



**Spanish A level  
Transition Booklet  
Year 11 to Year 12**

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**1.Introduction**

If you are thinking of choosing Spanish A-Level next year, then... great choice! Spanish is the second most widely spoken native language in the world (after Mandarin Chinese) and thus it literally does open a world of opportunities for you! When thinking about your future studies, it could combine well with politics, business, and law to lead to careers in international relations and trade, and for travel and leisure you would be able to explore with confidence the vibrant Spanish-speaking countries of South America and of course, closer to home, Spain itself.

This transition booklet aims to introduce some of the areas of the A Level course with various tasks that will enable you to do some research and to keep practising the language that you have acquired for GCSE, but in different contexts. Even if you are not thinking of doing Spanish A Level, you may like to do some of these tasks out of interest and to keep your language skills going.

**2.Course Content**

The A Level specification followed at Cardinal Wiseman is AQA. The course consists of the following topics, sub-topics, and tasks.

Aspects of Hispanic Society

Modern and traditional values

Cyberspace

Equal Rights

Artistic Culture in the Hispanic World

Modern day idols

Spanish regional identity

Cultural heritage

Multiculturalism in Hispanic Society

Immigration

Racism

Integration

### Aspects of Political Life in the Hispanic World

Youth of Today, Citizens of Tomorrow

Monarchies and Dictatorships

Popular Movements

### Literary Texts and Films

Two texts, or one text and one film, are studied from a varied list of works from Spain and South America including by great writers such as Federico García Lorca and Gabriel García Márquez and famous film directors such as Guillermo del Toro.

### Grammar

Core grammar from GCSE is revised and consolidated and more advanced structures are introduced to enable students to express themselves well over the wide range of topics contained in this course.

### Individual Research Project

Students choose a topic of personal interest to themselves relating to a Spanish-speaking country and do their own research on it which they then present as part of their Speaking Exam.

### Exams

There are three exams, and they are taken at the end of Year 13.

Paper 1 is Listening, Reading, and Writing;

Paper 2 is Writing (on your two texts, or film + text);

Paper 3 is Speaking (on your Individual Research Project plus one of the topics from the list above).

## **3.The Hispanic World**

Here is a short explanation of why so much of the world speaks Spanish ...

***“In fourteen hundred and ninety-two Columbus sailed the ocean blue”.***

Christopher Columbus (or Cristóbal Colón in Spanish) was not in fact Spanish, but Italian, but, as his voyages were funded by the Spanish “Reyes Católicos” (Queen Isabella I of Castille and her husband King Ferdinand II of Aragon), the New World that he reached was mostly claimed for Spain. However, he did not set out to discover a New World; he believed the new scientific theory that the Earth was round, and he was hoping to get to the spice and silk riches of the Far East by discovering a new route “round the back” of the world and thus open up a lucrative new trade route for Spain. However, no-one knew for certain what lay across the Western Sea (Atlantic Ocean). He must have had great faith in his vision to set sail, and the crews of his three ships must have had great faith in him because they really were sailing into the unknown! Would they just sail and sail until their food and water ran out and they died? Or would they just drop off the edge of the world?! (Many still believed the Earth was flat). In fact, on 12th October 1492 (three months after setting off) they finally reached land (a small Caribbean Island) and shortly afterwards a larger island that Columbus named Hispaniola (today half Haiti and half the Dominican Republic) - his men had been right to trust him! Gradually over the four voyages that he made to the New World, he claimed for the Spanish crown much of Central and South America, and gold and jewels from these new lands flowed back to Spain, making it for a time the richest country in the world. It is unclear whether Columbus ever realised that he had discovered a whole new land mass or whether he still believed that he had indeed fulfilled his original vision of reaching the Far East by going west.

