

# SPANISH LITERATURE

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Paper 8673/41  
Texts

## Key messages

- The presentation of candidates' work needs to be legible and logical.
- Candidates who opt for an **(a)** question in **Sección Primera** are advised to note that **(i)** and **(ii)** make direct reference to the printed extract from the text and require short responses. This may mean a few words, when identifying a character or location, for example, or up to two or three sentences if required to explain events or reactions. The third part, **(iii)**, always asks the candidate to refer to the whole text and consequently must be written as an essay.
- Candidates should identify the key words in the question and keep focused on these throughout the essay. The introduction should set out the candidate's approach, explaining key points. The following paragraphs should fulfil the central task of the question. This would involve analysis, explanation or comparing and contrasting points of view, but **not** description or narration. Candidates are reminded to write well expressed conclusions, as this will enhance the marks awarded.
- Candidates are reminded to ensure that the answer given is focused and relevant to the question in the examination. Pre-rehearsed, generalised essays do not attract marks.
- Quotation from the text is only effective when used judiciously and selectively. Candidates should not include long passages from the text. Brief, relevant quotations, which are integrated into an essay, show the depth of a candidate's knowledge and support the argument.

## General comments

The questions which attracted the largest number of answers were:  
**5(a), 7(a), 4(b), 1(a), 3(b), 7(b).**

The comments in this report do not constitute required content; rather they give an indication of the material which could be used to answer the question. Examiners assess a combination of factors including knowledge of the text, focus on the question, strength and quality of the argument, understanding of the themes, characters and literary techniques, and controlled structure.

In all cases, the essential requirements are an answer which responds precisely to the question, and, except for **(a)(i)** and **(ii)**, a well-structured argument, supported by thorough knowledge of the text.

### Comments on specific questions

#### *Sección primera*

#### **Question 1 – Juan Rulfo: *Pedro Páramo***

- (a) Answers to (i) could simply be Juan Preciado and Abundio and (ii) likened to Hell. In (iii), there were a number of central themes mentioned. These included the importance of place and atmosphere in the novel; the references to Pedro Páramo, introducing the reader to his character and the theme of violence; the description of Comala, which was such a contrast to the vision of the town created for Juan Preciado by his late mother; references to the dead in Comala and the idea of purgatory. The fact that these men were half-brothers may have been hinted at in the '*gota de confianza*' which Juan Preciado sensed in Abundio. The characters were moving downhill into a suffocating atmosphere, presaging the fact that Juan Preciado would not escape, and the nature of his death. The best answers chose a theme, such as Comala representing Hell or purgatory and linked other aspects to this, showing why it was such an important image. Some candidates made the thoughtful comment that Rulfo's text was densely written and benefits from close reading in order to appreciate the quality of the language, and supported this with relevant examples.
- (b) This question asked candidates to discuss whether *Pedro Páramo* can be described as a tragic novel. The essay should then begin with a definition of tragedy in the literary sense. This does not need to be lengthy, but should make reference to the essential points. A number of candidates understood the term, but many interpreted it as 'sad', in the general sense. The most effective essays focused on Pedro Páramo himself, as both the instigator of tragedy in the lives of many people within his sphere of influence, and also as a tragic figure, due to the fatal flaw in his personality. Páramo was also seen as representative of a figure of authority, a '*cacique*', and analysed how the author showed the tragedy of society and politics in Mexico. One answer described the novel as tragic because it was full of failed dreams. This was an excellent starting point.

