

Westcliff High School for Boys



Sixth Form Spanish

Course Guide and Summer Activities

A-Level students starting in September 2022

Contents

Introduction	3
General outline of the course and the examination	3
The Exam:	3
Outline	4
General Topic Areas	5-6
Literature and Film	7
Further notes on the themes covered in the course	7
Classwork during the year	7
Grammar	8
Oral and written work during the course	9
Written work and approaches to film and literature	9-10
Wider and background reading	11
The Instituto Cervantes	11
Dictionaries – paper and online	12
Online sources	12
Work you should do during the summer holidays before A-Level	13
Tips for success	13
Activities for the summer	14
A short story - Es que somos muy <i>pobres</i> by Juan Rulfo.....	15-17
A list of works of literature recommended for A-level students.....	17

Introduction

This booklet contains information about:

- the structure of the examination at A-Level, in summary and in detail
- the work you will be doing
- suggested background knowledge with bibliography and other sources of information
- some further ideas for success
- some preliminary work you can do before September of the Lower Sixth

General outline of the course and the examination

- 1 This is a two-year course – there is no possibility of “dropping” the course at the end of the first year.
- 2 There is no public examination offering an AS qualification at the end of year 12.
- 3 At the end of year 12 there will be an internal examination which will have the format of the A-Level examination. This will help us to determine your UCAS predicted grade.

The Examination:

The A-Level examination consists of 3 units each involving separate examinations. We will be following the specification of AQA for Spanish.

There is *no* coursework element. All examinations are written on the day or are oral. However, the preparation for your oral examination is considered as a kind of coursework, so it is important to follow the rules and guidance.

The three modules are outlined below in brief.

- **Paper 1 – Listening, Reading and Translation**
- **Paper 2 – Essay Writing on literature and film**
- **Paper 3 – Oral**

A more detailed breakdown follows:

The A-Level examination

Paper	Outline	Time	Weighting (%)
Paper 1	<p>Listening, Reading, Writing</p> <p>Listening questions <i>Reading questions</i> <i>Translation Spanish-English and English – Spanish</i></p>	2½ hours	50 (200 marks)
Paper 2	<p>Essay Writing</p> <p>Two closed-book essays.</p> <p>Essay 1: based on a literary (written) work, 300 words. (we study <i>La casa de Bernarda Alba</i> by Federico García Lorca)</p> <p>Essay 2: based on a film or another literary (written) work, 300 words. (we study <i>El laberinto del fauno</i> by Guillermo del Toro)</p> <p>Access to dictionaries or copies of the literary work is not permitted. There will be a choice of two titles to choose from for each essay.</p>	2 hours	20 (80 marks)
Paper 3	<p>Oral (April-May of Year 13 by teacher examiner: recorded examination)</p> <p>Task 1: <i>Examiner-led discussion of stimulus card about one of the topics covered over the two years (5 min. prep. time + 5-6 min. discussion.</i></p> <p>Task 2: <i>presentation of independent research topic relating to Spanish speaking part of the world (2 min.) + discussion of presentation in depth with examiner (9-10 mins)</i></p> <p>You will be given 5 min to think about the card and make notes if you wish in English or <i>Spanish</i> on a separate piece of paper. Notes are given to the examiner at the end.</p> <p>Notes permitted for the presentation, but only in English. Presentation must NOT relate to one of the themes taught during the course and the topic chosen must be different from those of other students.</p>	21-23 mins (incl. 5 min prep. time)	30 (120 marks)

General Topic Areas

Like GCSE, the vocabulary you will be expected to know is taught and learned through the study of topic areas. These reflect higher levels of knowledge, a deeper understanding of language and thinking than those required at GCSE level. You will see that there are new skills included here, such as the study of literature, and more complex topics which will require research and will allow for debate.

3.1 Social issues and trends

Students must study the themes and sub-themes below in relation to at least one Spanish-speaking country. Students must study the themes and sub-themes using a range of sources, including material from online media.

