
A-LEVEL SPANISH

7692/2 Paper 2 Writing
Report on the Examination

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General

There have again been examples of essays from across the full spectrum of films and texts this year. Most students have been prepared well for the component. The most widely chosen text continues to be *La casa de Bernarda Alba* but also popular is *Como Agua para Chocolate*. The most studied films, by some margin, are *Volver* and *El Laberinto del Fauno*. Some texts and films are answered by very few students and therefore it is hard to see clear trends.

Section A Texts

Question 1 *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

This was by far the most popular choice of text and answers were divided almost evenly between the two titles, with both providing scope for some outstanding answers while marks covered the whole range of grades.

In 1.1 the best responses considered that the statement only referred to women and that men were not punished for their errors. Some struggled to define what *perdonar los errores* meant and some seemed to focus on Bernarda alone, as a representative of society.

In 1.2 good students compared Adela to other characters such as Angustias and Martirio, or even Bernarda, and showed that Adela had learned from *La Hija de La Librada* what her fate would be, thus leading to the suicide. Weaker students relied on narrating events, often adding conjecture rather than development using points based on evidence, eg *Si Adela hubiera sabido que Pepe no había muerto...* perhaps to force complex language?

Question 2 *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*

2.1 was marginally less popular than 2.2 but this novel remains a popular choice.

Question 2.1 seemed to present more difficulty to students than 2.2, with many not really offering any evidence other than that Angela Vicario named Santiago Nazar. Better students explored the narrator's research, Santiago's mistreatment of women and the reasons Angela may have had for naming Santiago.

Question 2.2 was the more frequently answered question, with students criticising the role of the mayor and the priest and the effect of the bishop's visit. Some chose only to examine the Church and some failed to address the element of authority and focused entirely on characters with no authority.

Question 3 *Como agua para chocolate*

This was a very popular choice.

Question 3.1 was significantly less popular than 3.2 and, disappointingly, many students focused on magical realism rather than Nacha's impact and influence on the other characters. There was a tendency simply to narrate events rather than to evaluate.

Question 3.2 was more widely answered and there were some very good answers. The best considered Mama Elena's treatment of Tita, Gertrudis and Rosaura, and her influence beyond the grave, showing sound evaluation. Many forgot to analyse *las razones* or just mentioned José Treviño briefly, with no explanation or detail.

Question 4 *Réquiem por un campesino español*

Question 4.1 was the more popular choice and most students managed to examine some of the contrasts with some success, usually Paco and Mosén Millán, the rich men and the poor villagers. Some answers concentrated too much on criticism of the Church, possibly recycling a previous essay.

Question 4.2 was not widely answered and those who did had some success in dealing with the realistic element but much less success exploring the idealistic. Once again it is disappointing that responses often narrated events rather than evaluating them.

Question 5 *La sombra del viento*

This is a less popular choice, and it is hard to make conclusive statements. The responses were spread over both questions. In both cases students struggled with the complexity of the novel. Better students selected relevant evidence to justify points made, but some resorted to recounting parts of the novel with little evaluation or focus on the title.

Question 6 *La casa de los espíritus*

This is another less popular choice, and it is hard to make conclusive statements. The responses were spread over both questions. 6.1 proved difficult for some students, who failed to focus on the title and select evidence to justify their points. In 6.2 students did manage to focus on Esteban Trueno and offered some insightful answers.

Question 7 *Rimas*

Fewer than 20 students answered the questions on Bécquer and it is hard to make conclusive statements. It is important that students who choose this poetry analyse the poems as, at times, answers to both questions were little more than a list of quotations with little critical awareness.

Question 8 *Las bicicletas son para el verano*

Question 8.1 was by far the most popular choice and most students detailed the changed ambitions of Luisito and Manolita. Some considered the positive effects for those who supported Franco as a contrast.

In 8.2 stronger students considered the contrast between the prologue and epilogue and the political divide and gave good examples using different characters. Very few were able to evaluate the effect on the audience convincingly.

Question 9 *El otro árbol de Guernica*

Responses were divided equally across both questions and students tackled both titles well, showing some insight into the children's feelings and offering good evidence to justify their points.

Question 10 *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba*

This is becoming a less popular choice, but still the choice of a good number of schools. Question 10.2 was more popular but there were a number who opted for 10.1.

Overall students compared the two characters effectively in 10.1. Most focused on the positivity and naivety of the Colonel and the practical nature of his wife. Again, students sometimes simply narrated events rather than evaluate.

Question 10.2 attracted some strong answers, but many students simply listed examples of poverty rather than showing the pervasive nature of the poverty and examining the reasons for it.

Section B Films

Question 11 *El Laberinto del Fauno*

This is a hugely popular film choice and, while 11.1 was more popular than 11.2, both were answered by a significant number of students.

There were some excellent essays in response to 11.1: stronger students considered the double life of Mercedes and the bravery of Ofelia and even showed that they understood that Carmen was not necessarily the weak wife she seemed. Weaker students sometimes focused on Vidal rather than the women and narrated some events without a clear focus on the title. Some did not mention Ofelia (maybe because she is not a *mujer*?) and many ignored *es peligroso ignorarlas* or even the most obvious of consequences.

For 11.2 there were again some excellent essays showing how many of the themes of the film are addressed in this scene, with a strong argument that it can be seen as a turning point for Ofelia. Some failed to refer to *temas* or struggled to find them and simply narrated what they could remember of the scene.

Question 12 *Ocho apellidos vascos*

This was a popular choice with both titles attracting responses.

Question 12.1 was marginally more popular, and there were excellent answers which gave examples of ignorance and then showed how these were overcome. Most students considered the regional stereotypes, but few adequately dealt with the second part of the question other than to say that there was a happy ending. Some wrote an essay which was purely about stereotypes.

