



DACQ

Dynasty Academic Competition

Questions

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Study Guide:
South American Literature

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Argentina

Jorge Luis Borges (1889-1986): One of the most influential writers of the twentieth century, with an extensive corpus of works. Noted for numerous short stories, most of which were collected in the seminal *Ficciones* ("Fictions"). His story "The Aleph" describes a point located in the cellar of Carlos Daneri which contains all other points in the universe. "The Garden of the Forking Paths" describes Richard Madden's pursuit of double agent Yu Tsun during World War I, while "The Library of Babel" describes a structure of hexagonal rooms that contains every possible collection of writing that could be assembled from individual letters. Utopian themes dominate his "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" while examined literary translation and writing in general in "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote." Borges inherited a congenital disorder which caused him to lose his sight in middle age, though he remained a dominant figure in world literature throughout his life.

Julio Cortazar (1914-1984): Noted for writing (sometimes extremely) experimental works, many of which employ a stream-of-consciousness technique. Some major short story collections include *The Secret Weapons* and *Bestiary*, while major novels include *62: A Model Kit* and *Around the Day in 80 Worlds*. His magnum opus is the surreal *Hopscotch*, which traces Horacio Oliveira's pursuit of the enigmatic woman La Maga. The title is derived from the novel's structure, which gives readers the option of reading a shorter book or periodically jumping into sub-plot chapters, like hopscotch.

Jose Hernandez (1834-1886): Early Argentine writer whose fame rests on his epic poem *Martin Fierro*, the definitive romantic work about the lifestyle of the *gaucho* ("cowboys" who inhabited the fertile *pampas* plains region of Argentina). "Martin Fierro" was also adopted as the name of several major Argentine literary magazines.

Manuel Puig (1932-1990): Living mostly in Mexico, Puig first gained acclaim with *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth*, which uses a surrogate protagonist named Toto to paint a portrait of the author's own obsession and ultimate frustration with dedicating his life to cinema. Other works include *Heartbreak Tango* and his most famous, *The Kiss of the Spider Woman*, which uses a pseudo-frame tale structure based on various films to examine the relationship between two prisoners, the homosexual Molina and the political dissident Valentin.

Ernesto Sabato (1911): Though more famous recently for his role in investigating the *desaparecidos* of Argentina's Dirty War (documented in his *Never Again*), his literary fame rests on the essay *One and the Universe* and the novels *Heroes and Tombs* and *The Tunnel*, the latter of which centers on painter Juan Pablo Castel. Interestingly, Sabato also holds a PhD in physics and worked as a research scientist at the Curie Institute.

Chile

Isabel Allende (1942-): Magical realism author, whose father was the cousin of deposed Chilean president Salvador Allende, an event which forced her to flee to Venezuela and eventually to the United States (where she currently resides). Her best-known (and most lauded) literary achievement may be her debut novel, *The House of the Spirits*. The work centers around three generations of the Trueba family, whose patriarch Esteban manages a hacienda called Tres Marias. His wife Clara, daughter Blanca, and granddaughter Alba are the central characters. Other major publications include *Eva Luna*, *City of the Beasts*, and *The Sum of Our Days*. Allende's works frequently center around children (she began her career working for a children's literary magazine), and her *Paula* is structured as a letter to

her dying daughter.

Jose Donoso (1924-1996): One of the early champions of magical realism, Donoso is known chiefly for three works, including the much-anthologized “The Blue Woman.” His *The Place without Limits* centers on a bordello owned by Manuela, while his best-known work is *The Obscene Bird of Night*. The novel dissects the personality of Humberto Penaloza in an adaptation of a popular Chilean myth centering on a monster called Invunche.

Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957): Famous poet who won the 1945 Nobel Prize for Literature. “Gabriela Mistral” is actually a pen name drawn from Gabriela Mistral's two favorite poets, Gabriele D'annunzio and Frederic Mistral. Her most frequently anthologized poems include “Intimate Letter” and “His Name is Today.” She is best-known for her collections *Temura*, *Tala*, *Desolation*, and *Sonnets of Death*.

Pablo Neruda (1904-1973): Born Neftali Ricardo Reyes, Neruda was an incredibly influential poet from the publication of his first collections: *Book of Twilights* and *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* (his best-known work). The body of his poetry ranges from social commentary (*Spain in My Heart*) to surrealism (*Residence in the Earth*) to a fifteen-volume celebration of Chile and South America (*Canto General*). His other major work, *Elemental Odes*, consists of poems mostly celebrating the majesty of nature.

Columbia

Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1927-): Perhaps the most widely-read South American novelist, Garcia Marquez is the champion of the magical realist style, his innovations in which earned him the 1982 Nobel Prize for Literature. He is most famous for his novels, though novellas like *Leaf Storm*, *No One Writes to the Colonel*, and *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* are also notable. Garcia Marquez drew inspiration from numerous tyrannical Caribbean dictators to write the lyrical *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, and while the love triangle between Juvenal Urbino, Florentino Ariza, and Fermina Daza ends with the raising of a flag indicating virulence in his *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Many Garcia Marquez works take place in (or at least reference) the fictional city of Macondo, which is the subject of his famous chronicle of the Buendia family, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Most recently, he published the 2005 novel *Memories of my Melancholy Whores*. Garcia Marquez is also known for using his immense popularity in Columbia to frequently act as a negotiator between rebel groups and the government.

Peru

Mario Vargas Llosa (1936-): A still very much active author known for his ability to mix genre and subject matter. He drew inspiration from his own marriage to pen *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*, which follows the young student Mario as he works at soap-opera radio station. He delved into South American history with *The War at the End of the World* and chose actual centers of Peruvian culture for other works, setting *The Time of the Hero* at the Leoncio Prado Military Academy and *The Green House* at a famous Peruvian bar. Vargas Llosa was also an unsuccessful candidate for the Peruvian Presidency, losing to 100% fairly elected former dictator, Alberto Fujimori.