

ESPAÑOL 201-202
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DEVELOPING READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH SPECIAL READINGS

LA DAMA DEL ALBA

Act II

Situation. Act II continues in the home of the family we met in the first act. Telva has taken the children upstairs to bed. The *Peregrina* has fallen asleep in a chair. As the clock strikes nine, she tries to wake up, but is so tired from playing with the children that she falls back into her slumber. The *Abuelo* stares at her for a long time, trying to remember where he has seen her before. He recalls the three occasions she mentioned that she had been in the *pueblo* before. As he discusses it with Telva and puts the facts together, he suddenly realizes who she is, and remembers where he saw her. His reaction is so violent that it frightens Telva. Who is she? Why does he start to tremble? Why has she come?

Characters. The second act continues to develop the characters of the *Abuelo* and Telva. We know that Telva is a very strong person from the way she reacted to the death of her 7 sons. We see how her practical nature causes her to distrust the intentions of the strangely-behaving *Peregrina*, and we see her love and concern for the children when as the *Abuelo* tells her there is danger, she rushes up to their room to protect them. Most of Act II focuses on the conversation between the *Abuelo* and the *Peregrina*, and we see a bond of friendship form between them. As he (and the reader too) begins to understand her we learn that she is compassionate and caring. As a woman she has all the emotions and feelings of a woman. We feel sorry for her, just as the *Abuelo* does. We learn that the *Abuelo* was in the mine accident where he showed great strength and courage, and we see his sensitivity as he begins to understand the *Peregrina's* point of view. At the end of the act we see his wisdom in knowing that to convince the *Madre* to allow Adela to live in Angelica's room, he must appeal to her religious nature.

Style. What a marvelous sense of humor Casona shows as he has the *Abuelo* chide the *Peregrina* for losing two people the same night (p.59), and what a chuckle he gives us with the response of the *Peregrina* to the Martin's request for instructions on how to revive a person who has lost consciousness (p. 54). Casona's use of symbolism now becomes clear to us. Knowing who the *Peregrina* is, and who it was she came to meet, we now understand the strange scene where she knelt down and put the spurs on Martin's boots. (She said it was an "*acto de humildad*" but we now see that it was more than that.) What was she symbolically preparing him for? And now that he missed his meeting with her, what does the wiping away the red spot on his forehead symbolically represent? We saw how Casona used *presagio* in the first act with the barking of the dog, the *Madre's* concern about Martin having an accident at the *Paso del Rabi6n*, and the *Abuelo's* apprehension at the *Peregrina's* mention that she had been in the *pueblo* before. Can you find more examples of *presagio*? (Hint: pp.59-60.)

Culture. Pay careful attention to the description of the activities which the *Abuelo* and Telva mention as they discuss the wedding of *la mayorazca*. (She was apparently the oldest daughter of the most important family in the town.) Her wedding must have been the social event of the decade and gives us great insight into the customs and traditions of a small town in Asturias. How did the people of the *pueblo* learn of the death of the *herrero*? What does that tell us about life in the mountains of Asturias?

Language Objectives. What change in address between the *Abuelo* and the *Peregrina* you see as he wakes her up and tells her he knows who she is? How does this increase the intimacy of their profound discussion about death? What manner of speaking do both the *Abuelo* and the *Peregrina* use to convince each other that their point of view is correct?

Key Vocabulary. As you read the second act, be aware of the meaning of key words and phrases, such as the following. You will use these words in discussing your reading.

Yocab. activo/clave

la barranca(cañada)-ravine
la nevadona-snow storm
el pastor-shepherd
congelado-frozen
la boda-wedding
la mayorazca-oldest daughter
(heir to family estate)
el herrero-blacksmith
la escopeta-shotgun
el corzo-stag, male deer

el paso-the (mountain) pass
el relámpago-bolt of lightning
el castaño-chestnut tree
la mina (de carbón)-coal mine
el derrumbe-(rock)slide
la madrugada-dawn
el alba (f.)-dawn
la mancha-spot, stain
el arroyo-the brook, stream

morir-to die
muerto(a)-dead
la muerte-death
cazar-to hunt
disparar-to shoot (gun)
matarse-to kill oneself
suicidarse-com. suicide
ahogarse-to drown
desmayar(se)-to faint
reanimar-to revive
desangrar-to bleed