



## STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (067)

**TEXT:** *Martín Rivas* (1862)

**AUTHOR:** Alberto Blest Gana,

**EDITOR:** Jaime Concha (University of California, San Diego)

### PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

(Based on the Critical Introduction by Prof. Jaime Concha)

#### 1. THE CHILEAN "COMÉDIE HUMAINE":

- **The Balzacian Project:** Alberto Blest Gana explicitly aimed to be the "Balzac of Chile." Just as Balzac chronicled the rise of the French bourgeoisie post-1789, Blest Gana set out to document the consolidation of the Chilean bourgeoisie. *Martín Rivas* is the cornerstone of this project, capturing the social stratification of Santiago in the mid-19th century.
- **A "Bourgeois" Literature:** Prof. Concha argues that 19th-century Latin American literature corresponds directly to the establishment of capitalist economic conditions. Blest Gana represents the "middle ground" of this liberal ideology—less radical than José Martí, but more socially observant than the romantics.

#### 2. THE MYTH OF THE "MIDDLE-CLASS HERO":

- **Re-interpreting Martín:** Critics often label Martín Rivas as a hero of the middle class rising against the aristocracy. Jaime Concha corrects this view: Martín is not a representative of a different class, but the *ideological essence* of the bourgeoisie (talent, energy, morality, austerity) seeking its material base (capital).
- **The Marriage as Merger:** The novel's happy ending is not just romantic; it is an economic "merger." Martín (Virtue/Talent) marries Leonor (Capital/Status). He inherits Don Dámaso's business power, legitimizing the wealth with his competence.

#### 3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE GENERATION OF 1851:

- **The Liberal Revolution:** The novel is set in 1850-1851, culminating in the violent liberal uprising against the conservative government.
- **Two Types of Liberals:** The novel contrasts two archetypes:
  - **Rafael San Luis:** The romantic, tragic revolutionary who dies fighting for his ideals.
  - **Martín Rivas:** The pragmatic, industrious liberal who integrates into the system and survives. Blest Gana, writing a decade later (1862), seems to validate the pragmatic path over the revolutionary one.



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## PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

- **Social Mobility:** Compare the trajectory of Martín Rivas to European counterparts like Julien Sorel (*The Red and the Black*) or Rastignac (*Père Goriot*). How does the "upward mobility" narrative function in the rigid class system of Santiago?
- **The "Medio Pelo":** Analyze the role of the Molina family (Doña Bernarda, Edelmira, Amador). How does Blest Gana use this social stratum ("medio pelo") to contrast with the Encina household? Is his portrayal satirical or sympathetic?
- **Money as a Character:** Discuss how financial transactions underpin almost every relationship in the novel (Don Dámaso's obsession with the Senate, the "buying" of husbands, the debt of Rafael).
- **Civilization vs. The Provinces:** Martín arrives from the mining north (Copiapó) to the capital. How is the tension between the "virtuous province" and the "corrupt capital" resolved?

## PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- **Blest Gana, Alberto.** *Martín Rivas*. Edición Crítica de Jaime Concha. Stockcero, 2005.
- **Poblete, Hernán.** *Genio y figura de Alberto Blest Gana*. Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1968.
- **Silva Castro, Raúl.** *Alberto Blest Gana*. Santiago: Imprenta Universitaria, 1941.
- **Unzueta, Fernando.** *La historia en la novela hispanoamericana moderna*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 1996.

## PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

1. **In what year and historical context does the novel take place?** A) During the War of the Pacific (1879) B) During the Independence Wars (1810) C) Santiago de Chile in 1850-1851 D) The Parliamentary Era (1891) **Correct Answer: C**
2. **Where does Martín Rivas come from before arriving in Santiago?** A) Valparaíso B) Copiapó (The North) C) Concepción (The South) D) Mendoza (Argentina) **Correct Answer: B**
3. **What is the main ambition of Don Dámaso Encina?** A) To become a Senator B) To discover a gold mine C) To marry Adelaida D) To return to Spain **Correct Answer: A**
4. **How does the character Rafael San Luis die?** A) In a duel with Agustín B) Of tuberculosis C) Fighting in the street battle of April 20th (1851) D) He commits suicide **Correct Answer: C**
5. **Which social class does Martín represent, according to the critic Jaime Concha?** A) The decadent aristocracy B) The "medio pelo" (lower middle class) C) The rising bourgeoisie (talent and morality seeking capital) D) The proletariat **Correct Answer: C**



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