3.1.1 Aspects of Hispanic society

Students may study all sub-themes in relation to any Spanish-speaking country or countries.

- Modern and traditional values (Los valores tradicionales y modernos)
 - Los cambios en la familia
 - Actitudes hacia el matrimonio/el divorcio
 - La influencia de la Iglesia Católica
- Cyberspace (El ciberespacio)
 - La influencia de internet
 - Las redes sociales: beneficios y peligros
 - Los móviles inteligentes en nuestra sociedad
- Equal rights (La igualdad de los sexos)
 - La mujer en el mercado laboral
 - El machismo y el feminismo
 - Los derechos de los gays y las personas transgénero

3.1.2 Multiculturalism in Hispanic society

Students may study all sub-themes in relation to any Spanish-speaking country or countries.

- Immigration (La inmigración)
 - Los beneficios y los aspectos negativos
 - La inmigración en el mundo hispánico
 - Los indocumentados - problemas
- Racism (El racismo)
 - Las actitudes racistas y xenófobas
 - Las medidas contra el racismo
 - La legislación anti-racista
- Integration (La convivencia)
 - La convivencia de culturas
 - La educación
 - Las religiones

3.2 Political and artistic culture

Students must study the themes and sub-themes below in relation to at least one Spanish-speaking country.

3.2.1 Artistic culture in the Hispanic world

Students must study the sub-theme Spanish regional identity in relation to Spain. Students may study the remaining sub-themes in relation to any Spanish-speaking country or countries.

- Modern day idols (La influencia de los ídolos)
 - Cantantes y músicos
 - Estrellas de televisión y cine
 - Modelos
- Spanish regional identity (La identidad regional en España)
 - Tradiciones y costumbres
 - La gastronomía
 - Las lenguas
- Cultural heritage (El patrimonio cultural)
 - Sitios turísticos y civilizaciones prehispánicas: Machu Picchu, la Alhambra, etc
 - Arte y arquitectura
 - El patrimonio musical y su diversidad

3.2.2 Aspects of political life in the Hispanic world

Students must study Monarchies and dictatorships in relation to any relevant Spanish-speaking country or countries. Students may study the remaining sub-themes in relation to any Spanish-speaking country or countries.

- Today's youth, tomorrow's citizens (Jóvenes de hoy, ciudadanos del mañana)
 - Los jóvenes y su actitud hacia la política : activismo o apatía
 - El paro entre los jóvenes
 - Su sociedad ideal
- Monarchies and dictatorships (Monarquías y dictaduras)
 - La dictadura de Franco
 - La evolución de la monarquía en España
 - Dictadores latinoamericanos
- Popular movements (Movimientos populares)
 - La efectividad de las manifestaciones y las huelgas
 - El poder de los sindicatos
 - Ejemplos de protestas sociales (eg El 15-M, las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, ...)

Literature and Film

Alongside the topics above, you will be studying a written work and a film (two written works can be studied instead of the film option). The current list of set text texts and films is available to view in the Specification on the AQA website, and we currently choose to study *El laberinto del fauno* and *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. We have made these choices as both are outstanding works which past A-level students have enjoyed.

El laberinto del fauno was written and directed by Guillermo del Toro and combines the reality of post-civil war Spain with the protagonist's challenges in a parallel world of potentially even greater danger. *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, meanwhile, is the last play by Federico García Lorca and is considered a masterpiece of Spanish literature. Bernarda condemns her five daughters to eight years of mourning following the death of their father, eight years in which they must not leave the house. We recommend the bilingual Methuen edition of the play, ISBN 9780713686777, and copies will be provided in the summer term of Year 12, but students may wish to buy their own copy to annotate and keep.

By studying literature and film, you gain a deeper insight into the cultural heritage of Spain and the Spanish speaking world, your language skills improve, and you add an important skill to your repertoire which is particularly valued by universities.

