

PRINCIPAL COURSE SPANISH

Paper 9781/01
Speaking

Key Messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- in Part I, consider the issue raised in their chosen article and their own reaction(s) to it
- in Part II, choose a subject which genuinely interests them and which clearly relates to a country where the target language is spoken
- in Parts I and II, be prepared to take the lead in the conversation
- in Parts I and II, be ready to engage in natural and spontaneous discussion.

General comments

The general level of spoken Spanish was higher than last year. The majority of candidates were able to maintain a conversation in fairly accurate and fluent language.

Before the first part of the test (newspaper article discussion), candidates used their preparation time well, considering the issue in question and other issues that might arise in conversation. Most candidates were able to sustain an interesting discussion and use the language of argument well. The Examiners asked candidates to express opinions and to substantiate, elaborate, clarify or qualify them. Many of the performances were highly satisfactory and some were excellent.

For the second part of the test (prepared topic discussion), most candidates had prepared their topics very thoroughly. Examiners found evidence of detailed research using different sources, and rewarded candidates highly for the quality of their research. When detailed and extensive factual knowledge was combined with clear analysis and well-founded opinion, candidates achieved high marks.

Last year there were a few cases of under-preparation, affecting particularly the native or semi-native speakers. This problem was not observed this year.

The discussions mostly flowed naturally without the candidates giving the impression of simply reciting pre-learned material. They tended to respond readily to the Examiners' questions with appropriate replies. Not only that, but most did not appear taken aback by unexpected questions and tackled them confidently and honestly. Candidates were rewarded for their ability to engage in a natural and spontaneous conversation.

Most candidates also displayed an excellent ability to keep calm and collected or, at least, not to allow nerves to interfere significantly with their performance.

Comments on specific questions

Section A (Newspaper Article Discussion)

This is in principle the most challenging part of the test, as the candidates need to choose one of four newspaper articles, never seen before, and have only twenty minutes to prepare it, read it through and understand it, make a note of their reaction and opinions on it, and think about which issues might arise from the topic presented in the article. They can also consider the general heading on the card and give some thought to possible areas of discussion.

The bulk of this part of the test is by nature unpredictable. After one minute's summary of the article and 3 or 4 minutes' talking about their opinions on it, the conversation broadens according to the general heading on the card. The headings this year were: Health and Fitness, Environment, Religion and Belief and Equality of Opportunity. They all had takers, but the first one proved rather more popular, even though it was probably

the least polemical. Candidates normally fare better when they choose a general topic that they are really interested in, rather than one that they have been discussing in class or written an essay about recently.

Candidates were naturally more nervous during this part of the test, but curiously, this did not result in significantly poorer performances than in the second part. In some cases, candidates rose admirably to the challenge and relaxed into a spontaneous and natural exchange with the Examiner. Occasionally, the conversation felt so “real” as to make it possible to forget, momentarily, that it was an exam. Having to improvise did stump some of the candidates, but a high proportion of them fared just as well in **section A** as in **section B**.

A minority of candidates could give only limited support to their views with arguments after an initial yes/no answer, and were nonplussed by why/how questions. They tended to take refuge in simple statements and repetitive ideas. The very best candidates (a minority too) played an active role in the conversation and even introduced new topics themselves. Between these two extremes, the majority of performances showed good discussion skills and considerable resourcefulness.

Section B (Prepared Topic Discussion)

Most topics were well-suited to an 8-10 minute discussion, being neither too broad nor too narrow, or else fairly large topics approached in an intelligently selective way. So for example, if the candidate was talking about a famous artist or historical figure, the presentation worked best when it clearly concentrated on particular works or aspects of that figure’s career, while perhaps touching more lightly on other points.

Social issues, popular culture and the arts had the lion’s share of the topics, although there was an increase in the number of literary topics compared to last year.

Topics were mainly familiar - for example Spanish fiestas, bullfighting or drugs in Latin America - but many candidates had chosen to approach them in an original or personal way. All those who went beyond the purely descriptive in order to provide some analysis or personal view were highly rewarded, as long as they supported their insights convincingly.

