



GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Spanish
Advanced Level
Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.edugas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner Eduqas

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Executive Summary

In C1 most candidates' Independent Research projects were well-prepared, well researched and well presented. Topics were varied with successful candidates producing ones which were both original and analytical. Teachers are urged to steer candidates to topics that lend themselves to analysis. In C2 most responses were good with candidates being logical in their approach to focusing on language to determine meaning. There were by design elements of distraction in passages which candidates are reminded to expect. Clarity was important when giving responses, with examiners reporting it was sometimes difficult to locate a candidate's answer. Multiple-choice tasks proved a challenge for some. Translation was a good differentiator and included sections of varying degrees of accessibility. Component 3 produced many well-structured essays, containing effective analysis of text and appreciation of the context of the work. More successful candidates used PEEL (point-evidence-explanation-link) effectively. There were excellent examples of highly competent linguistic skills showcasing candidates' lexis and grammar.

Higher performing candidates in the speaking were able to lead discussion and use the examiner's questions as a lead into addressing the wider implications of the question. Weaker candidates were characterised by over-reliance on pre-learned language often adversely affecting their marks. In addition, examiners were often obliged to interrupt long sequences of memorised language. There was however, evidence of well-prepared language with use of appropriate specialist-vocabulary and a wide variety of language structures. In component 2 some candidates transcribed too much from recordings instead of reformulating bullet points to produce brief answers. Candidates did not always take care with the distractors, and it was evident that practice is needed in selecting the correct answer and rejecting with reasoning incorrect ones. There was unfortunately a tendency by some to use colloquial language when attempting the essay questions in component 3. This is not appropriate; it is expected that the correct register be used. Errors in the use of key language caused concern and it is necessary that this area of weakness be addressed.

The knowledge organisers provided by Eduqas on the website can provide key approaches and ideas to aid preparation for the discussion. It is important to talk about Spanish-language sources and materials used in the presentation. Revisiting GCSE vocabulary lists as part of revision for A level would benefit candidates. Continued work on reading questions and proofreading of translations would also be of sound benefit to candidates. Time spent deconstructing essay questions and essay plans would help candidates improve their skills for C3.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Spanish GCE Resources	EDUQAS A LEVEL SPANISH RESOURCE GUIDE	Key to resources
Resources Page	EDUQAS DIGITAL RESOURCES	Thematic materials
Preparing for the IRP	HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE IRP	Guidance for teachers

SPANISH
GCE A level
Summer 2024
COMPONENT 1 - SPEAKING

Overview of the Component

This component assesses the candidates' ability to use the spoken language effectively to present the findings of independent research, discuss the research conducted in detail and to show knowledge and understanding of the Hispanic world through a spontaneous discussion based on a stimulus card.

All four assessment objectives are assessed in the course of the test, which lasts between 16 and 18 minutes and is conducted by a visiting external examiner.

Advice on approaches and best practice are provided in reports from earlier series and this report can usefully be read in conjunction with these comments.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Task 1 – The Independent Research Project

The presentation

In this part of the test candidates spend two minutes presenting the key elements of their topic. The presentations are prepared in advance and memorised. This is acceptable practice, but teachers can usefully remind candidates that they should consider their delivery in terms of speed and intonation and not rush what they say to the point where sense is lost. Marks are given for the information that comes from their reading research (AO2), so it is useful for candidates to cite some sources. They are also assessed for the connections they make to the Hispanic world within their field of research.

Most candidates produced very well prepared and clear presentations, which laid out their main findings from their research.

The choices of topic were varied and, in many cases, original. These included:

- To what extent were the Latin American colonies founded to expand the Spanish economy?
- Is Spain's rural exodus beneficial for the future of the country?
- Nicolás Maduro – hero or villain?
- How far are *Las Patronas* heroines?
- What is the case for an independent Puerto Rico?
- How justified is Ecuador's search for oil?
- The influence of the Darién project in the modernisation of bullerengue.
- How well is Spain dealing with its crisis of homelessness?

Originality is a particular feature of higher performing candidates and teachers can usefully steer all candidates to topics that lend themselves to analysis. Teachers are reminded that the topics must always be located within the Hispanic world and that they are welcome to check the choices of topics with WJEC for suitability. There were no issues with topic choice this series. One query that did arise in a small number of centres was whether candidates are allowed to bring photographs to the test room to exemplify what they say. This is not a requirement of the specification, so there is no provision in the mark scheme to reward candidates for doing so.

