



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (041)

TEXT: *La gran aldea*

AUTHOR: Lucio V. López

EDITOR: [Stockcero Edition based on original texts and comparative notes]

PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

AUTHOR, GENEALOGY, AND GENERATION OF 1880

Intellectual lineage:

Lucio Vicente López (1848–1894) was grandson of **Vicente López y Planes** (author of the Argentine national anthem) and son of **Vicente Fidel López** (historian and politician). This lineage meant both a solid classical education and early immersion in politics.

Generation of 1880:

López is part of the so-called *Generación del 80*, a group of liberal elites who consolidated the national state, embraced export-led growth, and promoted European immigration. He wrote political articles in *El Nacional*, directed by Domingo F. Sarmiento, and later supported President Miguel Juárez Celman, a symbol of the era's optimism before the 1890 crisis.

"Beotic" Argentina:

From his vantage point, López characterized Argentine society as "beótica," suggesting that the pampas' fertility and easy wealth would more likely yield political mediocrity (like ancient Boeotia) than a new Athens, despite the country's economic promise. This tension between material progress and political imperfection underlies much of *La gran aldea*.

PLOT, FORM, AND SERIAL ORIGIN

Serial composition:

Published in 1884, *La gran aldea* was written rapidly as a **folletín** (newspaper serial), at the same desk where López prepared his polemical journalism. This explains some stylistic unevenness and occasional haste—yet also lends the novel immediacy and a close connection to contemporary debates.

Romantic plot, didactic intent:

The narrative follows a **romantic, morally edifying plot**, in keeping with the taste of the time: vice and malice (whether attached to repulsive ugliness or seductive beauty) are ultimately punished. Virtuous characters suffer but are vindicated. This moral architecture aligns with 19th-century didactic fiction, where literature is expected to instruct as well as entertain.

Costumbrista fresco:

Beyond the plot, the novel functions as a **costumbrista fresco** of Buenos Aires society, depicting customs, speech, social rituals, and urban spaces. The back cover notes that many of these traits "still persist for the observant eye," making the text valuable for cultural as well as literary study.



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

“NOVELA DE CLAVE” AND POLITICAL PORTRAITURE

Key-novel technique:

La gran aldea is explicitly described as a **novela de clave**, where fictional characters thinly veil real political figures. For example:

Don Buenaventura → Bartolomé Mitre

Bonifacio de las Vueltas → Bernardo de Irigoyen

Don Benito → Juan Carlos Gómez, the Uruguayan liberal journalist who opposed Mitre over the Paraguayan War

Reading the keys:

Recognizing these correspondences allows students to see how López comments on contemporary politics through narrative. The novel offers a coded critique of alliances, rivalries, and ideological conflicts in post-Rosas Argentina.

From Rosas to “La gran aldea”:

The story covers roughly 30 years after the fall of Rosas, depicting how Buenos Aires grows from a provincial town into a “great village”—simultaneously modern and provincial, sophisticated and parochial.

URBAN REALISM AND SOCIAL CRITIQUE

Buenos Aires as “great village”:

The title itself is ironic: the “great village” (*gran aldea*) captures the ambiguity of a capital city that aspires to cosmopolitanism yet remains deeply marked by provincial habits, clientelism, and elite cliques. The novel examines:

- **Social climbing and nouveau riche behavior**
- **Political corruption and opportunism**
- **The persistence of old loyalties and resentments under a modernizing surface**

Balancing optimism and lucidity:

Though López shared much of his generation’s optimism about progress (Juárez Celman as paradigm), he also saw the need for a “**movimiento civil regenerador**”—a civic regeneration that he perceived in Leandro Alem’s **Unión Cívica**. The novel’s critical eye anticipates later disillusionments with the oligarchic order and the limits of “order and progress” slogans.

Link to the “Great Debate”:

Alongside Sarmiento’s *Facundo*, Hernández’s *Martín Fierro*, and Echeverría’s *El matadero*, *La gran aldea* expands the civilization/barbarism debate into the realm of the modern city. If *Facundo* opposes rural barbarism and urban civilization, López complicates this dichotomy by showing how “barbarism” (in the sense of moral coarseness, political cynicism) can flourish in an apparently civilized urban environment.