Similarly, many presentations produced excellent conversations when an element of controversy or debate was brought into it. The contentious aspect could be implicit in the title, or else introduced under one of the sub-headings.

Quality of language

Pronunciation

This was good overall and did not impair communication. Among the most frequent errors were:

- Pronunciation of *u* in words like *ataque*, *Velázquez*, *guerra*.
- Anglicized initial vowels in words like *unidad*, *Europa*, *euro*, *usar*, *Uruguay*.
- Anglicized *g* in words like *religión* or *legislar*.

Grammar

- Failure to conform to gender and number agreements between noun and adjective.
- Wrong gender. Words like *problema*, *tema*, *país*, *situación* and *solución* suffered more than others.
- Confusion between *ser/estar/haber*.
- Conjugation errors: missed subjunctives, preterite for imperfect, wrong person ending, unconjugated infinitives and some invented participles such as **hacido*, **ponido*, and **vido*.
- Incorrect use of *gustar*.
- Inability to distinguish between certain pairs of words: *nada/ningún*, *este/esto*, *bueno/bien*, *para/por*.
- Omission of *s* in the hundreds: **noveciento*, **cuatrociento*.
- Use of cardinal instead of ordinal for kings and queens: *Carlos *tres*, *Fernando *ocho* instead of *tercero*, *octavo*.

Vocabulary

Some pairs of words were often confused:

- *Policía/política*
- *Peligroso/peligro*
- *Tiempo/hora*
- *Derechos/derechas*
- *Nombre/número*

Invented words were also used, one of the most frequent being *resulto*.

Candidates with a more sophisticated and specific vocabulary achieved higher marks in Range and Accuracy than those using the more general and common words, for example *llevar a cabo/realizar actividades nocivas/perjudiciales*, as against *hacer cosas malas*.

Advice and Guidance to candidates

Candidates should aim to:

- fill in the oral form correctly
- present their introduction “naturally”, even if pre-learnt
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the topic
- provide evidence of research
- show interest in and personal engagement with the topic
- support opinions with evidence
- avoid sweeping statements.

Candidates should also expect to:

- be interrupted
- be asked to support statements
- be asked unexpected questions
- give examples
- be stretched to their linguistic “ceiling”.

PRINCIPAL COURSE SPANISH

Paper 9781/02

Reading and Listening

Key Messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- focus only on the required information and communicate it precisely in their answers
- pay particular attention to conveying the required information to the examiner in unambiguous language.

General comments

This is the second year of the Cambridge Pre-U Spanish Principal examination. The entry for this session was small, but it is hoped that the numbers will grow in the future. This report will, therefore, look at the performance in this year, but will also concentrate on giving advice and guidance for future examinations.

This is a mixed-skills paper which allows candidates to show their Spanish-language skills in Reading and Listening. Candidates have 2 hours 15 minutes to complete the paper. They are advised to spend 1 hour 15 minutes on the Reading exercises and 1 hour on the Listening exercises. They may choose the order in which they prefer to tackle the exercises.

Part I – Reading (30 marks)

There are two passages with a combined limit of 600 words. The first one has reading comprehension questions in Spanish requiring answers in Spanish. Although these answers are not assessed for quality of language, candidates must avoid “lifting” phrases from the passage as far as possible. The second passage has questions in English that require answers in English. The third exercise is a retranslation from English into Spanish of a paragraph of about 75 words based on the stimulus of the earlier second reading passage.

Reading Text 1 was a passage about the seven provinces in the west of Spain that are experiencing a decrease in their population, and the efforts being made to attract new immigrants to the area. The test is marked positively and the objective is to communicate the correct response, but not to reproduce the original text word for word. It is important for candidates to use their own words as far as possible. Full sentences are not required in the answers but the correct information must be conveyed successfully. Accent errors are only penalised if they affect meaning and slight spelling errors are accepted if the word is recognisable, but not if the spelling error leads to another word.

