



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

SPANISH TEACHERS' RESOURCES

TEACHING FILM AND LITERATURE FOR AS AND A2

STUDYING:

EL CORONEL NO TIENE QUIEN LE ESCRIBA
GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

LA CASA DE BERNARDA ALBA
FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

LA LENGUA DE LAS MARIPOSAS
JOSÉ LUIS CUERDA

EL LABERINTO DEL FAUNO
GUILLERMO DEL TORO

CONTENTS

USING THESE RESOURCES	3
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TEXT ANALYSIS

<i>El coronel no tiene quien le escriba</i> by Gabriel García Márquez	4
<i>La casa de Bernarda Alba</i> by Federico García Lorca	7
<i>La lengua de las mariposas</i> directed by José Luis Cuerda	10
<i>El laberinto del fauno</i> directed by Guillermo del Toro	13

INTRODUCTION AND RESOURCE RATIONALE

These resources have been developed in response to changes in the content of the AS/A2 curricula for modern foreign languages (French, Spanish and German), which are effective from September 2016. They have been designed to give support and guidance to MFL teachers in selecting and teaching the film and literature content of the curricula.

There are five sections to this resource:

1. Why teach this text?

This section explains the relevance and benefits of teaching this text/film for teachers and their students. It also describes how the text/film fits in to the A-level as a whole, as well as its links with other A-level subjects.

2. Ways to read this text

This section briefly describes the different critical lenses for reading a text/film, as well as outlining different themes. This section will be particularly useful for the A2 exam questions, which are theme-based. Topics from previous exam questions have been integrated into this section.

3. Students

This section suggests how this text/film can appeal to certain students, according to interests, studies and background. For example this film will appeal to students who may be interested in studying social policy.

4. Useful passages/sequences

This section highlights specific sequences/passages from the film/text that are especially rich and point towards the ways in which these can be used for teaching.

a. Characters

This sub-section highlights a passage which would be useful in the teaching of characterisation and character relationships in the text/film. This sub-section is particularly useful for the AS exam questions, which focus on character analysis.

b. Themes

This sub-section highlights a passage which would be useful in the teaching of a major theme in the context of the whole text/film. This selected sequence/passage is normally an effective inroad for the discussion of the wider concerns/themes of the text/film. This sub-section is particularly useful for the A2 exam question, which is based on wider analysis of themes/context.

c. Language

This sub-section highlights a linguistically rich and/or interesting passage/sequence in terms of grammar, style, tone, genre, register, dialect, pronunciation etc. This sub-section is not exam-focused but teachers may find it useful for other focuses i.e. themes, characterisation, genre.

d. Cinematography/form and genre

The cinematography sub-section focuses on directorial and cinematographic technique in films. It aims to guide teachers who may not be familiar with teaching film. This sub-section is particularly useful for AS and A2 exam questions that deal with colour, sound, directorial technique, etc.

The form and genre sub-section focuses on the structure, form and genre of literary texts in order to guide the teaching of certain kinds of texts (novels and plays).

5. Further reading

This section provides links to websites, useful sources, articles and online books in English and each target language that can be used as pedagogic resources and/or preparatory material.

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***EL CORONEL NO TIENE
QUIEN LE ESCRIBA***
GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ, 1961

EL CORONEL NO TIENE QUIEN LE ESCRIBA, GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ, 1961 (EDICIONES ERA, S.A: 1966)

The Colonel, a veteran of the Colombian Thousand Days' War (1899-1902) who lives with his asthmatic wife, has been waiting for fifteen years to receive the pension for his service. Every Friday, when mail comes, he expects to be informed about his pension, but no one writes to him. It is the story of the fight of the Colonel to keep his dignity despite his struggles to buy the food and medicines that the couple needs to survive.

Why teach this novel?

Gabriel García Márquez once mentioned that this was his best novel. A short and simple text, but also an excellent insight into the Colombia of the 1950s. The novel is set during *la violencia*, an era of Civil War between liberals and conservatives, in which Martial law and strict censorship had been enforced. It is a story of ordinary life but also a social critique that depicts severe poverty and survival skills. Even though the main focus lies in the lives of ordinary inhabitants of a village, it portrays in a subtle way the severe effects violence has on them and how there is strength to resist repression.