The IRP Discussion

In this part of the test examiners delve into the details of the research and base their questions on the Appendix 4 Form, which candidates provide in advance. Candidates can be assured that questions will not step outside the content of this form and examiners will not bring their own knowledge to the discussion. They are there to find out what the candidates have researched. Where, on occasion, an examiner asks a question that is not part of the candidate's research, perhaps because it seemed implicit from the form that the candidate had knowledge of a particular aspect, but the candidate did not research this aspect, they need only say so and there is no impact on the final mark. The examiner will then move on.

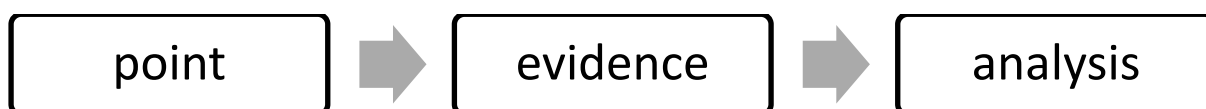
The discussions this year were interesting and varied and many candidates had clearly prepared very well. Marks are awarded for AO1, which is a measure of how candidates interact with the examiner; this means that they respond fully, lead the discussion and use the initial questions from the examiner as a springboard to answer the wider implications of the question. Some candidates relied too heavily on memorised language, and this impacts the mark for AO1 because they did not use the questions as a springboard and simply said what they had prepared. Examiners typically interrupt long memorised sequences.

The quality of language (AO3) is also a key part of the assessment of the test and there was evidence of some very good preparation at the level of language with specialist vocabulary and a wide range of extended sentences with varied clause types. There was some incidence of basic errors and advice for future candidates is to ensure that they are competent with high frequency verbs in Spanish.

The marks for AO4 are awarded for knowledge and understanding of the culture and communities where Spanish is spoken. Here the most able candidates were able to analyse well and make interesting connections between ideas. Lower scoring candidates often tended to make descriptive comments and analysis was lacking. This limited their marks and was sometimes a result of poor choice of topic.

The card discussions

The best candidates made points, gave evidence and then provided analytical or evaluative comments. Many candidates used the PEA technique to good effect.



They also targeted the marking scheme effectively in so doing because they showed what they knew about the topic in a general way and could begin by summarising the issues, then they used a good range of concrete examples that were consistently focused in the hispanosphere. These examples often included up-to-date statistics or data, references to current affairs, key figures in politics and society or clear ideas about historical timelines.

Candidates who scored less well tended to rely heavily on memorised language and so often said what they had to say but did not answer the questions in a targeted way. They also provided a lot of generalities which, whilst they may be true in the Hispanic world, could also relate to anywhere.

The knowledge organisers on the website should provide candidates with key approaches and ideas to prepare for the discussion and please also note the comments above about case studies. These can be developed using tables such as the following, which candidates use to organise their ideas. This can also help to formulate responses, because there is a strategic approach to answers and the key elements of a good response are embedded through practice. Including sources of information are also helpful for further, independent investigations by students. The detailed comments on each card below highlight possible case study areas for the topics more widely.

Theme	<i>Changes in the family</i>		
Facts	Evidence	Context	Significance
Marriage is changing	Over 6000 same sex marriages in Spain in 2022.	The apparent rise in the number of marriages over 10 years is because of this.	Marks a big difference between the past and present but is also controversial culturally among some of immigrant population and also politically with more traditionalist parties.
Birth rate is falling	Fell by 2.2% in 2022	Large families now thing of past	Immigration is needed to maintain population
Interesting extra information	Marriage Statistics have been prepared since 1858 and constitute one of the most traditional works in the INE. It collects data on marriages celebrated in Spain, as well as the socio-demographic characteristics of the spouses.		
Information comes from:	https://ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/en/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica_C&cid=1254736176999&menu=ultiDatos&idp=1254735573002		

The Cards for 2024 – Detailed comments

Card 1 – This card dealt with changes in marriage and the key areas for discussion were the traditional stereotype, different kinds of marriage in the Hispanic world, generational and religious attitudes and the impact on children and the next generation.

Card 2 – This card dealt with trends in male fashion and the key areas for discussion were the image Hispanic men want to project, the importance of fashion to young Hispanics, the obsession with image over substance and how fashion may be a route to the expression of personal freedom.

Card 3 – This card dealt with changes in the world of work and focused on the issue of retirement. The key areas for discussion were the likelihood that the next generation of workers will need to work for longer, the implications of this, the impact of technology on the Hispanic workplace and issues of unemployment.

