

SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/41
Texts

Key messages

These points are dealt with in more detail in the comments on specific questions below,

- Analysis of the text is always required. Simply re-telling the story of the text does not give candidates access to the full range of the mark scheme.
- Candidates should focus their answer directly on the question chosen.
- Candidates should **not** begin their answers with a general introduction presenting information about the author and his or her work.
- All aspects of a text may be examined. For a play, candidates are expected to be able to consider the staging of the work. In prose and poetry, the use of language and the structure of the work are to be studied.
- Candidates must ensure they have the names and settings of the chosen texts correct.
- Candidates must know what type of text is being studied (plays are often incorrectly referred to as *novelas*) and be aware of the essential qualities of each. There may be some confusion by those who have watched the film of a novel, for example.
- Candidates are reminded of the importance of clear handwriting. Legible presentation of a candidate's work is essential for the Examiner to be able find evidence of the candidate meeting the descriptors in the mark scheme.

General comments

It is hoped that future candidates can benefit from the content of this report so that they are successfully able to show their full ability under exam conditions. The key messages above are crucial for candidates to achieve their potential. Examiners have seen many examples of each of these in this session.

The majority of candidates were well prepared for the examination. It is encouraging to note that Examiners are seeing fewer examples of rubric infringements where candidates do not follow the instructions in choosing which questions to answer. It may be worth Centres reinforcing the essential rule that candidates cannot select both the **(a)** and **(b)** option for any one text. To this aim, candidates should study a minimum of three texts from the list provided in the syllabus for the year of study, with at least one text from each section.

Candidates must read the question carefully enough to identify the key concept targeted in the question, and then ensure that their answer is built around it. Pre-prepared 'general introduction' paragraphs are to be discouraged. Such introductions are rarely relevant to the question chosen and this uses valuable time and words which could be put to better effect. Candidates need to practise starting their essays with a first paragraph which addresses the question directly, defining the terms of the points under discussion and beginning a clearly argued essay with a logical and clear conclusion. Practice in essay writing per se is a most useful exercise to attain a high level of achievement in this examination. See the mark scheme for detailed comments on what is being sought in this regard.

Most candidates produced essays of a sensible length, with paragraphs and appropriate use of quotations. Those who chose to copy out long passages from the text, or even the extracts, were not credited for it. Quotation is used to substantiate or illustrate a point in the argument; it is not a point in itself.

The historical and geographical context of a text are important in understanding the work as a whole. Where there was confusion in this regard, it tended to weaken responses. The candidate's intentions must be clear; Examiners often have to make a judgement on which character is being referred to if the name is incorrect. Names should not be abbreviated. Similarly, the century and country in which a work is set must also be known.

Virtually all candidates answered on the texts by either García Márquez, García Lorca or Fernán-Gomez, with a fairly large number of answers on Rulfo and Lope de Vega. This session, there were examples of responses for each of the texts on the list.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

In **Section 1**, the **(a)** option of each question has three distinct parts. Of these, responses to **(i)** and **(ii)** should be the shortest by far, often only requiring one sentence. Candidates are simply being asked questions related directly to the extract printed in the Examination Paper. Part **(iii)**, requires candidates to explore an aspect of the text presented in the extract and to analyse this in relation to the whole text. Responses to part **(iii)** should make up the vast majority of the answer.

Question 1 Juan Rulfo: *Pedro Páramo*

- (a)** In **(i)** and **(ii)**, candidates fulfilled the demands of the questions although some answers were rather too long, reducing time and words available for **(iii)**. Part **(iii)** required responses to focus on *los temas universales*. Candidates discussed a number of these, including *caciquismo*, *machismo*, corruption, poverty, and power. One of the factors which differentiated between the quality of responses was the breadth of the argument. Responses which simply listed the themes without an explanation of how they developed throughout the novel were not able to access the higher mark bands.
- (b)** This question focused on the role of Media Luna in the Reader's understanding of Pedro Páramo's character. The best answers were well planned before writing, with an introductory paragraph outlining what Media Luna (the estate/ranch) meant to Pedro Páramo. Some candidates mistakenly discussed Comala as if it were Media Luna. Many essays explained that Pedro Páramo's sense of optimism or depression were directly reflected in his attitude to the estate. By analysing the events which prompted these, and showing how his character was developed, candidates focused directly on the question and scored highly.

