

# YERMA (by Federico García Lorca)

## 1. Introduction

*Yerma* is one of the tragedies written by Lorca, It reflects the Spanish society of his time and shows the role of women, always discriminated against due to social conventions.

*Yerma* is a play that makes us think about the Christian morality that has led many people to get married not because of love but out of obligation, need ,or for the main reason to procreate.

This is the story of Yerma, which means barren, a married woman living in rural Spain. She has no children, so her obsession with motherhood drives her to kill her husband in the end.

There are many topics we can deal with in the play: motherhood, arranged marriages, passionate love (as something negative), jealousy, and isolated women.

The main character seems not to have power to change her situation, the same problem many women have had to face for centuries.

## Activities (pre-task)

1- Read García Lorca's biography to learn about his life. You'll understand his rebellion

against the rules , why he was shot and killed and the political censorship his work had to undergo.

2- Name two more plays that belong to the Rural Trilogy and have women and social conventions as the main themes.

3- García Lorca also wrote poetry. Read *Little Vienesse waltz* and then listen to Leonard Cohen's song *Take this waltz*.

**[www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQm1OmLMNno](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQm1OmLMNno)**

There are many studies and theories about Lorca's poem. One of them says Lorca

is describing a hidden, forbidden love he cannot confess. Homosexuality wasn't

acceptable at that time. **Is homosexuality accepted at present? Have things changed much? Give your opinion.**

## YERMA= BARREN.

**Read these extracts from the play *Yerma* , and then answer the questions.**

**a- An old woman is talking to Yerma, who is sad and desperate because she can't get pregnant.**

Yerma: Why am I childless? Must I be left in the prime of my life taking care of little birds, or putting up tiny pleated curtains at my little windows? No. You've got to tell me what to do, for I'll do anything you tell me.

Woman: Do you really love your husband?

Yerma: I don't know.

Woman: Don't you feel something like a dream when he brings his lips close to yours? Tell me.

Yerma: No. I've never noticed it.

Woman: Never? Not even when you've danced?

Yerma: Perhaps....one time....with Víctor.

Woman: But, with Juan, your husband?

Yerma: My husband is something else. My father gave him to me and I took him, with happiness. From the first day I was engaged to him I thought about...our children.

**Questions. Write the answers.**

**According to Yerma, What are the tasks or household chores a woman with no children is bound to do? Does it remind you of a fairy tale? Which one?**

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**Does she love her husband?**

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**Her marriage was arranged. Was she against it? Why?**

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**Do you know anybody whose marriage has been arranged? Do you agree with it?**

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**Some cultures, like gypsies or people from India still practise this tradition.**

**Read and watch a piece of news about a 20 year old girl, Diptiben Mistry, who issued her family in law because her arranged marriage turned into slavery.**

**Abcnews.go.com (24<sup>th</sup> January 2012)**

**b- Yerma feels more and more isolated, so she starts going out to the fields. Juan, her husband, criticizes her attitude.**

Juan: Don't you know my way of thinking? The sheep in the fold and women at home. You go out too much. Haven't you always heard me say that?

Yerma: Justly. Women in their homes, when those homes aren't tombs. When the chairs break and the linen sheets wear out with use. But not here. Each night, when I go to bed, I find my bed newer.....

Juan: Always the same thing. It's more than five years. I've almost forgotten about it.

Yerma: But I'm not you. Men get other things in life: their cattle, their trees, conversations, but women have only their children and the care of their children.

Juan: I don't like people pointing me out. That's why I want to see this door closed.

Yerma: It's not sin to talk with people

Juan: But it can seem one. Remember, you are a married woman.

**Write the answers to these questions.**

**Juan says: "The sheep in the fold and women at home". Translate into Spanish.**

**There are many sayings that compare cattle and women in a very chauvinist way. Give an example in Spanish.**

**Remember, language is a way to show violence against women.**

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**Yerma feels really isolated and lonely at home. What does she compare her house**

**with?.....**

**Does Juan feel jealous ? Is he worried about Yerma's feelings?**

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**Why doesn't he want Yerma to walk on her own and talk with people?**

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**Do you think keeping up appearances is still important for women nowadays?**

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**THINK: When people say things have changed, and now men and women are considered to be completely equal, they forget there are still some prejudices in our society.  
We must continue working to change this situation.**