Further notes on the themes of the course

In all examination papers, it is essential that you have done wider background reading in addition to the topic material covered in class. This will give you great advantage in the examinations. Wider reading enables you to augment your vocabulary, and to develop a feel for Spanish style. You should endeavour to do some reading in Spanish every day.

A wide range of reading material is available to you and therefore there is no problem in locating suitable texts to cater for every interest. Quality websites on the internet, such as those newspapers like *El País* www.elpais.com and *ABC* www.abc.es are very useful.

It is strongly recommended that you visit one of the Spanish-speaking countries during the course, if you are able to. This will undoubtedly enhance your competence and confidence in spoken and written Spanish. A trip to Almería for GCSE and A Level students has been organised for February 2023 and it is hoped that this will become an annual trip. We have a partner school in Almería, IES Albaída, and there will be opportunities to correspond and meet students from that school.

You will be working in pairs with our Spanish Assistant, Ánxela, on your topics and on conversation in general. You will have one period each week for conversation; these are essential periods that form a **compulsory and integral part of your course and timetable**. You must always attend (registers are completed by the Assistant) and you must give your reasons in advance in the event of any planned absence.

Classwork during the year

You should always aim for a high degree of accuracy and always learn vocabulary and grammar regularly and systematically, e.g. nouns *always* with genders.

Grammar

Whilst the afore mentioned themes reflect the vocabulary which you will have to know, the mastery of grammar is a skill which is can be used in all contexts.

There is a full list of the grammatical structures which you need to master in the specification. <https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/languages/as-and-a-level/spanish-7692/subject-content/grammar>

Revision of verbs and tenses can be done by looking up verb tables in www.wordreference.com and by using www.conjuguemos.com, where there are verb charts by tense and a number of games and printable resources to help verb conjugation practice. www.linguee.com is another useful website which has examples of sentences and words in different contexts.

A-Level students will be expected to have studied all grammar and structures that appear in the AQA lists for **both** AS and A-level. Some of the grammar will be familiar to you, whilst there will be some grammar that is new. Mastering the use of the subjunctive mood is an important part of the A-Level Spanish course.

AS and A-Level grammar

Nouns

Articles

Adjectives

Numerals

Adverbs

Quantifiers/intensifiers

Pronouns

Verbs

Prepositions

Conjunctions

Négation

Questions

Commands

Word order

Other constructions

Discourse markers

Fillers

Oral and written work during the course

Oral work

During the course, you will have a weekly period with the Spanish Assistant, Ánxela. The course and the examination lay great emphasis on oral competence and fluency.

Oral work in the Spanish class may take the form of

- giving short answers to questions on a text
- explaining terms
- discussions
- seminars
- questioning each other
- critique
- group work
- preparing and giving a point of view which may not be your own, etc.
- interpreting exercises
- presenting your chosen topic

Throughout the Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth you will work independently on your presentation and you will practise discussing different topics in depth, as well as practising 'stimulus cards'. You can find examples of the stimulus cards on the AQA website. You should use this as a starting point for *objective observations* on what is presented, *discussing your opinion or speculating* on what is before you, and *commenting on wider issues* associated with the material. You must include examples from the Spanish-speaking world to illustrate your ideas. You have to have opinions!

You should willingly try to communicate in Spanish in general, in order to practise as much as possible with a view to developing fluency.

Written work

Written work in Spanish in class and at home may include

- short answers to questions on a text
- grammar and syntax exercises
- summaries
- tabulated information (advantages/disadvantages, arguments for and against, in bullet-point form), etc
- short accounts
- letters
- translation into Spanish
- essays on topics

You will also need to develop your translation skills from Spanish into English.

The material at this level will naturally be more complex and many more answers will involve *drawing* conclusions from what you hear or read, as opposed to simple factual recall.

