



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (035)

TEXT: *Doña Perfecta* (1876)

AUTHOR: José Benito Pérez Galdós

EDITOR: Stockcero Edition

PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

(Based on historical literary debates and critical interpretation of the work)

1. THE REALISM VS. IDEALISM DEBATE:

Literary Climate: In the mid-1870s, Spanish literary circles were fiercely debating the merits of realism (as seen in Fernán Caballero's *La gaviota*) against idealism (exemplified by Valera's *Pepita Jiménez* and Alarcón's *El sombrero de tres picos*).

Galdós's Commission: Commissioned to write a realist novel for *Revista de España*, Galdós, despite his ongoing *Episodios Nacionales*, crafted *Doña Perfecta* as a direct response to this debate, championing the realist portrayal of contemporary Spain.

2. ORBAJOSA AS A MICROCOSM OF SPAIN:

- Symbolic Setting:** Orbajosa, a fictional provincial town, serves as a powerful microcosm of Spanish society in the second half of the 19th century. It lacks cultural vitality and economic dynamism, its social life dominated by traditional morality and *tertulias*.
- Core Conflict:** The novel's central antithesis is between the fervent traditionalism and isolation of Orbajosa (and its inhabitants) and the progressive, liberal ideas represented by the young protagonist, Pepe Rey, arriving from Madrid.

3. RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY AND SOCIAL CRITICISM:

- Oppressive Morality:** *Doña Perfecta* highlights the pervasive hypocrisy fueled by an oppressive moral code prevalent in Galdós's Spain. Characters are often forced to maintain a public façade that contradicts their true motives and actions.
- Ironical Character Naming:** Galdós employs ironical names, such as Doña Perfecta herself (far from perfect) and Don Inocencio (anything but innocent), to underscore the pretense and moral corruption beneath the surface of provincial society.



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PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Religion and Fanaticism:

Discuss the role of religion in Orbajosa. Does Galdós criticize faith itself, or the fanatical interpretation and weaponization of it by characters like Doña Perfecta and Don Inocencio?

Modernity vs. Tradition:

Analyze the clash between Pepe Rey's liberal, modern ideals and Orbajosa's entrenched conservatism. How does this conflict manifest, and what are its tragic consequences?

Hypocrisy and Appearance:

Examine the theme of hypocrisy among the characters. How do they present themselves to the world versus their true intentions and actions? Provide examples.

Character Symbolism:

Discuss how specific characters (Doña Perfecta, Pepe Rey, Don Inocencio, Rosario) symbolize broader societal forces or ideas in 19th-century Spain.

The Provincial Setting:

How does the isolated, provincial setting of Orbajosa contribute to the novel's themes and the characters' fates? Could this story take place in a different environment?

PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- **Galdós, Benito Pérez.** *Doña Perfecta*. Stockcero.
- **Bly, Peter A.** *Galdós's Novel of the Historical Imagination*. Liverpool University Press, 2003.
- **Gilman, Stephen.** *Galdós and the Art of the European Novel: 1867-1887*. Princeton University Press, 1981.
- **Ribbans, Geoffrey.** *Pérez Galdós: "Doña Perfecta."* Grant & Cutler, 1990.



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PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

1. Who is the author of *Doña Perfecta*?

- A) Juan Valera
- B) José María de Pereda
- C) Benito Pérez Galdós
- D) Fernán Caballero

Correct Answer: C

2. What is the name of the provincial town where the novel is set?

- A) Vetusta
- B) Orbajosa
- C) Comillas
- D) Ronda

Correct Answer: B

3. What does Pepe Rey represent in the conflict with Orbajosa?

- A) Traditional values
- B) Liberal and modern ideas
- C) Religious fanaticism
- D) Rural simplicity

Correct Answer: B

4. Which character commissions Galdós to write a realist novel to counter idealistic works?

- A) Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo
- B) Fernando León y Castillo
- C) Juan Valera
- D) Himself, Galdós

Correct Answer: B

5. What literary movement is *Doña Perfecta* a prime example of in Spanish literature?

- A) Romanticism
- B) Naturalism
- C) Realism
- D) Modernism

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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