



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (075)

TEXT: *Los de abajo*

AUTHOR: Mariano Azuela

EDITOR: Luis Leal (Universidad de California Santa Bárbara)

PART 1: CRITICAL CONTEXT

(Based on Prof. Luis Leal's Introduction)

1. THE AUTHOR: MARIANO AZUELA (1873-1952)

Physician and Novelist:

Azuela's life was defined by these two interests, bringing a keen, objective eye to his observations.

Political Disillusionment:

Initially a supporter of Madero, his experience as "Jefe Político" in Lagos de Moreno (1910) led to deep disillusionment with the political corruption and false promises of the Revolution. This fueled his decision to avoid direct politics, prioritizing independence and unbiased judgment.

Birth of a Classic:

While serving as a medical officer with Julián Medina's Villista forces (1914), Medina's war stories became the germ for *Los de abajo*. The novel was partly written in a hotel in El Paso, Texas, and serialized in *El Paso del Norte* newspaper (1915).

2. "LOS DE ARRIBA" VS. "LOS DE ABAJO":

Social Critique:

The title, taken from an earlier novel, refers to the poor and dispossessed who fight the Revolution. They are motivated by past injustices from "los de arriba" (caciques, hacendados, the "decent folk").

Circular Structure: The novel's action begins and ends in the Cañón de Juchipila, symbolizing the tragic futility of the Revolution: immense suffering leading back to the same social position, "below." This circularity is key to its lasting value.

3. THE NOVEL OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION:

Pioneer:

Los de abajo is considered the first modern Mexican novel of the Revolution, establishing a new literary current in Hispanic America.

Contrast with European Norms:

Azuela intentionally broke with European novelistic traditions, forging a uniquely Hispano-American narrative form.



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PART 2: CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPICS

THEME A: The Failure of the Revolution

Discussion:

Analyze Demetrio Macías's journey. What are his initial motivations? How do they change (or not change) as the Revolution progresses? Is his final act of defiance (throwing a pebble) an act of resignation or enduring spirit?

Characters: Examine other characters like Luis Cervantes (the intellectual opportunist) and Solís. Do any characters truly understand the Revolution's purpose?

THEME B: Nature as a Narrative Element

Analysis:

Prof. Leal contrasts Azuela's use of nature with Carlos Fuentes's description of Latin American novels where nature dominates. In *Los de abajo*, how does nature reflect the characters' emotions and foreshadow events? (e.g., Camila's tears mirrored by a dove, the black cloud over the sierra).

Technique:

Discuss how Azuela interweaves human actions with landscape descriptions to create balance and rhythm in the novel.

THEME C: Social Class and Injustice

Exploration:

How are "los de arriba" represented in the novel? What specific injustices drive the "de abajo" to fight?

The Cycle of Violence:

Does the novel suggest any way out of the cycle of exploitation and rebellion, or is it a pessimistic view of social change?



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PART 3: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

1. What was Mariano Azuela's primary profession besides being a novelist?

- A) Lawyer
- B) Priest
- C) Doctor
- D) Soldier

(Correct: C)

2. Where was *Los de abajo* first published?

- A) In a Mexican literary magazine.
- B) As a book in Mexico City.
- C) As a serial in a newspaper in El Paso, Texas.
- D) In a European literary journal.

(Correct: C)

3. The title "*Los de abajo*" primarily refers to:

- A) The federal soldiers fighting in the canyons.
- B) The poor and dispossessed people who joined the Revolution.
- C) The leaders of the Revolution.
- D) Those who did not participate in the conflict.

(Correct: B)

4. What unique structural element does *Los de abajo* use that Luis Leal highlights?

- A) A linear progression from beginning to end.
- B) A circular structure, returning to the starting point.
- C) Multiple narrators.
- D) A fragmented, non-chronological timeline.

(Correct: B)

5. How does Mariano Azuela's use of nature differ from what Carlos Fuentes describes in Latin American novels?

- A) Azuela's nature is a destructive force that crushes human will.
- B) In Azuela, nature serves as a backdrop, reflecting human emotions and actions.
- C) Azuela ignores nature completely, focusing solely on human conflict.
- D) Nature is the main protagonist in Azuela's novel.

(Correct: B)

PART 4: CITATION GUIDE (Stockcero Edition)

Why cite this edition? This Stockcero edition (ISBN 978-987-1136-62-9) features the critical introduction by Luis Leal, an authority on Mexican literature, providing invaluable context and analysis of Azuela's seminal work.

Sample Citation (MLA): Azuela, Mariano. *Los de abajo*. Edited by Luis Leal, Stockcero, 2007.

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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