



**STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (079)**

**TITLE:** *El tungsteno / Paco Yunque*

**AUTHOR:** César Vallejo

**EDITOR:** Flor María Rodríguez-Arenas

**ISBN:** 978-987-1136-67-4

**PUBLISHER:** Stockcero

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## I. OVERVIEW & SIGNIFICANCE

César Vallejo (1892-1938), a towering figure in 20th-century Hispano-American poetry, also made significant, though less critically examined, contributions to prose fiction. This volume unites two of his most powerful narrative works: *El tungsteno* (1931) and *Paco Yunque* (written c. 1931, published posthumously). Far from being secondary to his poetry, these texts complement and project Vallejo's unwavering ideological commitment and aesthetic vision of socially engaged art.

*El tungsteno* offers a stark, unflinching exposé of the brutal exploitation wrought by transnational mining corporations in the Peruvian Andes, illustrating how corruption permeates all levels of society. *Paco Yunque*, a deceptively simple story for children, provides a poignant and incisive critique of social inequality, racism, and the insidious ways in which patriarchal masculinity is constructed and reinforced within the education system. Edited by Flor María Rodríguez-Arenas, this critical edition contextualizes these works within Vallejo's Marxist convictions, highlighting their enduring relevance for understanding the socio-economic and cultural problems of early 20th-century Latin America.

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## II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES

This edition offers a vital lens through which to explore Vallejo's prose fiction, his ideological commitments, and the socio-cultural landscape of early 20th-century Peru.

### Vallejo's Ideological Commitment and the "Social Utility" of Literature:

Discuss Vallejo's trajectory from poet to committed artist, his embrace of Marxism, and his stance against "mariana" (false, aestheticist) literature. How does he conceive of the "revolutionary writer" as an active participant in social reality?

Analyze how *El tungsteno* and *Paco Yunque* embody Vallejo's assertion that literature should "restore to words their universal social content" and be a "useful thing for life."

Examine the influence of early 20th-century socialist and communist movements (Russian Revolution, RAPP) on Vallejo's prose, even as he critiqued certain aspects of Stalinist dogma.

### Corruption as the Thematic Core in *El tungsteno*:

Identify and analyze the various "typologies of corruption" (prevarication, bribery, extortion, illicit enrichment, abduction, rape, murder, impunity) meticulously depicted in *El tungsteno*.

Discuss how the "Mining Society" (representing the US-based Cerro de Pasco Copper Corporation and others) systematically employs corruption, in complicity with local Peruvian elites, military, and religious authorities, to exploit natural resources and human labor.

Analyze the pyramid of power and delegated authority within the corrupt system. How does this structure create a climate of impunity and dehumanization for the Indigenous and peasant communities?



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### Masculinity, Socialization, and Inequality in Paco Yunque:

Explore the story as a critique of the social construction of masculinity in Peruvian society, particularly within the upper classes. How do familial values (Dorian Grieve) and the school system reinforce a despotic, aggressive, and entitled male identity (Humberto Grieve)?

Discuss the role of the teacher. How does his "pusillanimity" and "accommodation" to power reproduce the social hierarchies and injustices within the classroom?

Analyze how the story demonstrates that many societal ills originate in the home and are institutionalized in the educational system, normalizing violence, discrimination, and exploitation.

Examine the intersectionality of class and race in the construction of identity and privilege (e.g., Humberto's "white" foreign background vs. Paco's Indigenous background).

### Narrative Strategies and Denunciation:

Analyze Vallejo's narrative voice in *El tungsteno*. How does this "impersonal" yet "judging" voice function to anchor the story in realism, expose corruption, and provoke "puntuales reacciones juzgadoras" in the reader?

Discuss the use of rhetorical questions and the implied narrator-reader relationship to create a sense of contingent truth and draw the reader into the unfolding social drama.

How does the novel's structure, presented in chapters of unequal length and focusing on different aspects of corruption, contribute to its overall message of denunciation?

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## III. ADVANCED DISCUSSION & RESEARCH PROMPTS

These prompts encourage deep engagement with the text, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary connections suitable for graduate-level seminars or research projects.

**Vallejo as a Prose Writer:** Compare and contrast Vallejo's prose style in *El tungsteno* and *Paco Yunque* with his poetic style. How do his literary intentions and ideological commitments manifest differently across these genres? What makes his prose unique?

