



## STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (111)

**TEXT:** *Trece cuentos del romanticismo español*

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**EDITOR:** Borja Rodríguez-Gutiérrez

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### PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

#### 1. THE OVERLOOKED SPANISH ROMANTIC SHORT STORY:

This anthology asserts that the Spanish romantic short story, despite being a precursor to a golden age of short fiction (Bécquer, Valera, Clarín, Pardo Bazán), has been largely unstudied. It seeks to define what makes these stories "romantic" and how they reflect their historical context.

The collection explores a wide array of themes and characters: from good and evil kings, tragic lovers, noble heroes and villains, to witches, ghosts, saints, and demons. Settings range from medieval castles and dark forests to the bustling streets of Madrid and remote villages, offering a rich tapestry of early 19th-century Spanish life and imagination.

#### 2. THE CHALLENGE OF DEFINING THE "SHORT STORY" (1800-1850):

During the first half of the 19th century in Spain, there was a significant "lack of genre consciousness" regarding short narrative forms. Terms like "cuento," "novela," "fábula," "episodio," and "leyenda" were used interchangeably and often with ambiguous definitions.

Early definitions often associated "cuento" with oral tradition, popular tales, or non-literary status, contrasting it with the more formal "novela." Critics like Juan Valera emphasized the fantastic element as a defining characteristic of the "cuento," while others struggled with its brevity versus a longer narrative.

This terminological confusion meant that authors wrote short narratives without a clear theoretical framework, resulting in diverse forms ranging from proto-short stories to prose poems and fragments. The shift towards a more defined "short story" genre would only solidify later in the century, influenced by realism.

#### 3. SPAIN'S TURBULENT 19TH CENTURY AND LITERARY PRODUCTION:

The period from 1800 to 1850 was marked by intense political instability in Spain: successions of monarchs (Carlos IV, Fernando VII, José Bonaparte, Isabel II), constitutional changes, and continuous wars (War of Independence, Carlist Wars). Censorship played a crucial role. During periods of strict censorship, the short story, along with travel articles, historical biographies, and literary "costumbrismo," became a "refuge" for writers, allowing them to continue their work with minimal interference. Paradoxically, eras of greater political freedom sometimes yielded fewer short narratives.

This constant conflict and censorship profoundly shaped the themes and reception of Romantic literature, making the short story a sensitive barometer of the times.



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#### 4. THE COMPLEXITY OF SPANISH ROMANTICISM:

Spanish Romanticism is a multifaceted movement, often described as contradictory due to its emphasis on freedom, individualism, and a diverse range of expressions.

Key debates include whether Spanish Romanticism was a historical constant in Spanish literature (Peers), a late import from Europe tied to political liberalism (Del Río, Shaw), or an evolutionary phenomenon appearing earlier in the 18th century (Sebold).

The movement often exhibited dual tendencies: a "Romantic renaissance" looking back to the Golden Age (Lope, Calderón) and a "Romantic rebellion" seeking individual expressive freedom. This dynamic is reflected in the themes of emotion, longing, social critique, and the exploration of individual suffering seen in the short stories of the era.

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#### PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

##### *Defining the "Cuento Romántico":*

Based on the introduction, what were the main challenges in defining the short story as a literary genre in 19th-century Spain? How did this ambiguity influence the works included in this anthology?

##### *The Author's Role in a Turbulent Era:*

How did the political and social instability of 1800-1850 Spain (e.g., censorship, wars, shifts in monarchy) impact the themes, styles, and popularity of short stories during the Romantic period?

##### *Characteristics of the Romantic Hero/Heroine:*

Choose one or two stories from the anthology (e.g., "Pamplona y Elizondo" with Eduardo, "El Lago de Carucedo" with Salvador) and discuss how their protagonists embody the characteristics of a Romantic hero or heroine. What are their motivations, conflicts, and ultimate fates?

##### *The Fantastic and the Supernatural:*

Many romantic short stories incorporate fantastic elements. How do authors use the supernatural, dreams, or psychological states to explore deeper truths, moral dilemmas, or social critiques? (Consider "Beltrán" or "Yago Yasck").

##### *Art as Social Commentary:*

Analyze how the selected stories use their narratives to comment on societal norms, religious beliefs, or the human condition. For instance, how does the portrayal of "Yago Yasck" or "El Bautismo de Mudarra" reflect a critique of traditional morality or societal pressures?

##### *Style and Form:*

How do these short stories, despite the lack of a clear "genre consciousness" at the time, demonstrate distinct narrative techniques? Discuss the use of dialogue, descriptions, or framing devices (like the storytelling within "Beltrán" or "La Noche de máscaras").



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**PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- **Rodríguez Gutiérrez, Borja.** *Trece cuentos del romanticismo español.* Ed. Borja Rodríguez-Gutiérrez. Stockcero, 2009.
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**PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)**

*According to the introduction, what was a significant challenge for the "cuento" (short story) as a genre in early 19th-century Spain?*

- A) A lack of reader interest in short narratives.
- B) Excessive government censorship preventing publication.
- C) A lack of a clear, consistent definition and "genre consciousness."
- D) The overwhelming popularity of epic poetry.

**Correct Answer: C**

*The period of 1800-1850 in Spain was characterized by:*

- A) Political stability and economic growth.
- B) Frequent political changes, wars, and censorship.
- C) A flourishing of neoclassical ideals in literature.
- D) The dominance of foreign literary influences without local adaptation.

**Correct Answer: B**

*Which of the following describes a common theme or character type found in Spanish romantic short stories, as described in the back cover?*

- A) Pragmatic merchants and realistic urban settings.
- B) Evil kings, noble heroes, languid heroines, and supernatural elements.
- C) Scientific discoveries and technological advancements.
- D) Detailed accounts of everyday peasant life.

**Correct Answer: B**

*The editor's introduction discusses multiple perspectives on Spanish Romanticism. Which of these views suggests Romanticism was a "historical constant" in Spanish literature?*

- A) The view that it was a late import from France and Germany.
- B) The idea that it began definitively with the return of political exiles in the 1830s.
- C) The theory, proposed by E. Allison Peers, that it re-emerged from earlier Spanish traditions like the Baroque.
- D) The belief that it was solely driven by the desire for social realism.

**Correct Answer: C**

*In the story "Pamplona y Elizondo," what is the primary cause of the protagonist Eduardo's suffering and ultimate demise?*

- A) His physical wounds sustained in battle.
- B) The betrayal by the Carlist soldiers.
- C) The lack of understanding from his beloved Isabel, who cannot reciprocate his intense romantic passion.
- D) His fear of the nocturnal wilderness.

**Correct Answer: C**



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