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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

SPANISH

GCE Advanced Level

<p>Paper 9719/01 Speaking</p>

General comments

Although the numbers of candidates in this session tends to be somewhat lower than in June, the overall standard of the candidates' performance was encouraging. Centres appear to have come to terms with the syllabus and, for the most part, the examinations were conducted and assessed in accordance with requirements. Recording of the tapes sent for sampling was generally clear.

There are still, however, a few points which need to be reiterated and it is hoped that these reminders will be helpful to those few Centres to which they apply.

Topic presentation

Points made in previous reports remain valid. Candidates must be allowed to speak without interruption for a maximum of three minutes. Most Centres had reminded candidates that their topic had to be related to a Hispanic theme, but in a few cases candidates spoke on very general themes. In the presentation, candidates are required to show evidence of preparation, organisation of their material and relevant knowledge of the Hispanic cultural dimension. The presentation gives the candidate an opportunity to present a personal standpoint and a basis for the following topic conversation.

Candidates who do not deal with a relevant theme will lose credit for the content/presentation mark for this part of the test. This said, however, the majority of candidates had chosen their topic with care and presented the topic in an interesting and informed manner.

Topic conversation/General conversation

The mark scheme for these two sections is the same. Centres are reminded that the marks for the various components of the sections and not just the total mark per section must be clearly shown on the working mark sheets sent with the tapes for moderation.

It must be stressed that in addition to being asked questions by the Teacher/Examiner, candidates are required to elicit information or opinions from the Examiner. In a few cases this was still not done, neither did the Teacher/Examiner offer the candidate the opportunity to do this. In a very few cases, particularly with good candidates, candidates had been given a mark (out of 5) for this, even though this criterion had not been met.

In asking their questions, Centres should remember that candidates should be given the opportunity to include a range of appropriate and advanced language in their replies. It is important that candidates are asked accordingly about opinions and ideas, as well as more factual and descriptive matters. Candidates should be prepared to use different tenses and should be offered the opportunity to express present, past and future contexts.

General comments

The overall performance of candidates in this Paper was very good indeed. The standard of Spanish used was pleasing and most candidates were able to convey their answers using accurate, concise language. The vast majority of candidates followed the rubrics very closely indeed, but some were unaware of the importance of keeping to the word limit stipulated in **Question 5**, where candidates are instructed to write a maximum of 140 words in Spanish. Clearly, candidates who exceed this limit (in some cases by three to four hundred words!) can only harm their cause. Equally, those candidates who wrote in **Question 5 (a)** about the importance of education in contemporary society, but failed to relate their answer to the texts in the actual Question Paper itself (as instructed by the rubric) could not score highly. The idea is to summarise the ideas as presented in both texts.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was well answered by almost all candidates. There were very few problems encountered here.

Question 2

Again, this question was answered competently by most candidates although a small number forgot to use the exact form of the word or words given in brackets and so lost marks.

Question 3

- (a) Many candidates answered this question well and were able to express themselves using their own words (as required by the rubric). Some candidates got carried away and went into all sorts of unnecessary explanations of the opening line of Savater's speech.
- (b) Most candidates found this question a very straightforward one to answer.
- (c) There were many good answers to this difficult question with candidates grappling well with the notion of class division in society.
- (d) Another reasonably well answered question with most candidates able to avoid excessive lifting from the text.
- (e) Mainly well answered although some candidates took this question as an invitation to present their own ideas relating to the future of education in this new millennium.

Question 4

- (a)-(d) Mostly handled well by candidates although the problem for many was that they failed to avoid lifting whole sentences or parts thereof from the text. The rubric makes it clear that this is to be avoided and so those candidates who strive to use their own language by paraphrasing or textual remodelling will score more marks than those who simply copy directly from the text in order to answer the question.

