

SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/41

Texts

Key messages

- Read the question carefully, noting or underlining all parts of the task and check that the whole question has been answered.
- Show knowledge of the text by making reference to incidents or characters or by giving quotations to support the argument. Simply narrating the story is not sufficient. All references and quotations must be relevant to the specific question being answered.
- Introductory paragraphs which give background information about the author and his or her life and other publications are not needed. Candidates must focus entirely on the question as it is set and mention any pertinent general details as part of the essay.
- Examiners must be able to read answers and therefore candidates are asked to pay close attention to writing legibly.
- In **Questions 1(a), 2(a), 3(a) and 4(a)**, candidates should give a brief answer (often one sentence is sufficient) to parts **(i)** and **(ii)**. The majority of the answer should be in response to part **(iii)**, which requires detailed knowledge of the text beyond the printed extract.
- Candidates must number their essays accurately, e.g. **5(b)** or **6(a)**, so that Examiners can immediately identify which task is being answered.

General comments

Examiners noted a lower number of examples of rubric infringements and the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for the examination.

The key messages above point to several issues which recur frequently. Candidates who address these will be in a good position to make the most of their knowledge of the texts and achieve their full potential. Much of the advice given can be summarised as making the best use of the time available in the examination. It is counterproductive to write anything which is not relevant to the question chosen. All aspects of the question must be answered – omitting any of these will reduce the marks available. Candidates may be asked to analyse a specific aspect of a theme, so a pre-prepared general essay will not score highly. In the option **(a)** questions in **Sección Primera**, long answers to parts **(i)** and **(ii)** will leave insufficient time to spend on part **(iii)**, which should be the main focus of the answer.

If a candidate does not number a question correctly, or at all, it can make assessment difficult as the Examiner is left to guess the candidate's intentions. Candidates also need to be aware that if Examiners cannot read the work, it can be almost impossible to assess it. Very tiny handwriting is particularly challenging. Essays should be written in black or dark blue ink.

Most candidates showed detailed knowledge of the texts and had studied the themes and issues. There were some common misunderstandings relating to historical context and literary terms. Candidates are advised to avoid reference to these unless they are sure of the facts and the points being made add substance to the answer. Examiners look for individual responses to the questions, supported by knowledge and understanding of the text.

Comments on specific questions

Sección Primera

Question 1 Juan Rulfo: *Pedro Páramo*

- (a) There was a wide range in the quality of answers to this option, including some very good responses. The best essays identified the information required in parts (i) and (ii) briefly and then gave examples of how priests behaved, showing a lack of Christian charity to some parishioners and a tendency to bow to political pressure or financial gain.
- (b) This was the more popular option on this text. Some candidates referred only to one or two individuals, whereas others were able to take a wider view and showed insight into the depiction of the female characters. The answers dealt with social, religious and personal aspects and gave good examples without simply narrating or describing.

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

- (a) This question gave rise to some interesting discussion on the importance of the theme of violence in the play. Segismundo's experience in the tower did not include physical violence, but he was brutally treated in being denied free will. Rosaura was prepared to use violence, evidenced by the sword she wore. The people chose to rebel against Basilio in order to change the succession. However, harmony was restored in a largely non-violent way. In order to achieve a good outcome, candidates needed to analyse the role of violence rather than list examples, and to be aware of the contemporary concept of society and the individual.
- (b) The more obvious image of the dream was well documented in responses, but few candidates were able to go beyond this. Answers were generally satisfactory.

Question 3 Jorge Luis Borges: *Ficciones*

- (a) There were relatively few responses to this text. Candidates understood the context and Funes' experiences. Part (iii) of the question asked for an analysis of the meaning of the *Ficción*. Candidates were credited for presenting an individual response, providing the argument was supported with detailed references to the text. Much background information on the author's biography is not necessary and often cannot be rewarded.
- (b) This question gave candidates scope to choose two *Ficciones* and use these to show the brilliance of Borges' imagination. Examiners were open to a wide range of interpretations of this, provided candidates were able to justify the argument with detailed reference to the text.

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

- (a) Candidates were able to answer parts (i) and (ii) confidently. In part (iii), many wrote about the clear divisions in society between rich and poor, and the specific problems affecting those at the very bottom of the ladder who suffered from a disability. Many considered also the role of women in society as seen in the play. Some answers showed study of Buero Vallejo's work as a satire not only on society in France in the pre-revolutionary period, but also on that of Spain under Franco. This was successful when the facts were known and candidates did not confuse the date of the play's publication and the timing of the Civil War.
- (b) There were some thoughtful responses to this question. Candidates identified a number of examples of *engaño y la mentira* and the effect on victims of this behaviour. Some discussed hypocrisy, which was not quite the point of the question. Most analysed the moral viewpoint presented in the play and showed understanding.

