FIRST LANGUAGE SPANISH

Paper 8665/21

Reading and Writing 21

General comments

Candidates taking this component were generally of a good standard. They appeared to have been well coached in the techniques required, and there were many pleasing examples of attempts to express ideas in original wording, without copying lengthy phrases from the texts.

Candidates' presentation of their answers was often excellent, and few seemed troubled by the time constraints of the examination.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

Choosing the correct definition proved to be a relatively straightforward task, and a considerable number of candidates scored full marks. Those who went back to the text and looked carefully at how the word had been used in context received their just reward.

Question 2

This, as always, was a challenging exercise and only the most able candidates scored well. In addition to performing the required language manipulation, the answer should fit back into the original text and retain the same meaning.

It was at times disappointing when candidates who had correctly made the manipulation either introduced or omitted words which invalidated their answer. A good technique to avoid this is to copy out the phrase as it appears on the question paper before writing the answer underneath. In this manner it is possible to tell at a glance whether there are any extras or omissions.

(a)   Not every candidate realised that *es posible que* conveyed the meaning of *puede.* The majority of those who did usually supplied the accompanying correct subjunctive.

(b)   This proved quite difficult for many. A number of incorrect variations were noted, and only a minority successfully came up with *a quien le encanta.*

(c)   A passive construction is very commonly found in the manipulations question. The only occasional failing amongst those who identified this one was to offer an answer in the wrong tense. It had to be the future *será.*

(d)   Those who realised that a *tan + adj + como* construction was being sought generally fared well. It was unfortunate when a few who successfully completed the manipulation invalidated their answer by failing to use the feminine *gruesa.*

(e)   There were several permissible ways to incorporate *verdad* into answers. Those who attempted to use *decir la verdad* sometimes came unstuck because of an inability to form the correct preterite*.*

Question 3

This text about the popularity and shortcomings of Internet dating was perhaps a little more challenging than the one which followed. However, there were many candidates who showed clear understanding of what they had read and who were suitably rewarded.

(a)   The mark scheme allowed four possible ways to score three marks and many candidates took full advantage. The least popular of possible answers proved to be *la gente ya no va a las discotecas para ligar.* There were some instances of 'lifting' answers from the passage, but these were generally few and far between.

(b)(i)   The idea of *príncipes* or *princesas* meaning one's perfect partner caused difficulties for a number of candidates. (There were a few who took this to mean that even royalty were turning to Internet dating). However, most understood the meaning of *un clic de ratón.*

   (ii)   This was generally answered well, with only a few candidates unable to give a satisfactory explanation of *global.*

(c)   Although the question specifically directed candidates towards paragraphs three and four very few candidates took a lot of notice of the information given in paragraph three. Four marks were available for this question, and candidates who confined their attention to paragraph four were only able to score two at most. Scant reference was made to the profile of the e-dating user in Spain, whereas the fact that the Internet was the third most popular way to find a partner, and that it may have contributed to an increase in the divorce rate, was often clearly stated.

(d)   This was mostly answered correctly, with it being necessary to study the whole paragraph to appreciate how e-dating had failed Federico. Those candidates who took a more superficial glance and answered by saying that he would have been interested in the offer because he was very wealthy did not score the mark.

(e)(i)   The majority successfully identified the falseness of Internet profiles as the correct answer.

   (ii)   This question produced some interesting responses, as it required candidates to make inferences from their understanding of the final two paragraphs of the text. It was generally done quite well, with many candidates suggesting a discotheque, in order to meet real people, as Federico's most likely destination.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

Candidates commonly showed a clear understanding of this second text and achieved good marks.

(a)   This was answered well, with most candidates picking up on the fact that marriage in Spain used to be for life, until legislation in 1981 triggered an ever-increasing rate of separation and divorce.

(b)(i)   The different nature of society when Begoña went through her divorce and how this clashed with her parents' attitudes were readily identified. Some incorrect answers revolved around *estuvo casado 23 años,* which showed a misunderstanding of the text. Unless further information was given, no mark was awarded to candidates who noted *sus padres eran muy conservados*.

   (ii)   There were a few candidates who forgot to answer this second part of the question. Others failed to mention that Begoña was a teacher and that the majority of her pupils' parents were divorced. There were some interesting explanations of the meaning of *pan nuestro de cada día.* Several candidates mentioned the origins of the phrase, but then went on to explain it in terms of how people needed to work in order to learn a living. Such candidates failed to work out that in its context the phrase was being used to state that divorce is an everyday occurrence.

