

FIRST LANGUAGE SPANISH

Paper 8665/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

The paper was handled well by the majority of candidates. Candidates were able to take fairly challenging subject matter, and the inclusion of a new test type, in their stride, and very few appeared to have insufficient time to complete the tasks. There was clear evidence that many had been well coached in the techniques required by this examination.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

This was a well-established test type with target phrases which proved to be readily identifiable in the original text. Full marks were often achieved and only a minority of candidates failed to score fewer than three out of five marks.

As in previous sessions, marks were carelessly dropped either by omitting words from the target phrase or by unnecessarily extending it. The target phrase given by the candidate in their answer must match identically with the substitute phrase, and many candidates followed the good practice of writing the former alongside the latter as a means of checking. **Questions (a), (c) and (e)** attracted most correct answers. **Question (d)** proved to be more challenging, and even when correctly identified was often invalidated by the addition of extra words.

Question 2

The relative familiarity of the opening question was counterbalanced here by the introduction of a test type new to this paper. The conversion of direct speech to indirect or reported speech posed problems for many candidates, and construction of the imperfect subjunctive did not appear to be widely known.

Question 3

Candidates appeared to have little difficulty in locating the particular section of the passage targeted by the questions and good scores were commonly recorded.

- (a) (i) This was answered correctly by almost every candidate, with many taking advantage of the paraphrase offered in **Question 1(a)**.
- (ii) The point about negative connotations was very easily identified. A minority of candidates considered that this would be sufficient for the award of two marks and failed to mention the supposed connections with other social problems. It should be remembered that in the comprehension exercises marks are always awarded according to the number of points candidates are required to make. No single point of comprehension will ever be considered to be of sufficient importance to be worthy of two marks.
- (b) Candidates quickly focused on the relevant section of the text and usually picked up two marks with comparative ease. A stumbling block, however, frequently arose with the reproduction verbatim of five or more words from the phrase *ciertas deficiencias en el sistema de protección social*. Some marks were also lost through careless misreading of *deficiencias* as *diferencias*.

- (c) Four basic rights were clearly flagged up in the text and candidates had little difficulty identifying three of them. The only pitfall once again was the occasional tendency for candidates to copy five or more words of the original text rather than answering in their own words.
- (d) The relevant sentence from the text was easily identified and understood. However, paraphrasing was again the major problem here, with candidates encountering particular difficulty in re-wording *anular las ordenanzas represivas en cuanto a la regulación del espacio público*.
- (e) This was a more challenging question. Many scored with the mention of *informes honestos* and *opinión positiva* but few followed this up with the point about society questioning its own values or the reasons behind homelessness.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

Many candidates appeared to find the vocabulary in this second passage more challenging than in the first, and some had difficulty identifying the phenomenon of 'squatting'.

- (a) (i) Examiners thought that *desalojar* would be recognisable from the more widely used words *alojar* or *alojamiento*. Surprisingly, this was not the case for many candidates who failed to convey the notion of eviction.
- (ii) Even more surprising was the failure among many candidates to recognise *dejar de* and *suceso* which meant that they failed to score what should have been a fairly accessible mark.
- (b) With four marks available most candidates managed to pick up something on this question. Those who clearly understood what was going on and who remembered that four marks always means that four different points are being sought scored full marks. There were others who also clearly understood the passage but thought that one or two points would suffice and who therefore scored only one or two marks.
- (c) Even those candidates who failed to understand the notion of *condimentos* had little difficulty in identifying the sentence in the text which was being targeted. The only problems were encountered by those who were unable to paraphrase.
- (d) (i) Apart from a minority who failed to recognise *alquilar* when preceded by a prefix, most candidates who could paraphrase what was stated in the passage scored here.
- (ii) This was an inference question for which more than one answer was possible. Candidates needed to demonstrate their understanding of the situation by coming up with an answer which, although not stated in the text, would be perfectly feasible under the circumstances. The most popular ideas were that Carlos 'had already made enough money out of the scam', or 'he knew that the police would catch up with him if he carried on much longer'.
- (e) Many candidates found this question challenging. The speaker is summing up his previous remarks and it is a paraphrase of these, plus some explanation of *clandestinidad*, that is required. Generalised responses on the workings of the free market economy did not score.

Question 5

Although there has been a marked improvement over the years, a few candidates still seem to be unaware that anything they write in excess of a total of 140 words for parts (a) and (b) will be ignored. Those who transgressed commonly received few or no marks for part (b).

- (a) The summary question proved fairly accessible to most candidates. Candidates who had struggled to comprehend the second text were able to identify many causes and consequences of homelessness in the first text. In an exercise where words are at a premium candidates should be reminded that wasteful introductory sentences such as *Los dos textos hablan de la falta de vivienda, que es un gran problema en muchos países del mundo* are not necessary. Marks are allocated for facts which answer the question and not for literary style.

- (b) In the two or three sentences which were usually available for this exercise those candidates who came up with ideas other than those suggested by the texts scored the highest marks.

