

SPANISH LITERATURE

Paper 8673/41
Texts

Key messages

The key message has been stated in previous reports but is still valid and essential for a successful outcome in this examination. Candidates must demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the texts studied **and** respond directly to the question chosen. It is not sufficient to give a general account of a theme or character.

General comments

The majority of candidates had prepared texts thoroughly and considered the main themes and roles of protagonists, as appropriate. The factors which raised a response to higher mark bands included detailed examination of the question as set to ensure that the material selected and the argument presented were directly relevant and cogently set out.

Comments on specific questions

Sección 1

Question 1

Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda: Sab

- (a) The first two **sections (i) and (ii)** were generally answered correctly. **Part (iii)** of this question picks up a main theme from the text linked to the printed extract and asks candidates to examine it in relation to the novel as a whole. Here, the theme of '*riqueza*' would suggest the contrasting views of Sab and Enrique as a starting point. Most answers focused on the Otways' lust for wealth as the driving force of the novel with the better responses comparing this to Sab's spiritual nature and selflessness. A small number of candidates analysed the underlying theme of the exploitation of Cuba, as exemplified in the beauty and innocence of Carlota, by Europeans.
- (b) In a question of this type, candidates are advised to clarify the points to be discussed, in this case who are the '*individuos buenos*' and what needed to be changed in the '*sociedad tan injusta*'. Most responses focused on Sab and Teresa; they are seen as benevolent figures but lacking in power because of their situations, being poor, female or enslaved. Some reference needed to be made to the injustices of the Cuban society portrayed in the novel and the influence of foreigners. It was a pity that no-one discussed the role of Don Carlos de B. He was a benevolent male figure with some influence but did not take any action.

Question 2

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

- (a) Many responses to this question illustrate the need to read the question carefully and respond accordingly. Candidates knew the text well, but did not focus on the phrase '*A la luz de esta reacción de Florentino*' and tended to discuss the likelihood of the final outcome in the context of the whole novel without taking into account Fermina's aging and Florentino's attitude.
- (b) The key to answering this question should encompass both Florentino and Fermina. Both characters showed the ability to adapt to new situations. In Florentino's case most stated that this was to make himself more worthy of Fermina as he improved his status. Fermina also realised how

she needed to change her objectives to achieve a comfortable life, but retained her dignity also as seen in her response to Urbino's infidelity. They both had to make decisions and choices according to personal or social circumstances.

Question 3

Anónimo: *Lazarillo de Tormes*

- (a) Candidates had detailed knowledge of the text and showed understanding of the theme of '*honor*'. Most responses referred to the dual aspects of honour or lack thereof such as false appearances and general deception and recounted examples. Few discussed the morality of characters, particularly Lazarillo himself to give a wider context.
- (b) This was a less popular option for the text. Those responses seen tended to state that the link between the episodes was Lazarillo himself. Some seemed to suggest that the text was more of an autobiography rather than a literary device.

Question 4

Pedro Calderón de la Barca: *El alcalde de Zalamea*

- (a) This text did not attract a large number of responses. Essays on this option showed good narrative knowledge of the play but did not demonstrate in depth understanding of the difference in outcomes for both Crespo and Isabel.
- (b) This was the less popular option on this text. The purpose of the question was to look at Zalamea as a microcosm of society at the time, a peaceful, well-ordered picture of rural life. This was then disrupted by the arrival of the soldiers. Harmony was restored at the instigation of the King.

Sección 2

Question 5

Carmen Martín Gaité: *Las ataduras* (short story)

- (a) Many candidates chose this option. Naturally most focused on Alina's plight and the many forces constricting her. There were some insightful comments on the nature of '*ataduras*', as described by Santiago and good analysis of how the author creates a sense of confinement through vivid descriptions and imagery evoking all the senses, for example with the strong smell of paint in the apartment and the importance of the rivers. Most answers missed the reference to '*todos los protagonistas*' in the question, which would have given them the opportunity to use Eloy as a contrast.
- (b) A successful answer to this question required much detailed knowledge, which was well demonstrated in the responses. Phillippe does not appear in the whole of the text and we only see him through Alina's eyes. Candidates used the text well to present as full a picture as possible and made effective comments on the importance of his nationality and Alina's move to a different country and society through her marriage. The use of dialogue is crucial as we hear his own words and can appreciate more his point of view. It is essential to focus only on what is in the text – some essays strayed into imagining or inventing scenarios which did not appear in the story.