How to approach written work

When you are given any piece of written work to do which involves writing prose in Spanish, you should **before** you start:

1. review the topic just covered in your textbook
2. revise the essential vocabulary that has appeared as part of the topic
3. examine the title carefully and the requirements of the task
4. make a plan of points to cover, if none has been given as part of the task
5. re-read the relevant texts in the textbook or in hand-outs, noting useful phrases and expressions
6. consider implications, reasons, opinions, balancing views where appropriate
7. revise any points of grammar that you think may be necessary, and briefly review your last piece of written work to establish where you may have had difficulty in expressing yourself before, be it tenses, word order, etc.

During the writing you should

8. make a draft before re-writing your work
9. try and use new vocabulary
10. generally think before you put pen to paper
11. check all work through before handing in by the deadline given – sometimes it is beneficial to revisit the work a day later so it can be proofread

On **return** of the piece of work you should

12. carefully read all the comments, not just look at the mark
13. carefully examine all errors of content
14. carefully examine all errors of grammar and syntax
15. write a corrected version (sometimes corrections will be sufficient)
16. write at the end of the piece of work any targets for yourself which arise from the work, such as the use of vocabulary, revision of or finding out about grammatical structures/rules of syntax
17. ask about any issue of which you are unsure
18. compare the comments and mark with the previous piece of work to establish whether you are making progress
19. retain the piece of work in your exercise book for future reference.

How to approach literature and film

This will be a major step up for most students.

It is essential that new vocabulary is looked up and that the passages/scenes intended for reading/viewing and discussion in class are prepared in advance in order that you might get the most out of this part of the course.

Short questions, then essays follow, beginning with summaries and then themes. You should make use of new vocabulary in essays and oral work.

It is essential to master the facts, consider the interpretation, engage in discussion and revisit parts covered so that the work is known in detail and so that you are fully prepared for examination questions. Refer to the above advice on essays.

Wider and background reading

- The library clearly contains books, reference and for loan, and some computers
- We have a small number of books in the Spanish department which students may borrow
- The Sixth Form Study Centre contains computers for research

The internet represents an excellent resource for quick reading. Reading and listening to news items as often as possible in Spanish is invaluable, as you will absorb vocabulary and expressions useful for your development in the subject. Of greatest use are current affairs programmes and articles because you will already know something about the subject before you tackle a Spanish text. This will help you with understanding. Also useful are articles which exist in both Spanish and English. This will help you identify vocabulary and idioms very quickly.

The site www.rtve.es allows you to watch news from Spain and Spanish-speaking countries.

All Spanish newspapers and TV channels have websites on which you can watch videos such as news summaries. You may also find it helpful to watch the news in Spanish on www.bbc.co.uk/mundo

The Spanish Department does have a small collection of literature and works of non-fiction which students may borrow. Some are very recent publications on immigration and racism, offering a range of benefits and will be rewarding reads. A list of works of literature suitable for A-Level students is listed on page 16 of this document.

Candidates at A Level Spanish are expected to have a working knowledge of Spanish society and culture, and you must keep up to date.

The Instituto Cervantes

www.cervantes.es

Founded in 1991, the *Instituto Cervantes*' mission is the teaching of the Spanish language. The *Instituto* also collaborates with schools in the UK on educational cooperation programmes to promote Spanish language learning and organise teacher training. The *Centro Virtual Cervantes* website <https://cvc.cervantes.es/> has a rich variety of resources, including **Lecturas paso a paso** for graded reading practice, and **Pasatiempos de Rayuela** for interactive games aimed at different levels of fluency in Spanish.

If you are interested in how Spanish differs from one country to another, have a look at **Voces hispánicas** within the *Centro Virtual Cervantes* website. There you will be able to listen to examples of speakers from different Spanish-speaking countries as well as hear examples of regional differences in Spain. The videos are accompanied by notes on linguistic features and pronunciation, and there is also a transcript for each video below the accompanying notes. The videos are a little old, but don't let this put you off. https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/voces_hispanicas/default.htm .

Dictionaries – paper and online

Spanish-English/English-Spanish paper

The *Oxford Spanish Dictionary* or *The Collins Spanish Dictionary (complete and unabridged)* are the recommended dictionaries. You may find it useful to have a copy of one of these at home.

