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## FOREWORD

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

# SPANISH

## GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Paper 8673/04

Texts

### General comments

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

### Comments on specific questions

#### Question 1

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

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

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

#### Question 2

Federico García Lorca: *Romancero gitano*

Both options gave rise to good answers.

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

#### Question 3

Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

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

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

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

#### Question 4

Antonio Buero Vallejo: *El concierto de San Ovidio*

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

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

#### Question 5

Carmen Martín Gaité: *Entre visillos*

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

#### Question 6

Lope de Vega: *El caballero de Olmedo*

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

#### Question 7

Isabel Allende: *La casa de los espíritus*

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

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

### Question 8

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

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

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