(e). It seems many students did not make the link between *vestidos* and *ropa*. Students should always be aware of synonyms in the question paper and the recording to help them identify the correct statement.

Question 5

Students scored very well on this question about poverty with the words *paro* and *marginación* being the most difficult to match up to a definition. The grouping of topic specific vocabulary can be an effective tool for students to prepare for questions of this nature.

Question 6

Students found question 6(a) the most challenging but most scored well on the question as a whole. A close reading of the text is needed to ensure the correct statement is chosen.

Question 7

This question dealt with the topic of forced marriages. Students often identified the grammatical function of each word to assist them with their choice. However, this alone will not mean students find the correct answer. They must ensure that even if the word makes sense grammatically in the sentence it must also ensure that the text follows the logical meaning of the content. Most students achieved 7 or more marks with the most common mistakes being the confusion of *alcanzada* and *prometida* and/or *rechazan* and *existen* as possible answers.

Question 8

The performance on this question was disappointing. The standard of some students' written English was at times poor. Among the lexical items that caused problems were frequent misspellings: *sirgun*, *cirgen*, *scares*, *iliteracy*. Many students translated *une* as one, obviously being led astray by their knowledge of French. Surprisingly few students were able to correctly translate *unos quinientos* or even *millón*. It is clear that students need to become more familiar with their knowledge of numbers. Fewer students still were able to correctly translate *la red* (a word they would have met at AS Level), most rendering this as network. Reading through the less able students' translations, it was apparent that they had not looked back through their work to check that the English was of an acceptable standard and that the meaning was clear. Topic specific vocabulary such as *analfabetismo* and *situación sanitaria*, was not as well-known as might have been expected. The syntax was handled well overall, with a pleasing awareness of the subtlety of the subjunctive which was generally expressed well. It was pleasing to see a great many students able to write well in meaningful and fluent English, capturing the nuances of the original in their translations.

Question 9

As with the previous exercise, the objective is to test students' acquisition and application of more advanced grammar, and question 9 produced a good spread of marks, with a very few scoring maximum marks. The baseline for successfully rendered translations at A2 level should be a firm grasp of subject/ verb & noun/ adjectival agreements and a good knowledge of verb forms in all the key tenses, including the appropriate accentuation. The majority of students were able to translate 9(b), which required knowledge of the pluperfect subjunctive/ conditional perfect, and it is puzzling that they cannot always do so for the more straightforward tenses. Many students were unable to correctly translate *in the South of Spain*, the word *sud* being the most frequently chosen word. A surprising number could not spell *apartamento* or *pisos*. Many students failed to score a number of marks because they did not place accents on words such as *íbamos*, *hubiéramos*, *habríamos*, *políticos*, *economía*.

Question 10 – Question 14: The Cultural Topic essays

Examiners felt that there was again a general improvement in essays this year, particularly in respect of structure. There was a range of essays from all sections attempted (although relatively few from the historical study) with some excellent, original and insightful answers. Students should also take care at the planning stage to ensure that the essay they will write actually addresses the frame of reference set by the question. For example, in 13(b) certain students attempted an essay on the contemporary relevance of the play or poems they had studied only to replicate an essay they might well have written previously on the themes and nothing else. 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. This seems to be particularly evident with the dramatist Lorca and *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*. A few students wrote answers to the wrong questions and some often confused books they have studied with the film version. Films and novels were the most popular choices by students this year.

Question 10

10(b) proved more popular than 10(a). Andalucía was the region most often studied, followed by Cataluña. There were also some essays on Venezuela, Perú, Castilla y León and Mexico. 10(a) was often answered very poorly. Many students did not attempt to answer the second half of the question, *¿qué efecto ha tenido en su gente?* 10(b) often brought better responses but there were far too many poor quality essays of the sun, sea and paella variety. In most cases, the broad areas of *la geografía* and *la cultura* were chosen as being of prime tourist potential but the most successful responses included a good range of specific reference to the region to identify why they are popular.