Monolingual

A monolingual dictionary can be useful, but you do not need to buy one.

Online Spanish-English/English-Spanish

www.wordreference.com - good, but *do* read the forums. www.linguee.com – excellent for examples of sentences and words in context, but check carefully. www.rae.es – there is a very useful monolingual dictionary on the website of the Real Academia Española.

You may enjoy seeing the tweets of the RAE if you use Twitter. There are interesting questions that are answered when the hashtag **#dudaRAE** is used, and the RAE tweets **#PalabraDelDía** and **Consultas de la semana** <https://twitter.com/RAEinforma>

Online sources

Keeping up to date and making your Spanish learning exciting is much easier than it used to be. Here are a few sites, but please do your own research and please share ideas with the MFL team.

Netflix has a great number of Spanish-language series and films, as you may know already, ranging from the contemporary **La casa de papel** to the period drama **Las chicas del cable**. **Nevenka** and **El caso Alcasser** are amongst some excellent documentaries which will give you an insight into Spanish society. Or try **Las crónicas del taco** for another view of Mexico.

If you find a series that you really enjoy, try watching it first with English subtitles then watch the same episode with Spanish subtitles. It's really helpful for picking up new vocabulary and focusing on the language once you know that you can follow the plot.

If you don't have Netflix, www.rtve.es has many television series, as well as the news and radio in Spanish. You may enjoy **El Ministerio del Tiempo**, **Masterchef**, **Cuéntame cómo pasó** or scroll through the films and other series that are free to watch. Some may not be available outside of Spain, but many are. We recommend putting on the subtitles; although these will be in Spanish, it still helps to understand when there are no English subtitles available.

There are some useful links to news and TV websites in Spanish-speaking countries that are listed on: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/spanish/>

As well as the AQA website, the Eduqas website also has some interactive resources for Spanish A-Level. Go to <https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/Pages/ResourceByArgs.aspx?subId=29&lvlId=1>

Work you should do during the summer holidays before you start the A-level course

- Buy a good large dictionary **or** ensure you explore the online dictionaries already mentioned
- Read newspapers and magazines in Spanish
- Listen to Spanish radio; even having it playing in the background is good for your language skills
- Watch Spanish TV or series on Netflix or RTVE
- Acquaint yourself with some general knowledge about Spanish-speaking countries
- Do some of the suggested activities on the follow page – Activities for the summer

Tips for success

- Enjoy your studies and take an active interest; the students who do best in Spanish are those who love it and live it.
- Organise your work properly; we will use large format exercise books, but you also will need a folder organised by topic at home for extra materials.
- Hand in work on time – give it proper priority
- Research and investigate thoroughly
- Balance the demands of the various parts of the course
- Keep up to date with new vocabulary and grammar
- Ask for extra help if you need it
- Share ideas and problems
- Keep to all deadlines
- Participate and be proactive in lessons
- Attend every lesson punctually and with the right materials
- Use people – your teachers, the Librarian and the Assistant and others you may know outside school – as a resource.

Activities for the summer

You have some time to spend getting ready for the A-Level course and we look forward to hearing about how you have been preparing over the summer. We do not expect you to have studied every day for weeks and weeks, but we will be disappointed and unimpressed if someone turns up to the first lesson and says they have done nothing to prepare for A-Level Spanish.

Here are some suggestions, but they are not exhaustive and merely serve as a starting point to give you ideas and reference materials. You should choose something that interests you, but please don't neglect grammar and verbs in particular.