#### **Question 2 – Lope de Vega: *Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña***

- (a) Part (i) referred to the plot to get the Comendador into Casilda's home, involving Leonardo seducing Inés. Answers to (ii) merely needed to state that Inés was impressionable, easy led, not loyal to Casilda. The third part of the question asked candidates to discuss whether the sense of morality displayed in the extract was carried on throughout the whole play. Candidates selected elements such as selfishness (Comendador, Inés), cruel and abusive behaviour (Leonardo, Comendador) and betrayal (Inés – of Casilda, Comendador – of his position, of King). Many compared the attitudes shown here to those of Peribáñez and Casilda. Peribáñez was guilty of lying also, but for a different reason. Casilda showed loyalty at all times. The King and Queen understood the reason for Peribáñez's actions and showed good judgment. In many cases candidates compared and contrasted the moral centre of the main characters and analysed how the decisions made affected others, threatening the balance of society as a whole.
- (b) In this option, candidates were asked to assess whether Peribáñez behaved recklessly. The question was open to debate, as although Peribáñez was generally thoughtful and law-abiding, he was tempted by the trappings of luxury offered by the Comendador, for example. He was in a difficult position in that the established order of society was jeopardised when the person in charge, in this case the Comendador, was weak. This puts the murder of his superior in a different light as Peribáñez was restoring order in a chaotic situation. The Comendador was perhaps more guilty of recklessness in elevating Peribáñez's status for his own selfish ends. The behaviour of other characters could also be analysed, for example, Inés and Leonardo. Finally, after some consideration, the reaction of the Monarchs was also reasoned and not reckless.

**Question 3 – Jorge Luis Borges: *Ficciones***

- (a) (i) required candidates to identify that is a law student and (ii) that he believed he had killed a Hindu in a sectarian riot. The last part of the question focused on two features which often appear in Borges' work, and seem to suggest the concept of a quest (in this case some steps are missing, indicating that the quest is not an easy one), and the idea of returning to or never reaching a destination or understanding. If the quest is a spiritual one, it could be said to be the search for goodness.
- (b) The theme of ambiguity is well represented in the *Ficciones* of Borges and candidates were able to identify at least two stories to analyse in their answer. The most popular were '*El sur*' and '*Tema del traidor y del héroe*'. Candidates are reminded that simply re-telling the story does not attract marks. The question focused on analysis of the presentation of ambiguity or confusion, in the stories, so candidates needed to focus on why Borges used the device and how it was used. Some candidates clearly found this text intriguing and responded well to the author, with appreciation of his individual style and approach.

**Question 4 – Fernando Fernán-Gómez: *Las bicicletas son para el verano***

- (a) The '*escándalo*' referred to in (i) was the publication of Manolita's photograph in the magazine '*Cinegramas*'. The changes referred to in (ii) included differing attitudes in society and more freedom for women, for example. In (iii), the changes caused by the effects of the Civil War could be traced throughout the play. The best essays tended to find that women were more adversely affected than men in the action portrayed in the text. Most focused on Manolita and the physical and emotional travails she endured. María was another victim and all the other women experienced penury, hunger, worry and disappointment in addition to the fear of the conflict. The male characters suffered also as the war changed their lives in so many ways. Luisito lost the opportunity of a good education. His father, Luis, could not support the family and expected to be imprisoned at the end of the war because of his political stance. One of the scenes analysed in many essays, showing how even the most caring individuals can act in a selfish way in a crisis, was that of the lentils. The reaction of the family members revealed the suffering of all. It was important to be sure to answer the question with reference to the play, and not to venture into detailed historical accounts. The playwright gave a specific interpretation of the event, from a limited point of view, and this must be the focus of candidates' responses.
- (b) This question asked candidates to discuss why the author set the play largely within the confines of the building where the characters lived. Most identified the importance of the prologue and epilogue in showing the physical devastation caused by the fighting and the changes in both Luis and Luisito, and the contrast with the setting of the rest of the play. A number of essays focused too much on narrating events inside the apartments rather than analysing why the author chose to place the action there. The Civil War was very much in the background, on the radio, in occasional conversations and sometimes heard as bomb blasts. The central focus was on the claustrophobic situation endured by the families and their friends and how they coped in an extreme situation. The idea of a '*personaje colectivo*' was an interesting interpretation. Those imprisoned in their homes could be said to represent a microcosm of society, developing a sense of community and surviving despite material deprivation and emotional and psychological distress. Others interpreted the setting as a way for the author to depict the Civil War from the point of view of civilians, possibly thus making a greater impact on the audience.

