



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (030)

TEXT: *Pepita Jiménez* (1874)

AUTHOR: Juan Valera

EDITOR: Stockcero Edition

PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

(Based on the work's critical reception and Valera's literary philosophy)

1. JUAN VALERA AND HIS LITERARY VISION:

Authorial Profile:

Juan Valera y Alcalá Galiano (1824-1905) led a diverse life as a writer, diplomat, politician, poet, and critic. *Pepita Jiménez* is widely considered his masterpiece.

Search for the Ideal:

Valera's work consistently explores the search for the ideal in aesthetics and philosophy, evident in *Pepita Jiménez* through its characters' spiritual and emotional journeys.

The Power of the "Unreal":

Valera believed in the novel as a space for "fictional history" where "the extraordinary, the ideal, the rare, and the singular intervene," allowing for imaginative depth beyond common occurrences.

2. A PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL OF INNER CONFLICT:

Central Protagonist:

Luis de Vargas, a young seminarian with a fervent mystical vocation, is the novel's core. His education by his uncle, the dean, shapes his spiritual aspirations.

Clash of Vocations:

The narrative meticulously details Luis's internal struggle between his spiritual calling and the powerful, earthly attraction he feels for Pepita Jiménez, the young widow his father intends to marry.

Epistolary Form:

The first part of the novel, narrated through Luis's letters to his uncle, offers deep and precise insight into his psychological battle, making it a quintessential psychological novel.

3. SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS THEMES:

Love and Religiosity:

The novel is deeply immersed in themes of love and religiosity, exploring how these forces intersect and conflict within individuals and society.

Hypocrisy and Sincerity:

While presenting a seemingly simple plot, the work subtly examines the genuine convictions and unspoken doubts prevalent in a society grappling with changing moral landscapes.



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Authorial Presence:

- Valera, reflecting a 19th-century narrative style, frequently interjects his own opinions, becoming an active part of the narration and guiding the reader through the philosophical underpinnings of his story.

PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Spiritual vs. Earthly Love:

Analyze the conflict between spiritual devotion and romantic love as experienced by Luis de Vargas. How does Valera portray these two forces?

Psychological Realism:

Discuss how *Pepita Jiménez* functions as a psychological novel. How does Valera reveal Luis's inner thoughts and struggles?

The Role of Idealism:

Explore Valera's assertion about the "power of the unreal" in novel writing. How does *Pepita Jiménez*, despite its seemingly simple plot, incorporate "the extraordinary, the ideal, the rare, and the singular"?

Pepita Jiménez as a Character:

Examine Pepita's character. Is she merely an object of desire, or does she possess agency and depth that challenge traditional female roles?

Author's Narrative Voice:

Discuss Valera's decision to include his own opinions and reflections within the narrative. How does this style impact the reader's interpretation of the story and its themes?

Moral Dilemmas:

What moral dilemmas do the characters face, and how do they resolve (or fail to resolve) them? Consider the societal expectations versus personal desires.

PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Valera, Juan.** *Pepita Jiménez*. Stockcero.
- Brown, Donald F.** *The Catholic Naturalism of Pardo Bazán*. University of North Carolina Press, 1957. (Though focused on Pardo Bazán, relevant for 19th-century Spanish Catholicism and naturalism).
- Pérez Galdós, Benito.** (For context on 19th-century Spanish novel debates).
- Scanlon, Geraldine.** *Modernism and the Literature of Spanish American Independence*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. (For broader literary context of the period).



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PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

1. Who is the author of *Pepita Jiménez*?

- A) Benito Pérez Galdós
- B) Leopoldo Alas (Clarín)
- C) Juan Valera
- D) Fernán Caballero

Correct Answer: C

2. The protagonist, Luis de Vargas, is an aspiring:

- A) Lawyer
- B) Missionary priest
- C) Soldier
- D) Painter

Correct Answer: B

3. What is the central conflict in *Pepita Jiménez*?

- A) A political dispute
- B) A financial struggle
- C) The clash between spiritual vocation and earthly love
- D) A family feud

Correct Answer: C

4. The first part of the novel is primarily narrated through:

- A) A third-person omniscient narrator
- B) Pepita Jiménez's diary entries
- C) Luis de Vargas's letters to his uncle
- D) Dialogues between characters

Correct Answer: C

5. What literary genre is *Pepita Jiménez* a prime example of, due to its focus on inner thought and feelings?

- A) Epic poetry
- B) Adventure novel
- C) Psychological novel
- D) Historical romance

Correct Answer: C

Explore the “19th Century Spanish Novel: Realism & Naturalism”: This book is part of our comprehensive collection on the foundational works that captured the social fabric and individual struggles of Spain's 19th century through its literature: *La Regenta* (Clarín); *Doña Perfecta* (Benito Pérez Galdós); *Pepita Jiménez* (Juan Valera); *Sotileza* (José M. de Pereda); *La gaviota* (Fernán Caballero); and *Blasones y Talegas* (José M. de Pereda).

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