

SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/41
Texts

Key messages

Many of our centres are still being affected by the global pandemic. This has meant that the entry for the component was lower than usual, this Session. The comments which follow give guidance on the content of responses, with fewer reflections on the performance of candidates, in light of the current circumstances.

The key messages for our candidates remain those mentioned in previous Sessions. It is pleasing to note that examiners are seeing an ongoing improvement in the number of candidates who have prepared the texts thoroughly. The second main factor in achieving a good result on this component is to respond precisely and with reference to the text to the question as it is set. Identify the key task in the question, note whether there are specific instructions, such as 'with reference to characters x and y', 'in relation to the theme of x', 'as shown in **Section 1/Act II**', and so on, and focus on the question, with supporting evidence from the text.

General comments

Candidates generally observe the rubrics correctly. Examiners request that all answers are written legibly.

Comments on specific questions

These comments do not constitute model answers, rather suggest possible approaches. Other responses may be equally acceptable.

Section 1

Question 1

Emilia Pardo Bazán: *Los Pazos de Ulloa*

- (a) (i) The child is Nucha's daughter.
- (ii) Julián regrets becoming too attached.
- (iii) Perhaps a key starting point here could be the phrase '*ha triunfado el infierno*'. Responses indicated that Julián was correct. Any attempts to civilise the household had failed. The marriage between the Marqués and Nucha was a mistake, and both Nucha and her daughter suffered as a result. The priest recognises his errors, realising he did not fit in to this society and his role was at best ineffective, at worst damaging. The Marqués, Primitivo and Sabel did exactly as they wished. The best answers related the episode to the wider issues presented in the novel.
- (b) The question asks candidates to analyse the premise that the author depicts a society in which change is impossible. The response should show what kind of change was needed – a society steeped in rural values, based on strength and violence, protecting the status quo. The landowning elite only want to maintain their social position, but feel able to take advantage of those below them in status. Ironically, the Marquis is cheated by Primitivo because he does not carry out his responsibilities adequately. There is some degree of nuance in that there were improvements in Cebre described at the end of the novel, so the rural/urban divide may be changing, although it had not yet reached the Pazos. Julián's role in the situation as a moral judge was also a valid approach.

Question 2

Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda: *Sab*

- (a) (i) This refers to the slave rebellion in St Dominique.
- (ii) The situation refers to Cuba also.
- (iii) As has been suggested in the 'Key messages', candidates should first define their terms in identifying the main issue to be analysed and explain what it is. What is 'barbarie'? It can be defined in more than one way – the most obvious possibly the European exploitation of the New World, exhibiting racism and the use of force in enslaving others in order to profit from them. There are many examples of physical violence and disregard. At the same time, Sab, the supposed 'lesser' being has greater powers of intellect, empathy and selflessness than those presumed to be superior to him, merely by birth. The best responses identified this and looked at both individuals as well as the historical context.
- (b) This option asks candidates to analyse the statement that the main conflict in the novel is between Sab, a slave, who exhibits virtues normally associated with white people, and a white man (Enrique), who is selfish and immoral. The best answers would therefore give a detailed analysis of the motivation and behaviour of both characters, with evidence from the text to support the arguments made. Responses favoured Sab, showing how he was prepared to sacrifice his own happiness for the benefit of others. Enrique was moved only by the prospect of wealth and status.

Question 3

Gabriel García Márquez: *El amor en los tiempos del cólera*

- (a) (i) Florentino was playing the violin.
- (ii) He was completely unaware of current affairs blinded by his feelings for Fermina – arrested as spy.
- (iii) Most responses were positive towards Florentino but the more detailed analyses felt he had shown much selfishness in the way he had treated women in his life. He seemed to be able to rationalise his behaviour by compartmentalising his relationships without considering how he affected others. He could not see himself as others saw him, hence the reference to '*hacer el ridículo*'.

On the other hand, Florentino's whole life seemed to revolve around improving his status to make him good enough for Fermina, and he was determined to win her over, no matter how long it would take. His affection for her appeared real and he wanted to make her happy despite the fact that they had had to wait so long. At least his focus was entirely on Fermina, unlike that of her late husband.

- (b) This option asks candidates to examine the theme of faithfulness in the novel. There are a number of aspects to this, ranging from the commitment of Florentino to Fermina, Fermina's relationship with her husband, Jeremiah's lover's loyalty to him to enable him to carry out his intention to die before he became old, even Leona Cassini's service to Florentino. The ship on which Florentino and Fermina escape was named '*Nueva Fidelidad*'. Answers to this question tended to focus on the contrast between Florentino and Juvenal and their respective attitude to Fermina. Candidates understood the novel and the most successful answers could incorporate a number of the thematic approaches.