Question 6

Federico García Lorca: *Bodas de sangre*

- (a) This question clearly has a dual focus – '*El final de la obra es bellísimo y terrible*'. This is underlined in the reference to the contradiction between beauty and terror. All responses identified the '*terrible*' aspect of the tragic ending, with many empathising with the plight of the Novio's mother. Some made reference to the inevitability of the deaths with the intervention of fate. Most found difficulty in analysis the beauty of the ending. Some saw this is the pure force of passion between Leonardo and the Novia. Few were able to analyse the language and poetic imagery which enabled the work to rise above the grisly scene and explore deeper themes.

- (b) This was another popular choice. The theme of destiny works on a number of levels within the text, and virtually all essays gave a strong response in terms of the way Lorca conveys the presence of destiny in colours, symbols, songs, for example. Fewer answers explored the reasons behind the fate of the characters, showing how their behaviour was controlled by society and how deviation from this could result in divine or social retribution.

Question 7

Gabriela Mistral: *Tala: Lagar*

As has been the practice in previous sessions, there is no formal report on the work of candidates on this text. There is a very wide variety of possible responses. Success in answering on this text depends on familiarity with and extensive practice of the analysis of poetic form and technique as well as detailed knowledge and understanding of the works listed.

Question 8

Isabel Allende: *La casa de los espíritus*

- (a) This was a popular option. The majority of responses gave examples of the various and extreme instances of the abuse of power, with more thoughtful essays discussing how this was seen on both a personal and national level on the part of Trueba. Few made reference to the '*uso*', as opposed to '*abuso*' of power by the democratic regime, or indeed the improvements made at the ranch by Trueba or Clara.
- (b) Answers to this option largely centred on Trueba as the embodiment of both aspects of the question. The most effective examples of '*vengar*' featured Esteban García, whilst '*perdonar*' was represented by Alba and to some extent by Clara.

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General comments

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Comments on specific questions

Sección 1

Question 1

Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda: *Sab*

- (a) There were some misunderstandings in responding to (i) and (ii). Sab's reaction here is possibly the most nuanced seen in the text. If Teresa requites her love for Enrique, this will free Carlota from his grasp. There are also glimpses of possible dark intents after Enrique's accident but Sab is essentially too honest and altruistic to be able to act immorally. His loyalty and love for Carlota are the driving forces of his life. This kindness is also seen in his relationship with Martina and others.
- (b) This was the less popular option on this text. Both Carlota and Teresa can be seen as victims, but they are not both poor and it can be argued that Teresa saw and recognised what Enrique's intentions really were, whereas Carlota was blinded by her infatuation. Teresa's life is the closest parallel to Sab's in that she had little option for choosing her own way. She was not enslaved but was limited by her poverty and reliance on others. Teresa is the only happy protagonist at the end of the text as she has found peace in the convent. Carlota realises her misguided appreciation of Enrique and the idealised views she held.

Question 2

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

- (a) The first two parts of the **Question (i) and (ii)** were less well answered as candidates did not consider the emotional aspects involved. In relation to (iii), the focus is on the psychological portrait of the protagonists so any events or incidents mentioned need to be examined for motive and reaction. Evidence of doubts or contradictions give depth to the analysis. Most referred to the obvious contradiction in Florentino shown in the way he declares himself faithful to Fermina whilst conducting multiple love affairs. Fermina adapted her ideals from those of romantic love to an accommodation with status and money when marrying Juvenal.

- (b) Overall, most felt that Fermina made a spirited attempt to follow her own course within the constraints of social mores of the time. Her reaction to her husband's infidelity showed an independent streak, echoed in her decisions to go away with Florentino against her family's advice.

