

FIRST LANGUAGE SPANISH

Paper 8665/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

The examination discriminated well, providing a good challenge across the ability range, and a full range of marks was awarded. There were encouraging signs that candidates had been made well aware of the format of the paper and its requirements, and only a few of the less able candidates appeared to find difficulty in completing within the allocated time.

There were fewer instances of lines of text being lifted from the passage in answer to questions, which is not only an indicator of good understanding of the passages, but is also a measure of candidates' confidence in their linguistic ability. However, on some occasions candidates attempted to answer questions with information from their own experience and not as it appeared in the texts. This could not be awarded any marks.

Candidates should be reminded that the information required to answer questions occurs sequentially throughout the texts. Marks can only be awarded if the answers are relevant to a particular question and not to one which appears earlier or later.

Another thing to be borne in mind is the number of marks attached to each question. A question which is worth 4 marks will be seeking four different points and is unlikely to be answerable in a mere one or two lines.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

Seeking the equivalent expression in the text should by now be a very familiar exercise. It requires careful reading and understanding and, once the phrase has been identified, even greater care in ensuring that the words copied are an exact match to the stimulus phrase. On frequent occasions an otherwise correct answer was invalidated by the inclusion of surplus words either at the beginning or at the end of the answer.

- (a) Sadly, this was a good illustration of the above point. A number of candidates lost the mark by also including *la mayoría de los estudiantes* or *en clase*.
- (b) & (c) These proved to be the most accessible questions in the exercise with the majority of candidates correctly identifying them.
- (d) This was more challenging, with correct responses sometimes invalidated by the addition of *en nuestras relaciones*.
- (e) Correct identification was frequently marred by including *pero* as a prefix.

Question 2

This transformation exercise was a good test of knowledge and application of grammatical structure. In addition, candidates had to be careful to commence their answer with the word given and also to make certain that it would fit seamlessly into the original text.

- (a) Good candidates responded confidently producing several permissible variations. Less able candidates seemed to have little knowledge of the required structure.

- (b) *Hay que* + infinitive was correctly identified as appropriate by many. A few candidates lost marks by omitting *lo*.
- (c) A transformation from active to passive (or vice versa) is a perennial favourite in this exercise. Care must be taken to maintain the same verb tense as in the stimulus, (in this case the perfect), as answers such as *es usado* were rejected.
- (d) There were many correct answers for this transformation.
- (e) Although simple in appearance this manipulation caught out many candidates. Even those who successfully came up with *está preocupado* or *se preocupa* frequently overlooked that it was necessary to add *por*.

Question 3

The text was accessible to candidates with the vast majority readily latching on to the idea that traditional writing by hand is being replaced by new technologies.

- (a) As this was a question worth 4 marks candidates should have realised that to simply answer 'the author reinforces his assertion with a series of rhetorical questions' was unlikely to score the maximum. In fact, such an answer did not score any marks, as what was required was clear reference to the examples given of how the use of new technologies has replaced writing by hand.
- (b) Many candidates picked up both marks for this question. Those who did not often introduced information that did not appear in the text, e.g. *Pueden tomar apuntes de una forma más rápida* or *Pueden tomar apuntes con el ordenador en clase*.
- (c) As PIN numbers are regularly used when visiting the bank or supermarket in person it was essential for candidates to mention the use of the Internet or a 'remote' transaction in their answers.
- (d) This question appeared to capture candidates' imagination and, no matter what the linguistic ability was, produced many good and interesting answers.
- (e) Again, candidates should be reminded that an answer carrying 4 marks merits careful attention. The question referred to *los últimos dos párrafos* and the information required was spread evenly between them. Too many candidates felt that they had done enough by only partially answering the question.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

This was another text which seemed not to pose too many problems of comprehension and, if anything, produced slightly higher scores than **Question 3**.

- (a) Most candidates scored full marks on this opening question with the majority being of the opinion that the principal motive for reading was relaxation.
- (b) Not so many candidates scored all 3 marks available for this question. The most common omission was *los manuales de instrucciones* and further elaboration was not always forthcoming on what exactly constitutes *una afición*.
- (c) Happily, this was an occasion when many candidates did take full advantage of all the marks on offer, mentioning all the differences between male and female reading habits listed in the third paragraph.
- (d) This was another question where candidates commonly scored well, although some went to elaborate statistical lengths to score 1 mark for saying that 'young people read more than the elderly'. The valid opinions given for why this might appear surprising were usually well-argued and imaginative.

- (e) The full 4 marks were not so easy to come by on this two-part question. Other answers which were given to the wrong part-question could not be credited.

Question 5

- (a) What was needed in this summary exercise was an outline of five main points from each text delivered within the confines of approximately one hundred words. Here there were no penalties for failing to paraphrase nor did the level of Spanish necessarily have to be of the highest order to score the 10 marks for Content.

Those candidates who were aware of the required technique scored well. Sadly, there were a number of candidates, whose performance on earlier parts of the paper showed that they had clearly understood the texts, who failed to score many of the easily available marks here.

Introductory statements such as 'the first text talks about the current situation with regard to writing by hand and the second text talks about reading habits' scored no marks and were a needless waste of precious words. Further bland generalisations went equally unrewarded.

To do well in this exercise candidates should single out relevant facts which answer the question and which, in many cases, they will have already highlighted in answers to earlier parts of the paper.

- (b) Although the message does seem to be getting through, the main pitfall in this part of the question is experienced by candidates who disregard the 140 total word count for both parts of **Question 5**. If 140 words have already been used for the summary then no marks will be available for this part of the question.