Question 2 Lope de Vega: *Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña*

This text was not as popular as many of the other options.

- (a)** Parts **(i)** and **(ii)** were dealt with satisfactorily. Key words in the question for part **(iii)** were *comprender*, *juzgar* and *Comendador*. So the first aspect to be tackled was to explain what motivated the Comendador to act the way he did. The second part of the question focused on judging his behaviour in the context of the society in which he lived. The best essays included reference to the King and Queen as they were the ultimate judges and their opinion on Peribáñez's actions served to restore harmony in society.
- (b)** The key words in this question were *desenlace* and *optimista*. Candidates who chose this option were largely successful in addressing these requirements. Most concentrated on the issue of loyalty, showing that Peribáñez's loyalty to his wife, the Comendador (until his deceit was uncovered) and the King, was rewarded at the end of the play. The greater view of the threat to society as a whole was less often discussed.

Question 3 Jorge Luis Borges: *Ficciones*

- (a)** This was the less popular option on this text. Parts **(i)** and **(ii)** were generally answered satisfactorily, although the ambiguity of the words in **(ii)** was not always mentioned. For part **(iii)**, Examiners rewarded responses which dealt with the key words *mejor cuento* and *justificar*. This question gave candidates scope to select what they saw as the outstanding elements of *El Sur* and either compare these with another *Ficción* or use another piece to develop the points made with regard to *El Sur*. Examiners were pleased to see candidates take an individual stance and to engage with the text in this way.
- (b)** The key concepts in the question were *visión de la vida*, *misterio* and *el azar*. Candidates responded well to this question and chose a huge range of *Ficciones* to analyse. Many discussed the themes of labyrinth, library or lottery. Others explored the concept of identity and individuality. All succeeded in choosing two or more pieces to analyse.

Question 4 Fernando Fernán-Gómez: *Las bicicletas son para el verano*

This text was fairly popular, with roughly equal numbers choosing (a) and (b).

- (a) In parts (i) and (ii), most details were correct but some thought Julio had already died at the time of this extract, which was not the case. The point here is that Julio was not a relative. In part (iii), the key idea was to show how this scene helps us understand the play as a whole. The lentil scene is one of the most moving in the play, and underlines the suffering of ordinary citizens during the war. The effect of hunger was going beyond physical discomfort, making characters act against their principles in the struggle to survive. The best answers then proceeded to analyse this theme throughout the play.
- (b) The key words in this question were *impresión, guerra* and *sin escenas del combate*. Most of the scenes were set inside, in the block of flats. The war was present in its effects on the characters and as a background noises of gunshots and bombs and news on the radio. The author gives the audience an impression of the experience of living through a war. Most found the work very effective as the tension created both as psychological fear and actual physical danger were successful.

Section 2

Question 5 Gabriel García Márquez: *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba*

Virtually every candidate answered on this text.

- (a) In this question, the key words were *mensaje político*. Most responses felt that there was a strong political message, seen through the eyes of the colonel and his family. The village was seen as a microcosm of a post-civil war society where the radical elements had been defeated by a right-wing reactionary force. Examples of such a society – no freedom of expression, censorship, poverty, isolation, underground opposition, and violence – were discussed.
- (b) This question's key words were *el coronel [...] es la novela*. The best essays showed how the whole novel is centred on the colonel; the point of view is his; the themes focus on his experiences; other characters are seen in relation to him. There were some interesting analyses and many candidates engaged fully with the novel.

Question 6 Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna*

This was also a relatively popular choice of text.

- (a) In this question the key words were *abuso del poder*. Most essays referred to Rolf Carlé's experience at the hands of his father and to some of Eva's employers. The differentiating factor here was between those who described the events and those who analysed how the theme was used to show the effect on victims, and how it could be overcome. It was also possible to extend the theme to the wider political sphere.
- (b) The key words here were *el amor lo cura todo*. The overall consensus was that yes, it can. Many candidates gave a number of examples from the text, mostly related to Eva, but also including Rolf and Mimí. Some showed how different kinds of love are seen in the novel, and to what extent a character's life can be changed.