Ways to read this novel

- War: set in the 1950s, the novel narrates the ordinary life of a village that lives the effects of the ongoing civil war. However, rather than portraying violence directly, it rather shows the miserable situation of its main characters, who struggle to survive and whose son has recently been killed by the regime.
- Dignity and hope: despite their severe poverty, the couple refuses to lose their dignity, and attempts to hide their hardship. The Colonel's wife even boils stones to give the impression that she has food to cook and the Colonel never loses his hope that one day he will receive his pension.
- Inequality: huge class differences can be identified between the rich and the poor. Whilst the Colonel and his wife can hardly afford a living, Don Sabas is very rich and only concerned about money.

Students

El coronel no tiene quien le escriba is a very short novel with relatively simple language, which will be easy and entertaining for students. It will especially appeal to those students interested in gaining an insight into Latin American literature, and specifically into the recent history of Colombia. Furthermore, the regional Spanish used by García Márquez can be used to learn about variations of Spanish language.

Useful passages

1. Themes

Page 52 (- ¿Dónde estabas?...) – page 54 (...que la dignidad no se come.)

In this conversation between the Colonel and his wife, the recurring theme of poverty and dignity comes to light. The Colonel's wife has been outside, obliged to tell lies to hide their hardship. Sometimes she even boils stones to pretend that she actually has food to cook. The Colonel, however, is rather concerned about the neighbours finding out that they are 'muertos de hambre'. But his wife is fed up so much dignity, since 'la dignidad no se come'.

The passage allows us to analyse the Colonel's fight for dignity, but also more broadly the political context and class differences in which the narrative is set, as the following extract shows:

- Ahí tienes a mi compadre Sabas con una casa de dos pisos que no le alcanza para meter la plata, un hombre que llegó al pueblo vendiendo medicinas con una culebra enrollada en el pescuezo.
- Pero se está muriendo de diabetes – dijo el coronel.
- Y tú te estás muriendo de hambre – dijo la mujer –. Para que te convenzas que la dignidad no se come.

2. Language

Beginning (El coronel destapó el tarro...) – page 9 (...pensando en el muerto.)

A key characteristic of *El Coronel no tiene quien le escriba*, and García Márquez' work more broadly, is his descriptive language. Despite the short length of the novel, the author is able to transmit a very detailed picture of the village, its inhabitants and especially the Colonel and his wife's characters and interactions, and of course, their hardship.

It is impressive how García Márquez introduces us to the context in just two and a half pages, as we discover the Colonel and his wife's very poor living conditions, through the fact that they cannot even afford food, and that the wife is suffering from asthma. At the same time, we are introduced to cultural aspects, as we discover that they both sleep in hammocks and that they keep a cock for fights. We also learn about the regional climate, which is warm but very rainy, and possibly with plenty of mosquitos. What impression do we get about the Colonel and his wife's life through the author's description? Is the author capable of making the reader sympathise with the

characters? How is life in a village in Colombia different to a village in other Spanish-speaking countries? What are the particularities of Colombian Spanish that can be identified in the novel?

3. Character(s)

Page 17 (La última fue la lancha...) – page 19 (...permite publicar la censura.)

This passage portrays the Colonel's hope to receive post on Fridays. He watches the boat with mail arrive and, full of anxiety, follows the postmaster through the streets of the village. When he eventually finds out that no post was addressed to him, he lies unashamedly: 'No esperaba nada ... Yo no tengo quién me escriba'. Once more, the search for dignity that characterizes the main character of the novel becomes clear, as he hopes that his fighting cock will earn enough money to pay for food. But also he hopes that after 15 years, a Friday will come in which he will receive mail and his pension. This is very different from his wife's opinion, who respects his decisions but is also fed up of their miserable condition. She cares more about having the much needed money at her disposal to buy the basics than about the opinion others might have. What are they afraid that people will know about them? Why are they ashamed of being poor?

The passage also reveals to the reader the left-wing political values of the Colonel, who fought for the revolutionaries, as he engages in a conversation with the Doctor.

- Qué hay de noticias -preguntó el coronel.

El médico le dio varios periódicos.

- No se sabe – dijo –. Es difícil leer entre líneas lo que

permite publicar la censura.

What relationship does the Colonel have with the Doctor? How is the relationship between the Colonel and his wife? How can we describe other interactions between the characters of the novel?

