

SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/04

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.