Card 4 – This card dealt with festivals and questioned the role of imported festivals such as Halloween, why it may be controversial among certain people in the Hispanic world and then the importance of keeping traditional festivals going because they are a reflection of heritage. Added to this is the issue of inclusion in a multicultural world.

Card 5 – This card dealt with the idea of art for all and focused on street art, the importance of wider access to art works in the Hispanic world and also the relevance of traditional ways of appreciating art in a digitalised world.

Card 6 – This card dealt with the representation of certain groups in the cinema of the Hispanic world, why Hispanic filmmakers tackle difficult issues and the attitudes of audiences to these issues, either attracting and educating them or as a disincentive to watch films that are too serious in tone.

Card 7 – This card dealt with the issues faced by young migrants to the Hispanic world, the risks they take, the issues with undocumented migration, the geographical and political drivers of migration and also how new arrivals may be supported by community groups.

Card 8 – This card dealt with the role of women in the politics of the Hispanic world. It touched on the situation in Bolivia, where equal parliamentary representation is part of the constitution, the importance equal representation, the alignment of work with the needs of parents and the challenges of overcoming patriarchal paradigms.

Card 9 – This card dealt with the celebration of the role of indigenous peoples in the Hispanic world and why this is important for fostering respect and tolerance and challenging the restrictions to freedoms that may come from dominant cultures.

Card 10 – This card dealt with the ideology that underpinned Francoism, its origins and the use of propaganda to support it. The issues of how Spanish exceptionalism and Franco's need for absolute control were, perhaps, a weakness of the regime were also points for discussion.

Card 11 – This card dealt with Franco's use of education as a means of political control. The discussion points focused on the way teaching was used to support the regime, breed the next generation of Francoists and also to eliminate the recent past by not studying 20th Century Spanish history in a critical way.

Card 12 – This card dealt with the use of DNA records to find the remains of the *desaparecidos*, why the state may or may not want to assume the cost and responsibility for this and the wish to reach some kind of peace with the past, whichever side of the argument people find themselves on.

Five key messages for future candidates

1. Talk about sources and what you have read, if you can, in the presentation. This helps examiners award marks for AO2.
2. Try not to say everything in your presentation, saving information for the IRP discussion
3. Use the bullet points on the form as a way to set your own opening questions
4. Make sure your facts are current and reasonably up to date
5. Have a good range of case studies for the card discussion.

SPANISH

GCE A level

Summer 2024

COMPONENT 2 – LISTENING, READING AND TRANSLATION

Overview of the Component

This component assesses candidates on their comprehension of spoken and written Spanish and their ability to translate from and into each language.

- Section A targets AO1 and tests the ability to understand spoken Spanish from a variety of sources. These may include reports, dialogues, discussions and speeches. The questions are a mixture of objective questions and free response questions. There are three recorded passages, some of which are subdivided. Each passage targets a subtheme from the specification and there is further information about the fit with the theme in the specification below. There are no marks in this section for AO3 and so, provided examiners can understand the response the candidate produces, no marks are withheld owing to errors in the accuracy of the Spanish. Similarly, no marks are available for AO4, so all the information needed to answer the questions is included in the recording. One part question requires the application of guided summary skills, but candidates do not need to reply in full sentences. 30 marks are available for this section.
- Section B targets AO2 and tests the ability to understand written Spanish from a variety of sources. These may include reports, articles, literary texts and biographies. The questions are a mixture of objective questions and free response questions. There are three recorded passages, some of which are subdivided. Each passage targets a subtheme from the specification and there is further information about the fit with the theme in the specification below. There are no marks in this section for AO3 and so, provided examiners can understand the response the candidate produces, no marks are withheld owing to errors in the accuracy of the Spanish. Similarly, no marks are available for AO4, so all the information needed to answer the questions is included in the recording. One part question requires the application of guided summary skills, but candidates do not need to reply in full sentences. 30 marks are available for this section.
- Section C requires candidates to translate a passage from Spanish into English, which is deemed to be a reading task primarily and so minor errors in English spelling are tolerated. There is also a translation from English into Spanish, which is deemed to be a language test and so only very minor errors that do not hinder the clarity are tolerated. Translations are deemed accurate if all of the messages from the original are present in the translation, with nothing missed out. This means that alternative translations and phrasing that meet these criteria are credited by examiners.
- In all parts of this paper the marking scheme should be viewed as indicative rather than inclusive and so alternative correct answers are acceptable and credited. In sections A and B examiners simply ask themselves if, on balance of probability, the candidate has understood the stimulus material. If so, a mark is given and we aim to mark positively.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