(c)   Most candidates scored marks for this question, although not so many correctly identified all three elements required to score the maximum. Some failed to mention *la edad inusual* at which certain Spaniards are getting divorced, and others neglected to say that changes in the rate of divorce had happened in a short space of time.

(d)(i) This was generally answered correctly.

(ii) Only the more able candidates were able to identify all three elements sought by the mark scheme concerning the breakdown in a relationship. Most commonly noted was that infidelity was not usually the cause, and many candidates identified the sequential point that infidelity was more of an indication that things were not going well. The metaphor of tiny drips into a glass which eventually overflows was not picked up by many.

(e) There were many correct answers to the final question. The ideas that couples should communicate well and make an effort to resolve minor, everyday issues were usually clearly stated.

Question 5

Candidates often had plenty to say in answer to the first part of this question, which sometimes led to them exceeding the limit of 140 words for <u>both</u> parts of the question. Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for the second part.

(a) There were generally quite high marks awarded for the summary, with candidates identifying many of the points contained in the texts about the initiation and breakdown of relationships. Occasionally candidates added other information which could not be credited.

(b) In the two or three sentences which candidates have at their disposal here it is important to give a personal point of view. It is recommended that candidates really emphasise that they are giving their own opinions by using such expressions as *en mi opinión / considero que / pienso que* etc. Those candidates that did this, and contributed some originality in addition to ideas taken from the texts, were rewarded with the full five marks.

FIRST LANGUAGE SPANISH

Paper 8665/22
Reading and Writing

General comments

The two texts, one concerning organised crime and the other about shoplifting, generally appeared to be well understood. Candidates submitted work of a good quality, although on occasions marks were lost when phrases of more than four words were copied directly from the text, or when the 140 word limit was disregarded in **Question 5**.

Candidates' presentation of their answers was often excellent, and few seemed troubled by the time constraints of the examination.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

The phrases in the original text were readily identified, with many candidates spotting all five. However, this was not a guarantee that five marks would necessarily be awarded. Answers to this question must contain the words from the original which are the exact equivalent to the paraphrase. Often candidates successfully identified the phrase but were careless in copying it across, either omitting words or adding unnecessary, superfluous ones.
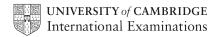
A good technique used by some candidates to check at a glance that their answers contained no extras or omissions was to copy out the paraphrase in the question and then write their answer phrase on the line beneath.

Question 2

This, as always, was a challenging exercise and only the most able candidates scored well. In addition to performing the required language manipulation, the answer should fit back into the original text and retain the same meaning.

It was at times disappointing when candidates who had correctly made the manipulation either introduced or omitted words which invalidated their answer. The technique mentioned above of copying out the phrase as it appears on the question paper before writing the answer underneath can help to prevent this occurring.

(a) Equivalent expressions using *falta* are fairly common, and candidates came up with a variety of correct uses which conveyed the idea of 'lacking authority'. A common error was to omit the initial *a* in answers which attempted *a sus instituciones les falta la capacidad.*

(b) This was usually answered well, with candidates seemingly well prepared for the likelihood of an active / passive manipulation.

(c) Many candidates appeared to be aware of the *sigue / continúa siendo* construction. Others, however, offered *siendo* alone at the beginning of the phrase, which might have worked in another context, but did not fit back into the original text in this instance.

(d) Not every candidate seemed to be familiar with the common expression *tener éxito.* Those that were sometimes lost the mark by using the present instead of the past tense which was required to retain the same meaning.

(e)   It was pleasing to note the number of answers which recognised the need for a subjunctive after *es importante que*. However, a number of candidates failed to score the mark through neglecting to make the necessary orthographical change.

Question 3

The text seemed generally to be well understood. However, a number of candidates experienced difficulty in expressing their answers without copying blocks of five words or more directly from the text.

(a)   The majority of candidates scored at least one mark for identifying unemployment as a reason behind crime, and many scored further marks if they avoided copying from the passage and successfully rephrased the other two points. Sometimes *vacíos* was misinterpreted in this context to mean 'job vacancies'.

(b)   Most candidates picked up one mark for noting the weakness of Central American institutions in the face of organised crime. Not so many went on to mention how illegal arms trafficking was also a significant threat to the security of the region.