## Sección segunda

### Question 5 – Gabriel García Márquez: *El coronel no tiene quien le escribe*

- (a) There were three key words in this question and candidates needed to refer to all of these in the response: '*celebra*', '*sobrevivir*' and '*corrupto*'. Most answers focused on the colonel and compared him to Sabas. In expressing the idea of celebrating the life of the colonel, candidates often referred to the way the author showed how the main character maintained his dignity and principles throughout, despite grinding poverty and illness. In a fairly large number of essays it was clear that candidates had interpreted '*celebra*' as '*presenta*' or '*demuestra*', which changed the nature of the answer. Corruption was seen in the behaviour of the mayor, the lawyer and of course Sabas. The fact that the doctor agreed with the colonel's view of censorship and injustice reinforced the stance taken. The reader was prompted to admire the colonel and condemn the situation he lived in. The wider message of political comment was also understood. There was some tendency for candidates to answer on 'hope'. It was possible to make reference to this in analysing the colonel's attitude, and the importance of the cockerel to the townspeople, but did not answer the question directly as the main point of the argument.
- (b) There were some very good responses to this question, where candidates analysed aspects of literary style such as Márquez's clear language, the use of dialogue, choice of vocabulary, creation of atmosphere, symbolism, cinematic technique, omniscient narrator and use of contrast. Analysis of themes did not focus directly on the question; candidates are advised to concentrate on the key words and to plan the essay around these.

### Question 6 – Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna*

- (a) The majority of answers challenged the question by arguing that the less prominent characters were significant as they all contributed to Eva's life in some way. In a number of instances the relationship seemed negative at the time but all added to her experiences and the process of moving on. In order to avoid a long list of characters and encounters it was more successful to take a small number of individuals and analyse how their interaction with Eva changed her life in some way.
- (b) The idea of '*transformación*' offered more than one interpretation and candidates are reminded to define their terms before embarking on a response. Most candidates focused on the change seen in Eva as she grew into a woman and developed her personality together with the physical and emotional change in Melecio/Mimí. There was another layer to this, namely the political commentary. The best answers combined these, showing how the themes overlapped within the stories of the individuals.

### Question 7 – Federico García Lorca: *Bodas de sangre*

- (a) Virtually all candidates chose this text. The key focus in this question was that although the play is essentially Spanish in nature, the ideas can be understood by all. Candidates were expected to recognise the characteristically Spanish elements and also to show how these were universalised by the author. The play was set in an Andalusian village in southern Spain, thus the circumstances were significant in the depiction of society and attitudes. The music and other references in Act 3 were an important part of the response. Themes such as marriage, family ties and honour were often analysed. The specific experience in a very rural and conservative society was culturally and geographically correct, including the use of knives as weapons of choice as they were also essential for day to day work in the fields. The use of generic names except for Leonardo was one way in which the author moved the work from the specific to the universal. In the main, candidates recognised the overall themes but were not so confident in analysing the Spanish cultural, social or economic references.

- (b) The question focused on the concept of change. There were many good answers which tended to show how social forces limited change, or the dramatic force of fate or destiny. Candidates succeeded in embracing a range of characters in the responses. It was unusual to find both social and dramatic elements in one essay. If an essay began with the importance of the title, which seemed to presage a tragic destiny, the argument moved to an analysis of Act 3, with focus on the drama and symbolism. Those answers which began with the social aspects sometimes veered off to speculate on the future of characters after Act 3. This suggests a misunderstanding in the reading of the play as a literary text. As has been mentioned above, it was important for candidates to define what change they were referring to and to maintain a clear focus throughout the argument.

**Question 8 – Rosalía de Castro: *En las orillas del Sar***

- (a) There were fewer answers on this text than the others on the Paper. Centres which chose to study the collection of poems tended to prepare students carefully in the specific task of critical commentary. Examiners are open to individual interpretation of the poem given, provided the candidate is aware of the context and has the skills and vocabulary to analyse the work effectively. There were some competent and thoughtful responses to this question.
- (b) As with (a), most candidates were well prepared and were able to choose relevant poems and to analyse them effectively. Examiners do not have preconceptions regarding the poems used and there were some very good answers to this question.