FIRST LANGUAGE SPANISH

Paper 8665/04

Texts

General comments

Examiners found that the overall performance of candidates reflected careful reading and preparation of the set texts. In addition, the majority of essays showed that candidates had experience in tackling the type of questions set. It was still challenging for candidates to produce three strong answers but few scripts were unfinished. In preparing candidates for future sessions, Centres might find it helpful to encourage students to read the questions carefully and answer only what is required of them; ensure that all sections of the question are addressed; make reference to the whole text in answering option (iii) in the (a) questions in *Sección Primera*; support points made in the essay with reference to the text and not to general knowledge.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1 Azuela: *Los de abajo*

- (a) There were many competent answers to this question. The extract gave much material to comment on in parts (i) and (ii), with many references to the skill and organisation of Demetrio's men juxtaposed with the almost flippant attitude to their enemy. In answering part (iii), the best essays were able to take these points and show how Demetrio's position changed and how the almost playful approach of his men became darker and cruel as the war progressed. The reference to *los de abajo* was also analysed – in the extract the *federales* are seen in those terms but the tables will be turned.
- (b) This question also gave rise to many good essays. Candidates tended to focus on Demetrio's men's descent into greed and cruelty and their ultimate rejection by the very people they were meant to be fighting for. There was some good analysis of the role of characters such as Cervantes and Solís but it often lacked sufficient detailed knowledge to be effective. Those answers which focused on Demetrio himself were generally well done.

Question 2 Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna*

- (a) Candidates showed understanding of the extract and answered parts (i) and (ii) well, with many including references to incidents beyond the extract. In order to attain a good mark overall, candidates then had to show detailed knowledge of the text beyond the extract, picking up the main themes of Mimi and Eva's struggle to make a life for themselves and the differences in their personalities which affected their attitude to life, in particular Eva's political views.
- (b) Answers to this question were generally full and well done. Candidates understood how Eva used her own experiences in her work and how the *telenovelas* also served an important function in informing the general population about the current political situation and the possibility of change.

Question 3 Vargas Llosa: *Los jefes y Los cachorros*

- (a) Candidates responded well to parts (i) and (ii) and gave full answers – in fact, in some cases too much detail, leaving themselves little space to deal with part (iii). The concept of nostalgia was dealt with in a number of ways, with additional reference to a range of other stories. Perhaps the most straightforward approach was to take the idea of looking back to adolescence and school days and consider how the author presents this. The idea of claustrophobia fits in with the somewhat limited world of the school or gang, but other examples are valid, such as that of old age.

- (b) The most popular examples chosen for this essay were Cuéllar and Rubén and Miguel. There was a wealth of material here, as in other stories in the collection, and candidates showed a good understanding of the issues, supported with evidence from the texts. The experience of war was dealt with sympathetically although there was, in some cases, a weakness in the argument. The circumstances of his death were not analysed.

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

- (a) There were some very competent answers to this question but many were lacking in detail from the text. In response to parts (i) and (ii), candidates needed to explain the reasons for the characters' reactions rather than simply paraphrase the extract. In part (iii), it was not sufficient to make general remarks about the population being afraid of bombs or not having enough food – this would be true of any conflict situation. The best essays used incidents from the text to illustrate this and showed how perceptions also changed in the way the characters behaved towards one another and the decisions they made.
- (b) This question was generally tackled in a systematic way, with a good deal of supporting evidence from the text. Most found the statement to be only partly true, showing how the individuals managed to find a way of coping in terrible circumstances. The point was often made that the effects of war are as keenly felt in the non-combatants as in the fighting troops – the presentation of this aspect of the suffering was well expressed.

Question 5 Ruiz Zafón: *La sombra del viento*

- (a) Many candidates chose this option and dealt in considerable detail with the similarities between the events in the book found by Daniel and in his own life. There was also discussion of the blurring of fiction and reality.
- (b) This option was also tackled well, with good awareness of the author's ability to interweave stories and maintain suspense. Candidates seemed to have enjoyed the text and were able to refer to incidents in detail and show empathy with the characters.

Question 6 Lope de Vega: *Fuenteovejuna*

- (a) This question required a specific focus on the importance – or otherwise – of the historical scenes in the play. Many candidates showed that they had studied this aspect of the text and were able to construct an argument linking the ideas of loyalty and duty to the Comendador's role in the political struggle of the time, as well as his role in the community of Fuenteovejuna. The position of the monarch was also considered. The conclusion tended to be that these scenes underpinned the themes of justice and loyalty and put the play within a recognisable historical context.
- (b) Many candidates chose this question. The question asked whether the most effectively drawn characters in the play were the women. The best answers showed how Lope de Vega brought the women characters to life in their vociferous challenges to the outrageous behaviour of the Comendador, and their leadership of the rebellion against this. They are seen to be strong, intelligent and committed. Not all the men are poorly drawn, however, and there are complex characters amongst them.

Question 7 García Lorca: *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

- (a) There was a large response to this question, and many very good answers. Candidates analysed Poncia's role in the household in great detail, considering her as Bernarda's confidante and bringer of gossip, a mother figure to the daughters and general commentator to the audience, amongst other functions. Her importance in revealing what was really happening was crucial to our understanding of the play.
- (b) This was another hugely popular question. Many candidates were able to support the idea that destiny could not be challenged and gave detailed accounts of the portents within the play which led to an inexorable tragedy. In addition, the importance of the character of Bernarda herself and the rigid regime imposed were also crucial aspects.

Question 8 Rubén Darío: *Poemas*

- (a) Most candidates who chose this question tended to agree with the statement and gave illustrations of the erotic aspects of two or three poems of their choice. They were able to discuss the forms and language also with some confidence.
- (b) This was chosen by fewer candidates and as there is a degree of scope for individual interpretation it is not appropriate to suggest a 'good' answer. In this type of question, Examiners wish to give candidates the opportunity to show their ability to present a personal reaction to the poem, supported by reference to it and an understanding of literary analysis – form, verse, language, theme. Since candidates have the text with them, paraphrase is not sufficient and experience of critical analysis is required. There were some good examples of this.