- Q.1** This question was located in the subtheme of **Youth trends and personal identity**. The task was planned to be a straightforward initial question to settle candidates into the paper. It was an objective task where candidates needed to complete sentences using a word from a box, based on what they had heard. Most responded well and many got full marks. Only (a) and (g) tended to be poorly answered by lower scoring candidates. 'revolucionarios' was often chosen for (a) and 'objetivo' for (g). There was evidence that many candidates had used a strategic approach to this task by using their knowledge of Spanish to narrow down the choices.
- Q.2** This question was located in the subtheme of **Post Civil War Spain**. The question was in two parts. 2A was an objective task that again was mostly well answered, although (a) was a common incorrect answer because of the mention of rationing in the recording. It is useful for teachers to draw candidates' attention to the fact that they should expect that there will be elements of distraction in the passages. This is a normal part of the task design. 2B was a free response task and this differentiated at a higher level than 2A. Many candidates did not pay proper attention to the question in (a) and focused on the building of concentration camps, rather than what happened to the prisoners. They were sent there but they did not (at least in the recording) build them.
- Q.3** This question was located in the subtheme of **Media, art, film and music in the Spanish-speaking world**. The question was in two parts. 3A was a summary task which required candidates to jot down details of what they had understood from the recording, under certain categories. There was a tendency to try to transcribe from the recording and to write too much. For the sake of clarity for future candidates, only short phrases or single words suffice in this task. Candidates can simply reformulate the bullet points in their minds into a question and then write their brief answers to those questions. Examiners reported that sometimes it was hard to find the candidates' answers. This said, many candidates responded very well to this task and produced answers showing high levels of comprehension. 3B was a free response task. A good number of candidates could not find the word 'cantante' in (a) and wrote 'cantador', others did not know 'fecha' to answer (b) and wrote 'dato' and lost a mark because this is ambiguous. This indicates that it is potentially useful for candidates to revisit the GCSE vocabulary lists as part of their A Level revision.

Section B

- Q.4** This question was located in the subtheme of **Cultural identity and marginalisation**. The content of the passage dealt with the use of inclusive language. 4A was an objective task that was well answered by most. It required matching of two lists. This was designed to be a straightforward lead-in to section B. 4B was a summary task that required the same skills and approach as the summary task in section A. There was a variety of response, but the best answered was the second bullet point. There was evidence of considerable interest by candidates in the topic content and often answers were in more detail than required. It is intended that some of these passages may be helpful for teachers in preparing future candidates with case studies for C1 and this guide to the use of inclusive language, available online, is an interesting resource.

- Q.5** This question was located in the subtheme of ***Families and citizenship***. The stimulus material was adapted from a literary text and again there was evidence of good engagement by candidates with the topic content. The tone of the text is light-hearted and the aim of this was to move between the serious and academic to the more parochial or humorous. The text type was also different because it contained features such as dialogue and reported speech. It was also written from a retrospective standpoint by a first-person narrator. This added to the demand in linguistic processing and also conceptual processing in terms of the need to deal with a fictional narrative. Teachers can usefully prepare candidates to deal with features of language specific to literary text types. 5A was a task that required candidates to find synonyms. It was mostly well answered but 'rumbo a' was often not known. Some candidates lost marks on this task because they did not check at the end if what they had written would fit into the text to replace exactly the words offered in the left-hand column. This meant many had located the words but used too many and did not get the marks. 5B was a free response task and a key issue was in (b) where it was necessary to express the subject of the answer clearly. Many candidates wrote things like 'tiene una relación estable', without saying which of the brothers they were talking about. Some work on reading questions carefully and ensuring answers are unambiguous could benefit some candidates.
- Q.6** This question was located in the subtheme of ***El franquismo***. 6A was a three-option multiple choice task and the same advice applies here to being careful about the distractors. Each of the options will have words or ideas that are included in the text but only one will be a correct interpretation of the text. Candidates should be trained to both select the correct answer and consciously reject with reasoning the incorrect ones. 6B was a free response task and, whilst many candidates answered well, the need to read the questions carefully arose again. In these questions there was an increased need to draw inferences to answer. In (a) it was important to find the idea of discipline, but many referred to Franco being a young general (not a personal quality). Similarly, in (d) many responded 'en un accidente' and missed the idea that they needed to move from the air accident to Sanjurjo having been travelling by plane. The final question challenged many and again required an inference. We are grateful to one eagle-eyed teacher who spotted a small error of fact in the text with regard to (b) and the place where Franco was banished to. This has been corrected in the published materials that will be available to teachers on the secure website. The Principal Examiner wishes to reassure all teachers that examiners accepted any answer that made it clear that Franco was sent out of peninsular Spain.

