

FIRST LANGUAGE SPANISH

Paper 8665/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

The exam provided a good opportunity for candidates across the ability range to display their writing and reading comprehension skills in Spanish. Based upon two texts about issues which have a worldwide relevance, the questions explored notions which were not unfamiliar to candidates. The time allocated for this paper appeared to be adequate and, if candidates omitted parts of questions, the reason appeared to be difficulty of task, or oversight, rather than the clock.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

A different question type was used for this session. It posed no problems for most candidates who followed the instructions given. There were, however, a very small minority who appeared not to have read the rubric and who offered duplicate or triplicate definitions for the words from the text.

The key to this type of exercise is not to attempt it in isolation from the text. A line number reference is given for each of the five expressions being tested and candidates should first look at how these are used in the context of the passage and then proceed to look for the equivalent definitions.

Full marks were not uncommon, although scores of one or two errors were more the norm. A discernible pattern in wrong answers offered was in **5(b)** where *asunto*, *cuestión* was often suggested instead of *aspecto* and **5(e)** where *estar situado* was frequently offered for *conseguir empleo*.

Question 2

Candidates were familiar with the requirements of this question type and it produced a predictable range of answers.

- (a) This was generally answered well with most candidates producing an acceptable variation of *cada vez más*.
- (b) Many permutations were possible here to gain the mark and candidates used this to their advantage. There was occasional carelessness with *más* and *menos* which gave a contrary, incorrect answer.
- (c) Again, there were several different routes taken by candidates to produce a correct answer, with the key to most of them involving the correct use of an imperfect tense. However, *la gente ahora coge el ascensor antes de subir un piso* was also a very acceptable answer.
- (d) This part question gave more difficulty than the other four, frequently because many candidates tried to treat *preciso* as a first person verb. Those who correctly used it with its adjectival meaning of 'necessary' often invalidated their answers by omitting *a esto*. (The correct answers should replace the original words from the text to give exactly the same meaning.)
- (e) The conversion of the passive agent to the subject of an active verb is a familiar device in this test type and was recognised by most candidates, although sometimes invalidated by the omission of an introductory *que*.

Question 3

The text and the questions asked on it proved to be very accessible to the majority of candidates. by accident or design, answers were sometimes invalidated by 'lifting' too many words of original text. rubric clearly states *sin copiar frases completas del texto* and, as a general rule, examiners interpret this as '4 words or more'.)

In both **Question 3** and **Question 4** marks were occasionally lost carelessly when candidates attempted to seek answers in paragraphs other than those given as reference.

- (a) This two-part question gave most candidates a comfortable start. Failure to score maximum marks was usually due to: failure to stress that obesity causes most deaths in the developed world; a 'lift' of *en los países desarrollados*; no mention of the two halves of the world dying from food-related issues; a 'lift' of *se muere de hambre*.
- (b) Many good answers were offered here. The question asked for an explanation of words from the text and those candidates who merely repeated *estética* and *un problema de salud* needed to find alternative expressions in their answers. Some candidates lost a mark by omitting to explain *con prevalencia creciente*.
- (c) Marks were freely available here and most candidates took full advantage. Not only did the mark scheme allow for up to six possible reasons, explanations of expressions such as *factores genéticos*, *ambientales* or *sedentarismo* were not being sought and therefore, being fewer than four words, could be taken directly from the text.
- (d) The more open-ended nature of this question produced many interesting and thoughtful answers. Two distinct ideas were needed in order to score both marks. Many candidates seized upon the text's suggestion that there is insufficient time for formal meals nowadays and then added further ideas of their own about how meals used to be a valuable part of daily routine when families could sit down together and talk.
- (e) Answers to this question were fairly readily identified although commonly invalidated by lifting *tienen una serie de frustraciones* or *problemas para conseguir empleo* directly from the text.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA**Question 4**

Although the text on which this question was based was of comparable difficulty to that of the preceding one, candidates did not appear so comfortable in their responses. The exploitation of the subject matter proved to be much more demanding and very high marks were not nearly so common.