For **Question 1** candidates had to choose two points of explanation: that the provinces are losing population and that they are in the west of Spain. A surprising number of candidates chose to say that the provinces shared a border with Portugal. This was only the case with four of the provinces, and candidates needed to read carefully to appreciate the full detail. For **Question 2** some mention of growth, wealth or success was needed. **Question 3** required an explanation of the phrase *demografía siberiana* mentioned in the text. Whilst most candidates referred to the lack of inhabitants, many just copied extracts from the original passage and made no reference to Siberia. Several candidates misunderstood the statement about young people: the text stated that many young people had left the area in the nineteen sixties and seventies, but that does not mean that *no hay jóvenes* now. Most candidates understood the material for **Questions 5** and **6** and gave appropriately correct answers. This type of exercise can be demanding in places, but overall the Examiners found that the majority of candidates displayed a good understanding of the Spanish material and were able to write their answers with an appropriate standard of Spanish language.

Reading Text 2 was an article discussing the way in which people provide their personal details when using the Internet and the dangers arising from this loss of privacy. The material was generally understood by the candidates, who succeeded in answering the English questions set on the passage in a fluent, comprehensible way. Many candidates scored high marks on this exercise. Most provided the correct

information for **Questions 7 and 8**, but some failed to gain the two marks available for **Question 9** by omitting to make any reference to mobile phones. Most candidates identified “a symbol of social success” for **Question 10** and there were some successful and interesting explanations of the term *nativos digitales* for **Question 11**. More errors were, however, seen in the responses to **Question 12**. Firstly, a surprising number of candidates thought that the Spanish singer referred to in the passage was a woman, when the text clearly refers to *un famoso cantante español* and that the word *datos* meant “dates”, rather than “data” or “details”. Many were also not familiar with the verb *chantajear* (“to blackmail”), so there were suggestions that the singer was stalked or pestered. Others thought that the fan chatted to the singer or even sang to him.

Reading Text 3 was a paragraph in English based on the material in **Reading Text 2**. Candidates had to translate this into Spanish. The previous text contained words and phrases that could help them, but generally some manipulation of language was required. For marking purposes, the text is divided into 30 boxes and these are each awarded one mark or zero. The total score is converted to a final mark out of 10. The correct information should be communicated and suitable and accurate alternative renderings are accepted (e.g. the phrase “for its speed” should be *por su velocidad*, but the Examiners also accepted *porque es tan rápido*). Slight spelling errors are disregarded, but not if the meaning of the word is altered. Similarly, minor errors involving adjectival agreements or capital/small-case letters may be accepted. The final mark scheme document gives a detailed list of versions that were accepted or not.

Most candidates performed well in this exercise and there were some pleasing translations. Although slight errors are permitted, the Examiners point to several common errors. These include using a plural verb with *gente*; confusion between *por* and *para*; inability to construct the expression *se ha convertido en*; writing *al seleccionando* instead of *al seleccionar* or *cuando seleccionando* instead of *cuando seleccionan*; missed subjunctives, such as *adivine* or *pueda*; confusion between *ser* and *estar* or inability to use the passive voice, when attempting to translate “these are based on” (*éstas se basan en* or *éstas están basadas en*); translating “strangers” as *extranjeros* or not knowing how to translate the verb “I refuse”, etc.

Part II - Listening (30 marks)

Candidates have control of their own individual listening equipment. They may stop, rewind and replay the recording at will, and they may make notes and write their answers at any point. There are three passages with a combined limit of 700 to 800 words. The first has listening comprehension questions in Spanish requiring answers in Spanish, whereas questions for the second passage are in English and require answers in English. Answers in the target language are not assessed for quality of language. Candidates then listen to a third recording of about 250 words and summarise it in English using bullet points for guidance (maximum of 100 words).

The extract for **Listening Text 1** was an item about the people who were evacuated from their homes when the Chilean volcano Chaitén erupted after being dormant for more than 450 years. The test is marked positively and the objective is to communicate only the correct information, so that candidates should focus on the question and generate a logical, sufficient response, rather than reproducing large chunks of the original text word for word. Full sentences are not required in the answers but the correct information must be conveyed successfully. Accent errors are only penalised if they affect meaning and slight spelling errors are accepted if the word is recognisable, but not if the spelling error leads to another word. It would appear that candidates understood the material well and produced sound responses. Most candidates answered **Questions 14 and 15** correctly, but mis-heard the word *temblores*, which led to some incorrect responses for **Question 16**. Whereas not all candidates understood what Rosa said about the speed with which they had to leave their homes for **Question 17**, most understand the material for **Questions 18 and 19**. Finally, **Question 20** asked what the Chilean government wanted to avoid (*evitar*), but some candidates appeared not to understand this verb and so wrote that the government wanted the people to die.