Question 3

Anónimo: *Lazarillo de Tormes*

- (a) This was a very popular choice of question. **Part (ii)** was often not fully understood; the 'clérigo' claims Lazarillo is greedy, which is completely untrue, showing his unkind nature and hypocrisy. In **(iii)**, some responses blurred the concepts of 'egoísmo', 'picardía and engaño'. The most successful answers referred to the 'every man for himself' nature of society at the time but were also aware of Lazarillo's more nuanced attitude. Lazarillo learns how to stay alive but also shares his food with the Escudero and chooses not to be associated with the buldero and his lies. It is important to give a full picture of Lazarillo, child and adult, so reference should be made to the whole text, not only the first few chapters as was often the case.
- (b) This was less popular than option (a). Most responses concentrated on examples of vulgar humour which was interpreted as a mechanism to make the content more palatable and enjoyable to read. At the same time, candidates noted that by including lighter moments in an essentially dark story, the author was able to safely criticise authority.

Question 4

Pedro Calderón de la Barca: *El alcalde de Zalamea*

- (a) In response to (i) and (ii), candidates only needed to explain that the Captain was returning to Crespo's house and that he had bribed someone to help him. With (iii), the consensus is that the Captain is the most guilty as he single-mindedly ignores his duty as he is driven by selfish desire. Others may have behaved in a misguided way but there were mitigating factors or immaturity to explain them.
- (b) The main difference between Pedro Crespo and Juan can be explained by Juan's youth and lack of experience. At the same time, Pedro has a deeper sense of morality and belief in justice. This is shown in Pedro's intention to arrest his own son. Juan is headstrong with a desire for vengeance and self-preservation.

Sección 2

Question 5

Carmen Martín Gaité: *Las ataduras* (short story)

- (a) Many responses to this option became too focused on describing the two settings rather than identifying the main themes. Alina suffers from the same sense of entrapment wherever she is. As a child in Spain, she was constrained by societal expectations and her father's wishes for her. In France, as an adult, she is not free as she has her role as a wife and mother. So Alina's psychological state was more important than the geographical location.
- (b) Naturally, responses homed in on Alina's continued dependence on male figures, passing from father to husband, even though she had believed herself to be different to the village girls she watched taking this path. More detailed analysis considered her mother's role; although seemingly deferential to her husband there were signs that he recognised her wisdom. Santiago's view that everyone needs to be attached to someone, that being alone is not a recipe for happiness, adds to the argument. Eloy was often used as a point of comparison and the fact that he was not female is seen as crucial.

Question 6

Federico García Lorca: *Bodas de sangre*

- (a) This question attracted a large number of responses. The question focuses on the theme of death, with a specific slant on why and how the two male protagonists died. Candidates were more

forthcoming with discussing how the men died rather than why. The most common reason given was that it was their destiny. This needed further analysis into specific reasons such as punishment for sins against society or nature. Many responses included thoughtful analysis of symbolism and poetic imagery which enhanced and supported arguments. Some more successful essays also referred to the influence of the tradition of Greek theatre.

- (b) This was a less popular option. It required careful planning and selection of examples to show which central themes were explored in poetry, whether specifically in poetic form such as song or in poetic use of language in symbolism and imagery, for example. The whole play is constructed with interwoven patterns of imagery together with real and supernatural beings which echo the same concerns.

Question 7

Gabriela Mistral: *Tala: Lagar*

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Question 8

Isabel Allende: *La casa de los espíritus*

- (a) This was the less popular option on the text. It is worth considering the image of the family as presented in the novel and how loyalty is expected. Clara's family was very different from the one she created with Trueba. Her parents followed separate but important interests and provided a stable environment built on compassion. Clara and Esteban Trueba's family was less cohesive. Clara cared for her children and Trueba sought to give them advantages he had not enjoyed and attempted to control everything. Members of the family were expected to abide by the rules set and accept the decisions of Trueba. Some cases, such as Blanca's arranged marriage, was imposed by her father as he did not approve of her association with Pedro Tercero but ended badly; Blanca had no option but to accept. The children had to live by their father's decisions as there was no other option but as adults they found their own way.
- (b) Responses to this question tended to begin with reference to Clara, who chose not to speak on two occasions in her life. The death of her sister was traumatic and her speech only returned when she declared that she was to marry Trueba. The second incident was provoked by violence as her revenge on her husband was never to speak to him again after he had attacked her. Clara certainly succeeded in exerting pressure through her silence. Another example of this is Tránsito Soto. She provided a service to powerful men from all political parties but never expressed an opinion. As a friend to all she acquired influence and indeed saved Alba's life. The most successful answers compared overt and sometimes violent control with the ability to influence and change through practical but less ostentatious means.