- (a) Not all candidates managed to identify the apparent contradiction between what Spaniards say and what they do. A few misinterpreted *ambas* to mean that there were also Mediterranean diet fast food outlets and others considered *cola* to be a form of beverage.
- (b) This question generally produced good scores provided that answers were drawn from the text and not home-grown theories of globalisation. Typical barriers to achieving full marks were omitting to mention that the food is identical in every outlet or lifting *como si se estuviera* and *en el del barrio*.
- (c) A fairly easy mark was available for a mention of *ensaladas*, although not all candidates went on to collect the second one by mentioning either that these were offered alongside the hamburgers or that criticism of the latter had prompted the appearance of the former.
- (d) Surprisingly, very few candidates knew the meaning of the word *opulencia*, with the result that marks for this question were very hard to come by. The most common misunderstanding was that opulence was another particularly nasty illness.
- (e) Three marks were offered for mentioning that the hamburger itself is not harmful although it should be consumed in moderation in the context of a varied diet. Not many candidates scored the maximum.

Question 5(a)

Good technique is crucial to scoring well on this question and there is still evidence of under-achievement because of a lack of it. The candidate has just under 100 words in which to answer the question, (in this case, summarise what the texts say about how forms of eating affect health). What is required, therefore, is a succinct reproduction of the relevant facts from the texts for which marks are awarded. (Lifting of expressions is not penalised in this exercise.)

Stylistic devices such as lengthy introductions may influence the 5 language marks available for this and the following question but in practical terms openings such as *Los dos textos hacen alusión de como la forma de comer afecta la salud de las personas* waste nearly one fifth of the words and score nil for content. A more appropriate, point-scoring opening might be: *La comida basura es una causa de la obesidad que afecta a muchas personas viviendo en países desarrollados...*

Personal opinions should not be included in **5(a)** and should be held back for **5(b)**. However, if the candidate uses up the full 140 words for the former there is little point in attempting the latter exercise, because, apart from possibly influencing the language mark, it will not score.

A few candidates chose to offer about 100 words for **5(b)** and only about 40 words for **5(a)**. Even though the maximum word count was observed the mark allocation still remained the same. (5 out of 5 for the personal opinion is scant compensation for marks of 2 or 3 out of 10 for the summary.)

Question 5(b)

This final part of the exam was handled fairly competently. Most candidates were aware that they had just two or three sentences with which to respond to issues raised by the texts. Those who managed to include some variety in their response scored well.

SPANISH

Paper 8665/04

Texts

General comments

Examiners report that the overall standard of work was comparable to previous sessions. It was pleasing to note that the majority of candidates were well prepared for the examination, both in terms of knowledge of the chosen texts and understanding of the requirements of the examination itself. There were fewer instances of incorrect interpretation of the rubric although candidates from a small number of Centres answered too many questions.

Examiners are, however, concerned about the increasingly poor quality of handwriting. It is becoming more and more difficult to read answers, and this is clearly likely to have a significant impact on the marks available. Examiners have found some scripts virtually illegible. In addition to the problem of the handwriting itself, the use of very flimsy paper is exacerbating the difficulty, especially when candidates write on both sides. Centres are asked to stress to candidates that they can only be given credit for material which can be read, and to consider the quality of paper supplied for the examination.

A final administrative detail to note is that candidates are required to fasten together all sheets of paper before handing in the completed script to the invigilator. Examiners report several cases of Centres dispatching loose papers which then have to be sorted and fastened by the Examiner. This is not acceptable and clearly could easily lead to papers going astray.

Comments on individual questions

PÉREZ GALDOS

- 1 (a) Many candidates chose this question and answered it well, although not all could make the reference to the rest of the work required for **Section (iii)**.
- 1 (b) Fewer chose this option; the best answers gave a considered account of the changes in Pepe's behaviour and the causes for this, with some discussion as to how much Pepe contributed to the problems he experienced and to what extent he had been tainted by the hypocrisy in those around him.