1. Read the information prepared by Ánxela on the **regions of Spain** and complete the activities throughout the booklet. There is a wealth of information here and we hope you will be inspired to delve deeper into some of the aspects of the regions that you find most interesting. You should also prepare your own research on **Andalucía**, in the style of Ánxela's research.
2. Read some **literature**. There is a short story on the next few pages, followed by a list of suggested books. Look up summaries of the titles mentioned and choose one to read. (You may be able to find a PDF online or in the Files section of the MS Team, for WHSB students. Alternatively the e-book may be free or cost less than the paper copy.)
3. If you enjoy **history**, there is much to explore. Here are some suggestions:
 - *Al-Andalus* may appeal to you if Spain's Islamic past is of interest;
 - *Los Reyes Católicos*
 - *La Inquisición*
 - *El imperio español y los territorios*
 - *El imperio Inca*
 - *La revolución mexicana*
 - *La Guerra Civil Española*
 - *Simón Bolívar*
 - *Fidel Castro*
 - *Augusto Pinochet*
4. For artists, musicians and future architects, why not find out about the **cultural heritage** of Spain and the Spanish-speaking world? Research famous artists, paintings, galleries, delve deeper into music, find the lyrics to the songs that appeal to you, or go on virtual tours of buildings you may discover. *Gaudi, Picasso, Dalí, Kahlo, Velázquez* and *Goya* are just some names to start.
5. If you are interested in **politics** and **current affairs**, find out about Spanish political parties, the rise of *Vox* or the transition from dictatorship to democracy in the 1970s. You may like to look up human rights activists *Helena Maleno Garzón* and *Sani Ladan*, antiracism activists *Moha Gerehou* and *Desirée Bela-Lobedde* (they can be found on social media), *los CIE* and *los manteros*.
6. Brush up on **verbs** and **tenses** using www.conjuguemos.com or www.languagesonline.org.uk – (<https://www.languagesonline.org.uk/Hotpotatoes/spanishindex.html#Grammar>).
7. Watch a **Spanish series** on Netflix or www.rtve.es and find out more about the cast, crew, locations, its popularity in the Spanish-speaking world and, if it is based on real life events, how true to the facts the writers and producers decided to make it.

Lectura - Un cuento corto

Es que somos muy pobres

(de la colección de cuentos en *El llano en llamas*) por
Juan Rulfo

Aquí todo va de mal en peor. La semana pasada se murió mi tía Jacinta, y el sábado, cuando ya la habíamos enterrado y comenzaba a bajársenos la tristeza, comenzó a llover como nunca. A mi papá eso le dio coraje, porque toda la cosecha de cebada estaba asoleándose en el solar. Y el aguacero llegó de repente, en grandes olas de agua, sin darnos tiempo ni siquiera a esconder aunque fuera un manojo; lo único que pudimos hacer, todos los de mi casa, fue estarnos arrimados debajo del tejabán, viendo cómo el agua fría que caía del cielo quemaba aquella cebada amarilla tan recién cortada.

Y apenas ayer, cuando mi hermana Tacha acababa de cumplir doce años, supimos que la vaca que mi papá le regaló para el día de su santo se la había llevado el río.

El río comenzó a crecer hace tres noches, a eso de la madrugada. Yo estaba muy dormido y, sin embargo, el estruendo que traía el río al arrastrarse me hizo despertar en seguida y pegar el brinco de la cama con mi cobija en la mano, como si hubiera creído que se estaba derrumbando el techo de mi casa. Pero después me volví a dormir, porque reconocí el sonido del río y porque ese sonido se fue haciendo igual hasta traerme otra vez el sueño.

Cuando me levanté, la mañana estaba llena de nublazones y parecía que había seguido lloviendo sin parar. Se notaba en que el ruido del río era más fuerte y se oía más cerca. Se oía, como se huele una quemazón, el olor a podrido del agua revuelta.

A la hora en que me fui a asomar, el río ya había perdido sus orillas. Iba subiendo poco a poco por la calle real, y estaba metiéndose a toda prisa en la casa de esa mujer que le dicen *la Tambora*. El chapaleo del agua se oía al entrar por el corral y al salir en grandes chorros por la puerta. *La Tambora* iba y venía caminando por lo que era ya un pedazo de río, echando a la calle sus gallinas para que se fueran a esconder a algún lugar donde no les llegara la corriente.

