



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (178)

TEXT: *Ramona* (traducción José Martí)

AUTHOR: Helen Hunt Jackson – Martí, José

EDITOR: Jonathan Alcántar y Anne Fountain

PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

1. HELEN HUNT JACKSON'S ORIGINAL "RAMONA": A REFORMIST NOVEL:

Helen Hunt Jackson (1830-1885) was a prominent American poet and activist known for her tireless efforts to improve the conditions of indigenous populations in the U.S. Her 1881 non-fiction work, *A Century of Dishonor*, documented the abuses against Native Americans.

Ramona (1884) was Jackson's attempt to use fiction to sway public opinion and influence policy, much like Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did for the abolitionist cause. The novel depicts the displacement of Mexican Californios and indigenous peoples after the U.S. intervention in Mexico (1846-1848).

2. JOSÉ MARTÍ'S TRANSLATION: MORE THAN A MERE TRANSLATION:

José Martí (1853-1895), Cuba's national hero, translated *Ramona* in 1888, funding its publication himself. This act demonstrates the profound importance he ascribed to the novel's social message, especially for Latin American audiences.

Martí's version, which he called "nuestra novela" and "un libro muy mexicano," is considered a "trans/text" – a creative act where the translator actively intervenes, shaping the original work to resonate with his own anti-imperialist and pro-indigenous ideology, particularly relevant for Mexico in the face of U.S. expansionism.

3. MARTÍ'S INTERVENTION AND IMPROVEMENTS:

Martí's translation involved significant modifications: he abbreviated the text, combined chapters, eliminated sections he deemed less relevant (like Aunt Ri's colloquialisms), and, crucially, assigned evocative names to chapters.

He "corrected" Jackson's linguistic and cultural inaccuracies concerning Californian history, for instance, restoring the Spanish name "Salvatierra" for the priest and portraying the indigenous character Alejandro as more "aguerrido" (fierce/brave) than Jackson's "nostalgic Alessandro."

Martí's keen awareness of the cultural context allowed him to imbue the narrative with greater emotion and a more contemporary style, making his "Ramona" a work that, for many, surpasses the original in its cultural and political resonance.

4. "RAMONA" AS A CULTURAL AND POLITICAL ICON:

Despite Martí's desire for the novel to instigate urgent social reform, its impact varied. In the U.S., it became a romanticized cultural phenomenon, fueling a tourism boom in Southern California, with "Ramona-related landmarks" and theatrical adaptations.



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In Mexico and Latin America, Martí's translation reinforced a message of caution against U.S. expansionism and became a tool for understanding the struggles of indigenous communities, linking to broader themes of "Nuestra América."

5. THE TRANSLATOR AS AUTHOR:

The critical introduction argues that Martí's "Ramona" should be considered a "second Martí novel" (beyond *Lucía Jerez*) due to his significant creative intervention. This perspective highlights the translator not as a passive intermediary, but as an active co-creator whose ideological stance profoundly reshapes the translated text.

PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Jackson's Purpose for Ramona: Discuss Helen Hunt Jackson's initial goals in writing *Ramona*. How did she intend for the novel to influence public opinion and policy regarding Native Americans?

Martí's "Translation" vs. Original: Analyze how Martí's translation of *Ramona* transcends a mere linguistic transfer. In what ways did he adapt, condense, and re-narrate the text to align with his own anti-imperialist and pro-indigenous ideologies?

"Nuestra Novela" and "Nuestra América": How does Martí's translation of *Ramona* connect with his broader vision for "Nuestra América"? What message was he trying to convey to Mexican (and Latin American) readers through this specific work?

The Translator as Co-Author: Discuss the concept of the translator as a co-author, especially in Martí's case. What arguments support the idea that Martí's *Ramona* is, in effect, his own novel?

Cultural Impact and Legacy: Compare the different receptions of *Ramona* in the U.S. (as a romanticized cultural icon) and in Latin America (as a political statement). How do these differing legacies reflect the distinct historical contexts and the power of translation?

"Ramona" in the "Caribbean & Central America" Bundle: How does this novel, despite being set in California, contribute to understanding the "Voices from the Caribbean and Central America," particularly through Martí's lens?



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PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- **Hunt Jackson, Helen – Martí, José.** *Ramona (traducción José Martí)*. Ed. Jonathan Alcántar y Anne Fountain. Stockcero, [Year of publication].
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PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

What was Helen Hunt Jackson's primary motivation for writing Ramona?

- A) To promote tourism in Southern California.
- B) To romanticize the life of Mexican Californios.
- C) To raise public awareness and advocate for Native American rights.
- D) To chronicle her own personal experiences in California.

Correct Answer: C

José Martí's translation of Ramona is described as a "trans/text" because:

- A) It was a literal, word-for-word translation.
- B) Martí made significant creative, cultural, and political interventions that reshaped the original.
- C) It was translated into multiple languages simultaneously.
- D) It was published anonymously, hiding the translator's identity.

Correct Answer: B

Why did Martí particularly wish to disseminate his translation of Ramona in Mexico?

- A) To encourage Mexican emigration to California.
- B) To warn Mexico about the continuing U.S. expansionist threat.
- C) To promote Helen Hunt Jackson as a leading American author.
- D) To celebrate the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Correct Answer: B

According to the introduction, what key detail did Martí change regarding the indigenous character Alejandro?

- A) He made him a wealthy landowner instead of a poor Indian.
- B) He eliminated the character entirely from the story.
- C) He portrayed him as more "aguerrido" and changed his original name to Alejandro (fierce/brave), rather than the "nostalgic Alessandro."
- D) He changed his nationality from indigenous to Spanish.

Correct Answer: C

The enduring cultural legacy of Ramona in the United States, despite Jackson's original intentions, is characterized by:

- A) Its success in promoting federal land reforms for Native Americans.
- B) Its transformation into a romanticized tourist attraction and cultural icon for Southern California.
- C) Its role as a direct catalyst for Mexican-American civil rights movements.
- D) Its exclusive readership within academic circles.

Correct Answer: B



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