In **Listening Text 2** candidates heard an interview with the Argentinian writer Pacho O'Donnell, in which he talks about his recent biography of Che Guevara. The discussion included references to Che as a person and as a revolutionary. Candidates appeared to understand the material well and produced some good, thoughtful answers. Occasionally, however, rather than weak comprehension of the Spanish material, a candidate might have lost marks because of awkward English expression that did not convey the information correctly. Most candidates gained the full marks available for **Questions 21 and 22**, but a few mis-heard *vivido* as *bebido* in **Question 23** or did not understand that the biographer had followed in Che's footsteps around the world. Whilst unclear English expression caused some candidates to lose marks on **Question 24**, most explained well the references to Che's being a “product of his time, the Cold War, when the world was divided in two” for **Question 25** and to Che's being a symbol of rebellion or dignity for **Question 26**.

Listening Text 3 involved an interview with a Spanish environmental scientist discussing the problem of air pollution and, in particular, contamination caused by cars. The test required a summary of his views in no more than 100 words in English. There were five bullet points of information to be covered. The full gist of the passage needs to be understood, there has to be detail and it needs to be well selected. The material should be expressed concisely, read well and be informative. The 10 marks available are awarded positively according to these criteria. Length is important. A summary with fewer than 80 words is likely to be self-penalising, as all the above criteria are unlikely to be met. On the other hand, candidates should beware of writing over-long summaries. It should be stressed that the Examiners operate a cut-off point and any material written beyond that point cannot be assessed, even if it is correct. Without doubt, candidates appeared to find the material accessible and there were some high marks awarded in this exercise. Most candidates appeared to be familiar with the vocabulary and concepts in the extract. The Examiners found that many candidates produced very good summaries that demonstrated a good understanding of the gist and detail of the original Spanish extract. They were able to infer ideas and showed an ability to select key facts and to communicate this information concisely.

Advice and Guidance to candidates

Listening and Reading Comprehension

What comprehension skills are required?

- The material for the texts may come from any of the Topic Areas in the Syllabus;
- the material could be factual or abstract;
- inference – you have to work out the answers;
- manipulation - you will be expected to manipulate the language;
- explanation – you will need to explain;
- synthesis – you may need to combine points of information;
- full information is always required – answers may be long;
- Quality of Language is high – accuracy and sophistication are needed.

Answering Spanish questions set on the texts

- Remember that full sentences are not required. However, the full information asked for must be given;
- highlight the question words (*¿quién?*, *¿cómo?*, *¿cuándo?*, etc.), so that it is clear what information is needed;
- note how many marks are awarded for each question, so that no essential information is omitted;
- try to use your own words and do not reproduce the language of the texts word for word;
- practise building a wide Spanish vocabulary, so that you are at ease using synonyms for words in the texts;
- remember that your Spanish answers must make sense. If they do not, then there is something wrong.

Answering English questions set on the texts

- Write your answers in good English and check your spelling;
- beware of “false friends” (words that look alike in Spanish and English but have different meanings);
- realise that some Spanish words can often have two meanings; choose the correct one;
- find the appropriate English word, not necessarily one that looks similar to the Spanish word;
- make sure your whole answer sounds like real English and makes sense to someone reading it;
- make sure that you give the full information required; do not omit any essential information.

Retranslation for Reading Task 3

Translation involves moving material from one language to another. Good translation is a real art that needs much practice, but which is often neglected. The elusive ideal is a translation that reads well and that conveys accurately the sense of the original.