4. Form and genre

This short and apparently simple novel hides deeper symbolism and meanings, since the Colonel lives in a world of an 'abstract realism' which is confronted with the real world:

'[C]ree posible lo imposible, tiene fe en la eficacia de lo ineficaz, afirma con terquedad y casi locura la existencia de algo que no existe en su mundo: la justicia, el respeto a la palabra empeñada, la vigencia de la ley, el funcionamiento de la administración'.¹

Furthermore, the novel is filled with symbolism that both introduces cultural aspects of Colombia but also allows the reader to dig for deeper meanings. In this way, the cock could be interpreted as the dead son, who had been raising it for the upcoming cockfights. The Colonel himself and his wife, whose names are never mentioned, can be seen as a representation of the poor living conditions of many Colombians. These conditions are portrayed in detailed descriptions, such as the very beginning, where we discover how poor the couple is, since they cannot even afford a coffee in the morning. Are there any other symbols which could have a deeper meaning? Do you think that the novel could be classified as a drama or as a comedy? Is *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* an abstract or magical realist text?

Further reading

- García Márquez' biography
http://www.biografiasyvidas.com/reportaje/garcia_marquez/
- *La Violencia* in Colombia
<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/colombia/la-violencia.htm>
- Analysis of the symbolism on violence in the novel
<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/4808344.pdf>
- Detailed analysis of García Márquez' work by Vargas Llosa Vargas Llosa, M. 1971. García Márquez: historia de un deicidio. 2nd ed. Barcelona: Barral Editores S.A.
- Widely acclaimed Film based on the novel *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba*. 1999. [Film]. Arturo Ripstein. dir. Spain, France, Mexico: Canal+, Ventanarosa, Amaranta Films, DMVB Films, Television Espanola.

¹ Page 296 in Vargas Llosa, M. 1971. García Márquez: historia de un deicidio. 2nd ed. Barcelona: Barral Editores S.A.



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LA CASA DE BERNARDA ALBA
FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA, 1936

LA CASA DE BERNARDA ALBA, FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA, 1936 (EDICIÓN FRANCISCO YNDURÁIN, MADRID: 1993)

Bernarda Alba, widowed for her second time at the age of 60, has decided to live a strict period of mourning which the rest of her family will also have to follow. In a story populated entirely by female characters, the play explores the contradictions in Spanish traditional values, when two of Bernarda's daughters fall in love with the same man.

Why teach this play?

As one of the most important plays in Spanish theatre, *La casa de Bernarda Alba* is the last work Lorca wrote before he was killed by the Franco regime two months later. It can be argued that the story is a feminist insight into Spain's first half of the 20th Century, picturing a house with nine women and no male characters physically appearing in the play. The storyline shows the author's efforts to create well developed characters in a tragedy about love, hate, money, power and envy. Unfortunately, Lorca would never see the play performed on stage. The play premiered in 1945 in Argentina.

Ways to read this play

- **Feminism:** this play is the story of the struggles of women in an all-female family. By applying a feminist lens, we can study gender roles in Spanish society and the importance of Lorca's work, which was well ahead of its time.
- *Generación del 27:* the style of this generation can be studied through *La casa de Bernarda Alba* by analysing the importance of its (poetic) realism or the symbolism introduced in this work.
- **Society:** the play offers valuable insights into the social relations and rules of the time and treat topics such as arranged marriage, envy, reputation, repression or gossip. These could be studied in comparison to contemporary Spanish society.

Students

La casa de Bernarda Alba is easy and fun to read, and it should be relatively simple to understand. This allows students to engage with its themes, for instance, through the help of the commented version edited by H. Ramsden. Students interested in Spanish history will find the text easy to relate to historical events, such as the Second Spanish Republic, but also the later Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. Students interested in literature can analyse the play alongside other literary productions of the time by authors such as Rafael Alberti, Luis Cernuda and Vicente Aleixandre.

Useful passages

1. Themes

Page 111 (Luego se portó bien...) – page 114 (... preguntarais dónde voy!)

In this all-female house, a lot can be learned about the marginalised role women played in the society of the time. This passage touches upon the relationship between wives and husbands, in which women are meant to play a submissive and caring role, whilst men enjoy more freedom. In both the characters of Poncia and Martirio, we find however strong personalities that are able to contest these gender roles:

Martirio: ¿Es verdad que le pegaste algunas veces?

Poncia: ¡Sí, y por poco lo dejo tuerto.

Magdalena: ¡Así debían ser todas las mujeres!

Furthermore, Adela intervenes with a comment referring to her body that sounds more radically feminist than we can expect from a play from the 1930s: *¡Yo hago con mi cuerpo lo que me parece!* What else made this play too advanced for its time and only allowed it to be released years later?