**The "Chronology of Dispossession" (Anaya Franco):** Using the detailed historical context provided in the introduction (e.g., the activities of Peruvian Corporation, Cerro de Pasco Copper Corporation, Northern Peru Mining), analyze specific instances of exploitation depicted in *El tungsteno* and connect them to the broader history of foreign capital in Peru.

**The Politics of the "Indigenista" Novel:** How does *El tungsteno* position itself within the *indigenista* tradition? Compare its portrayal of Indigenous communities and their struggles with *Huasipungo* or *El mundo es ancho y ajeno*. What are the similarities and differences in their critiques of exploitation and their calls for social change?

**Childhood and Socialization as Sites of Ideological Reproduction:** In *Paco Yunque*, analyze how the classroom functions as a microcosm of Peruvian society. How are social hierarchies, power dynamics, and racial prejudices reproduced and internalized by children? Discuss the roles of the school and family in shaping these destructive patterns.

**Corruption as a Systemic Force:** Beyond individual acts of corruption, *El tungsteno* presents corruption as a deeply entrenched, systemic force. Discuss how this systemic corruption impacts not only the victims but also the perpetrators, eroding moral values and hindering national development.

**"Art for Propaganda" vs. "Art for Art's Sake":** Vallejo explicitly aligned himself with the idea of a utilitarian, revolutionary art. Discuss whether *El tungsteno* and *Paco Yunque* succeed as



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works of art *because* of their ideological commitment, or if their artistic merit can be analyzed independently.

**The Global Reach of Imperialism:** The novel frames the mining exploitation in Peru within the context of global events (WWI, US industrial demand for tungsten). Discuss how *El tungsteno* illustrates the interconnectedness of local exploitation and global economic and political forces.

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## IV. SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

This section complements the study of *El tungsteno / Paco Yunque*, providing avenues for deeper research.

### Primary Text:

- Vallejo, César. *El tungsteno / Paco Yunque*. Edited by Flor María Rodríguez-Arenas. Stockcero. (TK ORDER: 079)

### Key Secondary Scholarship (as referenced in the Introduction):

- **Abeyta, Aaron.** *The Cerro de Pasco Corporation and the Modernization of Peru*. (For context on mining corporations).
- **Anaya Franco, Eduardo.** "Cronología del despojo." *Perú, la República y los problemas de su tiempo*. 1979. (For historical data on foreign economic control).
- **Beverly, John.** *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory*. Duke University Press, 1999. (For revalorization of social novel).
- **Bruzual, Ramón.** *Vallejo: Poeta de la revolución*. Fondo Editorial de la UNMSM, 2005.
- **Castillo Ríos, Carlos.** *Vallejo, poeta y militante*. Tarea, 1974.
- **Clayton, Lawrence A.** *W. R. Grace & Co.: The History of a Business*. 1985.
- **Delgado Benites, César.** *César Vallejo: Biografía y obra*. Peisa, 1998.
- **Flores, Enrique.** *César Vallejo: Vida y obra*. Promoción Editorial Inca, 1972.
- **Giner, Salvador, et al.** *Diccionario de sociología*. Alianza, 1996. (For definitions of corruption, communism, etc.).
- **Kruijt, Dirk, and Menno Vellinga.** *The Political Economy of Mining in Peru*. 1995.
- **López Alfonso, Antonio.** *César Vallejo: El arte y la revolución*. Gredos, 1995.
- **Mallon, Florencia E.** *The Defense of Community in Peru's Central Highlands*. Princeton University Press, 1983.
- **Mayer, Dora.** *La conducta de la Compañía Cerro de Pasco*. (Primary source of critique).
- **Neale-Silva, Eduardo.** *César Vallejo en su fase comunista*. UNAM, 1975.
- **Puccinelli, Jorge.** *Vallejo: Una vida en la escritura*. FCE, 2001.
- **Rodríguez-Arenas, Flor María.** *Flor María Rodríguez-Arenas, editor of this edition*.
- **Thorp, Rosemary, and Geoffrey Bertram.** *Peru 1890-1977: Growth and Policy in an Open Economy*. 1978.

### Additional Resources:

- Studies on the Latin American *Novela de la Tierra* and Social Realism.
- Research on the history of mining exploitation and labor movements in Peru.
- Scholarship on Marxism and literature.
- Theories of masculinity and gender studies in Latin American contexts.



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