## **History Task**

*Do some research and write IN YOUR OWN WORDS (approx. 200, English or Spanish) about one of the following people from Spanish and South American history:*

**El Cid / Isabel I de Castilla / Santa Teresa de Ávila / Felipe II / Simón Bolívar / General Franco / Fidel Castro**

**Include:**

- 1. Brief biographical details;**
- 2. A brief description of their physical appearance and character;**
- 3. Why they are famous;**
- 4. Your opinion of this historical person.**

## **Geography Task**

*Now do a similar task for geography. Do some research on one of these Spanish-speaking countries and write on it, again IN YOUR OWN WORDS (approx. 200, English or Spanish):*

**Argentina / Chile / Colombia / Cuba / Ecuador / Mexico / Peru / Spain / Venezuela.**

**Include:**

- 1. The population of the country and of its capital city;**
- 2. Its principal industries / exports / sources of wealth;**
- 3. Its principal tourist attractions;**
- 4. Whether you would like to visit this country and why/why not.**

*If you enjoy doing the above History and Geography tasks, do research on more than one of the people / countries.*

## **4.Current Affairs**

Keeping up with current affairs in the countries whose language you are studying is very important at A Level. In Spanish this is both particularly interesting and particularly challenging as there are so many countries that speak Spanish! A very good source is the website of one of Spain's most popular newspapers: El País. The website is <https://elpais.com/>

It gives headlines and short summaries of news items for free. You would have to subscribe to get the full versions of articles, but at this stage you don't need this. At the top of the page, you can click to change the headlines from the edition for Spain to its edition with a South American focus and there is also a USA edition in English (choose ESP / AME / USA). The different editions are not translations of each other; they each focus on news from a different perspective, but there is a lot of crossover.

### Translation and Comparison of Headlines

Click between the Spanish, South American and USA editions of the online newspaper on the same day.

1. Translate the main headlines in the editions for Spain and South America into English.
2. Compare the headlines in the three editions. Are they about the same news story or different news stories? If different, why do you think they are different?

### More Detailed Translation

Now select an article from the edition for Spain or South America that is also covered in the USA English edition.

5. Try to translate the Spanish article into English. You can use the article in English to help you. The English article probably won't be a direct translation, but it will help you to understand the context and some of the relevant vocabulary.
6. Say why you chose this article and whether you find it interesting.

### Current Affairs Listening Tasks

#### Radio televisión española "Telediario en cuatro minutos"

Go to the website of the main Spanish public broadcaster rtve.es and click on "Noticias" and then Telediario en 4' (= News in 4 minutes). This news programme is broadcast three times a day and in fact lasts about 54 minutes, but the summary is given in the first four minutes. Watch and listen to a summary twice a week and each time listen to the summary three times. There is a transcript on the right of the screen to help you, though it is not exactly what you hear.

#### News in Slow Spanish

The rtve suggestion above is very fast (it is aimed at Spanish people). For something slower, aimed at foreign students, try the News in Slow Spanish website: [www.newsinslowspanish.com](http://www.newsinslowspanish.com)

Click on the "News" section and then choose from Intermediate clips on World News & Politics, Science & Technology or Arts & Culture. You get a short clip in very slow, clear Spanish plus an exact transcript. You don't get very much of each news story for free but there are many stories to choose from so there is a lot of material. As above, listen to a clip three times.

## 5. Literature

You never forget the A Level texts that you study and there are some excellent ones on the AQA list. You will either study two texts, or one text and one film. Here are some of the texts on the current AQA list:

**"La Casa de Bernarda Alba"** ("The House of Bernarda Alba"), a play by Federico García Lorca set in early twentieth century rural Andalucía in which an authoritarian mother, obsessed by what the neighbours think, tries to impose strict mourning on her five daughters. But she can only control

outward appearances, not the emotions and passions that lie under the surface and which become harder and harder to repress.

***“Como agua para chocolate”*** (“Like Water for Chocolate”) a novel by Laura Esquivel and another tale about an authoritarian mother, this time set in nineteenth century rural Mexico. Tita, the youngest daughter, cannot choose her own life as her mother expects her to be her carer into old age, but Tita is in love and, with no outlet for her feelings, she puts all her emotions into her cooking with sometimes (literally) magical results!

***“La Casa de los espíritus”*** (“The House of the Spirits”), a novel by the Chilean author Isabel Allende. It is a brilliant family saga spanning four generations which combines elements of magic with the often brutal reality of twentieth century Chile.

***“Crónica de una muerte anunciada”*** (“Chronicle of a death foretold”), a novel by Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez. The novel opens with the reader being told the ending, that Santiago Nasar is going to be killed, and then cleverly backtracks through the day’s events that lead up to this.