- Study the Spanish stimulus passage in Reading Task 2 carefully: it gives vocabulary and structures to be used and re-worked;
- read the English passage and understand what is required;
- study the setting, context and tone of the extracts;

- use sensible and intelligent guesses where vocabulary is not known;
- never leave gaps;
- think carefully about the grammar of the sentence being translated; Examiners regularly point to the failure of candidates to translate tenses correctly, to spot adjectival agreements and to link pronouns with the nouns to which they refer;
- beware of literal translation and poor/meaningless Spanish;
- beware paraphrasing – do not stray too far away from the original;
- but, on the other hand, do not be afraid to change word order, parts of speech, etc.;
- remember that accuracy is more important than creativity.

Summary skills for Listening Text 3

What are summary skills?

- all the bullet points have been covered
- the gist of the passage has been understood
- there is detail and it is well selected
- the material is expressed concisely
- the material reads well and is informative
- there is no incorrect information

Advice on summary skills

Writing a good summary is a matter of regular practice and also of acquiring the correct technique. An unsuccessful attempt at a summary may be due to lack of understanding of the original text, but more often than not, it is the way the exercise has been tackled that is at fault.

- Listen to the passage until you have a good idea of what the whole text is about;
- do not start summarising (or even translating) every sentence; you will not be discarding the less significant details and you will quickly run out of words;
- make rough notes on the question paper; you are not likely to have time to write out a full version of the summary and then write out a clean copy;
- it is often not necessary to know the meaning of every word – do not panic if you do not understand something;
- remember this is a summary – be selective – you cannot include every bit of information;
- make sure that you cover all the bullet points;
- spread the words: it is a common error to say too much about the first half of a passage and too little (or nothing at all) about the last parts;
- “prune” written summaries, removing unnecessary words without deleting the main points that you wish to convey;
- absolutely stick within the word limit – do not exceed 100 words;
- check the accuracy of everything you have written.

The Quality of your Spanish Language

- Remember that essential Spanish grammar knowledge is required; you should aim for responding in accurate language;
- be confident in your use of all Spanish tenses, in particular the present, preterite, imperfect and conditional, both regular and irregular;
- be able to use tenses with all persons, not just the first person;
- be able to switch between the first and third persons with confidence, as this is often required in comprehension passages;
- use pronouns with confidence, in particular *le* and *se*, and be able to switch from first person to third person pronouns and adjectives with ease (e.g. *mi* to *su* and *mío* to *suyo*, etc.);
- use *gustar* and similar verbs properly in all tenses;
- be strict when applying the correct articles and adjectival endings (e.g. *un problema*, *cinco rosas rojas*, etc.);
- know when accents are important (e.g. *trabajo* or *trabajó?* *esta*, *esta* or *ésta?*);
- be familiar with the subjunctive mood: know when and how to use it successfully;

PRINCIPAL COURSE SPANISH

Paper 9781/03
Writing and Usage

Key Messages

In order to perform well in this examination, candidates should:

- in Part I, choose a title on which they have something to say and for which they have command of appropriate structures and lexis
- in Part I, plan their essay to produce well-structured and persuasive arguments
- in Part I, write complex sentences when appropriate, but without losing the thread of the argument
- in Part II, read each question carefully and make sure they understand the sense of the sentence(s)
- in Parts I and II, carefully proofread their responses.

General comments

Many candidates continued to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by the discursive essay. They wrote introductions and conclusions and clearly expressed their opinions, often in original style and using adventurous Spanish, sometimes demonstrating very skilful manipulation of language and a confident critical approach. Such essays were a pleasure to read. Nevertheless, some points of guidance may be offered to enable centres to improve candidates' performance. Some candidates' responses would have benefited from more consistent use of appropriate register and structure. The least effective pieces had overlong answers with poorly constructed paragraphs, a lack of organization and development of the argument, and no critical 'hook' with which the reader could engage.

In conclusion, I would once again commend the hard work of all those involved in preparing candidates for Spanish, and have been impressed by the high standard of work submitted. It is to be hoped that these comments are constructive and helpful in the preparation of candidates in the forthcoming year.