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

PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

From Rosas to the Generation of 1880

How does *La gran aldea* depict the evolution of Buenos Aires from the fall of Rosas to the 1880s? Which continuities and ruptures does the novel emphasize in terms of political culture, social hierarchy, and everyday life?

Urban Civilization or Urban Barbarism?

In what ways does the novel confirm or challenge Sarmiento's association of the city with "civilization"? Identify scenes or characters that reveal "barbaric" traits (corruption, cruelty, ignorance) within ostensibly refined urban circles.

Key-Reading: Fiction vs. Historical Figures

Choose one or two "clave" characters (Don Buenaventura / Mitre, Bonifacio de las Vueltas / Irigoyen, Don Benito / Gómez). How do their fictional portrayals comment on their real-life counterparts' political roles, virtues, or flaws?

Romantic Plot and Moral Didacticism

How does the romantic, morally edifying plot structure shape readers' responses to characters? Does the clear moral economy (vice punished, virtue rewarded) limit the complexity of the novel, or does it work in tension with more ambivalent social observations?

Beotia vs. Athens: National Self-Image

Discuss López's "beótica" characterization of Argentina. What does this metaphor suggest about his expectations for the country and his generation? How does this irony interact with the broader 19th-century tendency to imagine Buenos Aires as a budding European capital?

La gran aldea in the Civilización/Barbarie Tradition

Place the novel in dialogue with at least one of the following: *Facundo*, *Martín Fierro*, *El matadero*, *En la sangre*, or *Sin rumbo*. How does *La gran aldea* complement or contradict their visions of the nation, its elites, and its "people"?

PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary text

- López, Lucio V. *La gran aldea*. (Various Argentine editions; often with prologues by modern critics.)

Historical and critical studies (suggested)

- Shumway, Nicolas. *The Invention of Argentina*. (Chapters on the Generation of 1837 and 1880, Mitre, Sarmiento, and liberal nation-building.)
- Sarlo, Beatriz. *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920–1930* (for background on Buenos Aires as cultural project; useful for comparative work).
- Romero, José Luis. *Las ideas políticas en la Argentina*.
- Viñas, David. *Literatura argentina y realidad política*.
- Ramos, Julio. *Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina*.
- Altamirano, Carlos & Sarlo, Beatriz. Essays on the Generation of 1880 and liberal elites.



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

PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

1. **What historical period does *La gran aldea* primarily portray?**
A) Colonial Buenos Aires under the viceroyalty
B) The decades following the fall of Rosas, up to the Generation of 1880
C) The Peronist era
D) Post–World War II Argentina

Correct Answer: B

2. **How does *Lucio V. López* famously characterize Argentine society, according to the backcover?**
A) As a new Athens in the making
B) As “beótica,” shaped by easy wealth and political imperfections
C) As purely barbaric and irredeemable
D) As a perfect European transplant

Correct Answer: B

3. ***La gran aldea* is described as a “novela de clave” because:**
A) It is a detective story about stolen keys
B) It uses coded language that must be deciphered
C) Several fictional characters transparently represent real political figures under other names
D) It was printed with a secret key by the publisher

Correct Answer: C

4. **Which of the following best describes the relationship between plot and moral message in the novel?**
A) The plot is purely experimental with no moral implications.
B) The romantic plot is morally edifying: evil, whether ugly or seductively beautiful, is ultimately punished.
C) The novel rejects all moral judgments.
D) The plot focuses exclusively on military campaigns.

Correct Answer: B

5. **What is one of the main reasons *La gran aldea* remains valuable today, according to the backcover?**
A) Its strict adherence to classical unities
B) Its detailed costumbrista portrait of porteño society, highlighting traits still visible to the observant eye
C) Its complete absence of political commentary
D) Its pioneering use of science fiction elements

Correct Answer: B**

[Browse Collection](#)

Interested in adopting this text for your course?

[Request an Evaluation Copy](#)

or [Browse our Full 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