



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (167)

TEXT: *El áncora y otras novelas cortas*

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PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

1. EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN AND THE "NOVELA CORTA":

A Neglected Genre:

While Pardo Bazán is celebrated for her major realist and naturalist novels, her contribution to the "novela corta" (short novel) is equally significant but less studied. She published twenty-one short novels between 1884 and 1921, often in periodicals, which helped popularize her work.

Defining the Form:

The *novela corta* sits between the short story (*cuento*) and the full-length novel. Unlike the short story, it allows for more character development and dialogue due to its length. Unlike the novel, it avoids lengthy digressions and secondary characters, maintaining a rapid pace and a focused plot that culminates in a moment of high tension.

2. FEMINISM AND SOCIAL CRITIQUE:

The Double Standard:

A recurring theme in these works is the denunciation of the double moral standard of 19th-century Spanish society. Men were permitted infidelities and freedoms that were strictly forbidden to women.

Female Agency and Limitations:

Pardo Bazán portrays women realistically—neither as pure angels nor as absolute demons. She highlights how societal conventions, not biology or religion, restrict women's independence, education, and professional opportunities (as seen in *La dama joven* and *El áncora*).

3. ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED WORKS:

El áncora:

Tells the story of Fernanda, an aristocrat trapped in an unhappy marriage. Despite falling in love with another man, she chooses to dedicate her life to her disabled child. The "áncora" (anchor) symbolizes Christian fortitude and the paradigm of the resilient Catholic woman facing societal hypocrisy.

La dama joven:

Follows Concha, a seamstress whose dreams of becoming a theatrical actress (a path to emancipation) are crushed by societal norms and her fiancé's jealousy, forcing her into a restrictive domestic life.



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Bucólica:

An epistolary novel contrasting a decadent, hypocritical rural Galicia with Madrid. It debunks the idealized pastoral myth, exposing the exploitation of peasant women by the rural oligarchy.

La gota de sangre:

Pardo Bazán's foray into detective fiction. The protagonist, Selva, solves a murder using intuition and observation, subverting traditional police methods and genre conventions, ultimately acting as a redeemer rather than a strict enforcer of the law.

PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Genre Distinctions:

Based on the introduction, how does the *novela corta* differ from the *cuento* and the traditional *novela*? Analyze one of the works in this collection to demonstrate these structural differences.

The Feminist Critique:

How does Pardo Bazán use her female protagonists (like Fernanda or Concha) to expose the limitations placed on women in 19th-century Spain? Discuss the concept of the "double standard" as portrayed in these texts.

Rural vs. Urban Spaces:

In *Bucólica*, how does the author deconstruct the romanticized idea of rural life? What is the function of the epistolary format in revealing the biases of the narrator, Rojas?

Subverting Detective Fiction:

How does *La gota de sangre* interact with the conventions of the detective genre? Why does the protagonist, Selva, choose to let the culprit escape, and what does this say about the author's view on justice versus law?

Marriage and Independence:

Compare the fates of Fernanda (*El áncora*) and Concha (*La dama joven*). How do their respective marriages serve as an obstacle to their personal fulfillment and freedom?

PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

According to the introduction, what is a defining structural characteristic of the novela corta compared to the traditional novel?

- A) A focus on lyrical poetry instead of prose.
- B) The presence of multiple, complex subplots.
- C) A concentration on the main plot, avoiding lengthy digressions and secondary characters.
- D) The requirement that it must be published in a single volume, never in magazines.

Correct Answer: C

In El áncora, what decision does the protagonist, Fernanda, make regarding her romantic life?

- A) She elopes with her lover, Gonzalo, to France.
- B) She renounces her love for Gonzalo to dedicate herself exclusively to her child.
- C) She files for divorce and starts a successful business.
- D) She joins a convent to escape her unfaithful husband.

Correct Answer: B

What does Concha, the protagonist of La dama joven, aspire to become before societal pressures force her into a traditional marriage?

- A) A renowned writer.
- B) A successful dressmaker in Paris.
- C) A theatrical actress.
- D) A politician.

Correct Answer: C

In the epistolary novel Bucólica, what is the author's primary critique regarding the rural setting of Galicia?

- A) It exposes the harsh, unromantic reality and the exploitation of peasant women by the local elites.
- B) It praises the idyllic and pure lifestyle of the countryside compared to the corrupt city of Madrid.
- C) It focuses solely on the agricultural advancements of the region.
- D) It celebrates the deeply religious and moral nature of the local landowners.

Correct Answer: A

How does the protagonist Selva act at the end of the detective story La gota de sangre?

- A) He turns the culprit over to the official police for execution.
- B) He uses his intuition to solve the crime but ultimately lets the guilty party escape to France.
- C) He realizes he accused the wrong person and gives up detective work.
- D) He takes the law into his own hands and murders the suspect.

Correct Answer: B



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