(c)   In a comprehension test of this nature it is always a risky strategy to write a very brief, generalised summary of the facts when a more detailed explanation is possible, especially when there are three marks allocated to the answer. Candidates who gave full details of Guatemala's role in drugs distribution scored three marks, whereas candidates who generalised only scored one.

(d)   This was mostly answered quite well. Many candidates scored at least two marks for noting that the weakness of Latin American and Caribbean institutions and governments and the social inequality in this region are underlying causes of crime. The third mark was not so readily obtained, often because of an inability to either mention or paraphrase *zonas sin estado de derecho.*

(e)   Nearly every candidate scored something for this question, and the more able often picked up all four marks. There was some good re-working of *medidas impuestas desde el exterior,* and many successfully noted that military control of the police had not been a successful policy in the fight against crime. The other points about identifying and eliminating vulnerable areas and promoting more social equality were also often successfully noted. Candidates should be reminded that the mark scheme for these comprehension questions works on a point for point basis. If a question has four marks allocated to it, then they should look for and include four points in their answer. A number of candidates only mentioned two points and then moved on.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The second text dealing with crime of a more petty nature – specifically shoplifting in Spain – proved to be accessible to most candidates.

(a)   The expensiveness of products and the savings that could be made were commonly identified as Laura's main reason for shoplifting. Not so many candidates noted the gratification that she received from this activity ("*como si me hicieran un regalo*"). Her justification of only stealing from large multinationals was often noted, although some candidates failed to score when they directly copied *una gran superficie o multinacional.*

(b)   Most candidates scored marks by answering that shoplifters used to be people in employment who considered that the shopkeeper was already making enough money. Not so many picked up on the third point that these thieves did not consider that what they were doing was serious.

(c)   This was a two-part question worth four marks, and candidates should be reminded that they should try to answer such questions as fully as possible. Candidates who included several details generally scored well.

(d)   Quite often candidates only focused on the fact that the clientele in the discount shops had changed, and many failed to score at all when they lifted *gente de clase media y media alta.* The fact that the assistant needed to be more vigilant nowadays was often overlooked.

(e)   The mark scheme listed four possible differences between shoplifters in the past and shoplifters nowadays, and candidates only needed to list three of them to score maximum marks. Those who answered fully received their just rewards.

Question 5

Candidates often had plenty to say in answer to the first part of this question, which sometimes led to them exceeding the limit of 140 words for <u>both</u> parts of the question. Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for the second part.

(a)   It is important to remind candidates that the technique required to score well on this question is to pick out as many points from both texts which answer the question asked – in this case 'what are the reasons for crime?' Marks are allocated for relevant points, and lifting from the texts is no longer an issue. Candidates who adhered to these principles scored well. Candidates who generalised failed to do themselves justice. With such a constraint on the number of words to be used it is wasteful to write non-scoring introductions such as *Las razones de la existencia del crimen se dejan ver claramente en ambos textos.* Conclusions are equally unnecessary.

(b)   In the two or three sentences which candidates have at their disposal here it is important to give a personal point of view. It is recommended that candidates really emphasise that they are giving their own opinions by using such expressions as *en mi opinión / considero que / pienso que* etc. Those candidates that did this, and contributed some originality, in addition to ideas taken from the texts, were rewarded with the full five marks.

FIRST LANGUAGE SPANISH

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Paper 8665/41

Texts 41

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General comments

Examiners are pleased to observe that the majority of candidates continue to show understanding of and enthusiasm for the texts chosen for study. Those Centres which invest time in preparing their candidates in essay-writing skills as well as close study of the texts give their candidates an added advantage. Examiners look for a clearly-argued and focused response to the question, with reference to the texts to substantiate points made. This requires both deep knowledge and the ability to present a coherent answer.

Although there were a few cases where candidates did not follow the rubrics correctly and either did not answer the required number of questions, or wrote an essay on both options for the same text, these are decreasing.

Comments on individual questions

Sección Primera

Question 1 Azuela: *Los de abajo*

(a) This question gave much opportunity to discuss the more negative aspects of the Revolution and candidates were able to respond with detailed answers.

(b) This question elicited a wider range of responses where weaker candidates tended to give a rather superficial treatment, commenting on the varied settings and scenes and the fact that war is a popular topic. The better answers may have referred to the scenic qualities but went on to consider the dramatic possibilities of events and characterisation within the context of the Revolution and also mentioning some of the *costumbrista* aspects of the dialogue and customs of the Mexican people. Candidates also considered how the episodic nature of the text lent itself to the medium of cinema and how the director would interpret the author's intentions.

