



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (022)

TEXT: *Cuentos de Muerte y de Sangre*

AUTHOR: Ricardo Güiraldes

EDITOR: Stockcero.

1. Overview for Instructors

Ricardo Güiraldes (1886–1927)—poet, short-story writer, and novelist—is one of the central figures of **Argentine criollismo**, alongside Rómulo Gallegos, José Eustasio Rivera, Horacio Quiroga, and Benito Lynch.

In **Cuentos de muerte y de sangre** (1915), his first book of short stories, Güiraldes:

- Explores **gaucho life, violence, honor, and frontier justice**.
- Experiments with **narrative voice and tone**, moving from stark realism to grotesque humor and spiritual allegory.
- Blends a deeply loved **local reality (la pampa, el arrabal)** with **European literary models** and post–World War I sensibilities.

The volume is divided into three sections:

Cuentos de muerte y de sangre

– Brief, intense stories of duels, ambushes, revenge, and everyday cruelty in rural settings.

Aventuras grotescas

– Ironic, often urban tales that border on the absurd and satirical.

Trilogía cristiana

– Allegorical pieces on guilt, temptation, penance, and sanctity.

This collection is a natural companion to **Don Segundo Sombra** and to units on **gauchesca / criollismo, violence, masculinity, and early 20th-century Argentine narrative**.

2. Why This Text Works in the Classroom

Short, high-impact stories

Many narratives are only a few pages long but contain strong plot turns and striking images—ideal for close reading and in-class discussion.

Multiple tones

From stark fatalism (“Facundo”, “El Zurdo”, “Nocturno”) to grotesque humor (“Arrabalera”, “La donna è mobile”) and spiritual allegory (“Güelélé”, “San Antonio”).

Rich for thematic units

Enables focused modules on:

- Violence and honor in the pampas.
- The grotesque and black humor.
- Catholic imagery and moral allegory.
- Modernization, land, and the “old vs. new” estancia (“La estancia vieja / La estancia nueva”).

Language and style

Güiraldes experiments with:

- Colloquial gaucho speech and regionalisms.
- Highly crafted narrative rhythm.
- Shifts from realist detail to symbolic or visionary episodes.



The Stockcero Guarantee

SpanishBookPress Editions.

Printed in the USA. Never backlisted. Always available.

Copyright © 2025 Stockcero, Inc

3785 N.W. 82nd Avenue, Suite 302, Miami, FL 33166, USA

- **Suggested course contexts:**
 - Latin American Short Fiction
 - Argentine Literature: From Gauchesca to Criollismo
 - Violence and Masculinity in Hispanic Narrative
 - Religion, Allegory, and the Fantastic in 20th-Century Latin America

3. Suggested Reading Sequences

A. Violence, honor, and frontier justice

- **Core stories:**
 - «Facundo»
 - «El Zurdo»
 - «Justo José»
 - «El capitán Funes»
 - «Venganza»
- **Discussion angles:**
- **How are honor codes articulated and enforced?**
- **To what extent is violence portrayed as:**
 - Personal temperament.
 - Social norm.
 - Legacy of civil wars and caudillismo?
- **In «Justo José» and «El capitán Funes», how do anecdote and oral storytelling shape our understanding of historical figures and episodes?**
- **Classroom activity:**

Build a “map of violence” for each story: Who initiates it? Why? How is it judged (if at all) by the narrator and by the characters?

B. Everyday cruelty and fatalism

- **Core stories:**
 - «Puchero de soldado»
 - «De mala bebida»
 - «El remanso»
 - «De un cuento conocido»
 - «La deuda mutua»
 - «Comasión»
- **Focus:**
 - How do these stories present **random or banal cruelty** (e.g., “para que críes pelo” in «Puchero de soldado»)?
 - Where do we see attempts at **compassion** or **reparation** («La deuda mutua») and where do they fail?
- **Questions:**
 - What does “justice” look like in these stories?
 - How do narrative distance and tone (ironic, resigned, outraged) shape your response?



The Stockcero Guarantee
SpanishBookPress Editions.
Printed in the USA. Never backlisted. Always available.

C. The grotesque and black humor

- **Core section: Aventuras grotescas**

- «Arrabalera»
- «Máscaras»
- «Ferroviaria»
- «Sexto»

- **Teaching ideas:**

Identify the elements that make these stories “grotesque”:

Exaggeration of bodies or situations.

Collision between romantic clichés and crude realities.

Public humiliation or slapstick violence.

How does Güiraldes parody:

Sentimental love plots (“él, un asno paquetito... ella, un paquetito de asnerías sentimentales”).

Urban modernity (train, electric light, café).

Conventions of the confessional or moral tale («Sexto»).

- **Possible assignment:**

Ask students to rewrite the plot of «Arrabalera» or «Ferroviaria» in a strictly realist, non-ironic tone and reflect on what is lost.

