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Horacio Quiroga: The Poe of Latin America

Guide for Curriculum Unit 85.04.02
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Horacio Quiroga (1878-1937) was an Uruguayan writer renowned for his short stories. He is sometimes called the Poe of Latin America because of his obsession with love, insanity, cruelty, and death—all frequent themes in his stories. A skilled technician, Quiroga’s work is noted for its realism, intensity, and verbal economy. Most of his stories take place in the jungle and often pit rational man against irrational Nature. Quiroga is fascinated by man’s actions in the face of extremely stressful situations. This unit explores Quiroga’s life, his major themes and his stylistic principles. It then discusses two of his most masterful stories, “A la deriva” (“Drifting”) and “El hijo” (“The Son”). Both stories deal with sudden death and man’s efforts not to succumb to it. “A la deriva” begins with a snake bite. The story traces coincidentally the man’s actions to escape death and the poison’s progress throughout his body. “El hijo” is the heart wrenching story of a father’s frantic search for his son who has gone into the jungle to hunt and has failed to return. Both stories are emotionally riveting and guaranteed immediately to engage the interest of students. The accompanying exercises ask the students to use a variety of critical thinking skills to evaluate the stories and their own reactions to them.

(Recommended for Spanish II, III, or IV classes, grades 9-12)

Key Words

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