Question 2 Calderón de la Barca: *El alcalde de Zalamea*

Both **(a)** and **(b)** were answered by a relatively small number of candidates. The responses showed awareness of the cultural context of the play and careful reading of the text.

Question 3 García Márquez: *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande*

(a) This gave candidates much opportunity to give their interpretation of the events in the story and to relate this to others in the collection. Examiners are pleased to accept a variety of views, provided they are supported by reference to the text. In this case there were a number of approaches which gave rise to a wide range of stories used in **part (iii)** of the question.

(b) This was also generally well answered as regards examples of humour, but some candidates did not analyse how it was used by the author.

Question 4 Buero Vallejo: *Hoy es fiesta*

These questions were chosen by a minority of candidates. There were no problems in dealing with the issues raised in the questions set, and candidates were able to use their knowledge of the texts to good effect.

Question 5 Lauro Olmo: *La camisa*

Again, this text was not chosen by a large number of candidates, but both options were understood and accessible.

Sección Segunda

Question 6 Ruiz Zafón: *La sombra del viento*

(a) This was by far the more popular of the two questions on this text. Candidates answered well, with a wide range of examples drawn from all the major characters in the novel. They were able to refer to the key decisions made and to analyse the effects and consequences with detailed reference to the text.

(b) This question also gave scope for a range of interpretations.

Question 7 Paola Kaufmann: *El lago*

Neither of these questions was a popular choice, but they gave candidates the opportunity to deal with the wider themes of the text in **(a)** and to focus more specifically on the role of a central character in **(b)**.

Question 8 García Lorca: *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

This was perhaps the most popular text.

(a) Some candidates tended to read the play as a documentary rather than a drama and therefore lost much of the impact of the themes, characterisation and poetry. The best answers showed how Lorca used the setting to explore the human condition.

(b) Candidates tended to choose the final scene of the play as the most important, and answers were often very effectively argued. Some candidates strayed from the text to the film version and included interpretations which were those of the director or actor rather than the playwright. These may be relevant as a point of discussion but time is better spent in analysing the text itself.

Question 9 Rubén Darío: *Selección de poemas*

This text was not widely chosen this session. Those candidates who prepared for the poetry tended to be well-practised in the techniques of critical analysis and generally presented detailed answers.

Question 10 Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

This text always attracts many answers and candidates show genuine empathy with the characters.

(a) There were many good answers showing understanding of the use of *realismo magico* in the novel, with clear examples to support the argument.

(b) This question also gave candidates the opportunity to give an individual response to the text by accepting or challenging the statement given and then choosing a range of examples to support their argument. The best essays considered both positive and negative aspects, and showed awareness of a degree of ambivalence in the text.

Concluding remarks

Centres are choosing texts which engage their candidates and provide scope for analysis in terms of theme, character and technique. It is important to ensure that all candidates are given exam practice and that they are taught effective essay-writing skills in order to help each of them to achieve his or her potential.

FIRST LANGUAGE SPANISH

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Paper 8665/42

Texts 42

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General comments

The general standard of performance by candidates was good and was comparable to that of previous sessions, although Examiners were pleased to note that candidates appeared to be generally more knowledgeable about the texts studied. There is a small caveat, however, in that some essays show confusion between the text and a film version thereof. The film is not always true to the original and can cause some problems in answers. Centres are requested to warn candidates of this as Examiners expect references to the original text.

Comments on individual questions

Sección Primera

Question 1 Azuela: *Los de abajo*

(a) This was well answered and differentiated well between the stronger and weaker candidates. All could find something to say in each section of the question, with better answers showing understanding of the historical background of the novel and the ability to integrate this with clear references to the text. A number of candidates did not use the printed extract to its full advantage in responding to **parts (i)** and **(ii)**, rather making perfunctory remarks about the *ex federales* only. **Part (iii)** is the key section for determining the overall mark, and again, many candidates were too general in their comments. The passage pointed to a number of themes, such as the breakdown of communication and leadership within the rebels, which could be discussed in detail.

(b) There were fewer answers to this question, but candidates were able to refer to the effects of war on a population and individuals.

Question 2 Calderón de la Barca: *El alcalde de Zalamea*

(a) This question was very popular. Candidates provided a clear context for the printed extract and showed understanding of the historical and social background. The best essays traced how the attitudes expressed affected subsequent events in the play.

