
A-LEVEL SPANISH

7692/2: Paper 2 (Writing)
Report on the Examination

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General

There have been examples of essays across the full range of marks this year and the standard is largely similar to last year, with the mean mark down by less than one per cent. There were examples of essays on all of the texts and films and on all of the titles on the paper. The most popular works continue to be *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, *El laberinto del fauno* and *Volver* by some considerable margin, and the numbers of students choosing these works has gone up from last year. The numbers have risen slightly on most works, although *La casa de los espíritus* and *María, llena eres de gracia* were less popular than last year.

Section A – Literature

Question 1: La casa de Bernarda Alba

Once again this was the most widely chosen text and, this year, answers were divided unevenly in favour of 1.1, on the creation of tension in the play. Less than a quarter of students chose to answer question 1.2, on the role of La Poncia.

The most effective essays were on the creation of tension included Poncia's warnings, the growing rivalry and bitterness between the sisters, and the omens of the spilled salt and the pearl engagement ring. These essays also made a clear link between the evidence provided and the demands of the title, stating clearly **how** the tension was created and not just giving examples of tense relationships. The least successful essays focused solely on the antagonism between Bernarda and her daughters, and Adela's rebellious actions. These essays often left it to the examiner to deduce how the information linked to the title and failed to make their points clear.

Success in tackling question 1.2 was limited. There was some confusion about whether Poncia's role was indeed important and some restricted themselves to a discussion about social classes and the relationship between Poncia and Bernarda.

As happened last year, many students compared the house and Bernarda to the Franco dictatorship even though the play was published before the Civil War and Franco's regime had not started. Some inappropriately made reference to Lorca's sexuality and death and gave their opinion on this event.

Students are still attempting to 'shoe horn' inappropriate subjunctives into their essay on this play and should be discouraged from writing such sentences as 'Si yo fuera Bernarda, no trataría tan mal a mis hijas'.

Question 2: Crónica de una muerte anunciada

Around a third of the students chose to tackle question 2.1, on the style of the novel and its impact on the reader. There were some very good examples from students who had clearly studied the various aspects of the style in depth and enjoyed having the opportunity to showcase their knowledge. Less able students inevitably had less to say and had to focus on the newspaper report aspect of the novel.

Question 2.2 was much more popular and the most successful essays analysed the main themes succinctly, clearly explaining why they thought the theme still had relevance in parts of the world today. Students had clear ideas about the themes of honour, male/female roles and religion.

Occasionally, some descended into lengthy storytelling and forgot to link their information to the title.

Question 3: Como agua para chocolate

Around three quarters of students chose question 3.1 on the impact of prohibiting the expression of emotions. It would be a good idea for students to consider the titles in detail before embarking on their plans and writing, and even to highlight key words in the title, as a considerable number of students did not fully answer the question that was being asked. Many students wrote about ‘what happens when the characters do not get to do what they want’ rather than the specific stifling of emotions referred to in the title. The most effective essays carefully thought through the impact and gave excellent examples of Tita’s emotions having to be channelled into the food she prepares and affecting those who ate it. Less effective essays tended to be too narrative and gave few examples from the novel. There were a few inappropriate references to the Mexican Revolution and Porfirio Diaz, which seemed unrelated to the points being made in the essay.

Only around a quarter chose question 2.1 on Pedro’s relationship with the other characters. Some serious misconceptions about the novel were revealed, such as Pedro having a good relationship with Mamá Elena and being very caring towards Rosaura. Again, students should be reminded to read the question with care, as a number wrote about how other characters behaved towards Pedro and not the other way round.

Question 4: Réquiem por un campesino español

Some three quarters of students chose question 4.1 on the representation of the church in the novel and there were many successful essays on the topic. Many students showed great maturity in their approach. Their analysis of how the church is presented was thorough and well-structured from the first scene in the Sacristy through the main episodes, to the beginning of the Requiem Mass.

