

SPANISH

<p>Paper 8673/41 Texts</p>
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Key messages

Examiners seek thorough knowledge of the texts chosen and clear essays focussed on the questions set, with detailed references to support the argument presented. The following key messages are intended to help candidates improve their performance further.

- Keep focused on the question being answered. Candidates are advised to check back to the Question Paper frequently to ensure that they have not veered away from the question. A useful technique is to make reference to the question in the final sentence of each paragraph, showing how it relates to the answer. The conclusion must refer clearly to the question.
- All questions have key words which are essential to the response. Candidates need to deal with these as a central aspect of their essays. When choosing which question to answer, ensure that the entire question is clearly understood before beginning to write.
- The opening paragraph should relate directly to the question. Candidates may define their terms or state the outline of the argument to be presented. Examiners actively discourage a biography of the author or general introduction to his or her work. This tends to take up a lot of time and words, which then leave candidates with less opportunity to deal with the question in depth.
- If the text studied has an important historical context, (e.g. the *Mexican Revolution*, the *Spanish Civil War*), candidates must have a solid understanding of this so that any references are accurate. Examiners do not expect to see a detailed historical study, but incorrect references detract from the overall standard of the essay.
- Each text should be treated separately, as literary techniques, themes or settings are not necessarily relevant to more than one author. There has been an increasing tendency to relate magical realism, for example, incorrectly, to other texts such as the plays of García Lorca. There has also been confusion over whether texts are based in South America or Spain.

General comments

Candidates were well prepared for the examination and there were very few instances of rubric infringement. The majority of candidates had prepared the texts thoroughly and showed knowledge and understanding in their answers.

Differential in marks awarded was generally based on the quality of the answer, in terms of focused response, use of material from the text to support the argument and a well-argued, well-structured and thoughtful essay. There was still much narration, but the majority was relevant. Candidates need to try to be more analytical in their approach and consider the text as a whole. Examiners welcome individual approaches to the questions set, provided they are justified and explored appropriately according to the question.

We remind Candidates that they must write legibly as examiners can only mark what they can read.

Comments on specific questions

Comments here give an outline of the content and approach which could be expected, although not all of these elements would necessarily be included in a single response. In addition, there are observations from specific examples seen in essays, which are intended to help future candidates.

Section 1

Candidates are reminded that the answers to parts (i) and (ii) of the **Part (a)** questions, prompted by the printed extract, should refer specifically to the extract and should be short, i.e. from one word to two sentences in length. Part (iii) should encompass the whole text and constitute the vast majority of the overall response.

Question 1

Pérez Galdós: *Misericordia*

- (a) Most answers showed understanding of the historical context, referring to a period before the old order was overthrown and families such as Doña Paca's were wealthy and had status. In (ii), Paca's self-centred nature was mentioned and her lack of awareness of material concerns, or Benina's efforts. In (iii), Paca typified the impoverished middle classes still determined to maintain an illusion of status and the importance of appearances. Quotations such as '*Pero a dónde voy con esta facha, sin ropa decente, temiendo tropezarme a cada paso con personas que me conocieron en otra posición...*' were used appropriately and Frasquito Ponte was also analysed as another example of someone in the same predicament. Many referred to Galdós' objective presentation of the situation, allowing readers to perceive faults in the characters through interaction with others, and the importance of the use of dialogue in the novel. It was noted that changes in circumstance were not a result of fate but rather consequent on changes in politics and society as well as personal failings. Many compared Paca and Benina, showing how Paca's sense of entitlement permeated the way she treated Benina, and her lack of true interest in Benina's life. Most essays gave some thought to the end of the novel, where wealth could be said to have a malign influence and the values of Paca and her family contrasted sharply with those of Benina and Almudena.
- (b) This question focused on the nature of happiness. The majority of responses centred on Benina, showing her charity, kindness, selflessness and how she found happiness in helping others and feeling needed. Benina was often compared with Paca and her family, who seemed to believe that it was not possible to be happy without wealth and status. The best answers dealt with the more spiritual aspects with reference to characters such as Almudena and with less obvious sources of happiness such as Ponte's nostalgic reveries. The Christian concept of morality in loving one's neighbour was also considered, particularly in the light of the presence of the Church in the novel.

Question 2

Lope de Vega: *El caballero de Olmedo*

- (a) (i) (ii) Answers to (i) and (ii) were generally correct. Some did not mention Jesus in (ii).
- (iii) Fabia's role (iii) tended to be described rather than analysed. One of the main arguments to consider was whether Fabia was simply a comedy character in the play or whether she practised magic which changed the course of events, and therefore could be seen as a sorceress. The most successful answers analysed her role in the relationship between Alonso and Inés, finding that the lovers were genuinely attracted making her contribution dramatic, increasing the tension and interest for the audience. She also played a thematic role in giving Alonso sensible advice and warnings, possibly emphasising failings in his judgement. There was a degree of ambiguity as the Sombra in Act III said that 'una Fabia' taught him the song foretelling the death of Alonso. The conclusion generally found that Fabia was not a sinister character.
- (b) This was the more popular of the options on this text. The best responses showed understanding of the code of morals of the time, specifically the expectations on knights such as Alonso and Rodrigo. The title of the play highlights Alonso's rank in the 'caballería', and draws the audience's attention to the responsibilities and expectations associated with it. There were analyses of the nature of 'good' and 'bad' within the setting of the play and the moral judgements made by various characters. Most candidates argued that many individuals acted in a way unbecoming their role in society and were punished for it. Some did not make note of the word '*bruta*' in the question; the outcome of the play was certainly violent and all suffered in one way or another. The role of the King was important in determining the punishments of some in order to re-establish social harmony and the rule of law.

