SPANISH LITERATURE

> **Paper 8673/41**
>
> **Texts**

Key messages

- Candidates should study the stylistic and thematic qualities of the text and not simply the storyline.
- Candidates must read the question carefully and respond to all aspects of their chosen question.
- Each answer must include specific references to the text, which are directly relevant to the question asked.
- References to the text must be correct, for example names of characters.
- Any background to the text must be accurate, for example the date the text was written.
- 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.
- Candidates need to focus on essay-writing skills. It is expected that they can write an answer with a clear introduction and conclusion, and that the discussion includes relevant detailed material.

General comments

Examiners commented that the general standard of work was good; candidates had studied the texts carefully and presented answers legibly. However, greater focus on the question set and improved essay-writing skills would benefit a large number of candidates.

In some cases candidates did not clearly indicate which question they had chosen to answer and Centres are requested to remind candidates to write the question number, e.g. '2(b)', before they start their essay.

Comments on specific questions

Sección Primera

Question 1   Ernesto Sábato: *El túnel*

In option **(a)**, candidates dealt well with parts **(i)** and **(ii)**. Part **(iii)** tended to be discussed in a more cursory manner with limited discussion of the link between Castel's need for a mother and for María.

In option **(b)**, candidates were given some scope in interpretation of the "*obsesiones*". There is much material to support the fundamental need to be accepted/loved/recognised as an individual.

Question 2   Pedro Calderón de la Barca: *El alcalde de Zalamea*

Candidates found option **(a)** straightforward and were able to give a detailed analysis of don Lope's role in the play.

Option **(b)** was chosen by very few candidates.

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

Answers to option **(a)** were generally good. Candidates were able to respond to parts **(i)** and **(ii)** succinctly and gave balanced analysis in part **(iii)**. The essays included many detailed references and understanding of the underlying themes of the novel.

Option **(b)** attracted few answers, but candidates appreciated the author's purpose in the way the novel ends and were able to discuss how it informed a reading of the text.

Question 4   Lauro Olmo: *La camisa*

Option **(a)** gave rise to some lively responses. Candidates understood the role of señor Paco in the play and were able to give detailed examples of his dubious character. The best essays also analysed his exploitation of the men and examined his role in a wider political context.

Option **(b)** attracted very few answers, which focused on how poverty extends beyond the purely physical to sap the human spirit.

Sección Segunda

Question 5   Carmen Laforet: *Nada*

(a)   This question did not attract a large number of responses. The best answers went beyond the experiences of Andrea, to include analysis of the way other members of the family were affected and how they reacted.

(b)   Candidates were able to discuss Ena's role in the novel in some detail. She was generally seen as pivotal in helping Andrea adapt to and begin to understand her new life.

Question 6   Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

Almost all candidates chose to answer on this text.

(a)   Most candidates found both positive and negative aspects in the presentation of love in the novel. The experience of many characters – Tita, Pedro, Mamá Elena, Gertrudis and Dr Brown – was analysed. Candidates showed understanding and very detailed knowledge.

(b)   Answers focused primarily on Tita and her misfortunes. The best essays included references to the suffering of many others such as Mamá Elena, Nacha and Rosaura. Gertrudis was generally seen as a rebel who attained happiness and freedom on her own terms.

Question 7   Federico García Lorca: *Yerma*

All candidates answered on this text.

(a)   Candidates tended to focus on Yerma herself, showing how the pressures of society conspired to stifle her. Some answers dealt with Juan and Victor also, seeing them as victims of 'lo que dirán' too. There were some more sophisticated arguments that considered the nature of repression in a wider sense and discussed the author's intentions in the play.

(b)   This was a popular choice. Candidates produced good answers supporting both alternatives in the question. The best essays compared and contrasted the options. Weaker responses suggested that Yerma was liberated by Juan's death and was now free to marry Víctor. This reaction points to a particular way of reading the text, seeing it as more of a representation of reality than a work of literature with more complex and possibly contradictory messages.

Question 8   Alfonsina Storni: *Selección de poemas*

There were few responses on this text.

(a)   The choice of poems was critical to the success of the answer. Candidates who chose carefully and found a way of linking themes or images between the examples produced more coherent and effective answers.

(b)   This question did not present any difficulties. Candidates do not need to quote extensively from the poem but rather should spend time in showing awareness of poetic technique and demonstrate how the themes are explored and developed by the writer.

Concluding remarks

Centres are continuing to choose texts that appeal to their candidates and the enthusiasm is apparent. In order to maximise the effort spent in reading and preparing the texts, candidates would benefit from further guidance in interpreting questions and in essay-writing skills.

Resources

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SPANISH LITERATURE

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Paper 8673/42

Texts

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- Candidates need to focus on essay-writing skills. It is expected that they can write an answer with a clear introduction and conclusion, and that the discussion includes relevant detailed material.

General comments

Examiners commented that the general standard of work was good; candidates had studied the texts carefully and presented answers legibly. However, greater focus on the question set and improved essay-writing skills would benefit a large number of candidates.

In some cases candidates did not clearly indicate which question they had chosen to answer and Centres are requested to remind candidates to write the question number, e.g. '2(b)', before they start their essay.