# FIRST LANGUAGE SPANISH

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Paper 8673/42  
Texts

## Key messages

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## General comments

The texts which attracted the largest number of answers were: **4, 5** and **7**.

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### Comments on specific questions

#### **Sección primera**

##### **Question 1 – Juan Rulfo: *Pedro Páramo***

- (a) The answer to (i) was Pedro Páramo and his grandmother. In (ii) Pedro seemed gentle and already infatuated with Susana. He also showed practical sense in his comments on the repairs for the mill. The grandmother displayed the ability to cope in difficult financial circumstances and powers of understanding of her grandson. Answers to (iii) could cover a wide range. The main contrast between this scene from Pedro Páramo's childhood to more recent times was that in the extract, there was a sense of life and community rather than death, purgatory and misery. The mention of Susana linked both together and gave candidates the opportunity to analyse the impact she had on the life of Pedro and of Comala.
- (b) This question asked candidates to name the interlinked stories and show how the author united them. Most candidates identified the stories of Juan Preciado, Pedro Páramo and either Susana San Juan or Dolores Preciado. The stories were linked by the way Pedro Páramo entered their lives and affected them.

##### **Question 2 – Lope de Vega: *Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña***

- (a) Part (i) referred to the song about Casilda and the Comendador. In (ii), Peribáñez had concerns about the gossip circulating about his wife and the Comendador, threatening his reputation. The best responses to (iii) would include information about the nature of the relationship between Casilda and Peribáñez, with reference to their speeches at the beginning of the play. The Comendador had no respect for marriage and Leonardo was prepared to demean it also in his seduction of Inés for the benefit of his master. It was relevant to consider the relationship between the King and Queen, as it was possible to observe how they responded to one another in a spirit of trust and respect, in the same way as Casilda and Peribáñez. The stability of society depended on such institutions as marriage and just government.
- (b) In this option candidates were asked to analyse how the author presented the psychological development of two characters. Most chose Peribáñez and the Comendador. Both of these individuals changed over the course of the play, largely due to the decisions made by the Comendador. He chose to act in a way which threatened the stability of society and the lives of Peribáñez and Casilda in particular. As the Comendador continued to abuse his position, Peribáñez rose to fulfil the duties conferred on him, to protect his honour and that of his wife. The violence of the Comendador's execution saw a significant change in Peribáñez, but this was to benefit the greater good, not a selfish act. The Comendador recognised his mistakes, but too late.

##### **Question 3 – Jorge Luis Borges: *Ficciones***

- (a) In (i), the importance of Martín Fierro's presence explained the reason behind the vengeance sought by 'el negro'. Part (ii) referred to Recabarren, the paralysed onlooker, witness of the incident. In the third part of the question, candidates were asked to analyse how the final sentences contributed to the overall understanding of the themes of the story. In essence this could be expressed in the idea that one man represents every man, that the victim could also be his own killer, and whether it is possible to reverse guilt. These concepts can be found in other stories by Borges. In responding, candidates were expected to analyse how the author built up the narrative to the point of denouement, but not to tell the story.
- (b) The theme of chaos, including the sense of the individual being lost in the world, is well represented in the *Ficciones* of Borges and candidates were able to identify at least two stories to analyse in their answer. The most popular were '*Funes el memorioso*', '*La biblioteca de Babel*' and '*Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*'. Candidates are reminded that re-telling or narrating the story does not attract marks. The question focused on analysing to what extent Borges succeeded in creating a chaotic world in the stories. Candidates needed to focus on where it appeared and what it represented, in their view. Some candidates clearly found this text intriguing and responded well to the author, with appreciation of his individual style and approach and a unique way of interpreting the world as he saw it.