Question 3

Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

- (a) (i) Part (i) referred to Pedro and his father, Don Pascual.
- (ii) Tita felt betrayed by Pedro, hence her polite but distant response.
- (iii) There were many good responses to (iii). Nacha was more of a parent to Tita than her own mother, showing her love and respect. Tita was treated more as a servant by the rest of her family and the kitchen became her home, with Nacha. As well as teaching Tita to cook, giving her a role in the household, Nacha passed on her folk knowledge and native heritage. This could be seen as part of the social comment in the novel in that Nacha was less educated but wiser and more knowledgeable than Mamá Elena. Whereas both Nacha and Mamá Elena had suffered emotionally in the past, Nacha was able to nurture and care for others; Mamá Elena took out her resentment on her daughters. Nacha's affection for Tita continued from beyond the grave as she appeared to give advice and support whenever Tita needed it. Mamá Elena's ghost was as malevolent as she was. Tita's relationship with Nacha was key to the development of her own maternal instincts, essential to the upbringing of Roberto (until he was taken from her), and Esperanza. The way Tita was able to care for the children contrasted with the reactions of their own mother, Rosaura, who had been raised by Mamá Elena, not Nacha. Elements of magical realism were also central to both Tita and Nacha.
- (b) The majority of the answers agreed that selfishness did not lead to happiness and concentrated on Tita and the way Mamá Elena's selfish and uncaring attitude caused her suffering. Some candidates showed sympathy for Mamá Elena as she had suffered also, but decided that she did not deserve happiness. There was also analysis of Pedro, Rosaura and Doctor Brown, with differing interpretations of their roles. Gertrudis was often omitted, or censured for abandoning her mother and sisters. Another view was that as a result of the food prepared by Tita, Gertrudis was compelled to leave and follow her own path, becoming a respected military leader in the Revolution and a role model. Tita gave her impetus to do this; a further example of Tita's unselfish, generous attitude was also shown in her influence on Esperanza, to give hope for the women of the future. Did Tita achieve happiness or contentment? Most felt that she did. The break with tradition, the banishing of Mamá Elena's ghost, and the consummation of her relationship with Pedro pointed to this.

Question 4

Rodolfo Usigli: *El gesticulador*

- (a) (i) In (i), Elena expressed her sense of vulnerability as they were new to the area and strangers could be a threat to the family's safety.
- (ii) In (ii), César was more concerned with making a good impression and protecting the reputation of Mexicans.
- (iii) Bolton's role in the play (iii) was crucial in several ways. The best answers showed how Bolton instigated the central deception, therefore driving the momentum of the plot, and creating an important distinction of before and after his arrival – before, César was only a failed university lecturer; after, he had the possibility of a new life and fame. In addition, Bolton's career as an academic was important as it provided a direct comparison with César, and between Mexico and the United States. Bolton had a car, status, and money; higher education was clearly better funded and respected in the US. The possibility of the US financing a new university mirrored involvement by the more powerful neighbour in other areas as well as appealing to the vanity of César. These themes were further developed in the higher scoring essays.
- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse the theme of identity, which is central to the play. Essentially a large number of essays discussed the importance of mistaken/assumed identity and focused on César. The best answers widened the analysis to deal with issues of national identity. It was helpful to consider the meaning of 'identity'. Is it a set, defined condition? César's family had deceived others in their past by pretending to be more wealthy than they were. 'Identity' may be malleable and fragile. Julia was defined by other peoples' opinion of her. How did Mexicans identify

themselves after the Revolution – was the identity of Rubio accepted because the people needed a national figurehead? False identity was central to both the conflict and the solution of the play. The ambiguity evident in the play was also analysed.

Section 2

Question 5

Ramón J. Sender: *Réquiem por un campesino español*

- (a) Candidates were asked to analyse the role of El Monaguillo; the first task was to identify this character and place him correctly in the relevant period of time within the novel. He served Mosén Millán in the present time as an altar boy immediately before the Requiem Mass, reporting back to his master on arrivals for the Mass. In addition, he recited part of the 'romance' about Paco, thus prompting memories for Mosén Millán and linking the two time frames. The Monaguillo served an important function in the structure of the novel, and echoed Paco's own role as assistant to the same master in the past. The Church was a key influence and control in the lives of the villagers; Paco's questioning of Mosén Millán's practise of the faith, his betrayal of Paco and collusion in his execution pointed to failure of care and Christian charity by the Church. The most successful essays analysed these points and used references to the text effectively. The fact that El Monaguillo related both events in the present, and the folk memory of Paco, seemed to highlight Mosén Millán's increasing distance from the people, which could be said to reflect the changing role of the Church and indicate its stance in the coming Civil War.
- (b) This was the more popular option on the text. The consensus was that this is a political novel. The best candidates used their knowledge of the historical background sparingly and accurately, noting the reference to the departure of the King, which places the action pre - Civil War. The tone of the work was interpreted as critical of society and the power structures at the time, with special reference to the role of the Church and the landowners. Paco was seen as an objective witness of the inequalities in society and the lack of interest in those who could have helped. The incident in the caves was important in Paco's understanding of Mosén Millán and of the plight of his neighbours. Paco became a political figure in order to improve the lives of others; the landowners wanted to protect their own interests and the Church colluded with reactionary powers and individuals. The culmination of this was the betrayal of Paco by his priest. The absence of villagers at the Requiem was interpreted as a political act, ignoring the false piety of those guilty for Paco's death, who had arranged the Mass. The novel also showed the use of unjustified and extreme violence foreshadowing the war.

