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# A-level

# SPANISH

Paper 2 Writing  
Report on the Examination

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## General Comments

The vast majority of essays were well structured and clearly planned. In the main, students had plenty to say and sufficient command of the language to make their points clearly. It was pleasing to see very few cases of students attempting to reproduce a pre-learnt essay. Many of the essays were well written. The best were outstanding; they demonstrated a very assured knowledge of grammar and a very wide vocabulary. Some were extremely enjoyable to read. Many essays showed a very good understanding of the texts and films studied, and there were some very insightful comments.

Students should remember to write down the number of the question they are answering in the appropriate place provided and to ensure they have given the correct name of the author/director and not confused it with the name from their other text or film.

Students are also reminded of the need to read questions carefully to ensure they have understood the thrust of the question. They are also reminded that how they structure and organise their response is entirely up to them: if a question invites them to consider positive and negative aspects and they believe the negative aspects by far outweigh the positive ones (or vice versa), this is a perfectly acceptable response provided they offer justification for their opinions. There is no expectation with a question of this sort that answers will necessarily be balanced across the positive and negative aspects. Questions invariably invite the student to make a judgement about the validity of an opinion, the importance of a theme or character, or similar. There is no expectation that students should always agree with the judgement or that they cannot mention themes or characters they deem to be more important than the one highlighted in the question. While it is important that they do not ignore the question set in favour of one they would have preferred, they can construct a response to the question that addresses the correct focus but then brings in other relevant dimensions or perspectives.

## Section A: Books

### Question 1 *La casa de Bernarda Alba* – *Federico García Lorca*

This was the most widely chosen text by far and essays were fairly evenly divided between the two questions. The best essays closely examined the demands of the question and, in 1.1, covered not only the moral code demanded of women, but also showed its import by providing examples of what happened if the code was not followed. Students also understood the need to show whether it was only women who must obey the code, as indicated by the word *solo* in the title, and provided references to the text to exemplify how the moral code did not seem to apply to men. Weaker essays focused simply on how women lived a traditional, repressed way of life in the home.

The best essays for 1.2 showed both sides of the argument. They gave examples of Bernarda's violence to her daughters and her callousness to her servants in addition to showing why it was essential for Bernarda to be severe with the girls in the light of the fate of Paca la Roseta and la Librada's daughter. A large number of students showed great confusion about the society of the time, claiming that Bernarda represented Franco or that the life of the family represented the repression of the Franco regime. Some inappropriately referenced the *Guía de la buena esposa*, clearly a memorable aspect of their studies.

**Question 2 Crónica de una muerte anunciada – Gabriel García Márquez**

60% of the students who chose this text opted for 2.2 and many answered well, showing clearly that Nasar was not the only victim and explaining clearly why others could also be seen as victims. The remaining 40% wrote well-reasoned essays showing to what extent there were forces at work beyond the characters' control and most gave good examples to argue their case.

**Question 3 Como agua para chocolate – Laura Esquivel**

The overwhelming majority of students answered Question 3.1 and argued that, as Mamá Elena had been denied marriage with her true love, this had then warped her character and turned her into what she had become. The most able students referred to the Manuel de Carreño and Paquita Lobo to exemplify the pressures of society that had influenced her character. Students must ensure they answer the question set and not turn it into an answer to the question they would rather have written. This essay asked about Mamá Elena; it was not acceptable to claim that Tita is more of a victim and to write the essay about Tita.

The essays in answer to Question 3.2 focused on the position of the native women in society, their level of education, the way they spoke and how they were viewed or treated by the other characters. Few students grasped that the title (*cómo se presentan*) invited them to consider how Esquivel presented the indigenous characters as benign and kindly and the Hispanic characters as vengeful and repressive.

**Question 4 Réquiem por un campesino español – Ramón J Sender**

Question 4.1 was generally well answered with most students referring to the *romance* and the *potro* to indicate Paco's posthumous influence, alongside the presence at the mass of the three rich men of the village. The best essays also showed the importance of the absence of the villagers and the guilt of Mosén Millán, represented by the watch and the handkerchief that he keeps in the vestry.

Question 4.2 was not successfully tackled. Many students classified everyone mentioned in the novel as *campesinos*, including Mosén Millán and the three wealthy men. Hardly any appreciated that the villagers had no understanding of politics as a national concept and only took an interest when decisions affecting the village were at stake.

**Question 5 La sombra del viento - Carlos Ruiz Zafón**

Few centres tackled this novel, and 72% of the students that did answered Question 5.2, some interpreting it as parents and children, others as fathers and sons. The best essays took a relationship per paragraph and analysed the relationship, giving examples to endorse each claim and coming to a general conclusion at the end. This question prompted some of the best essays on the paper in terms of content (A04).

Only a handful tackled Question 5.1 and the best essays showed a good understanding of the female characters and could state and exemplify their shared characteristics.

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

Just over 100 students tackled this complex novel and three quarters of them chose Question 6.1. Unfortunately, many focused just on the word *conflicto* and talked about the differences between the classes without demonstrating the inevitability of violence and war. The few that chose

Question 2.2 fared better. In some essays, it was clear that students had enjoyed the text and their engagement was apparent in their writing.

### **Question 7 Rimas – *Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer***

A total of 27 students tackled the poetry of Bécquer and more than half of them chose Question 7.2. The marks ranged widely but, in general, the language mark was high amongst students who tackled 7.1 yet the content mark was higher for 7.2. Students on the whole referenced very few poems and should be prepared in future to show a more in-depth knowledge of more of the *Rimas*.