In response to 12.2, while some students showed a real transformation in Koldo and an understanding of why he was seen as cold and *bruto* at the start, this question proved difficult. Many failed to analyse Koldo's character successfully, choosing to merely describe him. Some strayed to other characters or failed to address the *forma negativa* aspect adequately.

Question 13 *María, llena eres de gracia*

In response to 13.1 students painted a bleak picture of the poverty and lack of opportunities in Colombia, but the statement about drug trafficking being an easy way out due to its dangers was not well handled. Some students thought it was a viable choice; others disagreed but without giving reasons from the film.

The best answers to 13.2 detailed the contrasts between Colombia and the USA. Many students concentrated too much on negative aspects of life in Colombia and did not mention positive reasons to stay in the USA. Some students did not know the names of secondary characters and, for example, mixed up Lucy, Carla and Bianca.

Question 14 *Volver*

This is the most popular choice among the films and produced both excellent and weak responses. 14.1 was hugely more popular than 14.2.

In 14.1 there was great variation in aspects discussed due to the open nature of the question. There were many excellent answers on rituals in La Mancha and the peaceful nature of the death of La Tía Paula in contrast to the violent death of Paco with a very different burial. Strong students looked at the other deaths: Raimunda's father and Agustina's mother, and Agustina's own death. Weaker students failed to evaluate; they just narrated. Too many students wrote a whole essay on new beginnings while others wrote whole essays on the colour red.

There were fewer answers for 14.2. While the best students showed how Paula matured into a young woman who grew to understand and love her mother and grandmother and to contribute to family life, other students were able to detail Paula's character and experiences but very few could analyse the reasons why. Students often narrated the sensational events with no evaluation of the emotional impact on Paula. Again, some focused on colours without justifying the relevance of colours to the transformation of Paula.

Question 15 *Abel*

Very few students answered questions on this film and it is hard to make conclusive statements. Question 15.1 was more popular and there was some recognition of the difficulties Cecilia faced. Again, some recognition of the selfishness and thoughtlessness of Anselmo in 15.2, but there were not many strong answers to either title.

Question 16 *Las 13 rosas*

This is a less popular film choice, and it is hard to make conclusive statements. Question 16.2 was the more popular title of the two. The stronger students focused on the title, giving evidence and examples from the film, while weaker students failed to do this. Often students simply narrated events from the film with little analysis.

Language AO3

While many students displayed excellent languages skills, others were not able to express ideas clearly.

1. Students must learn the vocabulary they need to discuss the characters and themes. They are at a huge disadvantage if they do not know the common words needed to write about the film or book.
2. While complex language will be rewarded, pre-learned phrases involving complex structures cannot compensate for an inability to deal with tenses and verbs accurately.
3. Expressions of emotion followed by a subjunctive seem forced and again cannot make up for poor grasp of grammar.
4. Nor is it appropriate to use conjecture in a literature/film essay to accommodate 'if/would' structures.

Critical response AO4

1. Students should avoid long introductions giving the name of the author/director, the year it came out/was published or who the main characters are. This adds nothing that can be awarded in either AO3 or AO4.
2. It is admirable and desirable to draw arguments, and indeed the whole essay, to a clear conclusion, but it must be genuine. Simply repeating the title at the end of each paragraph does not make the argument sound. Likewise, simply repeating what has already been said in the paragraph is not a good conclusion.
3. Development of arguments is essential. Students must explain their points and use examples and evidence showing us how they are answering the title set. Unfortunately some students choose to develop answers using conjecture. They discuss what might have happened if... Sometimes this is to force complex *si* clauses but sometimes it is just pure conjecture. This adds nothing that can be awarded in either AO3 or AO4.
4. Students must answer the title set in the paper and they should not rely on pre-learned material. Many students tried, with varying degrees of success, to recycle essays they had done previously, possibly in their mock exams. They clearly avoided elements of the title presented and, in some cases, they failed to answer the title in any way.

General points: advice to students

Ensure you learn the key vocabulary that is needed whenever you write or talk about a certain book or film.

Spend time reading the question – the whole question. What exactly does it ask you? Is there more than one element that needs covering? Which one can you answer best? Note down the points you will make and the evidence and examples you will use.

Do not attempt to use a previous essay. Of course, there will be suitable elements of previous essays, but you must adapt what you know to the question set. Everything you write must clearly answer the title set in the paper.

A detailed knowledge of the book or film is essential. Know the names of the characters and what they add to our understanding of the film or book. Too often students are clearly writing about Mercedes but calling her Carmen, for example. Sometimes Lorca is said to have been the author of *Como Agua para Chocolate*.

When giving evidence, do not just say that a character is cruel or brave etc. Give a few details of where we see that in the film. Do not be afraid to use the most obvious examples if they are clear. Sometime students use evidence which is not as conclusive as they think.

The aim should be to know the book or film so well that you can adapt your knowledge to whatever comes up, but do not write everything you know about the film or book. Select points to answer the title, offering knowledge from the film or book to justify these points.

Do not just re-tell the story; when you are providing evidence for a point you are making, quote or explain the episode briefly but then tell us what we learn from it and how it proves the point you are making.

Do not go into conjecture, imagining what might have happened if... or saying how you think the author or director might have done something in a different way. Focus on what is there in the text or film rather than what might have been.

Context is important and often relevant, but it should be accurate, and it should not dominate the response. You are asked to give a critical response to the work, and this will often require an understanding of the historical or political context. But your whole essay should not focus on the context of the novel or film. A long paragraph on the history of Colombia around the time of *El Coronel no tiene quien le esciba* or the history of the Mexican revolution at the time of *Como Agua Para Chocolate* may not be relevant to the title set.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.