Question 6

Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna*

- (a) Many candidates chose this question. The best answers included analysis of the importance of Melecio/Mimí in the life of Eva, in the main narrative thread of the novel, and also how he/she represented a character in his/her own right, opening up the argument to a study of the broader themes of the text. Thus Eva learned about courage and determination in the face of prejudice and the need for tenacity in following one's own path. Mimí was the person who not only acted as a sister for Eva in looking after her but also bought her a typewriter to encourage her to fulfil her ambition to be a writer. Candidates knew the text well and generally used references to good effect. The better essays set out the argument at the beginning, often noting the different stages in Melecio/Mimí's life and how his/her development interacted with Eva. Many emphasised how Melecio/Mimí's first hand experience of state corruption, arrest and the power of the media all contributed to the wide scope of the novel. This character reflected changes in society as well as being a warm and supportive friend to Eva, providing her with a home and substitute family, responding to Eva's needs at different stages of her life.
- (b) This was also a popular question. Candidates needed to plan the thread of the argument and follow this through to avoid over-emphasis on narration and generalised comments. The question referred to the power balance between men and women so this had to be addressed. The best answers then went on to analyse how the novel takes this theme further, to encompass politics, social comment and issues of personal freedom, for example. Responses which dealt with other aspects of the novel unrelated to this theme were not appropriate. Candidates showed detailed knowledge of the text and seemed to respond positively to the issues raised and the characters portrayed.

Question 7

Federico García Lorca: *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

- (a) The vast majority of candidates chose to write on this text and this was the more popular option. The most common approach was focused on “*callar*”, with studies of Bernarda’s control of her daughters’ lives (and those of other members of the household), often emphasising ‘*¡Silencio!*’ in a range of contexts. This was generally done well, with good use of references. The best answers included an analysis of ‘*bordar*’, which brought in the wider issues of the role of women in society. These also included discussion of expectations dependent on status, including the experiences of the servants. María Josefa was used by Lorca to expand the theme, and some responses showed sensitivity to the use of poetry within the play to emphasise this. The sense of irony was effectively analysed too.
- (b) Many answered this option also. The theme of envy or jealousy was well understood. The best essays encompassed a wide range of examples, from the more obvious one of Martirio to the longing of Magdalena to work outside, La Poncia’s resentment of Bernarda’s hold over her and the Mendiga’s envy of the perks of left-overs enjoyed by the Criada. The overall sense of claustrophobia and the impossibility of escape or change was an important background issue. Most candidates referred to Lorca’s use of symbols and images to convey this and showed sensitivity to the language throughout the play. It was important to ensure that all details were accurate – there were a number of essays where the names of the daughters were muddled up and the sequence of events at the end of the play was incorrect. Candidates are encouraged to check this as such errors detract from the overall essay and often lead to a confused argument.

Question 8

Varios, ed. Gordon Brotherston: *Spanish American Modernista Poets: A critical anthology*

- (a) There was a relatively small number of responses to this question, as is frequently the case with a new text. Candidates who chose the question showed sensitivity to the use of language but needed to explore the themes in greater depth. Examiners are open to widely differing approaches to essays on poetry, providing the candidate understands the literary techniques employed and can substantiate the argument with reference to the poem itself. Essays should include detailed analysis of use of language as well as a broader discussion of the themes and an understanding of the impact of the poem as a whole.
- (b) As with the other option on this text, there were fewer answers on this text overall. Candidates were free to choose any three poems from the whole anthology as the basis of a close study to support their response to the question. Examiners welcome an individual approach and encourage candidates to explore the theme as they wish, provided the argument can be supported with close reference to the required number of poems.

SPANISH

<p>Paper 8673/42 Texts</p>
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Key messages

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General comments

Candidates were well prepared for the examination and there were very few instances of rubric infringement. The majority of candidates had prepared the texts thoroughly and showed knowledge and understanding in their answers.

Differential in marks awarded was generally based on the quality of the answer, in terms of focused response, use of material from the text to support the argument and a well-argued, well-structured and thoughtful essay. There was still much narration, but the majority was relevant. Candidates need to try to be more analytical in their approach and consider the text as a whole. Examiners welcome individual approaches to the questions set, provided they are justified and explored appropriately according to the question.

We remind Candidates to write legibly as Examiners can only mark what they can read.

Comments on specific questions

Comments here give an outline of the content and approach which could be expected from candidates at the top of the mark range. It would not be expected that all of these elements would be included in a single response. In addition, specific examples seen in essays, which are intended to help future candidates.

Section 1

Question 1

Benito Pérez Galdós: *Misericordia*

- (a) (i) In (i), most candidates identified Obdulia and Ponte as the speakers.
- (ii) In (ii), there were some over-long responses; it was sufficient to state that one way of surviving for both characters was to remember the past and use their imagination as escapism.
- (iii) Most answers to (iii) concentrated on Benina and her generous nature and compared her to Paca, who was not condemned by Galdós, rather her personal failings gave rise to pity, with the exception of her treatment of Benina at the end of the novel. The general situation of virtually all the characters being poor aroused the readers' sympathy from the start. Many essays presented detailed character analyses with details of the tone of description, the use of dialogue and physical attributes including dress to give a full picture of the individuals.
- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse the physical, spiritual and moral effects of poverty. The majority of answers followed the structure suggested in the question and dealt with each aspect in turn. A useful approach was also to consider which characters were born poor and which became poor, to analyse how this affected their reactions. A number of candidates tended to describe rather than analyse and did not manage to construct an argument. They had considerable knowledge of the text and were loath to leave out long quotations and extended references to incidents or conversations. Careful planning before writing the essay would be helpful. The conclusion tended to be that some individuals coped better than others (Benina, Almudena, Ponte to some extent) whilst Paca, Juliana and Obdulia needed material wealth and had a different value system.