Y por el otro lado, por donde está el recodo, el río se debía de haber llevado, quién sabe desde cuándo, el tamarindo que estaba en el solar de mi tía Jacinta, porque ahora ya no se ve ningún tamarindo. Era el único que había en el pueblo, y por eso nomás la gente se da cuenta de que la creciente esta que vemos es la más grande de todas las que ha bajado el río en muchos años.

Mi hermana y yo volvimos a ir por la tarde a mirar aquel amontonadero de agua que cada vez se hace más espesa y oscura y que pasa ya muy por encima de donde debe estar el puente. Allí nos estuvimos horas y horas sin cansarnos viendo la cosa aquella. Después nos subimos por la barranca, porque queríamos oír bien lo que decía la gente, pues abajo, junto al río, hay un gran ruidazal y sólo se ven las bocas de muchos que se abren y se cierran y como que quieren decir algo; pero no se oye nada. Por eso nos subimos por la barranca, donde también hay gente mirando el río y contando los perjuicios que ha hecho. Allí fue donde supimos que el río se había llevado a *la Serpentina*, la vaca esa que era de mi hermana Tacha porque mi papá se la regaló para el día de su cumpleaños y que tenía una oreja blanca y otra colorada y muy bonitos ojos.

No acabo de saber por qué se le ocurriría a *la Serpentina* pasar el río este, cuando sabía que no era el mismo río que ella conocía de a diario. *La Serpentina* nunca fue tan atarantada. Lo más seguro es que ha de haber venido dormida para dejarse matar así nomás por nomás. A mí muchas veces me tocó despertarla cuando le abría la puerta del corral porque si no, de su cuenta, allí se hubiera estado el día entero con los ojos cerrados, bien quieta y suspirando, como se oye suspirar a las vacas cuando duermen.

Y aquí ha de haber sucedido eso de que se durmió. Tal vez se le ocurrió despertar al sentir que el agua pesada le golpeaba las costillas. Tal vez entonces se asustó y trató de regresar; pero al volverse se encontró entreverada y acalambrada entre aquella agua negra y dura como tierra corrediza. Tal vez bramó pidiendo que le ayudaran. Bramó como sólo Dios sabe cómo.

Yo le pregunté a un señor que vio cuando la arrastraba el río si no había visto también al becerro que andaba con ella. Pero el hombre dijo que no sabía si lo había visto. Sólo dijo que la vaca manchada pasó patas arriba muy cerquita de donde él estaba y que allí dio una voltereta y luego no volvió a ver ni los cuernos ni las patas ni ninguna señal de vaca. Por el río rodaban muchos troncos de árboles con todo y raíces y él estaba muy ocupado en sacar leña, de modo que no podía fijarse si eran animales o troncos los que arrastraba.

Nomás por eso, no sabemos si el becerro está vivo, o si se fue detrás de su madre río abajo. Si así fue, que Dios los ampare a los dos.

La apuración que tienen en mi casa es lo que pueda suceder el día de mañana, ahora que mi hermana Tacha se quedó sin nada. Porque mi papá con muchos trabajos había conseguido a *la Serpentina*, desde que era una vaquilla, para dársela a mi hermana, con el fin de que ella tuviera un capitalito y no se fuera a ir de piruja como lo hicieron mis otras dos hermanas, las más grandes.

Según mi papá, ellas se habían echado a perder porque éramos muy pobres en mi casa y ellas eran muy retobadas. Desde chiquillas ya eran rezongonas. Y tan luego que crecieron les dio por andar con hombres de lo peor, que les enseñaron cosas malas. Ellas aprendieron pronto y entendían muy bien los chiflidos, cuando las llamaban a altas horas de la noche. Después salían hasta de día. Iban cada rato por agua al río y a veces, cuando uno menos se lo esperaba, allí estaban en el corral, revolcándose en el suelo, todas encueradas y cada una con un hombre trepado encima.