Comments on specific questions

Part I: Discursive essay

There was a choice of five essay titles for which candidates were required to write a 350–450 words in Spanish response. The essay is marked following the published marking grids for accuracy and linguistic range out of 24 marks. Development and organisation of ideas are then assessed out of 16 marks. Candidates are free to write whatever they like as long as it fully addresses the question. They are also expected to use a wide range of vocabulary and a good sense of idiom. Weaker and overconfident candidates too often failed to address the question. Focusing on the development of the argument by substantiating, giving relevant examples, and then organising them well is of the utmost importance.

Points to note for future improvement should include the need to fully address the question set. Careful planning will allow candidates to avoid repetition of the same idea and to give appropriate examples in support of the arguments presented. Care and attention are needed in spelling, the use of the correct gender of words, sentence construction and word order.

In conclusion, planning and accuracy remain the two big areas to be worked on in preparation for next year's examinations.

Part II: Usage

Exercise 1 Questions 2–6

The question type was a gapfill, with the verbs which needed to be manipulated offered in brackets, and a wide range of tenses and moods was tested. Candidates coped well with the exercise. If problems occurred, they tended to be, like last year, on **Questions 2 and 5**, where the correct use of the Subjunctive was tested.

Surprisingly some candidates also struggled with **Question 3**, and the correct spelling of the Imperfect tense.

Exercise 2 Questions 7–11

This exercise was a grammar task, which tested grammar and manipulation of language.

Question 11 proved difficult to a number of candidates. This is a lexis exercise, where the candidates had to change *viajaron a Madrid* to *durante el viaje a Madrid*. Although the preposition *a* was given in the sentence, some candidates changed it to *en* in their answers. It should be stressed, for the second year, that Candidates are advised to pay close attention to the grammar which is actually provided in the question.

Question 10 proved to be the most challenging. Candidates found difficulty in the use of the relative pronoun.

Exercise 3 Questions 12–32

This exercise consisted of a short article on how the use of contraception could help counteract the problem of climate change. Candidates had to choose the right answer from a choice of four options. All the options provided are correct Spanish. This exercise tested common grammar points such as the correct use of demonstrative adjectives, prepositions, possessive pronouns and gender. Many candidates scored full marks, but weaker ones still encountered problems. When mistakes were made, they usually occurred on **Questions 12, 18, 20 and 28**.

PRINCIPAL COURSE SPANISH

Paper 9781/04
Cultural Topics and Texts

Key Messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- read the question with care and think about what they are asked to do
- plan their answer and organise their material with close attention to the question
- take care to include analysis and argument, and avoid simply retelling the story.

General comments

This year's candidates answered on three Part I Topics and three Part II Texts. In general, they achieved an impressive understanding of the subject matter. The strongest scripts combined an astute grasp of the question with excellent organisation of material and an in-depth knowledge of the Topic/Text. Mid-range answers tended to write on the most prominent issues of the work studied without close focus on the terms of the question. Most candidates had a reasonable grasp of historical issues, though some anomalies cropped up in answers to Topics 1 and 5.

On matters of style, the quality of introductory paragraphs varied. The best established a framework for the essay; the worst were merely generalities. About half the essays ended with clear conclusions: in other cases, conclusions were either omitted, or introduced fresh material, or did not reflect the preceding argument. It was good to see a number of attributed quotes from critics, authors and directors about the works studied (unattributed use of such material is best avoided). It was also good that candidates were willing to disagree with assertions in the essay titles, for example in **Questions 3B** and **12B**, even when these assertions had authoritative sources.

Most candidates wrote beyond the recommended word length. The best were able to sustain their argument across their entire answer without recourse to narrative. However, when writing on the Texts in particular, there was a danger of candidates using up their relevant material in two good pages, but ploughing on regardless for two more. This was usually counter-productive.

In the Topics section, the accuracy of the Spanish was impressive, and answers were almost always comprehensible throughout. Candidates who showed evidence of mastering linguistic structures beyond those expected at GCSE were able to score above the 'good' category for language. A few candidates used turns of phrase that, for an academic essay at this level, were either too basic ('*En mi opinión,*'), too vague ('*Que yo sepa, ...*'), or too bulky and clichéd ('*Es importante destacar el hecho de que...*', '*No cabe la menor duda de que se debe tener en cuenta que....*'). A succinct writing style suits this paper well, and this was a positive feature of most answers in the Texts section.

