



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (090)

TEXT: *Viajes al Río de la Plata y de allí por tierra al Perú*

AUTHOR: Accarete du Biscay

EDITOR: Jean-Paul Duvivier (Université de Paris-Sorbonne)

PART 1: CRITICAL CONTEXT

(Based on Prof. Duvivier's Introduction)

1. THE AUTHOR: A CLANDESTINE TRAVELER

Who was Accarete?

A French merchant (likely Basque from Ciboure) who posed as a Spaniard ("sobrino de Maleo") to bypass the strict Spanish monopoly laws.

The Mask:

He learned Spanish perfectly and used a false identity to travel to Buenos Aires and Potosí (1657-1659).

The Motive:

Purely economic. He represents the rising bourgeois ambition against the rigid Spanish mercantilist system. He was effectively an industrial spy for France (reporting to Minister Colbert).

2. THE GEOPOLITICS OF SMUGGLING (CONTRABANDO)

The System:

Spain forced all trade through the "Galeones" system (Sevilla -> Panama -> Lima). This made goods in Buenos Aires incredibly expensive and scarce.

The Reality:

Buenos Aires survived thanks to smuggling (Dutch, English, French). Accarete's chronicle documents this "open secret" where governors accepted bribes to look the other way.

Historical Value:

The text reveals the fragility of the Spanish Empire's borders and the pragmatism of colonial life.

3. TWO CITIES, TWO WORLDS:

Buenos Aires:

Described as a muddy village, defenseless ("no walls, no moat"), but rich in cattle and leather.

Potosí:

The "Imperial Villa." A metropolis of 160,000 people (larger than Paris at the time), opulent, expensive, and obsessed with silver.



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The Contrast:

Accarette provides a unique eyewitness account of the route connecting the Atlantic to the Andes.

PART 2: CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPICS

THEME A: The Picaresque & Identity

Discussion:

How does Accarette construct his persona? Analyze the scenes where he deceives authorities (e.g., carrying secret papers for the Viceroy). Is he a hero or a villain?

Comparison:

Compare his narrative voice (observational, calculating) with the impassioned voice of Las Casas. How does the "purpose" of the text change the description of the New World?

THEME B: Center vs. Periphery

Analysis:

Buenos Aires was the "back door" of the Empire. Discuss how geography dictated economy and morality. Why were smugglers heroes in Buenos Aires but criminals in Seville?

Textual Evidence:

Look for passages describing the "abundance" of the Pampas vs. the scarcity of manufactured goods.

THEME C:

The "Other" Gaze

Discussion:

Accarette is a Frenchman looking at Spaniards. How does he describe them? (Lazy? Corrupt? Hospitable?).

Spy Report:

Analyze the text as an intelligence report for Louis XIV. What details does he emphasize (fortifications, wealth, women)? Why?



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PART 3: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

1. What was Accarette's primary motivation for traveling to the Americas?

- A) To convert indigenous people to Christianity.
- B) To conduct scientific research on flora and fauna.
- C) Commercial profit and smuggling opportunities.
- D) To escape religious persecution in France.

(Correct: C)

2. How did Accarette manage to enter Spanish territory legally?

- A) He obtained a special permit from the Pope.
- B) He posed as the Basque nephew of a Spanish captain named Maleo.
- C) He invaded Buenos Aires with a French fleet.
- D) He entered through Brazil without being seen.

(Correct: B)

3. According to Accarette, what was the main economic activity in Buenos Aires?

- A) Silver mining.
- B) Sugar plantations.
- C) Trading cattle hides (cueros) and smuggling.
- D) Silk production.

(Correct: C)

4. Why did the Spanish Crown prohibit direct trade with Buenos Aires?

- A) To protect the monopoly of the Seville-Panama-Lima route.
- B) Because the river was too dangerous for navigation.
- C) Because Buenos Aires had no goods to offer.
- D) To prevent the spread of diseases.

(Correct: A)

5. What contrast does Accarette draw between Buenos Aires and Potosí?

- A) Buenos Aires is rich and Potosí is poor.
- B) Buenos Aires is a defenseless village; Potosí is an opulent, crowded metropolis.
- C) Both cities are identical in size and wealth.
- D) Potosí is a port city; Buenos Aires is in the mountains.

(Correct: B)



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PART 4: CITATION GUIDE (Stockcero Edition)

Why cite this edition? The Stockcero edition (ISBN 978-987-1136-26-1) includes the critical introduction by Jean-Paul Duviols, providing essential context on the geopolitical intrigue behind the text.

Sample Citation (MLA): Accarette du Biscay. *Viajes al Río de la Plata*. Edited by Jean-Paul Duviols, Stockcero, 2006.

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