2. Language

Page 104 (Adela, ¿no vienes?...) – page 109 (... ¡no tiene mal tipo!)

The language used across the play is full of insults, threats and curses. It is a vulgar language, colloquial and full of sayings, but at the same time it is perfectly measured and poetic. Lorca has been able to create a literary language which appears to be ordinary but is actually highly sophisticated. Which examples can we find in the text that show such language?

Adding to this, if used for translation exercises, this passage offers a combination of simple sentences (Se iría a eso de la una y media [p. 106]) and rather complicated sayings (¡más vale onza en el arca que ojos negros en la cara! [p. 105]) or meanings (No, porque cuando un hombre se acerca a una reja ya sabe por los que van y vienen, llevan y traen, que se le va a decir que sí.[p. 108]).

3. Character(s)

Page 133 (¡Qué escándalo es éste...) – page 138 (...y tus arboledas.)

Bernarda Alba is a very conservative character. She dominates the rest of the house and is deeply concerned about what the neighbours think. Angustias is the oldest daughter and the only one from Bernarda's first marriage. She is described as ugly and with poor health, but due to her inheritance she is meant to marry Pepe el Romano. Martirio, a younger daughter, has a complex character and could have been married if Bernarda had not impeded her marriage to a working-class man. Adela is the youngest daughter, described as pretty and passionate. She becomes the lover of Pepe el Romano.

This passage offers an insight into some of the main characters of the play. Bernarda appears, as always, controlling and worried about the neighbours (*¡Qué escándalo es éste en mi casa y con el silencio del peso del calor! Estarán las vecinas con el oído pegado a los tabiques.* [p. 133]), whilst Martirio and Adela show their envy of Angustias. How can we describe the main characters through the way in which they behave and what they say? How important is the role of Pepe el Romano? How justifiable do you think is the behaviour of the characters throughout the play?

4. Form and genre

The structure of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* is simple and consists of three acts. The first act is the beginning of the storyline, in which the characters are introduced

and the conflict, an eight year-long period of mourning, is announced. The second act is the development of the story, in which the oldest daughter is due to marry a man with whom two of the younger daughters are in love. The third and last act is the tragic end of the story, in which one of the daughters commits suicide out of love.

As it was common for authors of the *Generación del 27*, Lorca was influenced by symbolism, the greater transcendental meaning of things, which we can find reflected in most of his poetry and plays. Lorca gives a second meaning to words and actions such as *water*, representing either life, if it is running, or death, if it is standing. Also the names of the characters do all have a strong symbolic charge, with Bernarda meaning 'strength of the bear', Angustias being 'anxiety' or Adela meaning 'from noble nature'.

Symbol Possible Meaning

Thirst	Sexual desire
The moon	Eroticism, passion
The heat	Anxiety, suffocation
The horse	Passion, vitality
Colour white	Purity
Colour black	Death, mourning
Colour green	Rebellion, death

Further reading

- Edition used for page numbers
García Lorca, F. 1994. *La casa de Bernarda Alba*; edición [de] Francisco Ynduráin. 19 ed. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe.
- Introduction to the play and to Lorca's life and work
<http://cdn.mcu.es/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/09-LA-CASA-DE-BERNARDA-ALBA-98-99.pdf>
- Analysis of the characters in the play
<https://digitum.um.es/jspui/bitstream/10201/28456/1/Los%20personajes%20en%20La%20casa%20de%20Bernarda%20Alba.pdf>
- Lorca's bibliography
http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/bib_autor/garcialorca/pcuartonivel.jsp?conten=autor
- Entry on Lorca in the Literary Encyclopedia
<https://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=4924>



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LA LENGUA DE LAS MARIPOSAS
JOSÉ LUIS CUERDA, 1999

LA LENGUA DE LAS MARIPOSAS, JOSÉ LUIS CUERDA, 1999

La lengua de las mariposas tells the coming-of-age story of a young boy beginning school and of his relationship with a teacher during the Second Spanish Republic. Through the lens of education, the film portrays both the freedom of this short period in Spain's history and the beginning of Franco's oppressive dictatorship.

Why teach this film?