Question 2

Lope de Vega: *El caballero de Olmedo*

- (a) (i)(ii) Both parts (i) and (ii) were generally answered correctly as Alonso; and the fact that Inés was pretending to want to become a nun.
- (iii) Part (iii) asked candidates to analyse the theme of deception. The best answers found a number of different aspects to the theme; self-deception, deliberate subterfuge, plot complications, the actions of Fabia and Tello. Candidates then determined the nature of the deception and its instigators and the effects caused to other individuals and the plot or theme. Some instances were seen as more serious than others, with significant consequences. Fabia and Tello's activities were generally seen as entertainment rather than witchcraft, although the fact that Alonso was drawn into their lies suggested failing in his character. There was an ironic element also in that Inés was wrongly deceived that her father would not accept Alonso as a suitor. Rodrigo's reaction to the Inés's deception of him was prompted by the values of the time, where personal honour and reputation were key factors. Thus some essays succeeded in relating the theme firmly to the social mores and the responsibilities of rank at the time of writing. Most successfully identified the structural role of deception in driving the plot, and its thematic role.
- (b) In this question, candidates were asked to analyse the premise that there were no villains as such in the play, rather all characters were essentially honest, but behaved badly in the circumstances and were punished as a result. No-one, even Rodrigo, seemed inherently evil. Even Fabia was more of a comedy character than a sorceress. Alonso appeared almost perfect, behaving impeccably to all other individuals including Fabia and Tello, and saved Rodrigo's life at some threat to his own. Rodrigo had been accepted as a suitor for Inés, so must have had a sound reputation. He became blinded by jealousy. Tello only helped Fabia reluctantly and was concerned for Alonso's safety. Inés behaved inappropriately in her feigned devotion. The outcome depended on the intervention of the King, as the ultimate judge on Earth. There was some discussion regarding the level of punishment meted out but the conclusion tended to be that it was necessary to restore harmony and order in society, according to the beliefs of the time.

Question 3

Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

- (a) (i)(ii) Parts (i) and (ii) were generally accurate – the news of the death of baby Roberto (Tita’s nephew) and the fact that Mamá Elena’s reaction to this was cold and cruel.
- (iii) Part (iii) indicated that being a mother and behaving like one were not necessarily the same. The majority of candidates focused on the personalities of Mamá Elena and Nacha; Rosaura and Tita, analysing to what extent the typical attributes of care and compassion for children were displayed. Nacha was the role model for Tita, both of whom despite having no biological children had strong maternal instincts. Indeed magic realism was used by Esquivel to underline this when Tita was able to breastfeed Roberto. Many saw the difference between control and nurture, as Mamá Elena treated her children as commodities rather than individuals. Rosaura did not benefit from Nacha’s care and mimicked the attitudes of Mamá Elena. Roberto died because Mamá Elena put concerns over her reputation above his life. Nacha and Tita were so close emotionally that Nacha helped from beyond the grave. Rosaura died miserably and unhappily partly as a result of her mother’s influence on her life whereas Tita’s experience of nurture meant that she wished to change the life of Esperanza for the better and did not harbour grudges, just like Nacha. There was some sympathy for Mamá Elena as she had suffered unhappiness in her youth but this was not seen as justification for the way she treated her daughters or grandson.
- (b) This was a popular option. The majority of answers analysed the phrase in the context of Tita’s life. From the moment of her traumatic birth, in the kitchen, Tita suffered as a result of the actions of others. However at the same time, her life in the kitchen was nurtured by Nacha who taught her how to cope and to cook, thus giving her a purpose and role in the family home. Tita’s relationships with Roberto and Esperanza were both sad and fulfilling; Tita prepared her niece for a positive future. Mamá Elena was widely analysed as the instigator of Tita’s suffering in her refusal to allow the marriage between Tita and Pedro. The result of this decision also affected Rosaura, who accepted the arranged marriage but did not find happiness, or succeed as a mother. Pedro was seen by some candidates as another victim, but by others as contributing to the misery of both Rosaura and Tita. Dr Brown suffered in that his love for Tita was not returned, but he found contentment in his work and seeing others happy. Serving and helping was the core of Nacha’s life and gave her satisfaction. A few responses also mentioned the effects of change in the wider sense of the Mexican Revolution. The violence of the attack on the ranch caused Chenchá and Mamá Elena much physical suffering, but involvement in the revolutionary forces gave Gertrudis an opportunity to develop and achieve. Candidates are advised to plan the argument and select examples to support this, rather than write down everything they know of the novel which may be of relevance to the question.

Question 4

Rodolfo Usigli: *El gesticulador*

- (a) (i)(ii) There was a range of answers for (i) and (ii) – the correct responses were that Julia resented being moved away from her old life and her boyfriend in the city and for (ii), that César had been dismissed from the university and had never been as successful as he had wished either academically or financially.
- (iii) Part (iii) asked candidates to show how the extract related to future events in the play. Some essays simply narrated what happened after the scene quoted, with little analysis. More successful answers identified key issues in the extract and showed how these developed subsequently. Both César and Julia felt unfulfilled and let down, therefore likely to be open to opportunities to change their future. The reference to ‘*paciencia*’ warned Julia that nothing could happen quickly. The arrival of Bolton seemed like a gift from the Gods, suggesting to César that his ambitions may be met. The coincidence of Bolton being an academic, specialising in Mexican history and apparently offering the temptation of money and a new career for César was impossible to ignore. It was a small step for César, in his vulnerable state of mind, to accede to the suggestion that he could be the other César Rubio. His promise to Julia meant that she would accept whatever he did in the hope that she could return to the city. Some essays compared the reaction of Julia to those of Elena and Miguel. This led to the more philosophical analysis of the nature of truth and whether it is right to succeed by deception. Others explored the political aspect in that the people were prepared to

accept Rubio as a leader as they were also damaged by previous events and open to manipulation.