Entonces mi papá las corrió a las dos. Primero les aguantó todo lo que pudo; pero más tarde ya no pudo aguantarlas más y les dio carrera para la calle. Ellas se fueron para Ayutla o no sé para dónde; pero andan de pirujas.

Por eso le entra la mortificación a mi papá, ahora por la Tacha, que no quiere vaya a resultar como sus otras dos hermanas, al sentir que se quedó muy pobre viendo la falta de su vaca, viendo que ya no va a tener con qué entretenerse mientras le da por crecer y pueda casarse con un hombre bueno, que la pueda querer para siempre. Y eso ahora va a estar difícil. Con la vaca era distinto, pues no hubiera faltado quién se hiciera el ánimo de casarse con ella, sólo por llevarse también aquella vaca tan bonita.

La única esperanza que nos queda es que el becerro esté todavía vivo. Ojalá no se le haya ocurrido pasar el río detrás de su madre. Porque si así fue, mi hermana Tacha está tantito así de retirado de hacerse piruja. Y mamá no quiere.

Mi mamá no sabe por qué Dios la ha castigado tanto al darle unas hijas de ese modo, cuando en su familia, desde su abuela para acá, nunca ha habido gente mala. Todos fueron criados en el temor de Dios y eran muy obedientes y no le cometían irreverencias a nadie. Todos fueron por el estilo. Quién sabe de dónde les vendría a ese par de hijas tuyas aquel mal ejemplo. Ella no se acuerda. Le da vueltas a todos sus recuerdos y no ve claro dónde estuvo su mal o el pecado de nacerle una hija tras otra con la misma mala costumbre. No se acuerda. Y cada vez que piensa en ellas, llora y dice: "Que Dios las ampare a las dos."

Pero mi papá alega que aquello ya no tiene remedio. La peligrosa es la que queda aquí, la Tacha, que va como palo de ocote crece y crece y que ya tiene unos comienzos de senos que prometen ser como los de sus hermanas: puntiagudos y altos y medio alborotados para llamar la atención.

-Sí -dice-, le llenará los ojos a cualquiera dondequiera que la vean. Y acabará mal; como que estoy viendo que acabará mal.

Ésa es la mortificación de mi papá.

Y Tacha llora al sentir que su vaca no volverá porque se la ha matado el río. Está aquí a mi lado, con su vestido color de rosa, mirando el río desde la barranca y sin dejar de llorar. Por su cara corren chorretes de agua sucia como si el río se hubiera metido dentro de ella.

Yo la abrazo tratando de consolarla, pero ella no entiende. Lloro con más ganas. De su boca sale un ruido semejante al que se arrastra por las orillas del río, que la hace temblar y sacudirse todita, y, mientras, la creciente sigue subiendo. El sabor a podrido que viene de allá salpica la cara mojada de Tacha y los dos pechitos de ella se mueven de arriba abajo, sin parar, como si de repente comenzaran a hincharse para empezar a trabajar por su perdición.

If you have enjoyed this short story, *Es que somos muy pobres*, and would like to read more works of literature, here are some suggestions from the AQA list of texts that can be studied at A-level:

- Gabriel García Márquez *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*
- Laura Esquivel *Como agua para chocolate*
- Ramón J. Sender *Réquiem por un campesino español*
- Carlos Ruiz Zafón *La sombra del viento*
- Isabel Allende *La casa de los espíritus*
- Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer *Rimas*
- Fernando Fernán-Gómez *Las bicicletas son para el verano*
- Luis de Castresana *El otro árbol de Guernica*
- Gabriel García Márquez *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba*

You may be interested in other works by the above-mentioned authors, and also

- Carmen Laforet *Nada*
- Juan Rulfo *Pedro Párramo*
- Anónimo *Lazarillo de Tormes*
- Javier Cercas *Soldados de Salamina*
- Miguel de Unamuno *Niebla*

We hope that this introduction to the course has inspired you to get ready for your A-Level course. We look forward to seeing you in September.

¡Buena suerte!

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