La lengua de las mariposas is one of the first Spanish heritage films that deals critically with Spain's past, by showing the contrast between the 1931–36 Republic and the dictatorships that ruled the country just before and after this period. Through the relationship between Moncho, a young boy, and Don Gregorio, his teacher, the film portrays the Republic's aims for a liberal education and the tensions this produced within the more conservative sector of society. It is a powerful film which both pictures a romantic past in golden tones and deals with the dark times of the Spanish Civil War and the beginning of a 40-year long dictatorship.

Ways to read this film

There are a number of themes which can be studied in the film:

- Spanish history: the film deals with Spain's recent past and is an excellent insight into the lived experiences of a town in the Spanish north-western region of Galicia. It portrays the freedom of the Republic, the clash of liberal and conservative ideologies and the military uprising that lead to the Spanish Civil War.
- Education: one of the main themes in the thread of the story shows the Republican's educational values, with the teacher aiming for at least one generation of students to grow up in freedom. Don Gregorio's way of teaching recalls the Free Educational Institution, which refused to teach the religious dogma, politics and morals of the time. It has to be noted that the Republican Government invested huge amounts of money into creating schools and jobs for teachers, especially in rural areas.
- Spanish heritage film: on a broader level, the film allows us to analyse the importance of heritage film, along with other titles such as *El laberinto del fauno* (*Pan's Labyrinth*), *Los girasoles ciegos* (*The Blind Sunflowers*) or *Las trece rosas* (*Thirteen Roses*).
- Spanish culture of the 1930s: in the film we are presented with a culture dominated by religion and traditional values, as opposed to the values that represent the ideals of the Republic.

Students

The historical events in the film can be related to both broader historical events in Europe and later developments in Spanish history. Students can analyse the importance of the Second Spanish Republic, despite its short duration, or link it to contemporary political systems. Furthermore,

students could analyse how education changed between the Republic and the Dictatorship or how it compares to education in the UK today.

This film will appeal to students interested in subjects related to history, education or cultural studies.

Useful sequences

1. Themes

The teacher's speech (1:08:26 – 1:11:00)

This sequence shows the teacher's retirement speech in front of the whole town, not long before Spain would be taken over by the Fascists. Don Gregorio is pictured as committed to his work and to teaching within the freedom that the Republic offered: 'Si conseguimos que una generación, una sola generación, crezca libre en España, ya nadie les podrá arrancar nunca la libertad'.

One of the fathers leaves the room, clearly upset by Don Gregorio's speech, and the priest and the civil guard also appear to be opposed to his words. Therefore the scene allows us to analyse the opposition between the Republican and the Fascist ideologies, and it is an excellent example of how the film constructs the historical events of the time.

By relating this scene to the tragic end of the film, a number of questions can help analyse the sequence: does the film director deal with the past in a critical way? How are the values of the Republicans and the Fascists different from each other? How does each side deal with the other?

2. Language

School trip to the countryside (40:37 – 41:53)

Don Gregorio decides to take his students on a school trip to the countryside to awaken their interest in nature. As they walk through the forest the teacher stops to show them a butterfly and to explain to them how these creatures collect the nectar from flowers.

This short clip offers plenty of dialogue by the teacher and a few students, which is ideal to develop listening skills by getting used to different voices. Can students understand the conversation without subtitles? Can they explain what Don Gregorio has said about how butterflies eat? Can they transcribe the text? Can they understand the different characters, even when they whisper or shout?

3. Character(s)

Conversation at Moncho's home (42:37 – 44.16)

After a short school trip to the countryside, Moncho has an asthma attack and is taken home by his teacher. The clip shows a conversation between Moncho's parents and Don Gregorio. Moncho's father offers the teacher a tailor-made suit, which he initially does not want to accept.

This sequence offers an insight into some of the main characters of the film. Once more, Don Gregorio shows his values by not wanting to accept any presents as a school teacher. He is modest and caring. Moncho is pictured as a quiet observer who seems to have much to learn from the world. He does not speak at all and quickly responds to help his father by writing down the measures of the suit. The mother is represented as rather traditional and a strong catholic. She talks about the power of holy water. By contrast, the father has deeply rooted Republican values and does not seem to believe in God. Why is there such a big difference in the religious and political values of the parents?

4. Cinematography

Last scene in the town square (1:24:40 – titles)

In the last scene of the film the Fascists have taken over the town and implemented a regime of fear and violence. The citizens gather on the main square to watch as a number of known Republicans are taken away by the police. Out of fear, even Moncho is told by his family to insult the detainees and to show his support to the Franco Regime, whilst his friends and even his teacher pass by.