- (b) Some candidates responded to this question by comparing and contrasting the characters of Julia and Elena. This tended towards appreciation of Elena's loyalty to César and her commitment to her family, the typical perfect wife, even though she had doubts about her husband's decision. Julia was generally seen as selfish and immature, impressionable and young. Both women highlighted flaws in César's character as Julia appealed to his pride and Elena showed how obstinate he was. Many queried how weak they were; the fact that men dominated the action of the play did not mean that the women were weak. The best essays went beyond this to consider how these characters represented women in Mexico at the time. Some candidates had good understanding of the context and used this judiciously to support the argument. The cultural and historical setting had a strong influence on the way Usigli presented them, reflecting the lack of opportunity and freedom available for women at the time.

Section 2

Question 5

Ramón J. Sender: *Réquiem por un campesino español*

- (a) This was the more popular option on the text. Most essays showed understanding of Spanish society at the time and took the view that the author was critical of the inequalities evident and of the role of the Church and landowners. Candidates were aware of the social hierarchy and the traditions, superstitions and celebrations of the rural community. Divisions in this community were largely caused by limitations placed on individuals as the villagers did not own the land they worked and had little control over their destiny. Those who lived in the caves were the poorest but they were not cared for by the very institution which would be expected to help. Paco served as witness to the suffering of the cave dwellers and his reaction of surprise and disappointment at the lack of Christian compassion shown by Mosén Millan, the priest, was shared by the reader. Subsequent events only emphasised the likelihood of violent change as Paco's crusade to improve the lives of his neighbours ended in tragedy. The potential saviour was sacrificed by the priest to maintain the status quo and preserve his own interests. The Church allied with the wealthy landowners and was complicit in the violent end of Paco. The whole situation was interpreted as setting the scene for the Civil War.
- (b) Most answers on this question focused on Paco, the messianic figure who was betrayed by his friend, like Jesus. Paco had tried to redeem his people and save them from the dictatorial regime but was sacrificed. His innocent death served as a warning to other potential activists but the villagers stood by his memory in refusing to attend the requiem mass organised by those involved in his death. Forgiveness or redemption was possible for those who recognised and accepted responsibility for their actions. Mosén Millan allied himself to vested interests and betrayed the teaching of his God. Some essays took a more historical stance and presented a fatalistic view of the rural Spanish people who were completely under the control of a dictatorial regime. Any attempt to challenge those in power resulted in violent suppression. Those who were guilty of the death of Paco attempted to atone by means of the requiem. This was seen as futile; they did not repent of their actions and the Church itself was complicit in the crime.

Question 6

Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna*

- (a) This question appealed to a large number of candidates. Most essays presented the thesis that Eva had little experience of a 'normal' stable family life but succeeded in constructing a substitute family around her as she grew up, learning from a variety of people about relationships and responsibilities. Rolf also grew up in an atypical family, suffering abuse and witnessing violent and controlling behaviour on the part of his father. Some candidates questioned whether anyone has a perfect family background; Rolf's uncle's apparently ordinary family of two daughters did not behave as normal cousins towards him. '*La familia es la que creas*' seemed to be the answer for both Eva and Rolf. Melecio/Mimí was an important member of Eva's created family, who knew her from a young age and responded appropriately to Eva recognising her needs and offering the kind of encouragement and guidance which could be expected from a parent or older sibling. The family unit offers safety and security and the ability to develop as well as fulfilling the need of belonging to

a group. It was important to maintain focus on the text and use references to substantiate the argument.

- (b) Candidates were asked to define the '*gran talento*' of Isabel Allende. This gave rise to a range of interpretations. The best responses analysed the literary techniques employed by Allende, such as multiple narrative, magical realism, use of first person narrative and strong characterisation. All these elements were analysed and illustrated from the text. In addition, Allende chose to examine contemporary society and exposed issues such as political corruption, and activism, the dictatorship and prejudice against minority groups. In both aspects of the response the author succeeded in creating empathy with the characters and constructing a lively and varied plot, which caught and attracted the attention of the reader. Some answers were vague, with complimentary comments on Allende's work but little direct justification from the text. All arguments and observations should be supported with evidence.