Sección Segunda

Question 5 Carmen Laforet: *Nada*

- (a) This question focused clearly on the importance of the past as well as the present. Most candidates referred to the effects of the Civil War on the fortune of Andrea's family, and some

analysed the psychological legacy for individuals. The best essays also considered the role of memory and nostalgia as well as the more concrete events involving Román and Ena's mother.

- (b) Answers to this question showed some awareness of the effects of literary style, and understanding of the immediacy and empathy aroused in the use of the first person narrative. Essays which scored more highly included detailed analysis of the drawbacks of this device, in, for example, the limited point of view and the possible bias in the recounting of events.

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

- (a) Answers to both options on this question generally showed knowledge of the text, if sometimes they lacked precision. Candidates tended to discuss without sufficient reference to the text, producing rather general responses. There were some very good essays where detail was combined with thoughtful analysis, often going beyond the obvious examples (Trueba and Clara), to include a wider consideration of how Trueba's blindness to the effects of his behaviour and shortcomings was gradually tempered. A number of candidates did not appear to know the ending of the novel.
- (b) This question required much detail in order to attain a satisfactory result. Storytelling was a temptation for some, whilst others were able to select examples of events or situations which can be seen as a comparison to or representation of the themes of the novel. The fact that the *casa de la esquina* was largely Clara's domain gave a good starting point for analysis.

Question 7 Federico García Lorca: *Bodas de sangre*

- (a) This was the most popular text by far and was chosen by almost all candidates. This option asked candidates to analyse the importance of the lullaby in Act One. Candidates needed to give a very detailed commentary on the poem, both in terms of its poetic language and references to events and individuals in the play, by inference. There was a tendency to give a generalised answer without considering the images in sufficient detail or to consider the effect of the poem in context. Some answers showed awareness of the poetry and made thoughtful observations on how it contributed to the success of the play.
- (b) The first task in answering this question was to define terms – what is meant by *contenido espiritual*? If this was not done, essays sometimes lacked focus as candidates included several references to aspects of the play which may be taken as having some kind of relevance, but with no cohesion to the argument. There is clearly a religious or moral compass guiding the actions of characters, and also a more individual impulse at play. Again, candidates who gave thought to the argument and chose examples judiciously achieved good results.

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

- (a) This option was chosen by a small number of candidates. Those who had been well prepared in writing a critical commentary, and ensured that they paid close attention to the specific points in the question (the sea and its importance for Neruda), did well. Examiners look for close analysis of poetic language and presentation of the theme, and a personal response to the work.
- (b) There was much scope for candidates to select the three poems on which to focus their answer. The best essays found a way of linking the poems with the themes, either in the way the poet presented the ideas, or through linguistic threads, such as imagery.

SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/42

Texts

Key messages

- Read the question carefully, noting or underlining all parts of the task and check that the whole question has been answered.
- Show knowledge of the text by making reference to incidents or characters or by giving quotations to support the argument. Simply narrating the story is not sufficient. All references and quotations must be relevant to the specific question being answered.
- Introductory paragraphs which give background information about the author and his or her life and other publications are not needed. Candidates must focus entirely on the question as it is set and mention any pertinent general details as part of the essay.
- Examiners must be able to read answers and therefore candidates are asked to pay close attention to writing legibly.
- In **Questions 1(a), 2(a), 3(a) and 4(a)**, candidates should give a brief answer (often one sentence is sufficient) to parts **(i)** and **(ii)**. The majority of the answer should be in response to part **(iii)**, which requires detailed knowledge of the text beyond the printed extract.
- Candidates must number their essays accurately, e.g. **5(b)** or **6(a)**, so that Examiners can immediately identify which task is being answered.

General comments

Examiners noted a lower number of examples of rubric infringements and the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for the examination.

The key messages above point to several issues which recur frequently. Candidates who address these will be in a good position to make the most of their knowledge of the texts and achieve their full potential. Much of the advice given can be summarised as making the best use of the time available in the examination. It is counterproductive to write anything which is not relevant to the question chosen. All aspects of the question must be answered – omitting any of these will reduce the marks available. Candidates may be asked to analyse a specific aspect of a theme, so a pre-prepared general essay will not score highly. In the option **(a)** questions in **Sección Primera**, long answers to parts **(i)** and **(ii)** will leave insufficient time to spend on part **(iii)**, which should be the main focus of the answer.

If a candidate does not number a question correctly, or at all, it can make assessment difficult as the Examiner is left to guess the candidate's intentions. Candidates also need to be aware that if Examiners cannot read the work, it can be almost impossible to assess it. Very tiny handwriting is particularly challenging. Essays should be written in black or dark blue ink.

Most candidates showed detailed knowledge of the texts and had studied the themes and issues. There were some common misunderstandings relating to historical context and literary terms. Candidates are advised to avoid reference to these unless they are sure of the facts and the points being made add substance to the answer. Examiners look for individual responses to the questions, supported by knowledge and understanding of the text.