Question 5

- (a)(b) Many candidates performed well in this question despite the aforementioned problems relating to the actual length of some answers. Candidates would do well to notice the distribution of marks in this question and to present their answers accordingly. It is worth remembering that part (a) requires many references to both texts whilst part (b) gives the candidate the opportunity to offer his/her own opinions on a related topic. Candidates do, however, need to stick to the issue raised by the question and not just answer the question in a vague, generalised way.

General comments

The overall standard of performance this year was very good. Pleasing numbers of candidates produced essays that were completely relevant to the title set whilst at the same time showing imagination, linguistic control and a sense of style supported by an impressively confident grasp of idiom. Candidates seemed to revel in the challenge of keeping the Examiner's interest, avoiding repetition and conveying a clear line of thought at all times. Most essays were well constructed, although a small but significant number seemed unaware of the importance of paragraphing, relying instead on a continuous line of thought unbroken by the setting up of a new paragraph. More often than not, such essays lost marks for Content as they showed little signs of any ability to structure an argument and present it coherently. Nevertheless, the vast majority of pieces were easy to follow and well structured.

Examiners were pleased to note that most candidates managed to appreciate the importance of keeping to the word limit (250-400 words). Essays that ignored this stipulation and seriously exceeded the upper word limit suffered from an inevitably higher frequency of grammatical errors resulting in a lower mark for Language than might otherwise have been the case.

Linguistically, there were very few major errors to report. Of these, the most notable was the tendency for candidates to indulge in the blatant tautology of statements such as *en mi opinión personal, creo que...* . Other than this, the vast majority of candidates used accurate Spanish with a good sense of idiom and a wide range of related vocabulary. Examiners felt that candidates were well prepared for this particular Paper.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This title was the least popular by far. Candidates obviously felt that a discussion of political extremism in the Spanish speaking world was not for them.

Question 2

A popular title with many candidates. There were some passionately argued essays on the nature of discipline in schools and how it could be improved. Many candidates also examined the importance of discipline within the domestic setting and the vital role of parents. This was acceptable provided that overall the emphasis on the nature of discipline within schools was maintained.

Question 3

Another very popular title. The overwhelming majority of essays argued that the loss of human contact was indeed an inevitable consequence of the obsession with the Internet. There was also an impressive range here of technical vocabulary used by candidates discussing an issue that was clearly very dear to their hearts.

Question 4

Not a particularly popular title. Those candidates who did produce an essay on the issue of pacifism, produced convincing pieces, often relating their thoughts to current events.

Question 5

The most popular title. Most candidates argued the importance of both work and leisure in contemporary society. Some argued that leisure and relaxation are closely related to the health of both the individual and society in general. Others felt that their major goal in life should be the pursuit of pleasure! Many essays with this title were extremely well written and a joy to read.

Question 6

Quite a popular title. Almost every single piece argued that the title was absurd and that young people are perfectly capable of having mature ideas at all times. One or two argued the opposite and actually used their own experiences in life to justify such an argument!

Paper 9719/04

Texts

General comments

The standard of the entry this session was pleasing. Candidates showed good knowledge of the texts and often enjoyment in reading them. Centres have prepared candidates well as there were many fewer cases of misunderstanding of rubric or failing to complete the Examination Paper. Candidates also seem to have had more practice in examination technique as there was better focus on the questions set and awareness of the different types of question, particularly with reference to the first section options.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Gabriel García Márquez: *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba*

This text is always popular and candidates empathise well with the main characters.

- (a) The colonel's anxiety was well understood and most candidates were able to consider the role of newspapers in its widest sense by including reference to the *información clandestina* and relating the press censorship to other forms of control. The most disappointing part of this question was the last part where the role of the doctor was often sketchily answered.
- (b) This option elicited some very good answers where candidates explored the themes of poverty, censorship, lack of democracy and violence which are prevalent in the colonel's world.

Question 2

Federico García Lorca: *Romancero gitano*

Both options gave rise to good answers.