**Question 4 – Fernando Fernán-Gómez: *Las bicicletas son para el verano***

- (a) The response to (i) only needed to identify Luisito's wish that Charo should take the piece of paper with her, as he had written a poem for her. Part (ii) followed on from this, as Luisito seemed to be nervous and unsure of himself, typical of a young teenager. In (iii), candidates were asked to analyse how Luis grew up over the course of the play, taking into account the effects of the Civil War. Many essays covered the contrast seen in Luisito in the Prologue and Epilogue. It was important not to narrate Luisito's life but to select significant episodes, show how he reacted to them and analyse how his perceptions and beliefs developed as a result.
- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse how the author explored the challenges faced by the characters and to what extent they succeeded in maintaining a strong moral stance. There were a number of possible approaches to this, for example, concentrating on the decisions taken by a few specific characters or by selecting incidents and examining how these showed moral dilemmas. Many analysed the 'lentils' episode and the events surrounding the relationship between Luisito and María. There were some thoughtful observations on the change in moral attitude, for example the way Doña Antonia accepted Pedro's girlfriend in her home.

**Sección segunda**

**Question 5 – Gabriel García Márquez: *El coronel no tiene quien le escribe***

- (a) This question asked candidates to focus on two elements, namely the fact that the colonel was a proud character and whether this attitude was positive or negative for him. There were several approaches to this. Some felt that the colonel suffered unduly, and inflicted misery on his wife by creating a false impression of coping, others argued that his fierce independence was what kept him going. His wife colluded in this by boiling stones when they had no food, for example. The best essays succeeded in comparing and contrasting positive and negative effects.
- (b) This question focused on how the title helps the reader to understand the novel overall. The most effective responses began with an analysis of the title itself, mentioning, for example, the military rank of the main character, the sense of isolation, and pathos because no-one ever writes to him. The title also suggests that the outcome is pre-determined and this could influence the way the reader approaches the text. The analysis could then consider how the colonel was presented, why his situation had arisen and the way in which the reader was drawn in to his life and understood the focus of the novel.

**Question 6 – Isabel Allende: *Eva Luna***

- (a) Candidates were asked to analyse the structure of the novel and determine to what extent the text showed careful planning, or whether it seemed confusing. A possible starting point could be that the novel was written in such a way as to reflect Eva Luna's life – a series of episodes which at first sight may be unconnected, but which eventually coalesce into a unified whole. In a similar way, the break in narration from Eva to Rolf seemed to interrupt, but it was eventually brought into the main story and enhanced it.
- (b) This question asked candidates to analyse to what extent the novel could be said to be a criticism of society at the time. Candidates needed to keep the focus of their answers firmly on the text. Providing detailed knowledge of the history of Chile did not attract marks. It was possible to give a good response by selecting examples of specific aspects of society raised in the novel and then analyse how these were presented. Such topics could include the role of women, poverty, racial minorities, understanding of other minority groups, dissent and political awareness.



**Question 7 – Federico García Lorca: *Bodas de sangre***

- (a) Virtually all candidates chose this text. In this question the quotation from the Novia was given as the stimulus to the response, where candidates were asked to show to what extent her comment helped the reader to understand the play. The best answers dealt with the quotation itself in the opening paragraph, defining the sentiment expressed. Most felt that the Novia was proclaiming her sincerity and honesty – she fully intended to marry the Novio and had not planned to run away with Leonardo. The essay would then proceed to analyse what had driven her to behave the way she did. This was generally explained as the force of passion, which completely overwhelmed her.
- (b) In this question, candidates had to consider whether there was any kind of resolution at the end of the play. This involved analysing to what extent the ending was presaged throughout the play; if the circumstances were inevitable; how far the characters deserved the outcome. It was essential to keep focused on the events in the play as some candidates speculated on the future lives of characters, which was not appropriate.

**Question 8 – Rosalía de Castro: *En las orillas del Sar***

- (a) There were fewer answers on this text than the others on the Paper. Centres which chose to study the collection of poems tended to prepare students carefully in the specific task of critical commentary. Examiners are open to individual interpretation of the poem given, provided the candidate is aware of the context and has the skills and vocabulary to analyse the work effectively. There were some competent and thoughtful responses to this question.
- (b) As with (a), most candidates were well prepared and were able to choose relevant poems and to analyse them effectively. Examiners do not have preconceptions regarding the poems used provided they are integrated into the argument, which is focused directly on the question.