Question 4

Anónimo: *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes*

- (a) (i) His behaviour inappropriate (see lines 2/3 of extract).
- (ii) He had so many errands to complete for his master.
- (iii) The statement in the question was accepted by those who chose to answer this option. The fraile demonstrated the hypocrisy seen in many clerics in that the teachings of the Church were ignored in the way they behaved. This tratado differs in that there are hints of even worse actions as

Lazarillo says he can't mention them. This technique could be contrasted with other episodes – the absence of detail may be more effective. So criticism of the Church was seen as the central theme. Christian charity had been replaced by selfishness and greed. To what extent did this influence society at large? Was Lazarillo as guilty as the clerics in the fact that he benefited from his association with the archpriest?

- (b) Candidates felt that society was lacking in compassion overall. There were some instances of kindness, but Lazarillo's experiences seemed to suggest that the main aim in life was to get on, even if that meant learning a certain ruthlessness from his masters. Society had replaced true religion with opportunism. Any charitable behaviour, for example helping Lázaro after he had been assaulted, was limited – individuals were expected to be independent and look after themselves. Lázaro's mother was criticised by some candidates, who felt she was unkind in handing her son over to a blind man but others saw this as symptomatic of a cruel society. She had no other option as poverty was endemic.

Section 2

Question 5

Carmen Martín Gaité: *Las ataduras*

- (a) There was a temptation to tell the whole story in response to this question, which gave no focus to the argument. Candidates needed to identify and analyse those '*momentos críticos*' which can be said to influence the course of Alina's life. Most felt that Eloy's departure to South America and the death of her grandfather were some of the key events. Others mentioned the visit of her parents to Paris. There is no definitively correct response in terms of how many moments, or which ones are chosen. The success of the essay depends on how the candidate uses analysis of each event to show how Alina reacts and possibly changes her way of thinking and how this then affected other decisions she made.
- (b) This was the less popular option on the text. There was little evidence of true happiness, according to responses seen. Most focused on the issue of '*ataduras*' and whether these contribute to happiness or not. There were some comments on the presentation and criticism of society, where it was more difficult for women to follow their own path than for men. The expectations on women were limiting and even though some were happy (Alina's mother?) there were few possibilities for individual fulfilment beyond the traditional roles. Alina's father was happy when he was in control. Was Alina and Phillippe's marriage happy or just a formality expected by society. Most felt there were more questions than answers, which pointed to the complexity of human relationships and lives.

Question 6

Federico García Lorca: *Yerma*

- (a) Virtually all candidates answered on this text.

Candidates are advised to read the question very carefully before drafting their answer. The wording is important as the focus is on the importance of Juan's words for Yerma. This could be defined as a key element in Yerma's understanding of Juan – showing the gulf between them, and determining her subsequent behaviour. Candidates generally know the text well and understand the essence of the themes. The best answers show the ability to select evidence from the text and to construct an effective argument, with a clear focus on the question as it is set.

- (b) This question gave candidates the opportunity to go beyond the narrative of the play and analyse the intention of the author in presenting the dilemma suffered by Yerma – someone unable to fulfil her individual needs in the society in which she lives, and the tragic consequences of this. Successful essays considered this predicament and showed how Lorca depicted it through the use of expressive images. The dramatic techniques employed also added to this, by evoking the sense of entrapment in the interior scenes and false freedom outside as there is always someone watching and commenting. Yerma is trapped by external forces as well as her own sense of honour. Some characters were happy, as they were able to fit in to the expected moulds, but there was also a sense of unease.

Question 7

Gabriela Mistral: *Tala/Lagar*

The practice for questions on poetry is not to give an outline answer as the responses are inevitably so individual. Examiners look for knowledge and understanding of the work, both in terms of the treatment of themes and the poetic techniques employed by the author.

Question 8

Isabel Allende: *La casa de los espíritus*

- (a) This option asks candidates to consider two aspects of the novel – ‘*humanidad/política*’ and argue whether one is more dominant than the other. Both must therefore be considered. There were fewer responses than usual to this text, but the feeling was that Allende focused on the individual both in terms of relationships and in politics. Esteban and Clara were the main focus of analysis. Certainly Esteban’s character and the way he reacts with his family and employees could be said to be mirrored in his political career.
- (b) The role of the Church in the novel reflects society as a whole. It is a patriarchal society, where the role of women is subservient to that of men; the husband is the head of the household; there are ‘*mujeres decentes*’ and ‘*otras*’; society is unequal but that is the status quo and the Church does not challenge it. Clara is daring in challenging Padre Restrepo over the existence of hell and Tránsito Soto, though not a ‘decent’ woman in the eyes of the Church, displays Christian charity and compassion in securing the release of Alba. The Church is right-wing, not on the side of the people.

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Paper 8673/42
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There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.