Section C

- Q.7** This translation into English was located in the subtheme of ***Cultural enrichment and celebrating difference***. The translation passage differentiated very well but was designed to be motivating for candidates, so there were accessible sections throughout mixed in with the more challenging sections. These more challenging sections tended to include the more idiomatic features of the language and so were 'ha conducido a', 'las inquietudes', 'les resulta', 'ajenas' and 'ampliar'. The need to proofread translations for sense is important because there was evidence that some candidates had been able to deduce meaning from words they didn't know from the surrounding context. As examiners mark, the sections are simply right or wrong but there were some good but wrong answers, where strategy was evident. The items mentioned above aside, vocabulary was not a major issue. It is hoped that there is useful content here for speaking cards in future series.

- Q.8** This translation from English into Spanish was located in the subtheme of ***Regional culture and heritage in Spain and Spanish-speaking countries and communities***. The text appeared simple at first sight but is a reminder of the need to be familiar with KS3 and GCSE vocabulary as a starting point for revision for A level. Words that should be familiar - doors, cook, meals, waiter, writer, take, atmosphere, prices etc. – were often not known. The preterite and imperfect of regular verbs such as ‘abrir’ and ‘preparar’ were also often misrendered. Teachers could usefully drill these things as regular lesson-starters because they are the basic building-blocks of the language. Again, however, here is an example of an historical site that candidates might like to speak about in C1 in a future series. We don’t always need to hear about the Alhambra!

Five key messages for future candidates

1. Use your knowledge of grammar to help deal with tasks that ask you to complete sentences or connect two halves of a sentence
2. Try to be concise in summary tasks and only give as many points as there are marks available
3. In free response tasks read all the questions carefully, paying attention to the verb in the question
4. In translation into English make educated guesses when you don’t know a word
5. Revisit the GCSE vocabulary and grammar list to help you revise for translation into Spanish.

SPANISH

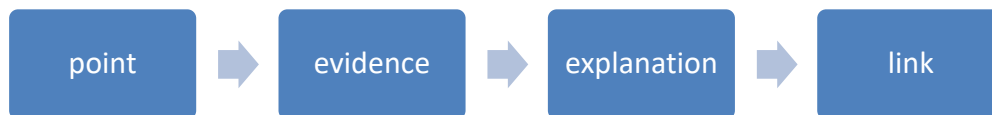
GCE A level

Summer 2024

COMPONENT 3 - CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL RESPONSE IN WRITING

Overview of the Component

- The skills assessed in this component include AO3, where candidates are required to manipulate written Spanish accurately using a range of lexis and grammatical structures, and AO4 which requires knowledge and understanding of the works of literature and film studied. Candidates should aim to respond critically and analytically, demonstrating an awareness of context and aspects of the Spanish speaking culture and society in which each work is set.
- It was pleasing to note a good number of well-structured, analytical essays that showed detailed knowledge of the work in question and a clear understanding of context. The best candidates made points, gave evidence and then provided analytical or evaluative comments before linking successfully back to the title. Many candidates did this by using techniques such as PEEL to good effect.



The less successful candidates, however, need to spend more time deconstructing the question and planning the essay carefully to avoid a general or pre-learned answer rather than a targeted response.

- This year more candidates had written their responses on alternate lines – a recommendation from last year’s report – which was a great help to examiners. There appeared to be fewer cases of poor handwriting overall but lack of legibility did prove problematic in some cases. Where this is a known issue, candidates should be encouraged to use a word processor.
- Regarding the standard of written Spanish, there were some excellent examples of high-level linguistic competence where candidates demonstrated an impressive range of lexis and grammatical structures alongside an awareness of idiom and an appropriate academic register. It should be noted that colloquial language such as ‘*la peli*’ is not considered a suitable register for academic writing. There were, however, still errors when using key lexical items for example, ‘*muerto*’ and ‘*muerte*’ and the conjugation of the verb ‘*morir*’. This is disappointing given these terms are key when writing about many of the works. In Q14 there was much confusion between ‘*muy*, *más* and *mayor*’ when candidates were referring to the scenes in the film that have the greatest impact. The use of ‘*por* / *para*’ remains a challenge for many candidates and a number are still reliant on English syntax.
- Candidates attempted all questions on the paper with the exception of 21 to 24.