Question 7

Federico García Lorca: *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

- (a) This question asked candidates to analyse how Lorca used both poetry and realism in the play. Most responses focused on realism and gave many examples of the claustrophobia, tension and control within the setting. It was rare to see a more nuanced discussion. Detailed study of poetry within the play was also limited to a few responses, including a considered examination of María Josefa's contribution. Candidates gave much narrative detail. This would be a good example of the need to plan before writing and to keep referring back to the question to ensure that all elements are addressed adequately. The conclusion should present a balanced assessment on the role of poetry and realism in the play, showing how each was used to highlight or emphasise specific themes, and to contribute to the overall dramatic effect.
- (b) Most candidates chose this option. The role of money was primarily seen in terms of social status and, for the daughters, as a means to allow them to marry. All essays dealt with these issues in some detail and observed how Angustias became the object of envy and resentment as she was the only one to have a dowry and therefore able to marry. Better responses considered whether marriage was in fact a better option for women. The experience of La Poncia and Adelaida could suggest that women moved from one prison to another. The importance of status and family wealth was Bernarda's preoccupation. La Poncia pointed out that Bernarda's family was only seen as of superior rank in that village; elsewhere, she would be considered poor. Bernarda lived by tradition and reputation and would allow nothing to threaten her place in society. Angustias was treated differently because she had inherited money. Marriage was a contract and exchange of money, as a dowry, and was arranged by parents. To marry for love, Adela would have to wait until Angustias died in childbirth, according to La Poncia, when Pepe el Romano would then turn to her. Money was also used as a means of control over the servants. Even though La Poncia and Bernarda had worked together for many years and Bernarda accepted some help the phrase '*Me sirves y te pago*' sums up the true relationship between Bernarda and the servants. La Poncia declared her hatred for Bernarda but she depended on the meagre salary. Money was an element of control or imprisonment as individuals had little opportunity to make decisions about their future. Candidates always respond very well to this text but must be sure to resist the temptation to write all they know about the play rather than keep their answer focused on the question.

Question 8

Varios, ed. Gordon Brotherston: *Spanish American Modernista Poets: A critical anthology*

- (a) Candidates who chose the question showed sensitivity to the use of language but needed to explore the theme in greater depth. Widely differing approaches to essays on poetry are welcomed, providing the candidate understands the literary techniques employed and can substantiate the argument with reference to the poem itself. Essays should include detailed analysis of use of language as well as a broader discussion of the theme and an understanding of the impact of the poem as a whole.
- (b) As with the other option on this text, there were fewer answers on this text overall. Candidates were free to choose any three poems from the whole anthology as the basis of a close study to support their response to the question. Examiners welcome an individual approach and encourage candidates to explore the theme as they wish, provided the argument can be supported with close reference to the required number of poems.

SPANISH

<p>Paper 8673/43 Texts</p>
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Key messages

Examiners seek thorough knowledge of the texts chosen and clear essays focussed on the questions set, with detailed references to support the argument presented. The following key messages are intended to help candidates improve their performance further.

- Keep focused on the question being answered. Candidates are advised to check back to the Question Paper frequently to ensure that they have not veered away from the question. A useful technique is to make reference to the question in the final sentence of each paragraph, showing how it relates to the answer. The conclusion must refer clearly to the question.
- All questions have key words which are essential to the response. Candidates need to deal with these as a central aspect of their essays. When choosing which question to answer, ensure that the entire question is clearly understood before beginning to write.
- The opening paragraph should relate directly to the question. Candidates may define their terms or state the outline of the argument to be presented. Examiners actively discourage a biography of the author or general introduction to his or her work. This tends to take up a lot of time and words, which then leave candidates with less opportunity to deal with the question in depth.
- If the text studied has an important historical context, (e.g. the *Mexican Revolution*, the *Spanish Civil War*), candidates must have a solid understanding of this so that any references are accurate. Examiners do not expect to see a detailed historical study, but incorrect references detract from the overall standard of the essay.
- Each text should be treated separately, as literary techniques, themes or settings are not necessarily relevant to more than one author. There has been an increasing tendency to relate magical realism, for example, incorrectly, to other texts such as the plays of García Lorca. There has also been confusion over whether texts are based in South America or Spain.

General comments

Candidates were well prepared for the examination and there were very few instances of rubric infringement. The majority of candidates had prepared the texts thoroughly and showed knowledge and understanding in their answers.

Differential in marks awarded was generally based on the quality of the answer, in terms of focused response, use of material from the text to support the argument and a well-argued, well-structured and thoughtful essay. There was still much narration, but the majority was relevant. Candidates need to try to be more analytical in their approach and consider the text as a whole. Examiners welcome individual approaches to the questions set, provided they are justified and explored appropriately according to the question.

We remind Candidates that they must write legibly as examiners can only mark what they can read.

Comments on specific questions

Comments here give an outline of the content and approach which could be expected, although not all of these elements would necessarily be included in a single response. In addition, there are observations from specific examples seen in essays, which are intended to help future candidates.

Section 1

Candidates are reminded that the answers to parts (i) and (ii) of the **Part (a)** questions, prompted by the printed extract, should refer specifically to the extract and should be short, i.e. from one word to two sentences in length. Part (iii) should encompass the whole text and constitute the vast majority of the overall response.

Question 1

Pérez Galdós: *Misericordia*

- (a) Most answers showed understanding of the historical context, referring to a period before the old order was overthrown and families such as Doña Paca's were wealthy and had status. In (ii), Paca's self-centred nature was mentioned and her lack of awareness of material concerns, or Benina's efforts. In (iii), Paca typified the impoverished middle classes still determined to maintain an illusion of status and the importance of appearances. Quotations such as '*Pero a dónde voy con esta facha, sin ropa decente, temiendo tropezarme a cada paso con personas que me conocieron en otra posición...*' were used appropriately and Frasquito Ponte was also analysed as another example of someone in the same predicament. Many referred to Galdós' objective presentation of the situation, allowing readers to perceive faults in the characters through interaction with others, and the importance of the use of dialogue in the novel. It was noted that changes in circumstance were not a result of fate but rather consequent on changes in politics and society as well as personal failings. Many compared Paca and Benina, showing how Paca's sense of entitlement permeated the way she treated Benina, and her lack of true interest in Benina's life. Most essays gave some thought to the end of the novel, where wealth could be said to have a malign influence and the values of Paca and her family contrasted sharply with those of Benina and Almudena.
- (b) This question focused on the nature of happiness. The majority of responses centred on Benina, showing her charity, kindness, selflessness and how she found happiness in helping others and feeling needed. Benina was often compared with Paca and her family, who seemed to believe that it was not possible to be happy without wealth and status. The best answers dealt with the more spiritual aspects with reference to characters such as Almudena and with less obvious sources of happiness such as Ponte's nostalgic reveries. The Christian concept of morality in loving one's neighbour was also considered, particularly in the light of the presence of the Church in the novel.