ISABEL ALLENDE

- 2 (a) This was popular, although surprisingly few went into detail about characterisation as invited to in **Section (ii)**. There were different interpretations as to which family was meant in **Section (iii)**, but all candidates managed a coherent response.
- 2 (b) Few candidates really did justice to this question, as many could talk about the 'supernatural elements' but found it difficult to analyse how the novelist uses historical events.

VARGAS LLOSA

- 3 (a) Many chose this question and the answers were generally good, or very good, giving the impression that candidates related well to the story. It was important in responding to (iii) that candidates analysed the main characters (as referred to in the quotation given) to consider the role of the 'banda'.
- 3 (b) This was also a popular choice and candidates showed good knowledge of the text in a variety of interpretations of the question. Some considered the life of the 'barrio' as a whole, others focused more closely on the experience of individuals within that society.

FERNÁN-GÓMEZ

- 4 (a) This was a popular question although answers to **Sections (ii)** and **(iii)** tended to draw the same examples. The answer to **(ii)** only needs to be fairly brief with specific reference to an extract quoted, whereas **(iii)** requires a much broader perspective on the text. The most successful answers identified both positive and negative aspects to the experience of women in the Civil War. It is important to keep the focus of the answer on the text itself rather than historical background information.
- 4 (b) This was the less popular option for this text, but candidates were able to discern the playwright's sympathy with those drawn into such a conflict. Some answers interpreted the question as the innocent showing solidarity amongst themselves, and this resulted in successful responses also.

GARCIA MÁRQUEZ

- 5 (a) This was a very popular question and generally very well answered. The best answers were able to express a certain ambiguity with regard to the concept of 'justicia social', pointing out that the action of the brothers was in accord with one type of justice, but even so, no guilt was ever proved.
- 5 (b) Candidates often interpreted the reference to 'personajes superficiales' to mean that the people mentioned in the story were superficial people, not that the author had not bothered with in-depth characterisation because this was not relevant to his aims - but in any case they found plenty to say about the various characters.

CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA

- 6 (a) This proved a popular choice and there was scope for the best candidates to write an answer touching on many different elements in the text. Candidates seemed to relate well to the issues discussed in this play and many showed insight and a sensitive reading of the text.
- 6 (b) This question did not present any problems and was straightforward, although candidates must be sure to analyse as well as identify the symbols, as instructed in the question. There was a wide variety in the range of symbols chosen and their degree of importance.

GARCÍA LORCA

- 7 (a) Many chose this question although most ignored the 'toro' reference in their answers. The question was sometimes interpreted too literally, focusing only on the wedding of la Novia and el Novio, without wider consideration of the nature of marriage as an institution, for example, within the context of the play. There were clearly many other avenues to explore and the most successful responses considered the role of Leonardo and indeed analysed what 'la boda' meant to him and how this wedding had been a catalyst for action.
- 7 (b) This question was popular too. Most candidates managed solid answers with some thoughtful reflections on la Novia's plight and her inner conflict.

MACHADO

- 8 (a) The answers to this question were satisfactory, as candidates were able to find a reasonable range of examples to support the hypothesis and some also showed how Machado valued nature for itself.
- 8 (b) Although relatively few chose this question, the answers were successful as candidates were able to identify how, for example, individuals were motivated to act in response to greed or selfishness and that the situations and outcomes could be said to be timeless and represent the human condition at any time in history.

Conclusion

Candidates are advised to focus closely on the question and although a number of interpretations may be valid, the answer must be a direct response to the task set. Examiners expect to find the argument supported by references to the text, which do not need to be long quotations. It is not in candidates' interests to answer

more than the required three essays. With reference to questions in the first section of the paper, candidates must ensure that they make reference to the whole text as instructed in (iii) of option (a) and in option (b). It is never sufficient to base a whole answer on material in the extract given as a stimulus for option (a). Please ensure that Examiners can read the answers.