



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (114)

TITLE: *Doña Bárbara*

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EDITOR: Flor María Rodríguez-Arenas

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I. OVERVIEW & SIGNIFICANCE

Rómulo Gallegos's *Doña Bárbara* (1929) is a seminal work in Latin American literature, an iconic representation of the struggle between "civilization and barbarism" in the Venezuelan *llanos*. Beyond its allegorical power, the novel offers a complex interplay of social order, political conflict, and deeply rooted cultural beliefs.

This Stockcero edition, expertly edited by Flor María Rodríguez-Arenas, provides an unparalleled resource for advanced study by **including complete sections from *La Coronela* (1928), the initial, uncirculated version of the novel.** This unique feature allows scholars to trace Gallegos's meticulous process of textual revision, revealing how he constructed the novel's narrative world, articulated its underlying ideology, and shaped the definitive characterization of Doña Bárbara. The study of *La Coronela* sections illuminates the socio-cultural imaginaries that permeated Gallegos's creative process, offering a richer understanding of the final novel's enduring impact and its intricate engagement with prevailing myths and social values.

II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES

This edition enables a nuanced exploration of *Doña Bárbara* through its textual genesis, socio-cultural production, and ideological underpinnings.

Textual Evolution: From *La Coronela* to *Doña Bárbara*:

Analyze the significance of including sections from *La Coronela* (1928). How do these earlier texts reveal Gallegos's initial intentions and the narrative strategies he employed?

Compare the characterization of key figures (e.g., Luisana Luján vs. the definitive absence of her role, Guadalupe's initial depiction vs. Bárbara) across *La Coronela* and the 1929/1930 editions of *Doña Bárbara*.

Discuss how Gallegos's revisions between editions (1929, 1930, 1954) refined the novel's structure, dramatic appeal, and thematic depth, ultimately leading to the "magnificent example of a well-made work."

Ideology and Social Imaginaries in the Novel:

Define "ideology" and "social imaginaries" (Althusser, Pintos) and explain how Gallegos utilizes these to construct his narrative world. How does *Doña Bárbara* operate as a "mito moderno," subtly shaping reader perception and legitimizing specific views of social order?

Examine the novel's allegory of "civilization versus barbarism." How do the characters (Santos Luzardo, Doña Bárbara) embody these opposing forces, and how do their traits reflect contemporary social beliefs about progress, tradition, and national identity in Venezuela?

Discuss how Gallegos, through his narrative, seeks to "persuade and influence readers' judgments and evaluations by emotionally involving them."



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Characterization of Doña Bárbara/Guadalupe:

Analyze the evolution of Doña Bárbara from the early "Guadalupe" in *La Coronela*. How does the character embody the myth of the "devoradora de hombres" (man-eater) or echo the Lilith myth?

Discuss how the narrative portrays Doña Bárbara's acquisition of power through her Indigenous knowledge ("brujería," *pusana*) and her strategic manipulation of patriarchal norms. Is she a victim, a monster, or a symbol of untamed will?

Critically evaluate the "denigrating" perspective of the narrative voice regarding Doña Bárbara's actions and her Indigenous heritage. How does this reveal the underlying masculine insecurity and cultural biases of the era?

The Role of Luisana Luján:

Examine the character of Luisana Luján in *La Coronela* and the significance of her ultimate disappearance from the final version of *Doña Bárbara*. What does Luisana represent (e.g., urban refinement, female intellectual agency, the "angel in the home" ideal)?

How does Luisana's presence or absence influence the allegorical balance of the novel and the portrayal of Santos Luzardo's "civilizing" project?

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.

Gender and Power in the Llanos: Analyze Doña Bárbara's complex power dynamics. How does she achieve and maintain control in a patriarchal society? Discuss her use of sexuality, violence, and Indigenous knowledge. Does her power ultimately empower or entrap her?

The Llano as a Symbolic Space: Discuss the Venezuelan *llano* not merely as a setting but as a dynamic character that shapes human behavior and reflects the nation's struggle. How does its "untamed" nature mirror the internal conflicts of the characters and the broader national project?

Santos Luzardo's Civilizing Project: Evaluate Santos Luzardo's mission to bring "law and civilization" to Altamira. To what extent is his project successful, and what are its inherent limitations or contradictions? How does the novel critique the very notion of "civilization" in the context of the *llanos*?

The Narrative Voice and Ideological Bias: Analyze the narrative voice in *Doña Bárbara*. To what extent does it reinforce or implicitly critique the prevailing ideological perspectives of its time? Discuss instances where the "imaginario social" (as described in the introduction) of the author or society colors the portrayal of characters or events.

Textual Genesis as Critical Tool: Using the provided sections of *La Coronela*, conduct a comparative analysis of a key scene or character interaction that changed significantly from the earlier version to *Doña Bárbara*. Discuss what these specific textual revisions reveal about Gallegos's evolving ideological position, narrative craft, or response to contemporary social debates.

Myth-making and National Identity: *How does Doña Bárbara contribute to the creation of* Venezuelan national identity? Discuss the symbolic role of the characters (Doña Bárbara, Santos Luzardo, Marisela) in representing different facets of the nation's past, present, and desired future.

Reception History and Critical Shifts: Research the reception history of *Doña Bárbara*. How have critical interpretations of the novel evolved over time (e.g., from its initial acceptance to



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later criticisms as "prototipo del atraso" to recent re-evaluations)? How do these shifts reflect broader changes in literary theory and cultural perspectives?

IV. SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

This section complements the study of *Doña Bárbara*, providing avenues for deeper research.

Primary Text:

- Gallegos, Rómulo. *Doña Bárbara*. Edited by Flor María Rodríguez-Arenas. Stockcero. (TK ORDER: 114)
- Gallegos, Rómulo. *La Coronela* (1928), as presented in the introduction of this edition.

Key Secondary Scholarship (as referenced in the Introduction):

- **Althusser, Louis.** *Ideología y aparatos ideológicos de Estado*. 1971. (For the theoretical framework of ideology).
- **Chatman, Seymour.** *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Cornell University Press, 1978. (For character analysis theory).
- **Englekirk, John E.** "La primera versión de *Doña Bárbara*." *Revista Iberoamericana*, 1948. (For initial textual comparison).
- **Gallegos, Rómulo.** "Discurso de incorporación a la Academia Venezolana de la Lengua." 1935.
- **Gallegos, Rómulo.** "Confesiones literarias." *Obras completas*. Aguilar, 1959. (For authorial intent).
- **Lynch, John.** *The Hispanic American Novels: A Critical Study*. 1982. (For ideology and narrative).
- **Pintos, Juan-Luis.** *Los imaginarios sociales*. Siglo XXI, 1995. (For the theoretical framework of social imaginaries).
- **Rodríguez-Arenas, Flor María.** *El sistema de la vorágine*. Pliegos, 1988. (For literary context).
- **Shaw, Donald L.** "La segunda versión de *Doña Bárbara*." *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 1974. (For detailed textual comparison).

Additional Resources:

- Studies on the Latin American "Novela de la Tierra" and Regionalism.
- Critical works on Venezuelan history and politics of the early 20th century.
- Scholarship on gender and literature in Latin America.

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