

SPANISH

Paper 8673/04

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 model for option (a). Please ensure that Examiners can read the answers.