Comments on specific questions

Part I: Cultural Topics

Question 1

- A** Candidates needed to understand the term *defienden* in the question, and not misinterpret it as *están a favor de* or *critican*. Stronger answers put into context the different circumstances in which these works were created. Attempts to portray *La Plaza del Diamante* and *¡Ay, Carmela!* as 'propaganda', and their protagonists as representatives of the Republic, were less convincing. Some candidates made good points about Colometa's lack of political consciousness, the pragmatism of Paulino, and Carmela's increasing identification with the republican cause at an emotional level. It was helpful to point out *La Plaza del Diamante*'s focus on universal human

suffering rather than the politics of the era, and to differentiate between factions within each *bando* in *¡Ay, Carmela!*. In the latter, the cruelty of *bando nacional* officials was widely noted, as was the contrast between the theatrical events that open and close the film. There was much discussion of the different diet in the two camps (though few related this to the support of the *bando nacional's* foreign allies). Some observed that women only featured in the republican camp. Those writing on *Réquiem por un campesino español* identified the author's clear, though low-key, defence of the republican cause. The cruelty of the *señoritos* was widely remarked, while perceptive candidates alluded to the political evolution of the village and Paco's errors of political judgement as symptomatic of the Republic's failings. Various claims were made about the position of the Church, not all of which were substantiated. Most candidates knew the works well, even if the plight of the protagonists in some cases absorbed more attention than the focus of the question.

- B** To score well, answers needed to focus closely on the chosen moments and analyse the characters' motives in those scenes. The visit of Paco and Mosén Millán to the caves was the favoured scene from *Réquiem por un campesino español*, portrayed as setting Paco on the road to political engagement and death, and marking the start of the rupture between him and Mosén Millán. The final scene was the most chosen from *¡Ay, Carmela!*, with more varied offerings from *La Plaza del Diamante*.

Question 3

- A** The best answers looked at the range of associations – cultural and cinematographic – of the films' settings. The dominant setting of *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* is Pepa's flat, and a number of candidates successfully linked her balcony to her life-story (though hardly any commented on the flat itself). Others found it productive to focus on the La Mancha scenes in *Volver* and the multifaceted portrayal of Barcelona in *Todo sobre mi madre*. Unsurprisingly, a clear and detailed understanding of the material was necessary to portray Almodóvar's intentions coherently. Less good answers lapsed into travelogue or commented on the characters more than the *escenarios*. The question lent itself well to references to all three films for candidates who chose to do so.
- B** Candidates answered this question well, correctly pointing out that the dysfunctional human relationships in these films are those involving male characters, and contrasting this with the *solidaridad* among the females. As in question A, several candidates alluded (albeit without attribution) to ideas that Almodóvar has put on record, e.g. on the web-sites of his films: at best, this provided convincing corroboration of the candidate's argument and knowledge of the topic; when not properly put into context, it risked giving a muddled view of the director's work.

Question 5

- A** All answers focused on *La casa de Bernarda Alba* and *Como agua para chocolate*. Candidates needed to be clear which of the question's three key terms they were addressing at any one time (*siempre*, *víctima* or *frustraciones*), all of which deserved some attention in the answers. In the event, the *siempre* element was well answered, with candidates differentiating perceptively between those who accepted their wretched lot and those who rebelled. *Víctima* was less well explored, with few convincing explanations of why women were both oppressors and oppressed in the two works. *Frustraciones* drew out some good analysis of both sexual and social factors. The Gertrudis sub-plot in *Como agua para chocolate* provided useful evidence in support of a 'no' answer to the question. Candidates also did well to refer to symbolic elements like cooking in *Como agua para chocolate* or water in *La casa de Bernarda Alba* as antidotes to the characters' frustrations. Those who described Adela's death as a victory did not always substantiate this interpretation; those who saw Tita's death in this light helped their cause by referring to the magical realist nature of the scene.
- B** This question required detailed analysis of a chosen scene in each work. The very few answers received tended to give too general an overview of the text.