### **Question 8 Las bicicletas son para el verano – *Fernando Fernán-Gómez***

Overall the marks for AO4 were higher for Question 8.1, attempted by 70% of those who studied this play. There were a large number of students who did not interpret the essay titles correctly as they did not have a clear understanding of the concept of ‘*moral attitudes*’ or ‘*solidarity*’, both of which are important aspects of the work.

### **Question 9 El otro árbol de Valencia – *Luis de Castresana***

Slightly more students favoured the question about Santi’s relationship with the Dufours, and these showed a good knowledge of the novel. The best essays showed both sides of the argument, laying blame on both sides and concluding that the Dufours motives were misguided. Some argued that Santi was only a child and it would be wrong to expect anything different from him.

### **Question 10 El coronel no tiene quien le escriba – *Gabriel García Márquez***

Almost three quarters of students who studied this novel answered Question 10.1 and there were some pleasing essays that made it clear that, although the colonel was indeed a proud man, his pride had little bearing on their poverty. They were able to clearly explain the factors that contributed to his circumstances. Responses to the other question did not score as highly for content but the most successful essays analysed the colonel’s relationship with his fellow townspeople and how the colonel depends on their help and support, both morally and financially.

## **Section B Films**

### **Question 11 El laberinto del fauno – *Guillermo del Toro***

This was the most popular choice of film, with over 2000 students answering these questions. 44% chose to write about the relationship between Ofelia and Mercedes but the marks were not as high as for Question 11.2. Many of the answers were superficial, seeing nothing beyond a mother-daughter relationship. The best students ensured they responded to the word *influencia* in the title and showed how Ofelia was spurred on to become daring and rebellious by Mercedes’ role with the *Maquis* and how Mercedes was moved to rescue Ofelia through her growing affection for the child. In Question 11.2, there were some excellent ideas covering the use of brutal violence to depict the regime, or the use of parallelism between the two worlds. It was good to see references to camera angles exaggerating the stature of Vidal but weaker essays made weak links to the use of light or the colour palette, trying to show that the use of blues and greys depicted a regime of terror.

**Question 12 Ocho apellidos vascos – Emilio Martínez-Lázaro**

Answers were divided fairly evenly between the two titles and over 650 students studied this film. Question 12.1 produced the better answers of the two titles and the best essays were able to show where the humour lay in the film, both in Rafa's attempts to become Basque and in the various other aspects. Some even managed to explain why these were humorous. The weaker essays simply told the story of a few of the comic moments in the film. Question 12.2 produced a range of marks, and the best responses made it clear why the humour could be seen as offensive and gave clear examples to endorse each point. The weaker ones were too vague and demonstrated little in-depth knowledge of the film.

**Question 13 María, llena eres de gracia – Joshua Marston**

Of the 509 students who studied this film, 65% chose to answer Question 13.2. The best answers presented both sides of the argument, showing how we initially see the lure of the world of drug smuggling but are soon faced with its horrors. Some answers did not make enough of the off-putting physical side to swallowing drug pellets or the horrific nature of Lucy's death. In Question 13.1, the best essays analysed both motivations mentioned in the title, making it clear that that María was indeed unfairly treated at home but was also bored with her lifestyle. A small minority completely misinterpreted the question, as they understood *termina en* to mean that María finished with or left the world of drug smuggling.

**Question 14 Volver – Pedro Almodóvar**

Nearly 2000 students studied this film and 14.1 was slightly more popular. Many essays dealt with the very obvious, such as the tranquillity of the countryside and the busy lifestyle of the city, and some claimed there was more solidarity in the country, ignoring the support of Raimunda's neighbours in the city. A number of essays referred to the violence in the city, overlooking the violence that Raimunda had suffered as a girl in the country.

In 14.2, the best essays referred to Paco, Raimunda's father and Sole's husband, concluding that men were mostly shown as lazy, cheating predators who abandon their responsibilities. The very best essays went on to say how women were seen to manage better without them and, indeed, had to solve the problems that men created.

**Question 15 Abel – Diego Luna**

A very small number of students studied this film and most chose to answer Question 15.1. The best essays could explain why certain scenes were comic but went on to show how a number of the scenes and themes were dark and unsettling.

**Question 16 Las 13 rosas – Emilio Martínez-Lázaro**

The questions were fairly evenly divided between the students who chose this film, although 16.2 was slightly more popular. There were some excellent essays which showed how much students had engaged with the film and most essays achieved AO4 marks in the top two bands.

### Language (AO3)

In the best essays it was pleasing to see a range of higher level structures and vocabulary creating variety and sophistication. However, if command of language is not in the top band, it is more important to write clearly, simply and correctly to get points across rather than to ‘shoe-horn’ in unnecessary subjunctives or pre-learnt phrases. Too many students were determined to use the ‘if/would’ construction to show off a subjunctive and produced sentences inappropriate in a literature/film essay such as ‘*Si yo fuera Bernarda, no golpearía a mis hijas*’. It is more important to get the basics right and ensure that genders, tenses, adjectives and spellings are correct. Quotations are not required in the essay and it is better to make concise references to what characters may have said rather than quote inaccurately; if students wish to learn quotations then short ones of just a few words are the best.

### Advice to students

- Read the question carefully. Highlight the key words and ensure you deal with all aspects required by the title.
- Make sure you leave sufficient time to plan and, equally importantly, to check your essay through at the end.
- Don’t waste time summarising the text or film: get straight to the point.
- Don’t tell the story of what happens. The best essays are those which demonstrate an excellent critical evaluation and analysis of the text.
- Back up your points with concise yet detailed references to the book or film.
- Write the number of the essay you are answering in the space provided.
- Don’t quote unless you are sure you can quote accurately.
- Bear in mind that it is not essential to write an introduction, especially one that tells the examiner who wrote the text or directed the film and when/where it was set. It is perfectly acceptable to go straight into your first point.

### Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.