Question 7 Federico García Lorca: *Bodas de sangre*

Virtually all candidates wrote about this text.

- (a) In this question, the key words were *técnicas teatrales, situación sencilla* and *drama complejo*. Candidates needed to consider how to structure their answer with care before starting to write. It is always advisable to define terms, so an introductory paragraph outlining the simple dramatic situation, the complexity of the play overall (Act 3) and some theatrical techniques would be helpful. Some referred to the source of the play – the newspaper article does underline the simplicity of the situation. The complexity emerges in the breadth and depth of the themes which arise from this, looking at the dilemma facing *la Novia*, for example. Themes such as 'the pressure of society versus the individual', 'destiny' and 'forces beyond human control' may all be seen as sophisticated aspects of the play. The question asks how these are expressed – many theatrical devices were used. The whole of Act 3 and the supernatural must be analysed. More simple devices such as the symbols introduced in Acts 1 and 2 – the horse, the knife – contribute to the sense of foreboding. It

is important that candidates are aware of the manipulation involved in writing a play – some saw it as a work to be read, rather than live theatre.

- (b) This question had as key words *no está enamorada* and *consiente en casarse*. The essence of this question lay in the social and family pressure on *la Novia* to marry *el Novio*. Many candidates were able to discuss this, and show why the earlier relationship with Leonardo could not be acceptable due to the difference in wealth and standing between *la Novia*'s family and his. There was some confusion regarding the plot. A number of responses indicated that the marriage between *la Novia* and *el Novio* had not taken place. Most succeeded in analysing the scene when *la Novia* is getting ready for her wedding, showing her reluctance. The contrast between *el Novio* and Leonardo was generally well presented, and the best answers contrasted the way *la Novia* reacted to each of the men. As far as *el Novio* was concerned, she was deferential or distant, but she was instinctively drawn to Leonardo and was passionate. Her dilemma between instinct and duty was well explained.

Question 8 Rosalía de Castro: *En las orillas del Sar*

There was a relatively small number of answers on this text.

- (a) In this option, candidates who were able to analyse the ways in which the author unified the poem in a coherent argument were more successful than those who went through the poem stanza by stanza, commenting on each one as the poem progressed. It is worth noting that it is not necessary to quote at length as this does not add to the force of the argument.
- (b) This option was open to many interpretations. The key words to address were *persona apasionada*. Essays focused on a range of topics inspiring passion in the poet, such as deforestation, emigration and social inequality. Candidates who chose this question engaged with the work and seemed to enjoy writing about the poems.

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Question 1 Juan Rulfo: *Pedro Páramo*

- (a)** The extract and characters were recognised and points **(i)** and **(ii)** were generally answered correctly. Some responses to **(ii)** were too vague.

In **(iii)**, candidates were required to focus on *la nostalgia*. It is always good practice to define terms – nostalgia was not understood by all. Successful responses mentioned the longing for better and happier times expressed by Dolores and many other characters, both in the world of the spirits and the world of Pedro Páramo in his lifetime.

- (b)** The key words to address in this question were *sufrido* and *vivido*. Most responses focused on suffering and often referred to the spirit world, *caciquismo* and the experience of Pedro Páramo as *cacique*. Candidates also provided successful responses which explained his effect on those dependent on him, as well as historical events and religious life in the village. The best essays selected appropriate examples from across the range of experiences in the novel and drew a conclusion about the novel as a whole.

Question 2 Lope de Vega: *Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña*

- (a)** Parts **(i)** and **(ii)** were generally well done as candidates recognised the passage and understood the events portrayed. In **(iii)**, the key word is *conflicto*. Responses to this part of the question tended to narrate the story which did not attract many marks. There was more success where candidates identified the conflict itself and analysed its importance in the play.

