



## STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (030)

TEXT: *Pepita Jiménez* (1874)

AUTHOR: Juan Valera

EDITOR: Stockcero Edition

### PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

(Based on the work's critical reception and Valera's literary philosophy)

#### 1. JUAN VALERA AND HIS LITERARY VISION:

##### **Authorial Profile:**

Juan Valera y Alcalá Galiano (1824-1905) led a diverse life as a writer, diplomat, politician, poet, and critic. *Pepita Jiménez* is widely considered his masterpiece.

##### **Search for the Ideal:**

Valera's work consistently explores the search for the ideal in aesthetics and philosophy, evident in *Pepita Jiménez* through its characters' spiritual and emotional journeys.

##### **The Power of the "Unreal":**

Valera believed in the novel as a space for "fictional history" where "the extraordinary, the ideal, the rare, and the singular intervene," allowing for imaginative depth beyond common occurrences.

#### 2. A PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL OF INNER CONFLICT:

##### **Central Protagonist:**

Luis de Vargas, a young seminarian with a fervent mystical vocation, is the novel's core. His education by his uncle, the dean, shapes his spiritual aspirations.

##### **Clash of Vocations:**

The narrative meticulously details Luis's internal struggle between his spiritual calling and the powerful, earthly attraction he feels for Pepita Jiménez, the young widow his father intends to marry.

##### **Epistolary Form:**

The first part of the novel, narrated through Luis's letters to his uncle, offers deep and precise insight into his psychological battle, making it a quintessential psychological novel.

#### 3. SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS THEMES:

##### **Love and Religiosity:**

The novel is deeply immersed in themes of love and religiosity, exploring how these forces intersect and conflict within individuals and society.

##### **Hypocrisy and Sincerity:**

While presenting a seemingly simple plot, the work subtly examines the genuine convictions and unspoken doubts prevalent in a society grappling with changing moral landscapes.



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## **Authorial Presence:**

- Valera, reflecting a 19th-century narrative style, frequently interjects his own opinions, becoming an active part of the narration and guiding the reader through the philosophical underpinnings of his story.

## **PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION**

### **Spiritual vs. Earthly Love:**

Analyze the conflict between spiritual devotion and romantic love as experienced by Luis de Vargas. How does Valera portray these two forces?

### **Psychological Realism:**

Discuss how *Pepita Jiménez* functions as a psychological novel. How does Valera reveal Luis's inner thoughts and struggles?

### **The Role of Idealism:**

Explore Valera's assertion about the "power of the unreal" in novel writing. How does *Pepita Jiménez*, despite its seemingly simple plot, incorporate "the extraordinary, the ideal, the rare, and the singular"?

### **Pepita Jiménez as a Character:**

Examine Pepita's character. Is she merely an object of desire, or does she possess agency and depth that challenge traditional female roles?

### **Author's Narrative Voice:**

Discuss Valera's decision to include his own opinions and reflections within the narrative. How does this style impact the reader's interpretation of the story and its themes?

### **Moral Dilemmas:**

What moral dilemmas do the characters face, and how do they resolve (or fail to resolve) them? Consider the societal expectations versus personal desires.

## **PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Valera, Juan.** *Pepita Jiménez*. Stockcero.
- Brown, Donald F.** *The Catholic Naturalism of Pardo Bazán*. University of North Carolina Press, 1957. (Though focused on Pardo Bazán, relevant for 19th-century Spanish Catholicism and naturalism).
- Pérez Galdós, Benito.** (For context on 19th-century Spanish novel debates).
- Scanlon, Geraldine.** *Modernism and the Literature of Spanish American Independence*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. (For broader literary context of the period).



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## PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

### 1. Who is the author of *Pepita Jiménez*?

- A) Benito Pérez Galdós
- B) Leopoldo Alas (Clarín)
- C) Juan Valera
- D) Fernán Caballero

**Correct Answer: C**

### 2. The protagonist, Luis de Vargas, is an aspiring:

- A) Lawyer
- B) Missionary priest
- C) Soldier
- D) Painter

**Correct Answer: B**

### 3. What is the central conflict in *Pepita Jiménez*?

- A) A political dispute
- B) A financial struggle
- C) The clash between spiritual vocation and earthly love
- D) A family feud

**Correct Answer: C**

### 4. The first part of the novel is primarily narrated through:

- A) A third-person omniscient narrator
- B) Pepita Jiménez's diary entries
- C) Luis de Vargas's letters to his uncle
- D) Dialogues between characters

**Correct Answer: C**

### 5. What literary genre is *Pepita Jiménez* a prime example of, due to its focus on inner thought and feelings?

- A) Epic poetry
- B) Adventure novel
- C) Psychological novel
- D) Historical romance

**Correct Answer: C**



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