Relevant to both answers: a number of candidates lacked the correct Spanish terms for suicide and stealing.

Question 8

- A** All those answering question 8 chose this option. Candidates wrote perceptively on the physical description of the woman and disapprovingly of Neruda's approach to male-female relations. Most answers looked beyond the stock interpretation of *VPA* as an exercise in *machismo*, with many showing an excellent grasp of the wider collection. Close reading of the text helped add value to answers: the most astute candidates were able to recognise the alienation at the start of the second stanza and discuss what was meant by the image of the invading night in line 6. Likewise, analysis of the *te amo* of line 9 or the *gracia* of the final stanza was a hallmark of the better answers. The main omission was to overlook that the woman is being compared to the world in line 2, casting a different light on the poet's view of himself as a *labriego (que) socova*. By contrast, the sense of hopelessness in the final stanza was well understood and related to other poems in the collection

Question 10

- A** Not attempted.
- B** Candidates were well versed in the relatively few dream sequences in the novel (though varied in their ability to specify where they occur in the narrative). Answers identified how dreams add to our understanding of Castel and María Iribarne. Some used references to Freud constructively. Others suggested that Castel's dreams were more reliable than his waking thoughts because they reached the reader without being filtered through his conscious mind, but this claim proved difficult to substantiate. Evidence in the text that Castel at times found dreams and reality hard to differentiate was not explored.
- C** To score well on this question, candidates needed clearly to analyse the tunnel metaphor as it occurs in chapter XXXVI and form a judgement on the way that Castel applies it to his situation. They then needed to decide whether it has a bearing on Castel's reliability as a narrator. These requirements stretched some candidates to the limits of their ability to manipulate complex ideas while keeping their argument grounded in the text. Attempts retrospectively to apply the metaphor to scenes earlier in the novel were not always successful (the tunnel emphasises Castel's solitude, whereas much of his memoir concerns his dealings with others). A more fruitful approach was to explain the metaphor as Castel's description of what it is like to suffer from his psychological condition. Some candidates shrewdly argued that we learn as much from the way Castel narrates as from what he narrates. There was also strong analysis of how Castel distorts accounts of events to make others look bad.

Question 12

- A** Candidates were able to score well by drawing out from this passage the themes of *honor*, irony, fate, doubt and *machismo*. The main omission was consideration of why Pura, a woman, so vehemently upholds the *machista* code of honour. The strongest answers centred their analysis on the text and focused closely on the closing lines, with the ability to comment on *albedrío* often being a characteristic of the best responses. Some perceptive answers referred to Ángela's later insights into her thought processes during this scene, and to the contrast between this gentle portrayal of Bayardo and the honour code's usual obligations on a husband in his position.
- B** Candidates needed to stay focused on the reference to structure in the question, and resist more general discussion of whether *CMA* is a detective story. The best answers began by defining the structure of a detective story, referencing Agatha Christie etc. as necessary, and then contrasting this with the structure of *CMA*. Most answers recognised that the identity of Ángela's lover is the real mystery, and that the ambiguous role and perspective of the narrator subverts the traditional structure of a detective story.
- C** Some candidates found strong material in the dichotomy between the community's respect for the Church and its lack of Christian values. The conduct of Padre Amador was used as evidence for the failings of the church in the society of the novel. There were also perceptive comments associating religion with male authority and superstition with female intuition. Some candidates stated that García Márquez was 'criticising' religion, thereby overlooking the author's subtle treatment of his material and the way he leads readers to draw their own conclusions. Many candidates successfully associated superstition with the prevalent belief among the townspeople

that fate is a guiding influence in human affairs. The interpretation of dreams was much cited as evidence of superstition.

Some candidates (in all **Question 12** answers) stated that the setting of the novel was variously Sucre, Riohacha or Colombia, overlooking the fact that its non-specific location is an integral feature of the text. Referring to the real-life story on which *CMA* is based was likewise not germane to this year's questions. Several candidates appropriately cited Stephen Hart's *Critical Guide* to lend extra authority to their arguments.