LITERATURE

The most popular literary work continues to be *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, but there were also examples of essays on *Las bicicletas son para el verano*, *Como agua para chocolate* and *El otro árbol de Guernica*, and a few on *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* and *Requiem por un campesino español*. Most candidates appear to have found the works accessible and it is still evident that none of them are being studied in a vacuum as candidates, in general, showed good awareness of context and of the Spanish speaking societies in which the texts are set. There was however still the occasional misunderstanding that *La casa de Bernarda Alba* was set during Franco's regime.

Federico García Lorca: *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

- Q.1** proved to be the most popular choice of literature essay. It required candidates to analyse whether La Poncia is right to highlight that Bernarda Alba is unaware of what is going on in the house. Many candidates tackled it well with the best essays referring to Bernarda's obsession with '*chisme/cotilleo*' and '*el que dirán*' at the expense of being aware of what is going on under her nose, La Poncia's repeated warnings to Bernarda and how Bernarda's inability to doubt her control over the household blinds her to the unfolding events. There was, however, the occasional misunderstanding of '*tiene razón*' and candidates focused almost entirely on the different social classes of the two women suggesting that La Poncia, being inferior in terms of social standing, does not have the right to tell Bernarda what is going on.
- Q.2** focused on the statement suggesting that Martirio is a dangerous influence in the Alba household. Candidates tended to agree with this statement and the best essays included examples to support this view such as her jealousy of Adela, the scene where she steals and hides the photo of Pepe el Romano and her lie at the end of the play leading to Adela's suicide. There were, in addition, some valid additional arguments made that whilst Martirio is indeed a dangerous influence, Bernarda's authoritarian control and Pepe el Romano's influence over the daughters could also be seen to be equally damaging. Although an alternative argument can be valid, candidates should ensure that they still focus on the wording of the essay title as it can result in a completely different response to the question asked and, in some cases, there was scarcely a mention of Martirio.

Fernando Fernán Gómez: *Las bicicletas son para el verano*

- Q.3** was chosen by only a few candidates. Candidates were asked to analyse the Republican ideals of the secondary character, Anselmo, compared with the reality of daily life for residents in Madrid during the play. Those who chose this question tended not to include enough evidence from the play to back up their points. They mainly focused on the increasing scarcity of food in Madrid and the way Anselmo talks about the availability of food in Valencia, but they did not refer to Anselmo's dream of free love, open frontiers or the hope for the disappearance of Church influence on Spanish society. Neither did many mention the increasing threats posed by an impending fascist victory.

- Q.4** required candidates to analyse the changes in attitudes and the lives of two of the main female characters in the play, Doña Dolores and Doña Antonia. Many candidates focused only on the change in the women's fortune at the end of the play; the better essays, however, mentioned how Doña Antonia's ultra conservative and judgmental attitude towards Manolita and Rosa is challenged leading her eventually to be more accepting of the younger women. A key point would have been to mention the growing reliance of both Doña Antonia and Doña Dolores on each other, a clear shift from the start of the play when Doña Dolores appears to have the upper hand regarding their relationship.

Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

- Q.5** Candidates recognised the important part that Dr John Brown plays in the novel. They made very good reference to his role in restoring Tita to good health following the death of Roberto and the subsequent abusive treatment of Mamá Elena. The best essays also mentioned John Brown's role in the family as the trusted physician and his gentle and accepting nature when Tita chooses to be with Pedro rather than to marry him. Candidates could have also mentioned the importance of how John, despite being a man of modern science and reason at the time, values the native Indian traditions learnt from his grandmother.
- Q.6** This was a more popular choice amongst candidates who had studied this novel. Although candidates recognised the impact of the conflict on the relationship between Mamá Elena and Tita throughout the novel, including after Mamá Elena's death, there needed to be more of a focus on how Tita's emotions are affected by the constraints of family tradition and are expressed through her cooking. Some candidates barely mentioned this which is surprising given that it is a major theme of the novel. Another impact of the conflict is how it affects other relationships in the family e.g. between Tita and her sister Rosaura and many ignored this. Also, more emphasis was needed on how the conflict affects the relationship between Tita and Pedro. A significant number of candidates, however, referred well to the context of the novel and made good links to how the conflict in the De La Garza household could be seen to reflect the struggles of the Mexican Revolution.

Luis de Castresana: *El otro árbol de Guernica*

- Q.7** Most candidates who had studied this novel chose this essay and in general showed detailed knowledge of the story and many made good links to the question. There were many possible examples that candidates could have chosen as evidence to back up their points, such as the way Santi matures on foreign soil and adopts the role of a leader, how he starts to recognise all parts of Spain and his attempts to include children from other regions in the football games. Many did this to good effect but some candidates, although they clearly knew the story well, did not get across this idea of change when talking about Santi's behaviour and ideas which is a reminder to always make links back to the title of the essay and avoid writing in a narrative style.