Many students who tackled the second question were drawn in by the mention of the character Mosén Millán but tended to put their own slant on the title, limiting themselves to writing about the priest’s passivity and inaction. The most effective essays were able to look beyond this and into the priest’s low opinion of the poor and acceptance of the class structure that supported his position.

Question 5: La sombra del viento

Only around 50 students answered the questions on this novel and the vast majority chose question 5.1, on the lies on which the life of Carax was based. Many students showed an impressive understanding of this complex novel and were able to show their understanding and evaluation of all the lies and secrets from childhood to adulthood and the beginning of a new life at the end of the novel.

Question 6: La casa de los espíritus

Question 6.1, about themes, was marginally more popular than question 6.2 and was well answered by well-prepared students. They wrote about inequality between the rich and the poor creating violent conflicts and resulting in revenge and hatred. They also analysed the inequality of the sexes and the roles of politics in relation to the situation in Chile.

Question 7: Rimas

The numbers of students studying this work has gone up from last year and question 7.2, about the joys and misery of love, was the more popular of the two titles. The main problem with both questions was the sketchiness of the answers. Many students spent far too long discussing the life and loves of the poet and made only infrequent references to the poems. Successful answers gave specific references to the language and the images used by Bécquer to illustrate their points. These students clearly knew the poems in depth, whereas others seemed to be depending on a general and rather vague overview of the work.

Question 8: Las Bicicletas son para el verano

Around a quarter of students tackled question 8.1, but question 8.2, on the aspirations of the characters, was far more popular. At times students showed a flimsy understanding of the plot, stating that Manolita never achieved her goal to become an actress and that Luisito got a very good job in the end. The more effective responses to question 8.2 also pointed out that Manolita's goal was to become an independent woman in a liberal society and that Julio's ambition, to marry Manolita, was short-lived and ultimately thwarted as the marriage was declared invalid.

Question 9: El otro árbol de Guernica

There was quite an increase in the number of students studying this text and they produced some pleasing essays. Question 9.1, on whether Santi is a credible character, was generally answered well and many students were able to present evidence of Santi's realistic behaviour and other references that pointed to him being a rather idealised character. Question 9.2, on the use of symbols, was slightly less successful. Students clearly understood the significance of the tree itself but there was some confusion as to the meaning of a cut-down tree or mast, with some students thinking it was a positive symbol rather than a negative image of a rootless tree cast adrift.

Question 10: El coronel no tiene quien le escriba

Some three quarters of students chose question 10.1 on how the Colonel and his wife faced their difficulties and there were some very effective responses here. Many students demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the text. Question 10.2 was marginally less successful, but students who were well prepared were able to provide lots of examples from the novel to show how Márquez depicts the isolated and lifeless town. Both questions demonstrated the benefit of an in-depth knowledge of the work.

Question 11: El laberinto del fauno

This was the most popular film once again and produced answers across the range of marks. The great majority chose question 11.1 on the behaviour and motivations of Carmen. Some were able to give good examples to support their arguments, but the less effective responses did not focus on the question, instead concentrating solely on behaviour with no mention of motives. Some went on to write about Del Toro's techniques with colours and the magical world. Too many essays wrote at length about women's rights during Franco's dictatorship, even bringing up '*La guía de la buena esposa*'. We came across a number of essays where students did not seem to know the names of the characters and had written the entire essay about Mercedes, calling her Carmen, thus writing the whole essay about the wrong character. The most successful essays pointed out that Carmen always attempted to placate Vidal as she was dependent upon him for security and protection and dismissed Ofelia's childish interest in fairy stories as she wanted to toughen her up to face the harsh reality of the world where magic does not exist.

There were some highly successful essays on question 11.2 when students examined the portrayal of the *maquis*, Mercedes and the doctor. Some ingeniously referred to Ofelia's story of the rose on the hill as an allegory of Del Toro's message about the resistance. Less effective responses appeared to ignore the title all together and write about how the director was only aiming to depict the brutality of the Franco regime.