Question 2

Lope de Vega: *El caballero de Olmedo*

- (a) (i) (ii) Answers to (i) and (ii) were generally correct. Some did not mention Jesus in (ii).
- (iii) Fabia's role (iii) tended to be described rather than analysed. One of the main arguments to consider was whether Fabia was simply a comedy character in the play or whether she practised magic which changed the course of events, and therefore could be seen as a sorceress. The most successful answers analysed her role in the relationship between Alonso and Inés, finding that the lovers were genuinely attracted making her contribution dramatic, increasing the tension and interest for the audience. She also played a thematic role in giving Alonso sensible advice and warnings, possibly emphasising failings in his judgement. There was a degree of ambiguity as the Sombra in Act III said that 'una Fabia' taught him the song foretelling the death of Alonso. The conclusion generally found that Fabia was not a sinister character.
- (b) This was the more popular of the options on this text. The best responses showed understanding of the code of morals of the time, specifically the expectations on knights such as Alonso and Rodrigo. The title of the play highlights Alonso's rank in the 'caballería', and draws the audience's attention to the responsibilities and expectations associated with it. There were analyses of the nature of 'good' and 'bad' within the setting of the play and the moral judgements made by various characters. Most candidates argued that many individuals acted in a way unbecoming their role in society and were punished for it. Some did not make note of the word '*bruta*' in the question; the outcome of the play was certainly violent and all suffered in one way or another. The role of the King was important in determining the punishments of some in order to re-establish social harmony and the rule of law.

Question 3

Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

- (a) (i) Part (i) referred to Pedro and his father, Don Pascual.
- (ii) Tita felt betrayed by Pedro, hence her polite but distant response.
- (iii) There were many good responses to (iii). Nacha was more of a parent to Tita than her own mother, showing her love and respect. Tita was treated more as a servant by the rest of her family and the kitchen became her home, with Nacha. As well as teaching Tita to cook, giving her a role in the household, Nacha passed on her folk knowledge and native heritage. This could be seen as part of the social comment in the novel in that Nacha was less educated but wiser and more knowledgeable than Mamá Elena. Whereas both Nacha and Mamá Elena had suffered emotionally in the past, Nacha was able to nurture and care for others; Mamá Elena took out her resentment on her daughters. Nacha's affection for Tita continued from beyond the grave as she appeared to give advice and support whenever Tita needed it. Mamá Elena's ghost was as malevolent as she was. Tita's relationship with Nacha was key to the development of her own maternal instincts, essential to the upbringing of Roberto (until he was taken from her), and Esperanza. The way Tita was able to care for the children contrasted with the reactions of their own mother, Rosaura, who had been raised by Mamá Elena, not Nacha. Elements of magical realism were also central to both Tita and Nacha.
- (b) The majority of the answers agreed that selfishness did not lead to happiness and concentrated on Tita and the way Mamá Elena's selfish and uncaring attitude caused her suffering. Some candidates showed sympathy for Mamá Elena as she had suffered also, but decided that she did not deserve happiness. There was also analysis of Pedro, Rosaura and Doctor Brown, with differing interpretations of their roles. Gertrudis was often omitted, or censured for abandoning her mother and sisters. Another view was that as a result of the food prepared by Tita, Gertrudis was compelled to leave and follow her own path, becoming a respected military leader in the Revolution and a role model. Tita gave her impetus to do this; a further example of Tita's unselfish, generous attitude was also shown in her influence on Esperanza, to give hope for the women of the future. Did Tita achieve happiness or contentment? Most felt that she did. The break with tradition, the banishing of Mamá Elena's ghost, and the consummation of her relationship with Pedro pointed to this.

Question 4

Rodolfo Usigli: *El gesticulador*

- (a) (i) In (i), Elena expressed her sense of vulnerability as they were new to the area and strangers could be a threat to the family's safety.
- (ii) In (ii), César was more concerned with making a good impression and protecting the reputation of Mexicans.
- (iii) Bolton's role in the play (iii) was crucial in several ways. The best answers showed how Bolton instigated the central deception, therefore driving the momentum of the plot, and creating an important distinction of before and after his arrival – before, César was only a failed university lecturer; after, he had the possibility of a new life and fame. In addition, Bolton's career as an academic was important as it provided a direct comparison with César, and between Mexico and the United States. Bolton had a car, status, and money; higher education was clearly better funded and respected in the US. The possibility of the US financing a new university mirrored involvement by the more powerful neighbour in other areas as well as appealing to the vanity of César. These themes were further developed in the higher scoring essays.
- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse the theme of identity, which is central to the play. Essentially a large number of essays discussed the importance of mistaken/assumed identity and focused on César. The best answers widened the analysis to deal with issues of national identity. It was helpful to consider the meaning of 'identity'. Is it a set, defined condition? César's family had deceived others in their past by pretending to be more wealthy than they were. 'Identity' may be malleable and fragile. Julia was defined by other peoples' opinion of her. How did Mexicans identify

themselves after the Revolution – was the identity of Rubio accepted because the people needed a national figurehead? False identity was central to both the conflict and the solution of the play. The ambiguity evident in the play was also analysed.