- (a) The emphasis was on detailed knowledge and analysis of the poem selected. The best answers showed much sensitivity to Lorca's use of imagery and the plight of the *monja gitana* and had clearly made a very close study of the text.
- (b) There was scope for a wider view of the poems, but candidates also had to use specific examples to support their arguments. There were some very competent essays where candidates analysed the common themes and the imagery with a sophisticated understanding of Lorca's work.

Question 3

Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

This text attracted some answers which revealed an imperfect knowledge, often referring only to the printed extract.

- (a) The first part of the question requires a fairly short response, giving candidates the opportunity to display understanding of the text as a whole in tackling the other two parts. Examiners expected to see a considered analysis of the relationship between Tita and John and, in the final part, some understanding of what degree of happiness they both achieved. This could not exclude reference to Pedro and other members of the family.

- (b) This gave some competent candidates the opportunity to explore a number of aspects of the novel's originality taking the unusual structure as a starting point.

Question 4

Antonio Buero Vallejo: *El concierto de San Ovidio*

Candidates respond well to this text and there were good answers to both options.

- (a) Those who chose this option highlighted Valindin's selfishness and hypocrisy and often cited the rights of the individual as the message of the play. The weakest part of the question was (ii), where candidates did not always take full advantage of the opportunity to show the differing reactions of individual blind characters to the *gafas de cartón*.
- (b) In answering this part candidates showed understanding of the underlying themes of the play.

Question 5

Carmen Martín Gaité: *Entre visillos*

- (a) There were some splendid answers to this part where candidates explored the idea of *visillos* in many ways, showing how they could be seen as either positive or negative – shielding characters from a reality they preferred to resist or presenting a barrier to be knocked down in a bid for freedom and independence. Some essays displayed a very sensitive reading of the text.
- (b) Answers to this part were also good, although some required closer reference to the text in support of the argument.

Question 6

Lope de Vega: *El caballero de Olmedo*

- (a) The best answers to this were able to show how Inés was to some extent responsible for the outcome of the action. Her collusion with Fabia was a crucial point here, as well as her decision to lie to her father. Certainly, as many candidates pointed out, she could not be held entirely to blame for Rodrigo's jealous reaction. Examiners also accept arguments to the contrary if they are well constructed with evidence from the text!
- (b) This part gave plenty of scope to examine the portents in the play and show how they were enmeshed in the structure to lead inexorably to the tragic outcome.

Question 7

Isabel Allende: *La casa de los espíritus*

Candidates seem to enjoy this text and, despite its length, generally have a good overview of characters, events and themes. It is important that detail is not lost in responding to a long text – some candidates were too general in their comments. It is preferable to choose a specific aspect of a question and limit a response to that, with detailed references, than to give a woolly, over-generalised response.

- (a) In answering this there were good essays where candidates showed how the author had incorporated aspects of the recent history of Chile, as seen through the experience of characters in the novel, and the emergence of new ideas and a different society. This had to be related to the novel, usually with reference to Esteban Trueba, and not focused on the author's own biography and family. The best answers tended to argue that although the historical element was significant, there were other aspects of the text which they found effective and which took it beyond the definition of a historical novel.
- (b) Answers either focused on Esteban Trueba or the women. In the first case, many candidates found his experience and behaviour understandable, if not always acceptable. The female characters presented a few problems as candidates could not empathise with the extraordinary powers which some possessed, but there were good answers where the focus was on the strength of character shown by many of the women.

Question 8

Pablo Neruda: *Veinte poemas de amor y Una canción desesperada*

Both options gave candidates much scope to explore whichever aspects of Neruda's work they found most interesting.

- (a) This focused more on the earlier poems and candidates tended to trace the experience of first love and loss.
- (b) Candidates showed how Neruda made themes accessible and appealing to a wide audience by his use of recognisable imagery. There were some excellent answers which showed a depth of understanding and the ability to manipulate detailed material most effectively and sensitively.