For the majority of candidates who had retained sufficient words to write two or three sentences giving a few opinions or ideas about the popularity of reading or writing by hand in their countries, the full range of marks was easily available.

The general consensus amongst candidates was that reading still enjoys widespread popularity but the future of writing by hand looks to be a lost cause.

FIRST LANGUAGE SPANISH

Paper 8665/04

Texts

General comments

Examiners observed that the quality of preparation for this paper was good overall. The majority of candidates had read sufficient texts and showed knowledge of them in their answers. It was very apparent, however, which candidates had had practice in answering examination type questions, and training in making full use of the texts studied. The questions set are intended to give candidates of all abilities the opportunity to interpret the text in their own way in answering the questions. This requires not only evidence from the texts in the form of quotations or references to incidents in supporting points made, but also a structured argument addressing the question directly. It is also essential to ensure that all parts of the question are answered. This is particularly important in the **(a)** questions in **Sección Primera**, where part **(iii)** always requires the candidate to refer to the whole text in their answer, not just to the published extract. Many candidates did not achieve their potential in these questions because they confined the points made to the extract supplied.

Comments on individual questions

Sección Primera

Question 1 Azuela: *Los de abajo*

Both options were well answered in the main, with candidates showing understanding and empathy with the characters concerned. Weaknesses tended to occur in giving a full response to **Question 1(a)(iii)** and in analysing the role of women in the Revolution rather than describing individuals. The best answers to **Question 1(a)** showed how Luis Cervantes influenced Demetrio's decisions and subsequently changed the whole attitude of his band and their involvement in the struggle. Many good answers to **Question 1(b)** indicated that candidates had already considered this aspect of the novel and were able to categorise the different types of women depicted and the nature of their contribution.

Question 2 Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna*

This was a popular text and, as usual, candidates showed commendable knowledge of a lengthy novel, and understanding of the themes. In answer to **Question 2(a)**, Examiners expected candidates to be aware of the circumstances surrounding the death of Riad Halabi's wife, and to be able to show how Eva's life was affected by this incident with reference to specific experiences following her departure. **Question 2(b)** gave much scope for candidates to give individual interpretations of the main themes, but they are expected to give examples from the text and to analyse rather than narrate.

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

Many candidates chose one of these options and generally showed understanding of the stories. For both **Questions 3(a)(iii)** and **3(b)**, there were many possible references to make from a number of stories, and Examiners rewarded the ability to draw conclusions about the role of violence and the difficult aspects of being young as shown in the examples chosen.

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

Again, this was a text chosen by a large number of candidates, who knew the text well. The weakness in a number of responses, both to **Questions 4(a)** and **4(b)**, was the lack of balance and detail in the answer. In **Question 4(a)**, too much time was spent on parts **(i)** and **(ii)**, leaving the final part of the answer very brief. Examiners accept short answers to the first two parts of an **(a)** question but expect more detail and analysis in response to part **(iii)**. With reference to **Question 4(b)**, the best answers gave examples of the material

deprivations and then went on to consider if the changes in attitude to life and others were seen as benefits outweighed the other aspects of suffering. Candidates must address all parts of a question.

Sección Segunda

Question 5 Ruiz Zafón: *La sombra del viento*

Candidates responded enthusiastically to this new text. Both questions were answered well overall and candidates took advantage of the opportunity to give an individual interpretation in both options. Examiners do not have a pre-conceived 'correct' response to questions and are pleased to read candidates' own reactions to a text. Examiners will accept an answer provided the points made follow a logical argument, are directly focused on the question set and, most importantly, are supported by reference or quotation from the text.

Question 6 Lope de Vega: *Fuenteovejuna*

Examiners were pleased by the quality of these answers. Candidates seemed to enjoy the play and were able to justify their answers with well-chosen references to the text. A number also displayed background knowledge which they were able to integrate into their essays. This was most apparent in **Question 6(a)**, where candidates were able to discuss the social hierarchy of the time and the historical events pertinent to the play. Centres may be reassured to know that although there may be linguistic challenge in tackling such a text, candidates tend to answer well on it.

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

Answers on this text were great in number and very varied in quality. Many showed excellent knowledge and understanding with detailed analysis of the role of María Josefa and the significance of *infierno* in relation to the house itself. Some high-scoring answers to **Question 7(a)** discussed the presentation of *locura*, indicating that María Josefa made the most sane and perceptive comments in the play, and considered the author's intention in creating such a character. In response to **Question 7(b)**, there was a vast range of material to draw upon including the symbolism of the colours mentioned, the atmosphere likened to a prison, the role of society and Bernarda's philosophy of life. Excellent essays also referred to the nature of the relationships between the sisters and the role of La Poncia in bringing in the outside world to the confines of the house. Candidates are advised to check historical references carefully – a significant number of essays insisted that Bernarda represented Franco.

Question 8 Rubén Darío: *Poemas*

Candidates who chose to answer these questions showed understanding of the themes and techniques of poetry. They were able to make use of the text to support their ideas and appreciated the skill of the poet. It is absolutely essential that candidates practise tackling examination type questions to avoid the trap of simply telling the story of the poem or of linking numerous quotations together with little analysis.

Concluding comments

Examiners are very aware of those Centres which encourage candidates to read the texts in detail and discuss them in class. These Centres also give candidates the opportunity to develop the techniques which are essential to enable them to answer examination questions effectively. Candidates must show knowledge with understanding and be able to structure an argument which is directly focused on the question set. It was pleasing to note that the majority of candidates wrote with enthusiasm on the texts studied.