Comments on specific questions

Sección Primera

Question 1   Ernesto Sábato: *El túnel*

Option **(a)** was the most popular here. The majority of candidates noted that Allende passed the letter to Castel. The best answers examined the importance of "*…me pertenecía*" in detail, showing how Castel's possessive nature led to the death of María.

Option **(b)** was answered well by those candidates who had studied the symbolism of the names and how these related to the themes of the text.

Question 2   Pedro Calderón de la Barca: *El alcalde de Zalamea*

Marks awarded to answers to both options for this text were particularly dependent on close reading of the questions. Candidates must respond to all parts of the question; in many cases the focus was limited because candidates did not pay attention to the specific wording.

In option **(a)**, most candidates picked out key parts of the extract to support their argument and answered parts **(i)** and **(ii)** thoroughly. Part **(iii)** required understanding of irony as a vehicle for the exploration of the themes. A significant number of essays dealt with the themes alone, or took it to mean criticism of the society portrayed.

Option **(b)** asked candidates to reflect on the importance of verisimilitude in the text and how this relates to the moral message of the theme. The best answers gave examples of Calderón's depiction of life at the time and the way the characters were made credible. This enhanced the themes, as the audience were able to identify with the individuals and gain greater understanding of the moral dilemmas. A description of themes alone did not constitute a full answer.

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

Answers on this text were generally less detailed, with fewer specific references to support the discussion. This limited the marks available to those essays. It serves as an example of the way in which some candidates read the texts with too much focus on the story and less on the novel as a work of literature.

Option **(a)**, parts **(i)** and **(ii)** were answered well. Part **(iii)** required candidates to respond to the ironic quotation and show how this is discussed in the text. There are many examples of both incidents and the attitude of individuals to support an answer. It needed to be made clear that candidates understood "*el desierto*" and the ecological message of the text.

The question in option **(b)** is often the first focus of discussion when studying this text. Many answers here reflected the points made earlier – little cohesion to the argument or awareness of the importance of the "*novelas de amor*" as a central element within the novel. Candidates needed to consider the novel as a construct, a work of the imagination, where every part has been included for a specific purpose, and analyse it accordingly.

Question 4   Lauro Olmo: *La camisa*

Option **(a)** was a popular question and resulted in sound essays. Candidates were able to discuss the different ways Olmo used alcohol and drunkenness within the text, both to inform the audience regarding the social issues and to underline many other themes.

In option **(b)**, the wording of the question did not invite candidates to choose a theme and write about it. The focus was on "*machismo*"; candidates needed to analyse how this is presented in the play in the first instance and then, if they wished, go on to show how another theme may be considered central to the message of the text.

Sección Segunda

Question 5   Carmen Laforet: *Nada*

(a)   This was the least popular question on this text. There were a few very good answers, where candidates had clearly studied the historical background of the text and were able to show not only the physical deprivation of the time, but also the spiritual, emotional and personal aspects.

(b)   Many candidates chose this question, and generally answered well. There was much material to support the idea that Andrea's time in Barcelona had been completely negative. The best essays included these references as well as a more considered analysis of what Andrea learned and how this informed her decision to leave.

Question 6   Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

(a)   A very large number of candidates answered this question. The factors that differentiated between responses were the level of detail and the sophistication of analysis. Many essays dealt with the development of the relationship between Tita and Mamá Elena chronologically, and analysed how their characters were revealed in key interactions and events. Some candidates ignored the important revelation of Mamá Elena's lover. The majority of answers made some reference to "*realmente*" in the question, which suggests more than the normal response to grief.

(b)   This question also attracted many responses. Candidates showed detailed knowledge of the text and the best essays traced Nacha's influence beyond her death, in pivotal incidents in Tita's life. It was interesting to note that no reference was made to Nacha's ethnic background.

Question 7   Federico García Lorca: *Yerma*

Almost all candidates chose to write on this text.

(a)   This was the most popular option. All candidates were able to discuss a number of characters and, at a simple level, state whether they were happy or not. Within a very wide range of answers, the best analysed degrees of happiness and changing situations for Juan, Yerma and some other characters. There was a lack of subtlety in assessing the nature of the relationship between Víctor and Yerma, and only a small number of essays considered why there was so much unhappiness.

(b)   Most essays focused on the closing scene, and there was limited evidence of critical analysis. A number of candidates stated that the final scene was the key one because the audience finds out what happens in the end. The best examples of this choice included the ability to trace elements presaging and leading to the denouement. A few very good answers chose a different scene and analysed interactions between characters in detail as well as explaining symbols found throughout the text. By examining their function in that scene and showing how the themes developed, candidates showed appreciation of the dramatist's skill.

Question 8   Alfonsina Storni: *Selección de poemas*

There were few responses to this text.

(a)   This question gave scope for a range of interpretations and choice of poems.

(b)   Candidates who had prepared these poems thoroughly were able to give a convincing analysis.

Concluding remarks

Centres are continuing to choose texts that appeal to their candidates and the enthusiasm is apparent. In order to maximise the effort spent in reading and preparing the texts, candidates would benefit from further guidance in interpreting questions and in essay writing-skills.

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