- (b)** The key word to address in this question was *lealtad*. Some candidates read this as a question on honour, which they had prepared and tried to present it as a response. However, essays that do not relate directly to the question set score less well. The best essays recognised that loyalty is indeed a central theme of the play and involves virtually all characters, including the King and Queen. In fact, the concept of loyalty unifies the work. The importance of understanding society at the time in which the play is set was highlighted in a number of essays, where candidates seemed to think that Casilda had the freedom to leave Peribáñez and have a more comfortable life with the Comendador. Examiners saw some thorough responses to this question.

Question 3 Jorge Luis Borges: *Ficciones*

- (a)** This was the less popular of the options on this text. In **(i)**, Menard tried to write the Quijote, not copy or change it; in **(ii)**, although the texts are identical, Borges indicates differences which make the Menard text superior. Part **(iii)** deals with Borges' basic premise that a work of literature exists beyond itself in that the way readers interact with it or are affected by it may change it. At the same time Borges may be satirising literary criticism, he may be being ironic or suggesting that literature creates order in a chaotic world, or considering the idea of the author as God. Borges' work is open to many interpretations. The key focus for responses should have been the purpose of literature.

- (b)** The key words to be addressed here were *percepción* and *memoria*. There were some good answers to this question. A range of *Ficciones* were studied, including '*Funes el memorioso*', '*La muerte y la brújula*', '*La Biblioteca de Babel*' and '*Las ruinas circulares*'. A useful starting point was to consider how people perceive the world – Borges seems to say that we do not understand reality so anything can happen. He also said '*el mundo es un caosy el hombre está perdido...*' Our

perception may be mistaken. What purpose does memory serve? As is usually the case with this text, a number of candidates wrote with real interest and understanding and seemed to enjoy the challenge of Borges.

Question 4 Fernando Fernán-Gómez: *Las bicicletas son para el verano*

- (a) Examiners saw a large number of essays on this question, with some very good ones. In (i), there was a range of opinion as to whether the scene was positive or negative, which was perfectly acceptable provided the opinion was supported with reference to the text. This answer should only have been one or two sentences long. Part (ii) caused some confusion as a number of candidates did not know what a *trinchera* was, but most answered well. A sufficient response would be to say that the presence of trenches indicated that the area was the site of active warfare with the opposing troops digging defences as they were so close.

Answers to part (iii) fell broadly into two categories. The first were those where candidates only referred to the opening scene of the play as a point of comparison or focused only on the scene printed and did not discuss other characters or events in the play. The second, and more successful group were able to see the play as a whole, taking the scene printed as a starting point, and discussed a number of issues. These covered areas such as; what did the play set out to do in the portrayal of a civil war?; the contrast between pre- and post-war life; realism; following the experience of one or two characters to show how the war affected them. Most were determined to include a discussion of the *bicicleta* as a symbol but this needed to be integrated into the argument to be effective.

- (b) The key words to be addressed in this question were *espíritu humano* and *sobrevivir*. As a general point in questions such as these where the candidate is being asked to comment on a theme, the majority of the essay must be focused on that theme and not another which the candidate sees as more important. It may be relevant to point out how the theme in the question interacts or contrasts with another, but in this case the strength of the human spirit seen in the fight for survival is the main focus of the essay.

An excellent starting point, as always, is to show understanding of the key words in the question and to set the scene in the opening paragraph, possibly indicating which aspects of the play will be discussed, such as the lack of food, changing attitudes, reactions to the developing political situation, reactions to danger. The question asks how the characters fought to survive and that aspect had to be present. This meant that a description of the hardships caused by the war did not answer the question. There were some excellent analyses of the 'lentil' episode, where candidates explored the characters' feelings and often related it to Manolita's theft of the piece of bread.

Section 2

Question 5 Gabriel García Márquez: *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba*

- (a) There were very many answers to this question and these attracted marks from across the full range. The key words in the question are *tan sencilla como parece*. The first task is therefore to explain *sencilla*. This encompasses a number of areas – the number of characters and the plot; the language; the themes; the setting, to name some. It was not sufficient to say that the novel is easy to read. Examiners were seeking an analysis of an apparently simple novel which portrays a breadth of vision and criticism of Colombian society as well as a moving portrayal of the married couple. An interesting and successful interpretation was that the simplicity of the novel is elegantly designed to portray the colonel's solitude. A less effective approach was to list the symbols and other literary techniques and then state that as these make the novel harder to understand.