In this scene, the golden tones of previous sequences have disappeared. Galicia is no longer represented in romantic colours and scenes that hardly showed the poverty of the time. The citizens, dressed in grey colours, have stopped supporting the Republicans to show their adherence to the Franco Regime. Moncho's family also seems to have betrayed the Republicans, and especially Don Gregorio, by participating in their shaming before they are driven away to be shot.

Even though there is little speaking in this scene, plenty of questions about the cinematography can be asked: what role the music and light play in this scene? In what way are the citizens represented? Does Moncho's family have a different reaction to the events than other neighbours? Do we suspect that Moncho's family does not genuinely support the new regime? Why does Moncho shout *tilonorrinco* and *espiritrompa* as he throws stones at the detainees?

Further reading

- Analysis of the film
<http://www.seindor.com/publicacionesdidacticas.com/hemeroteca/articulo/00314/articulo-pdf>
- Didactical material (*Aprendiendo con el cine*)
<http://www.aprendiendoconelcine.com/fichas/033.pdf>
- Didactical material (*La relación entre cine y literatura*)
<http://www.ub.edu/filhis/culturele/luning.html>
- About the Free Educational Institution:
<http://www.acfilosofia.org/materialesmn/historia-de-la-filosofia/historia-de-la-filosofiageneralidades/287-giner-de-los-rios-y-la-institucion-libre-de-ensenanza>
- Interview with the director José Luis Cuerda
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWzIYAcVxwY>



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EL LABERINTO DEL FAUNO
GUILLERMO DEL TORO, 2006

EL LABERINTO DEL FAUNO, GUILLERMO DEL TORO, 2006

During the aftermath of the bloody Spanish Civil War, the young Ofelia moves in with her new stepfather, a tyrannical military officer committed to defeat the Republican guerrilla fighters who resist Franco's dictatorship in Spain's mountains. Only Ofelia's imagination can make her escape from such cruelty, when she meets the faun Pan, who reveals to her that she is a lost princess from a non-human world.

Why teach this film?

As part of Spanish heritage cinema, *El laberinto del fauno* is an internationally acclaimed and award-winning film, which is not only highly entertaining but is also an informative film to teach about Spain's history. To understand the historical events of the plot, students will have to analyse the importance of the values of Second Spanish Republic and the cruelty of the Civil War, as well as look further into the resistance. The *maquis* were guerrilla fighters who still believed in a liberal Spain long after the war had come to an end. During the Second World War, they hoped that the Allied forces would help them after defeating Nazism.

Ways to read this film

- Spanish history: undoubtedly the film is amongst the most important pieces of Spanish heritage film, engaging in a critical portrayal of Spain's dark past. The film allows us to think around Spain's history from the 1930s until today. A recurring topic within this historical analysis could be the role women play.
- The fight against Fascism: by connecting the historical events of the 1940s in Spain with broader European history, a common goal to defeat Fascism can be found. For example, by analysing the support the Spanish Republic received from the International Brigades.
- War vs. fairytale: we can find elements of both a traditional war film, picturing the suffering of people, and a fairytale, a world of fantasy that is however more cruel than we are used to.

Students

Students should find this film entertaining but also didactical. It will teach them about the cruelty of Spain's dictatorship and the suffering of innocent people. The film will be especially appealing to students interested in Spain's and Europe's history of Fascism. But also in terms of cinematography, looking at the dark colours of both reality and fairy tale or the special effects used to create the pan's labyrinth.

Useful sequences

1. Themes

End of film (1:37:20 – 1:42:00 or until end of film)

As the film comes to its end, Ofelia takes her little brother and tries to escape from all the violence around her, into her fairy tale. But Vidal, for whom the baby is the most important in his life, comes running after her and shoots her in the labyrinth. Reality and Ofelia's fairy tale become further entangled and it is difficult for the watcher to tell whether the girl dies or just joins an immortal world as a princess. Why does Ofelia accept the tasks the Pan poses to her?

This scene pictures the two worlds of the film. On the one hand we can see characteristics of a traditional war film that critically engages with the past by showing how towards the end there is a small victory of the *Maquis* against the Fascists. On the other side, reality becomes blurred in a fairy tale that pictures a happy ending for Ofelia, in which she escapes the violence of the Spanish post-war era.

Beyond the concrete events in these last scenes, students may discuss whether there is any allegorical meaning to the ending of the film or analyse how the director deals with the past.