- Q.8** Again there was evidence that candidates knew the story well and some good examples were chosen to back up points made such as the emotional trauma suffered after experiencing the death of loved ones - Valentín's father and Santi's Tío Lázaro and the sudden and unexpected death of the child, Eusebio. The best candidates referred to the poignant scene where Manolín leaves a note for Santi asking that if he dies, please make sure they bury him back in San Vicente, highlighting the emotional damage caused by the war. Not many candidates expressed the idea of '*añoranza*', the sense of longing the children feel when in exile for example at Christmas and New Year when in the Fleury.

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

There were very few essays this year on this novel.

- Q.9** Some candidates appeared to have misunderstood the question as in most essays there was little sense of the fact the colonel lived in a "fantasy" of his own making with the focus being solely that they were trapped in poverty. Some essays too became narrative rather than analytical – he is waiting for his pension and then they will have a better standard of living or likewise if the cockerel wins the fight. There was little mention of the colonel's conviction that the health of himself and that of his wife will improve.

Ramón Sender: *Réquiem por un campesino español*

- Q.11** Candidates here were required to analyse whether Mosén Millán's memories of Paco allow him to live in peace. Many showed good knowledge of the novel but as in other questions sometimes failed to link their points sufficiently well to the title. The best essays referred to the presence of the altar boy and the ballad – again, regarding key vocabulary it was disappointing that a number of candidates did not seem to know the word '*romance*'. They also cited the scene in the cave and how at this point we see a shift in the relationship between Paco and Mosén Millán. Many said that Mosén Millán had betrayed Paco or was responsible for his death which made him unable to live in peace, but they did not explain how this happened. Neither did they mention how Mosén Millán fails to condemn Paco's murder. There was however some good analysis of the symbolism of the '*potro*' and how its presence does not allow Mosén Millán to live in peace.
- Q.12** Fewer candidates attempted this essay and those that did tended to be short on evidence. Candidates were asked to analyse the statement that Paco does not recognise the growing threats that surround him. There were cases of essays that resorted to storytelling rather than analysis. The more successful ones referred to Paco's failure to realise he should not trust the landowners and his misguided trust in Mosén Millán. They also referred to Paco's empathetic character and his naivety which blinded him to the growing danger that he faced.

FILMS

This year the most popular film was once again *El laberinto del fauno* followed by *Maria, llena eres de gracia*. There were a few essays on *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* and *Las trece rosas* but as in recent years no candidate wrote about *El lobo* or *La caja 507*.

Guillermo del Toro: *El laberinto del fauno*

- Q.13** The candidates who answered this question well made clear links to the postwar period at the start of Franco's regime and how this backdrop was reflected in the atmosphere of the mill. The best essays included references to the continued struggle between Vidal and his soldiers and the Maquis and the mill's setting being like that of a military camp, the scene of the welcome dinner with the guests as representatives of the different allies of the regime, contrasted with the image of people queuing to be given ration cards, the way Vidal treats the women in the film and the use of violence as a way to ensure control. The less successful candidates showed good knowledge of context but did not explain how this linked to the film, and they failed to include enough specific examples to back up their argument, usually only focusing on one or maybe two.
- Q.14** This was the more popular choice when writing about this film. Candidates had a lot of problems differentiating between the use of the noun, adjective and verb '*impacto*', '*impactante*' and '*impactar*' and similarly when trying to communicate the phrase 'the greatest impact' in Spanish. Too many candidates went off topic completely ignoring the idea of horror and violence and wrote instead about other scenes that had an impact – although a counterargument can often be valid, candidates should not completely disregard what is in the title. There tended to be more of a focus on the violence than the horror in the film. The best essays, however, used good examples to illustrate their points such as the murder of the two '*campesinos*', the torture of the young Maqui, the attempted torture of Mercedes and her subsequent retaliation and escape and of course the murder of Ofelia at the end of the film, although many, surprisingly, failed to mention this last point. They also detailed the horror of the scene with the '*hombre pálido*' referring to imagery such as the pile of children's shoes in his lair. Fewer candidates, however, mentioned what the actual impact of this horror and violence was.