D. Spiritual allegory and moral struggle

- **Core section: Trilogía cristiana**

- «El juicio de Dios»
- «Güelé»
- «San Antonio»

- **Angles:**

«El juicio de Dios»:

A satirical “celestial trial” of modern humanity, philosophers, poets, doctors, and believers.

How does the piece critique institutional religion and “rebaño” mentality?

«Güelé»:

Conversion of a violent cacique who reenacts a Christ-like act of self-sacrifice in the pampa.

Themes of guilt, expiation, and the possibility (or impossibility) of redemption.

«San Antonio»:

Monastic asceticism, sexual temptation, and self-flagellation.

How does the story navigate the line between mystical experience and bodily obsession?

- **Discussion questions:**

How do these texts reuse Catholic imagery in a modern, often ambivalent way?

Where do you see tension between **institutional** vs. **personal** spirituality?



The Stockcero Guarantee

SpanishBookPress Editions.

Printed in the USA. Never backlisted. Always available.

4. Sample Discussion Questions

You can adapt these for in-class discussion, online forums, or short written responses.

Pampa as moral landscape

In stories like «Facundo», «El Zurdo», «El remanso», and «La estancia vieja / La estancia nueva», how does the physical environment (pampa, river, storm, drought) reflect or shape the characters' moral choices?

Narrators and orality

Several stories are explicitly told by a character (e.g., Gonzalo in «El capitán Funes», Don Segundo in «Al rescoldo»).

How does this oral-tale frame affect credibility and tone?

What kind of community or listening situation is imagined?

Gender and cruelty

In «La donna è mobile» and «Arrabalera», how are women represented?

How do humor and cruelty interact in these portrayals?

How might you read these stories critically in a contemporary classroom while still analyzing their technique?

Religion and ambiguity

In «Güelé» and «San Antonio», is Güiraldes ultimately affirming Christian values, questioning them, or both?

What is the role of the body (pain, exhaustion, desire) in spiritual experience?

Title and thematic unity

Considering the entire volume, why “Cuentos de muerte y de sangre”?

Where do you see “death” and “blood” operating literally, and where metaphorically (family bonds, debts, allegiances)?

5. Short Written Assignments

Close reading (2–3 pages)

Choose a single story (or a section of a longer one) and analyze:

How Güiraldes builds tension (pacing, withholding information, point of view).

The role of descriptive detail (landscape, gestures, objects—e.g., the cards in «Facundo», the well in «El pozo»).

How the ending re-frames what came before (twist, moral reflection, brutal closure).

Comparative essay (4–5 pages)

Compare one of Güiraldes's rural stories with:

A story by Horacio Quiroga, or

A regionalist / criollista text from another country.

Possible topics:

Different representations of rural violence and honor.

The narrator's stance toward the rural world (nostalgic, critical, ironic).

How modern literary techniques (framing, interiority, allegory) modify “traditional” materials.

Creative + critical task

Ask students to write a short “gaucho” or “grotesque urban” sketch (2–3 pages) inspired by Güiraldes's tone:

Use first-person oral narration.

Include at least one moment of abrupt or unsettling violence or humor.

Afterward, in 1–2 pages, reflect on what was hardest to imitate in his style.



The Stockcero Guarantee

SpanishBookPress Editions.

Printed in the USA. Never backlisted. Always available.

6. Assessment Ideas

Reading journals

- Track all instances of honor-related language (e.g., “maula”, “macho”, “valiente”, “sonso”).
- Note shifts in tone within a story (serious → humorous; realistic → allegorical).
- Record one sentence per reading that “sounds” especially Güiraldesque and explain why.

Group work

Each group presents on one section of the book (Muerte y sangre / Aventuras grotescas / Trilogía cristiana):

- Summarize key stories.
- Identify dominant themes and stylistic traits.
- Prepare 2–3 discussion questions for the class.

Exam-style prompts

- “Analyze how Güiraldes uses short narrative forms to explore the relationship between violence and morality in early 20th-century Argentina.”
- “Discuss the role of humor and grotesque exaggeration in at least two stories from *Aventuras grotescas*.”

Explore the “Short Fiction for the Hispanic Literature Classroom” Collection:

This volume is part of our curated short-fiction series designed for university courses in Hispanic literature, women’s writing, and the fantastic, alongside titles such as *El viejo, el asesino, yo, y otros cuentos* (Ena Lucía Portela), *Feiguele y Otras Mujeres* (Cecilia Absatz), *Cuentos de La Habana Elegante* (Ramón Meza et al.), *Cuentos de Muerte y de Sangre* (Ricardo Güiraldes), and *Tradiciones Peruanas (las más cortas)* (Ricardo Palma).

[Browse Collection](#)

Interested in adopting this text for your course?

[Request an Evaluation Copy](#)
or ~~Error! Bookmark not defined.~~

[Browse our Catalog](#)



The Stockcero Guarantee

SpanishBookPress Editions.

Printed in the USA. Never backlisted. Always available.

Copyright © 2025 Stockcero, Inc
3785 N.W. 82nd Avenue, Suite 302, Miami, FL 33166, USA