2. Language

Beginning of the film (Beginning – 0:02:20)

At the beginning of the film we are introduced to the fairy tale of the young princess Ofelia, who lived in an underground kingdom where lies and pain do not exist. One day she decides to escape to ground level, to experience the human world and live in the sunshine and the blue skies she had been dreaming of.

This scene introduces students to Spanish fairy-tale language. How do fairy-tales in Spanish usually start? Is there a more common way of saying 'cuentan que hace mucho, mucho tiempo...'? Why does the narrative use the past and the conditional tenses, or the subjunctive?

End of the film (1:44:05 – End)

As the film comes to the end, Ofelia realises that she is not dead but has finally made it back as a princess into her kingdom, by passing the last test. Again, we can notice the use of fairy-tale related language. Why is Ofelia referred to in plural? What other particularities do we find in the language used in the voiceover?

3. Character(s)

The dinner (37:00 – 41:30)

An important dinner is taking place, for which Ofelia has taken a bath and has received a beautiful dress from her mother. Ofelia is however in the middle of the first task of her fairy tale and when she returns her dress is dirty and she is sent to bed without dinner.

Most of the important characters of the film appear in this scene and allow us to analyse them.

- Ofelia is a young 13-year-old girl. She is a gentle daydreamer, but also becomes aware that she needs to help the resistance that is opposed to the regime her stepfather is fighting for. She escapes from fear and violence into a fantasy world, even though the line between both worlds become rather blurred.
- Carmen is the mother of Ofelia. She is having a difficult pregnancy and tries to find peace in the new Spain with her new husband.
- Vidal is Carmen's new husband. He is very loyal to the fascist regime and does not think twice about killing whoever is opposed to him. The most important thing for him is the son he is expecting.
- The doctor is characterised by his loyalty to the resistance. He is humble and caring, and does not hesitate to challenge Vidal in order to defend the Republican resistance.
- Mercedes works for Vidal but is in reality just making a living whilst supporting the resistance. She is tough and fights for her values.

¹ Based on https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/28029/1/gupea_2077_28029_1.pdf

- Pedro is Mercedes' brother, the rebel hidden in the forest and leader of a group of *maquis*. He fights for his people, against fascism, and becomes the worst enemy of Vidal.

How can we describe other characters in the film, such as Pan?

4. Cinematography

Last task (54:45 – 58:00)

The amount of violence and fear around Ofelia makes her hide in her fairy tale. But even the events in the fantasy world are darker than the viewer would expect. Ofelia is confronted with a reproduction of the real world. In her tasks there is always elements that come from what she has experienced just before. In this way in the first task she has to get a key out of the toad. In the real world her stepfather Vidal keeps the only key to the supplies that are essential for the resistance to survive.

During the last task, Ofelia encounters a pale monster, presiding a long table with mouth-watering food, just as the dinner table on the night before was presided by Vidal. When she dares to take two grapes, the monster awakens, eats two fairies and comes after her. This recalls Vidal's character, someone who does not care about innocent people and kills indiscriminately. The fact that the eyes of the monster are in his hands further shows how it is just a killing machine that does not see with its head. When it runs after Ofelia, a link can be drawn to the scene in which Vidal runs behind the *maquis*, shooting with the sole aim of killing as many of them as possible¹. Are there other similarities between what happens in the fairy tale and in real life? Which techniques are used to represent and differentiate the fairy tale from the real life/war aspect?

Further reading

- Analysis of the film
<http://arbor.revistas.csic.es/index.php/arbor/article/download/1313/1322&q=ver+pelicula+de+mena+teniedo+relasion+por+culo+y+toto&sa=X&ei=EtwAUMn5POib1AXu6J2vBw&ved=OCCwQFjAG>
- Analysis of the monsters in the film
https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/28029/1/gupea_2077_28029_1.pdf
- About the history of the *Maquis*
<http://www.terrademaquis.com/es/historia/>
<http://www.territorimaquis.cat/> (in Catalan)
- Post-Civil War in Spain and the International Community.
http://www.spainthenandnow.com/spanish-history/franco-s-spain--international-relations/default_177.aspx
- Interview with the director Guillermo del Toro
<http://www.cineactual.net/entrevista-a-guillermo-del-toro/>
Another interesting interview and additional extras can be found on disc two of the DVD.
- Biography of the director
<http://www.biography.com/people/guillermo-del-toro-92115>