Question 11

Relatively few students chose 11(a), and when they did, General Franco was the key figure to analyse although Fidel Castro and Pinochet were also discussed. Successful students were able to identify political intentions during the period but had more difficulty explaining the social intentions of their chosen leader. Most students chose 11(b) but often there was a problem of interpretation relating to *un momento importante de la época estudiada*, which clearly means that students should have selected a key moment in a defined historical period (eg Pinochet's coup, the assassination of Carrero Blanco or el 23-F) and gone on to analyse how it changed the course of the country's history; too often students talked about *la Guerra Civil* or *La Transición* in terms of *un momento*. There were some excellent essays on the bombing of Guernica.

Question 12

Como agua para chocolate, *Requiem por un campesino español*, *el Coronel no tiene quien le escriba*, *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* were the texts most often studied by the students choosing these questions. Both 12(a) and 12(b) proved equally popular. Both questions proved relatively straightforward although many students again chose to regurgitate a pre learned essay which was not often focussed on the title. Most students argued that knowledge of Hispanic society was helpful but not essential. Although most students answering on *Requiem por un campesino español* felt it was necessary. In 12(a) many students argued well that the protagonists of the texts have strong motivations which are, variously, love (*Tita*), a desire for social justice (*Paco el del Molino*), hope (*El coronel*) and hunger/ survival (*Lazarillo*). Students could only score well, however, if their essays included an analysis of how far the characters achieved what they were motivated by, and in the majority of cases this was proven by sound textual reference. Similarly in 12(b) students could only score highly if their work included both an analysis of the themes and whether or not they have a universal appeal – again in most cases students made a good job of writing logically about the key themes within the context of their chosen text and then broadened their answer to consider their wider relevance.

Question 13

Once again, *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* re-appeared as the text of choice. A few students chose *Yerma* or *Bodas de Sangre*, whilst a very few ventured away from Lorca and studied *Las bicicletas son para el verano*. Better students were able to incorporate an understanding of the impact of set design, costumes and movement on and off stage and analyse the effect these had on their feelings towards and appreciation of the play. Less able students tended to view the play as a written document. More able students were able to describe the visual and auditory impact of the work as a play and how they felt as they observed the play. Some students were able to refer to modern versions of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* as evidence that the play still had value today. Many were also able to point to similarities between the situation regarding forced marriages and lack of opportunities for girls in underdeveloped countries. Many went on to consider the contemporary relevance of these themes either by considering other parts of the world (e.g. the fate of the Nigerian schoolgirls/ the place of honour in Indian society) or by making a comparison with how the morals of western society have changed since Lorca's day.

Question 14

Volver, *El Laberinto del fauno*, *Dalí*, *Picasso* and *Kahlo* were most often cited in answer to these questions. 14(b) was most popular and proved the most straightforward to answer. Less able students struggled to extricate *los aspectos de su trabajo ... que podrían garantizar su fama* from themes and consequently ended up listing the themes of the films with a brief sentence at the end of each paragraph saying that this would guarantee their future fame. The best students were able to extricate the cinematic techniques as being the most important aspects of the director's work. Of those attempting 14(a) the students who chose to view their painter/director/artist as a pioneer of his/her times fared best. There were many very poor essays on *Volver*. There were many unfocussed responses about the colour red, strong women and the traditions of La Mancha. Less able students struggled to explain what was unique or profound 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.

General

The range of marks for Section B was very wide and again the paper gave students who knew the material well and could organise it so that it targeted the question the chance to fulfil their potential in terms of content and language. However, the quality of language was variable, with some demonstrating an excellent command of topic-specific and more abstract lexis and grammar and others doing so less well. Overall, the best essays were those that had a clearly-focused and short introduction with discrete paragraphs addressing one aspect of the question with an in-depth analysis and personal evaluation and offering good textual justification. In the best cases it was a genuine pleasure to see how much can be achieved by students taking this paper.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

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[UMS conversion calculator](#)