(b) Fewer candidates chose this option, but there were some very good answers. These essays showed that candidates had studied the importance of the social hierarchies within the historical context.

Question 3 García Márquez: *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande*

(a) This was a popular question and elicited responses at all levels. In order to achieve a high mark, candidates had to show knowledge of the text beyond that in the printed extract. A number of answers seemed to be based on assumptions drawn only from the passage printed in the question paper. As is usually the case, the response to **part (iii)** is key to determining the overall mark, and the best answers showed detailed understanding of the plight of the widow. Some considered that her sadness was a result of her having turned a blind eye to events for many years, and therefore was, to an extent, of her own making. Others gave more detailed accounts of her husband's affairs, the reactions of her children and made reference to other stories in the collection.

(b) All were able to draw on three stories. Some candidates agreed that the search for love was the main theme, but some disagreed and went on to discuss other topics, such as social inequality and corruption; inevitably in a few cases this appeared to be writing out a pre-learnt essay. There are often a number of ways of approaching a question but Examiners can only accept a candidate's interpretation if their answer is a clearly focused response to the question asked.

Question 4 Buero Vallejo: *Hoy es fiesta*

(a) Generally answers to this question were good. Candidates showed detailed knowledge of the play and were able to refer widely to the effect of the events of the day on a range of individuals.

(b) Fewer candidates chose this question, but those that did were able to make logical comments, though few understood that the author was using the terrace as a literary device. Weaker candidates tended to simply recount events without considering the importance of the setting and its effect on characters.

Question 5 Lauro Olmo: *La camisa*

(a) This question was quite popular. Candidates were able to give the context and explain what was happening. In **part (iii)**, there were differing views on whether young people promised hope for the future or not, but everyone found material to support their interpretation.

(b) There were some good answers to this question, with a number of themes being sensibly identified. A few candidates spent too much time writing vaguely about present day problems and too little time referring to the text.

Sección Segunda

Question 6 Ruiz Zafón: *La sombra del viento*

(a) This question was fairly popular. There were some strong answers, but weaker candidates struggled to find enough material, tending simply to list the places mentioned rather than considering the setting and atmosphere of the city as a whole.

(b) This question was very popular and there were many excellent answers. Everyone could focus on the character and find plenty to say. All candidates noted the parallel between Julián and Penélope, and Daniel and Beatriz, but only the best considered why Zafón might have used this device.

Question 7 Paola Kaufmann: *El lago*

(a) This was answered satisfactorily by a small number of candidates.

(b) This did not attract a wide enough range of candidates to make significant general comments.

Question 8 García Lorca: *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

(a) Many chose this question and answers were generally very good. Better candidates put the quotation into context and considered how Bernarda chose to suppress the situation.

(b) This was the most popular question. Candidates showed sound knowledge of the characters and were able to discuss the play in detail. While all disagreed with the proposition, stronger candidates discussed to what extent it was true (i.e. the pressures to conform; their shared situation) and then went on to talk about the different personalities of the daughters. Weaker candidates tended to produce an answer that resembled a list of notes on each character, but everyone found plenty to say and the answer was easy to structure.

Question 9 Rubén Darío: *Selección de poemas*

(a)   This was a straightforward question, giving a clear structure of 'compare and contrast'.

(b)   This attracted a small number of responses and was well answered. Candidates had no difficulties in finding three poems to analyse.

Question 10 Laura Esquivel: *Como agua para chocolate*

(a)   There were quite a lot of answers to this question. Candidates generally discussed the elements *recetas, amores y remedios caseros* one by one in order and achieved a reasonably good response. A few candidates responded that there was more to the novel and went on to discuss other themes as well.

(b)   This question was extremely popular. Most candidates adopted the chronological approach, discussing how the character develops through the novel. This provided a structure for the answer and everyone found plenty to say.

Concluding remarks

Examiners are pleased to note the increasingly knowledgeable way in which candidates are approaching this paper. The best answers are able to use the knowledge of the text with an understanding of the broader context and the author's intention in writing the work, but this is always clearly focused on the question as set. Those Centres where candidates are given practice specifically in structuring an essay and selecting relevant material are providing valuable skills in tackling examination questions. Awareness of the techniques and skills involved helps candidates to achieve their potential, at whatever level, and reduces the risks of making mistakes such as answering both questions on the same text or not answering the correct number of questions on the paper.