Question 12: Ocho apellidos vascos

Around a third of students opted for question 12.1, on the use of scenery and backgrounds, and some were very successful. Students who knew the film in depth were able to pick out the differences in the bars used to highlight the difference in regional character, the weather and the houses, including their contents. Successful students were able to show how these scenes enhanced our understanding of the film's message. Question 12.2 was more popular and produced a range of successful responses. Some focused on how the characters learned to overcome their differences and grew to love one another, while others concentrated on how familiarity breeds understanding and lessens the likelihood of conflict. Less effective responses suffered from too much storytelling.

Question 13: María, llena eres de gracia

There were some very effective answers to the reasons Maria had to leave Colombia. To justify their answer, students analysed her situation at home: her job; her lack of love for her boyfriend; her lack of prospects; her adventurous attitude; her responsibility to her unborn baby and the hope for a better future. In question 13.2, on the relationship between María and Blanca, the most effective answers ensured they answered the question and showed how the experience of the two girls affected their relationship. Less effective responses resorted to narrative and simply described scenes in which both girls appeared.

Question 14: Volver

This film was a popular choice, as last year, and answers were evenly split between the two questions. The more successful responses on Raimunda's motivations covered some of the film's main themes. They discussed how Raimunda moved away from her village to escape her past, how she was prepared to sacrifice herself for her daughter and ultimately forgave Irene due to her own need for a mother figure in her life. Other students recounted too much of the plot or dwelt on Almodóvar's childhood surrounded by women. Question 14.2, on the image of Spain in the film, produced some well-reasoned arguments. Effective answers explained how the film does show some very unpleasant aspects of society but that, ultimately, the positive elements of maternal love, family ties and female solidarity outweigh the negative view. Occasionally, students brought in topics they have studied elsewhere in the course, believing them to be appropriate and an indication of their grasp of social context (such as '*La guía de la buena esposa*', gender violence or lack of opportunities for women). These are almost always inappropriate and are best avoided.

Question 15: Abel

Very few students studied this film. Some three quarters tackled question 15.1 on the positive side of Abel's role and the remainder answered on the figure of the 'macho' in Mexican society.

Question 16: Las 13 rosas

About 96% of students who studied this film chose question 16.1 on how the film provokes strong emotions. The higher scoring responses showed real engagement with the subject matter and indicated that students had clearly enjoyed the film. These essays showed an in-depth knowledge of characters and plot and were able to refer to the music and sounds, as well as the visual elements.

Language

The most effective responses used a wide range of vocabulary, clear connectors and stylish constructions. This also meant that students had all the vocabulary they needed to express their ideas and were able to get their point clearly across. Students should be reminded to proof-read their essays at the end to check for basic errors of spelling, agreement and gender and even to check that they have written the correct name for each character, author and director.

Students should be reminded that conditional constructions using the subjunctive (if/would) are rarely appropriate for essays on film and literature. There are a number of better ways to show a command of the subjunctive in this type of essay such as *para que...*, *es posible que ...*, *Agustina quiere que Raimunda...*, etc.

Inaccurate quotations are still very much in evidence, and many students think it is acceptable to paraphrase quotations yet still use speech marks. Students should be reminded that quotations are not required in an essay and that the best approach is to use them only when they know they are completely accurate. For this reason, it is always better to learn short quotations, if at all.

Advice to students:

- ensure you know the names of the characters very well – your understanding of the entire title may depend on it
- read the title carefully, highlight key words and ensure you cover all elements that are required
- plan your essay; the logical flow that results from a planned essay will be evident in what you write and make your argument clearer
- make your point, provide evidence from the text or film and then explain how your evidence proves your point; failing to do this means that points are lost or the examiner has to read between the lines to work out the point that you are making
- do not start your essay by announcing who wrote the work or directed the film. The introduction can be an explanation of what you will examine in your essay or you may leave out the introduction and get straight to the point
- do not quote unless you are sure you can quote accurately
- write down the number of the essay title you have chosen, and make sure you have written the correct one
- know the film or text in depth: this is essential as you need to be able to answer any question on the day, while providing valid and appropriate references to back up your ideas.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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