Comments on specific questions

Sección Primera

Question 1 Juan Rulfo: *Pedro Páramo*

- (a) Parts (i) and (ii) were generally well done, with the questions answered accurately. In part (iii), few candidates were able to explore the themes in any depth; most tended to discuss 'death' in a fairly narrative way.
- (b) There were a number of prepared answers to this question, which were not entirely relevant. Most responses referred to the role of individuals, such as Pedro Páramo, with few references to the setting of the novel.

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

- (a) Most answered parts (i) and (ii) correctly although the responses tended to include too much storytelling and were overlong. Part (iii) was often well argued, with understanding of how Segismundo used free will to make moral judgements. The answer obviously went beyond him simply giving up Rosaura to allow her to regain her honour.
- (b) Key to a successful answer here was the candidate's interpretation of '*la moralidad cristiana*'. Some candidates ignored this part of the question altogether, which limited the marks available.

Question 3 Jorge Luis Borges: *Ficciones*

- (a) There were relatively few answers on this text. Those who tackled this option showed understanding and the ability to respond to part (iii) in a straightforward way.
- (b) This question gave candidates scope to choose two *Ficciones* to analyse. *La biblioteca de Babel* was the most popular choice, often paired with *Las ruinas circulares*. The responses were thoughtful with a range of examples linking the two pieces.

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

- (a) Many candidates answered on this text, with option (a) being the most popular. The play was well known and understood in general. The best answers expressed what was implied in parts (i) and (ii), showing the ability to interpret the text. In part (iii), some responses were too limited as analysis of '*la conciencia y el egoísmo*' centred on one character only, usually Valindin. Higher-scoring essays discussed the conflict seen in Adriana in particular, as well as other characters. A number of answers did not address the issue of conflict at all. Examiners saw many examples of the interpretation of the play as a story about Spain in the mid-twentieth century but this was often not incorporated successfully into the rest of the essay.
- (b) The accepted view presented in responses was that violence had triumphed, and this was generally presented as physical violence, prompted by the reference to '*espada*' in the question. The best answers went beyond a list of instances of physical violence to consider why it was used and to analyse psychological violence also. There were some good parallels drawn between this and the political situation in Spain at the time the play was written. These needed to be brief and to the point; some candidates spent too long explaining Buero Vallejo's political views.

Sección Segunda

Question 5 Carmen Laforet: *Nada*

- (a) This was a popular text. Some very good answers here analysed Ena's role in the development of Andrea, and also considered the friendship from Ena's point of view. There was a high degree of storytelling, however, which detracted from the time available for analysis.
- (b) The best essays here considered the role of description in the novel in a number of aspects. These included the presentation of Barcelona and the family home post-war, as compared to Andrea's memories, and analysed the relevance of this. Specific descriptions were selected to show how they revealed Andrea's state of mind. The fact that the novel is narrated in the first

person was another factor for analysis. Some candidates focused more on the use of language in descriptive passages. All emphasised how effectively the descriptions draw the reader in to the text.

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

- (a) There were many answers on this text. Option (a) required candidates to look at relationships between mothers and daughters, as well as mothers and sons. It was essential to address both parts of the question. Most candidates focused on one or two examples, primarily Clara and her family. The discussion of sons tended to be limited but the best answers found reasons for the difference in treatment and included examples of mothers who only had sons.
- (b) Many essays on this question discussed the physical silences of Clara and the reasons for them. Some took the analysis to a higher level by considering the intangible examples of silence, in political and social aspects of the novel, for example. The silence of those bullied and violated by Trueba became resentment and resulted in vengeance. There were some thoughtful and individual responses.

Question 7 Federico García: Lorca *Bodas de sangre*

- (a) This text attracted the largest number of answers, but option (a) was the less popular choice. The best answers showed how the staging of the third Act of the play was structured, and how it was experienced by an audience. In many cases, candidates did not give sufficient emphasis to the physical staging, seeing the play only as a text to be read, not visualising it as a piece of live theatre. One key word was given in the question – ‘*distanciamiento*’. This led in to an analysis of the inclusion of the ‘supernatural’ characters and their role in this Act.
- (b) This option was exceedingly popular. Some very good answers related the play to real life in Andalucía in the past and understood how the symbols and supernatural effects all fit together coherently. Candidates selected references which illustrated the social forces affecting Andalucía, or indeed somewhere else, and how individuals responded to it. There was a tendency to list examples and simply say that this could not happen now, taking events at face value rather than studying the universal nature of human experience, presented in a work of literature.

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

- (a) The question referred to *Poema 1* as ‘*típico*’. In the analysis of the poem, candidates needed to make reference to themes or techniques which are found in other poems in the collection to justify the argument. Those who chose this question generally responded well.
- (b) There were few answers to this question but candidates were able to select poems which illustrated the quotation and used these effectively.