



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (068)

TEXT: *La bola*

AUTHOR: Emilio Rabasa

EDITOR: Luis Leal (Universidad de California Santa Bárbara)

PART 1: CRITICAL CONTEXT

(Based on Prof. Luis Leal's Introduction)

1. EMILIO RABASA: LAWYER, POLITICIAN, NOVELIST (1856-1930)

The Porfiriato Critic:

Rabasa was a prominent intellectual during the Porfiriato (late 19th - early 20th century). While he held political posts (governor, senator), his literary work, especially his five novels, offers a sharp critique of the political landscape.

The "Five Novels":

La bola (1887), *La gran ciencia* (1887), *El cuarto poder* (1888), *Moneda falsa* (1888), and *La guerra de tres años* (1891) are often seen as a cohesive series, united by their political theme and recurring characters.

2. PIONEER OF MEXICAN REALISM:

Spanish Influence:

Leal highlights that Rabasa's realism is more akin to Spanish authors like Galdós than to French realism. It incorporates elements from earlier Mexican novels like *El Periquillo Sarniento*.

Nuanced Reality:

Mexican realism, as Rabasa practices it, is never fully objective and often retains romantic elements, showing a nuanced perception of social reality.

3. "LA BOLA" AS SOCIAL CRITIQUE:

The "Bola" vs. The "Revolution":

The novel distinguishes between a mere "bola" (a local uprising driven by petty caudillos seeking power for personal gain) and a true "Revolution" (a movement for social change). *La bola* is a scathing indictment of the former.

Autobiographical Undertones:

Leal suggests *La bola* might be largely autobiographical, reflecting Rabasa's own experiences in small-town politics.

PART 2: CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPICS

THEME A: Political Satire & Local Power

Discussion: Analyze how Rabasa uses humor, irony, and satire to expose the flaws of Mexican society during the Porfiriato. How does the "struggle for power in a small town" (San Martín de las Piedras) serve as a microcosm for larger national issues?



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Character Archetypes: Discuss characters like Juan Quiñonez and Remedios. Do they represent specific societal roles or ideals?

THEME B: Narrative Techniques & Metafiction

Analysis: Leal points out Rabasa's innovative narrative techniques, such as the narrator directly addressing the reader and foreshadowing a sequel. How do these elements engage the reader?

Intertextuality: Discuss Rabasa's use of intertextuality (references to Virgil's *Bucolics*, *The Wandering Jew*, *The Three Musketeers*). How does this enrich the novel and demonstrate Rabasa's extensive cultural knowledge?

THEME C: Precursor to the Mexican Revolution Novel

Comparison: How does *La bola* (1887) foreshadow themes and styles found in later novels of the Mexican Revolution, such as Azuela's *Los de abajo* (1915)? Leal explicitly links Rabasa's description of a town's takeover to Azuela's.

Historical Context: Discuss the political climate of the Porfiriato as depicted by Rabasa. What are the key criticisms he levels against the caudillos and local power structures?

PART 3: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

1. Emilio Rabasa is primarily remembered for his contributions to which genre?

- A) Poetry
- B) Drama
- C) Political essays and novels
- D) Historical biographies

(Correct: C)

2. What distinguishes Rabasa's "realism" from European realism, according to Luis Leal?

- A) Its complete objectivity.
- B) The total absence of romantic elements.
- C) A less objective social perception and the presence of romantic elements.
- D) Its focus solely on urban settings.

(Correct: C)

3. What is the central theme of *La bola*?

- A) The importance of love in rural Mexico.
- B) The struggle for power among local caudillos in a small town.
- C) The economic development of Mexico during the Porfiriato.
- D) The daily life of farmers.

(Correct: B)

4. How does Rabasa use the concept of "metanarrative" in *La bola*?

- A) By avoiding any direct address to the reader.
- B) Through the narrator's digressions about his own person and memories.
- C) By presenting only objective facts without commentary.
- D) By incorporating poems within the narrative.

(Correct: B)



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5. How does Luis Leal describe the relationship between *La bola* and the Mexican Revolution of 1910?

- A) *La bola* is a direct continuation of the Revolution.
- B) *La bola* is a denunciation of the Revolution's ideals.
- C) *La bola* is a true precursor to the narrative of the Mexican Revolution.
- D) The two events are unrelated.

(Correct: C)

PART 4: CITATION GUIDE (Stockcero Edition)

Why cite this edition? This Stockcero edition (ISBN 978-987-1136-55-1) includes a critical introduction by Luis Leal, an authority on Mexican literature, providing essential context on Rabasa's pioneering role in Mexican realism and his astute political critique.

Sample Citation (MLA): Rabasa, Emilio. *La bola*. Edited by Luis Leal, Stockcero, 2006.

Explore the "Mexican Revolution & Beyond" Collection: This anthology is part of our comprehensive collection on Mexican literature, including *Los de abajo* (Azuela), *La bola* (Rabasa), and *El Zarco* (Altamirano).

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