



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (068)

TEXT: *La bola*

AUTHOR: Emilio Rabasa

EDITOR: Luis Leal (Universidad de California Santa Bárbara)

PART 1: CRITICAL CONTEXT

(Based on Prof. Luis Leal's Introduction)

1. EMILIO RABASA: LAWYER, POLITICIAN, NOVELIST (1856-1930)

- **The Porfiriato Critic:** Rabasa was a prominent intellectual during the Porfiriato (late 19th - early 20th century). While he held political posts (governor, senator), his literary work, especially his five novels, offers a sharp critique of the political landscape.
- **The "Five Novels":** *La bola* (1887), *La gran ciencia* (1887), *El cuarto poder* (1888), *Moneda falsa* (1888), and *La guerra de tres años* (1891) are often seen as a cohesive series, united by their political theme and recurring characters.

2. PIONEER OF MEXICAN REALISM:

- **Spanish Influence:** Leal highlights that Rabasa's realism is more akin to Spanish authors like Galdós than to French realism. It incorporates elements from earlier Mexican novels like *El Periquillo Sarniento*.
- **Nuanced Reality:** Mexican realism, as Rabasa practices it, is never fully objective and often retains romantic elements, showing a nuanced perception of social reality.

3. "LA BOLA" AS SOCIAL CRITIQUE:

- **The "Bola" vs. The "Revolution":** The novel distinguishes between a mere "bola" (a local uprising driven by petty caudillos seeking power for personal gain) and a true "Revolution" (a movement for social change). *La bola* is a scathing indictment of the former.
- **Autobiographical Undertones:** Leal suggests *La bola* might be largely autobiographical, reflecting Rabasa's own experiences in small-town politics.



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PART 2: CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPICS

THEME A: Political Satire & Local Power

- **Discussion:** Analyze how Rabasa uses humor, irony, and satire to expose the flaws of Mexican society during the Porfiriato. How does the "struggle for power in a small town" (San Martín de las Piedras) serve as a microcosm for larger national issues?
- **Character Archetypes:** Discuss characters like Juan Quiñonez and Remedios. Do they represent specific societal roles or ideals?

THEME B: Narrative Techniques & Metafiction

- **Analysis:** Leal points out Rabasa's innovative narrative techniques, such as the narrator directly addressing the reader and foreshadowing a sequel. How do these elements engage the reader?
- **Intertextuality:** Discuss Rabasa's use of intertextuality (references to Virgil's *Bucolics*, *The Wandering Jew*, *The Three Musketeers*). How does this enrich the novel and demonstrate Rabasa's extensive cultural knowledge?

THEME C: Precursor to the Mexican Revolution Novel

- **Comparison:** How does *La bola* (1887) foreshadow themes and styles found in later novels of the Mexican Revolution, such as Azuela's *Los de abajo* (1915)? Leal explicitly links Rabasa's description of a town's takeover to Azuela's.
- **Historical Context:** Discuss the political climate of the Porfiriato as depicted by Rabasa. What are the key criticisms he levels against the caudillos and local power structures?

PART 3: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

1. **Emilio Rabasa is primarily remembered for his contributions to which genre?** A) Poetry B) Drama C) Political essays and novels D) Historical biographies (Correct: C)
2. **What distinguishes Rabasa's "realism" from European realism, according to Luis Leal?** A) Its complete objectivity. B) The total absence of romantic elements. C) A less objective social perception and the presence of romantic elements. D) Its focus solely on urban settings. (Correct: C)
3. **What is the central theme of *La bola*?** A) The importance of love in rural Mexico. B) The struggle for power among local caudillos in a small town. C) The economic development of Mexico during the Porfiriato. D) The daily life of farmers. (Correct: B)
4. **How does Rabasa use the concept of "metanarrative" in *La bola*?** A) By avoiding any direct address to the reader. B) Through the narrator's digressions about his own person and memories. C) By presenting only objective facts without commentary. D) By incorporating poems within the narrative. (Correct: B)
5. **How does Luis Leal describe the relationship between *La bola* and the Mexican Revolution of 1910?** A) *La bola* is a direct continuation of the Revolution. B) *La bola* is a denunciation of the Revolution's ideals. C) *La bola* is a true precursor to the narrative of the Mexican Revolution. D) The two events are unrelated. (Correct: C)



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PART 4: CITATION GUIDE (Stockcero Edition)

Why cite this edition? This Stockcero edition (ISBN 978-987-1136-55-1) includes a critical introduction by Luis Leal, an authority on Mexican literature, providing essential context on Rabasa's pioneering role in Mexican realism and his astute political critique.

Sample Citation (MLA): Rabasa, Emilio. *La bola*. Edited by Luis Leal, Stockcero, 2006.

Explore the "Mexican Revolution & Beyond" Collection: This anthology is part of our comprehensive collection on Mexican literature, including *Los de abajo* (Azuela), *La bola* (Rabasa), and *El Zarco* (Altamirano).

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