The issues raised in marking this question point to some basic points for all candidates – define your terms and construct an argument before beginning to write.

- (b) The key word here is *metáforas*. By asking candidates to consider the importance, or role of these in the novel, candidates must be prepared to analyse them in terms of how they relate to themes or character portrayal, for example, not just listing them. The strongest answers went beyond the two most obvious metaphors (*gallo* and *carta*).

Question 6 Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna*

- (a) The key words to be addressed here are *no es feminista*. There were some very effective essays, especially where candidates began by explaining what they understood as feminism. It does not mean that the book is mostly about women. Most weighed up the evidence, but some had only considered the novel from one point of view and had not thought about how the male characters were portrayed, as well as the variety of stances seen in the female protagonists. There was an unusual and interesting interpretation of the novel as not feminist, but anti-machismo. Examiners are always pleased to read personal evaluations of the texts, provided they can be substantiated and are focused on the question.
- (b) This was the less popular of the two options on this text. The key words here are *presentación* and *Rolf Carlé*. Candidates often narrated Rolf's unhappy childhood and mentioned how this was similar to Eva's. The best answers recognised his importance in the novel by showing how he had been affected, both physically and psychologically by his experiences as a counterpoint to Eva. There were also discussions regarding the stylistic impact of his appearance in the novel and the overall structure and thematic development. The theme of male experience as a whole was also relevant and Rolf's role could be analysed in the light of the other male protagonists.

Question 7 Federico García Lorca: *Bodas de sangre*

Virtually every candidate answered on this text, with (a) being the more popular option.

- (a) The key words for responses to address in this question were *uso*, *contexto geográfico y rural* and *tragedia*. Of the very many essays, these were the essential points:
- candidates needed to know the setting (Andalucía in southern Spain)
 - the rural setting also encompasses the rural society
 - references to the natural world could be used in the answer but did not constitute the main focus
 - references to the use of colour in the room settings often took the essay off task
 - the contrast between the actual geographical setting in the first two Acts and that of the *bosque* in Act 3 which introduces the supernatural elements.
- (b) The key word in the question was *teatro*. The best answers to this question referred to the songs and in particular to the staging of Act 3, analysing the roles of the *mendiga*, the moon, the *leñadores*, the colour and the lighting. The essential focus was to see the play for what it is, a work intended to be performed on a stage. Even though some candidates mentioned having seen a film or a live production of the play, there seemed to be a misunderstanding of Lorca's intentions. Some saw the question as asking about adapting the work to the stage. Others saw the written work as somehow different from a theatrical production. Those who felt that it was helpful to read the play before seeing it performed made a good point in that the unprepared spectator may miss some of the subtleties of language. Although biographical information about the author is not usually encouraged, the fact that García Lorca ran a very successful touring theatre group may have been helpful in this case. García Lorca used theatrical techniques to full effect as he understood them and had been fully involved in production over a number of years.

Question 8 Rosalía de Castro: *En las orillas de Sar*

- (a) The key word in this question was *sufimiento*. The poem '*Los tristes*' is full of references to a number of aspects of suffering or unhappiness. A summary may be that some people are pursued by darkness with no sense of escape; suffering is everywhere as part of the cycle of life but other individuals are fortunate enough to have a positive experience. Candidates generally knew the work and were able to analyse critically and in detail. The best answers developed their argument and studied the theme and techniques in a structured discussion, which read more fluently than those responses which looked at each stanza in turn. Candidates who chose this text are usually well prepared and respond positively to poetry.
- (b) The key words in this question were *aislada* and *sofa*. Again, as with option (a), candidates were well prepared in the main. All chose three highly appropriate poems, or more, and focused on the question directly. The choice of examples was very individual and as with (a), candidates engaged fully with the text.