Section 2

Question 5

Ramón J. Sender: *Réquiem por un campesino español*

- (a) Candidates were asked to analyse the role of El Monaguillo; the first task was to identify this character and place him correctly in the relevant period of time within the novel. He served Mosén Millán in the present time as an altar boy immediately before the Requiem Mass, reporting back to his master on arrivals for the Mass. In addition, he recited part of the ‘romance’ about Paco, thus prompting memories for Mosén Millán and linking the two time frames. The Monaguillo served an important function in the structure of the novel, and echoed Paco’s own role as assistant to the same master in the past. The Church was a key influence and control in the lives of the villagers; Paco’s questioning of Mosén Millán’s practise of the faith, his betrayal of Paco and collusion in his execution pointed to failure of care and Christian charity by the Church. The most successful essays analysed these points and used references to the text effectively. The fact that El Monaguillo related both events in the present, and the folk memory of Paco, seemed to highlight Mosén Millán’s increasing distance from the people, which could be said to reflect the changing role of the Church and indicate its stance in the coming Civil War.
- (b) This was the more popular option on the text. The consensus was that this is a political novel. The best candidates used their knowledge of the historical background sparingly and accurately, noting the reference to the departure of the King, which places the action pre - Civil War. The tone of the work was interpreted as critical of society and the power structures at the time, with special reference to the role of the Church and the landowners. Paco was seen as an objective witness of the inequalities in society and the lack of interest in those who could have helped. The incident in the caves was important in Paco’s understanding of Mosén Millán and of the plight of his neighbours. Paco became a political figure in order to improve the lives of others; the landowners wanted to protect their own interests and the Church colluded with reactionary powers and individuals. The culmination of this was the betrayal of Paco by his priest. The absence of villagers at the Requiem was interpreted as a political act, ignoring the false piety of those guilty for Paco’s death, who had arranged the Mass. The novel also showed the use of unjustified and extreme violence foreshadowing the war.

Question 6

Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna*

- (a) Many candidates chose this question. The best answers included analysis of the importance of Melecio/Mimí in the life of Eva, in the main narrative thread of the novel, and also how he/she represented a character in his/her own right, opening up the argument to a study of the broader themes of the text. Thus Eva learned about courage and determination in the face of prejudice and the need for tenacity in following one’s own path. Mimí was the person who not only acted as a sister for Eva in looking after her but also bought her a typewriter to encourage her to fulfil her ambition to be a writer. Candidates knew the text well and generally used references to good effect. The better essays set out the argument at the beginning, often noting the different stages in Melecio/Mimí’s life and how his/her development interacted with Eva. Many emphasised how Melecio/Mimí’s first hand experience of state corruption, arrest and the power of the media all contributed to the wide scope of the novel. This character reflected changes in society as well as being a warm and supportive friend to Eva, providing her with a home and substitute family, responding to Eva’s needs at different stages of her life.
- (b) This was also a popular question. Candidates needed to plan the thread of the argument and follow this through to avoid over-emphasis on narration and generalised comments. The question referred to the power balance between men and women so this had to be addressed. The best answers then went on to analyse how the novel takes this theme further, to encompass politics, social comment and issues of personal freedom, for example. Responses which dealt with other aspects of the novel unrelated to this theme were not appropriate. Candidates showed detailed knowledge of the text and seemed to respond positively to the issues raised and the characters portrayed.

Question 7

Federico García Lorca: *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

- (a) The vast majority of candidates chose to write on this text and this was the more popular option. The most common approach was focused on “*callar*”, with studies of Bernarda’s control of her daughters’ lives (and those of other members of the household), often emphasising ‘*¡Silencio!*’ in a range of contexts. This was generally done well, with good use of references. The best answers included an analysis of ‘*bordar*’, which brought in the wider issues of the role of women in society. These also included discussion of expectations dependent on status, including the experiences of the servants. María Josefa was used by Lorca to expand the theme, and some responses showed sensitivity to the use of poetry within the play to emphasise this. The sense of irony was effectively analysed too.
- (b) Many answered this option also. The theme of envy or jealousy was well understood. The best essays encompassed a wide range of examples, from the more obvious one of Martirio to the longing of Magdalena to work outside, La Poncia’s resentment of Bernarda’s hold over her and the Mendiga’s envy of the perks of left-overs enjoyed by the Criada. The overall sense of claustrophobia and the impossibility of escape or change was an important background issue. Most candidates referred to Lorca’s use of symbols and images to convey this and showed sensitivity to the language throughout the play. It was important to ensure that all details were accurate – there were a number of essays where the names of the daughters were muddled up and the sequence of events at the end of the play was incorrect. Candidates are encouraged to check this as such errors detract from the overall essay and often lead to a confused argument.

Question 8

Varios, ed. Gordon Brotherston: *Spanish American Modernista Poets: A critical anthology*

- (a) There was a relatively small number of responses to this question, as is frequently the case with a new text. Candidates who chose the question showed sensitivity to the use of language but needed to explore the themes in greater depth. Examiners are open to widely differing approaches to essays on poetry, providing the candidate understands the literary techniques employed and can substantiate the argument with reference to the poem itself. Essays should include detailed analysis of use of language as well as a broader discussion of the themes and an understanding of the impact of the poem as a whole.
- (b) As with the other option on this text, there were fewer answers on this text overall. Candidates were free to choose any three poems from the whole anthology as the basis of a close study to support their response to the question. Examiners welcome an individual approach and encourage candidates to explore the theme as they wish, provided the argument can be supported with close reference to the required number of poems.