***“La Sombra del viento”*** (“The Shadow of the Wind”), a novel by Carlos Ruiz Zafón set in Barcelona after the Spanish Civil War. This is a book for people who love books as books lie at its heart, and in particular one special book. However, it is also a book for mystery-lovers and by the end you will also have fallen in love with Barcelona!

### Literature Task

**Try to obtain one of the above novels / plays in English and read it or perhaps read something else by one of the above authors, again in English translation at this stage.**

**Write a paragraph in English or Spanish saying whether you liked it and why/why not.  
If you are a native speaker, you can read the original Spanish texts straight away.**

## 6. Spanish and Latin American Cinema

As stated above in the Course Content section, for the Paper 2 Writing paper you can write on two texts, or one text and one film. There is an interesting selection of films on the AQA Specification; here are some of them:

***“Volver”*** (“The Return”) directed by Pedro Almodóvar. Two sisters return to their old home village for the funeral of an elderly aunt, but when they go back to their lives in Madrid one finds herself having to deal with a shock from the past while the other is confronted with a shock in the present. Colourful, crazy, funny and deeply moving, this film has all the hallmarks of a typical Almodóvar masterpiece and stars two of his all-time favourite actresses, Carmen Maura and Penélope Cruz.

***“El Laberinto del Fauno”*** (“Pan’s Labyrinth”) directed by Guillermo Del Toro and set shortly after the Spanish Civil War. Franco’s forces are trying to hunt down a group of Republican fighters who are hiding out in a wood. A young girl called Ofelia is brought into this violent world but finds another one too, inhabited by strange and sometimes terrifying mythical creatures. Can she find the courage to follow the quest in the mythical world in order to help those she loves in the real world?

***“Ocho apellidos vascos”*** (“Spanish Affair”) directed by Emilio Martínez-Lázaro. A hugely successful Spanish comedy which plays on regional prejudices. Rafael from Andalucía in the sunny south of Spain follows Amaia, the girl he likes, to the northern Basque Country, where, through a series of

misunderstandings, he ends up having to pretend to be a Basque native (with eight surnames!) despite his negative preconceptions about the region.

Not on the syllabus, but another film that you might like is *“Diarios de Motocicleta”*, which tells the true story of the year-long road trip around South America that the young Che Guevara made with his best friend. The suffering, oppression and injustice that they encountered influenced the political thinking of this young revolutionary.

### **Cinema Task**

**Try to watch one of the above films.**

- 1. Who is your favourite character and why? (Write a paragraph in Spanish).**
- 2. Make a list of some of the new vocabulary that you have learnt from watching this film.**

### **Grammar**

Having a very good knowledge of Spanish grammar is essential at A Level and you already have many notes and resources from your GCSE course. All GCSE grammar needs to be revised for A Level and thus this information is a great starting point.

If you want something more detailed that will help you all the way through your two years of A Level study, buy a copy of Schaum’s Spanish Grammar and start to work through the exercises in it (there are answers at the back so you can check your progress).

### **Grammar Tasks**

- **Revise all GCSE grammar notes.**
- **Buy a copy of Schaum’s Spanish Grammar and start working through it.**
- **Use Linguascope’s “Conjugation Station”. Ask a member of the Cardinal Wiseman MFL department for the login details.**

## **7. Further Study and Links**

Here is a reminder of websites mentioned earlier in this booklet

<https://elpais.com/>

[www.newsinslowspanish.com](http://www.newsinslowspanish.com)

<https://www.rtve.es/>

[www.linguascope.com](http://www.linguascope.com)

There is also of course the AQA website itself [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)

For the history and geography research, Wikipedia is the easiest resource. For the Spanish version of articles, search on wikipedia.es

Finally, there is music, which is a great way of learning a language in an enjoyable way. You may like Colombian superstar singer Juanes or something more traditional, such as songs by the influential Chilean folk singer Violeta Parra. However, probably you will find your own Spanish music that you like as the whole world is dancing to a Latin American beat! Try to study the lyrics to make sense of the songs and to learn more vocabulary.

***Thus, lots to keep you busy and interested in preparation for Spanish A Level! Even if you are not sure that you would like to do the A level, it would be good to follow some of these suggestions in order to keep your Spanish going. It is a great skill to have and you don't want to lose it!***

***If you have any questions about the A Level course, ask Mrs Bell or Ms Pont.***