Pedro Almodóvar: *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios*

- Q.15** Some candidates found it difficult to tackle this title, resorting to more of a narrative style essay than an analytical account. The structure of many of these essays would have benefited from referring to the events in the film in chronological order and more links back to the title were needed. Most candidates did refer to the unfathomable behaviour of Iván and Carlos but did not always analyse the effect on the female characters. Many mentioned the contrast of the taxi driver as an example of a male character with a more modern way of thinking.
- Q.16** Many candidates talked well about the humour, absurdity and dramatic irony of certain scenes in the film referring for example to the comical and irrational behaviour of Pepa, the spiked gazpacho and the burning bed but once again candidates should remember to include analysis rather than relating events in a narrative style.

Joshua Marston: *María, llena eres de gracia*

Q.17 The best essays mentioned the men in chronological order of the film: Juan, the factory boss, Franklin, Javier, the ‘*narcos*’ and lastly the counterargument of the altruistic Don Fernando and Carla’s husband when María and Blanca are in New York. There was good analysis as to why each character was either ‘*inútil*’ ‘*malévolo*’ or both but also some generous evaluations of Juan – saying that rather than being ‘*inútil*’ he was merely trying to do the right thing in a very traditional and Catholic country – and also Franklin and Javier who were not in fact ‘*inútil*’ as they provided Maria with an escape – albeit a dangerous one – from the monotony and lack of opportunity facing her in Colombia. For this to be a valid argument, candidates needed to point out how Franklin and Javier were also manipulative, exploitative and self-serving and in the case of Javier how he threatens María if she fails to deliver the drugs.

Q.18 This essay was attempted by fewer candidates, and overall, it tended to be done less well with fewer concrete examples given. The best responses however focused on how María’s outward appearance belies her rebellious, stubborn and combative spirit and they gave good examples to back this up. These included her relationships with Juan and her family, her unwillingness to accept the treatment of her boss at the flower factory, her determination to become a mule and to swallow the ‘*pepas*’ and the way she fights to get the money from the ‘*narcos*’, standing up to them as best she can. They also highlighted her determination to do the right thing in ensuring that Lucy’s body can be repatriated to Colombia and her brave decision to stay in the USA despite the challenges ahead.

Emilio Martínez Lázaro: *Las trece rosas*

Q.19 In this essay there tended to be a lack of concrete examples given by many candidates. A number mentioned the beating suffered by the elderly man who does not know all the words to the fascist anthem ‘*Cara al sol*’ and the torture and abuse of Julia, Adelina and Juan Canepa after being arrested. The best essays clearly highlighted the sadistic nature of Captain Fontenla but there was not much mention of the clear presence of the ‘*police state*’ seen with the round up of the ‘*rosas*’ and the climate of fear illustrated, for example, by the reporting of Canepa to the police by his in-laws and the way Teo betrays his friends.

Q.20 Again, here there could have been more concrete examples given to back up points being made. Most candidates seemed to view Doña Carmen in a sympathetic light because of her treatment of Blanca and her lack of real power in being able to improve the conditions in the prison. They did not, however, emphasise how she fanatically and consistently imposes the state and religious trappings of fascism without question and punishes those who refuse to comply. Nor did they point out that while Doña Carmen may indeed afford Blanca some preferential treatment, she does not appear interested in trying to help the other ‘*rosas*’.

General observations and advice for future candidates

- Spend more time reading the question and think about what is being asked in terms of content and evidence. Examiners commented that often candidates include irrelevant and pre-learned information which does not refer to the title. It is also advisable to write the number of the question, don't make the examiner guess which one it is!
- Plan logically. It is important to think about the structure of the essay and when referring to events, it is better to do so chronologically as it results in a more cohesive rather than disjointed argument. Think about punctuation and avoid excessively long sentences which end up being more a stream of consciousness than evaluative and are difficult to follow.
- Use the present tense to analyse unless referring to context. Many candidates switch tenses constantly through the essay or write in the past which then ends up with candidates recounting the story rather than analysing.
- Set aside 5-10 minutes at the end of the exam to proofread. AO3 marks could be improved by checking basic grammar, including common genders, all agreements, conjugation of verbs in all tenses and consistency of tense. The spelling of key vocabulary for each work is also quite frequently inaccurate, disappointing when candidates have studied the work in depth. The best essays tend to have a clear introduction which refers immediately to the essay title, use paragraphs effectively with good idiomatic linking phrases and end with a succinct but pertinent conclusion.
- Regarding essay length, the recommended 300 words is a guide but candidates who write less than this will self-penalise by not including enough detail, evidence or analysis. Conversely, the candidates who write extremely long essays frequently also end up self-penalising by being repetitive and going off topic.

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