

GAUCHOS BY REBECCA HINSON

(HISTORY/NONFICTION)

Questions for *Gauchos* by Rebecca Hinson

LEVEL 1: What does it say?

General Understanding

- Quote accurately from the text to describe Gaucho clothing and gear, and how it is used in daily work.

Key Details

- Determine two or more main ideas of *The Gauchos of Argentina* (below) and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

Being a Gaucho is more than leading a life of solitude and caring for horses and cattle. The gaucho way of life also has its own strict code of ethics. Hospitality and respect for others are as much a part of this lifestyle as the art of breaking horses. Unfortunately, Argentina is nearly the last place in the world where the gaucho code is still maintained and the demanding lifestyle still exists. It is home to nearly 150,000 gauchos, who are very much a part of the national identity. One reason for their popularity is that gauchos are a universal part of Argentinean life. There are gauchos living in all parts of the country, even 2,000 kilometers south of Buenos Aires, on the edge of Antarctica in a place called Patagonia.

- Citing specific information in *Gauchos*, explain how the issuance of land grants and the creation of barbed wire changed the lives of nomadic gauchos.

LEVEL 2: How does it work?

Vocabulary

- Determine the meaning of Southern Cone, nomad, rawhide, nostalgia, embellishment, vicuña, thistle, intuition, cue, crude, expel, conquest, vagrancy, frontier, indenture, conscription, livestock, spurs, tinkle, bygone, improvisation, colonial, stake, embers, bridle, cinch, swashbuckling, predecessors, and dexterous.

Structure

- Compare and contrast Gaucho musical events in *Gauchos* and *The Gaucho Juan Moreira* (below).

On the serene moonlit nights of his youth, young Moreira would saddle his dappled bay horse, tie his guitar behind the saddle, and ride to the house of a friend, where he was always welcome because his arrival promised gaiety and dancing. Friends and neighbors gathered at the house with high expectations, passing the mate gourd and gin bottle around, a sip of mate, a shot of gin, as they listened with rapt attention to Moreira's song. Then the dancing started and continued until midnight or one o'clock in the morning . . . The guests are hard-working folk, neighbors, and possibly a traveling stranger or two who has been invited to unsaddle and spend the night, because our gauchos consider hospitality a sacred obligation. Outlaws drifters, and other dangerous men stay away from parties like this and gravitate instead to isolated pulperías, where they arrive under cover of darkness and leave early the next morning.

- **Author's Craft**

Analyze accounts of Martín Fierro in *Gauchos* and the *Catholic Sun* (below) noting important similarities and differences in the points of view they represent.

"Martín Fierro" —represents "the heart of our national identity," the future pope once wrote. He wrote that in the idyllic world of Fierro, the gaucho lives in harmony with nature, works with joy and skill, has fun with his friends, and lives simply and humanely surrounded by few material belongings. Then-Cardinal Bergoglio highlighted the fortitude and can-do attitude of the gaucho, who "takes his destiny into his own hands" with what little he has instead of pining for more or waiting for someone else to act.

LEVEL 3: What does it mean?

Author's Purpose

- Explain how the author uses reasons and evidence to support her assertion that the gaucho is at one with nature and his loyal steed.

Intertextual Connections

- Draw on information in *Gauchos* and *Insight Guide, Argentina* (below) to explain how politics and technology changed the lives of nomadic gauchos?

Profound change came to the gauchos' way of life as increasing portions of the pampa came under private ownership. Beginning in the late 18th century, large land grants were made to powerful men from Buenos Aires, often as a form of political patronage. The gauchos, with their anarchistic and highly independent ways, were seen as a hindrance to the development of the land. Increasing restrictions were put on their lives, in order to bring them under authoritarian control and to put them at the service of the new landowners.

- Draw on information from *Gauchos* and *Don Segundo Sombra* (below) to define the image of the gaucho.

He was the one who patiently led me to the full knowledge of the man living on the plains of the pampa. He taught me the skills of the herdsman, the tricks of the tamer, the handling of the lasso and the boleadoras, the difficult science of breaking in a good horse for all the tasks it will face, to form a good troop of horses, even the way to capture animals anywhere and anyhow. Observing him, I became dexterous at making rawhide strips with which I would then make my reins, cinches, and the like. Through him, I learned about life, resistance, and integrity in battle, the stoicism of accepting fate with no complaints, moral strength in love affairs, distrust of women and drink, caution with outsiders, faith in friends...

LEVEL 4: What does it inspire you to do?

Opinion with Evidence or Argument

- Integrate information from *Gauchos* and the following texts to write or speak about gauchos knowledgeably.

Paul Groussac: The gaucho is a wanderer, a prodigal son of society. Born in some ranch of the Argentine pampa, a branch soon severed from the parent trunk, raised on horseback, he learns from boyhood days to struggle and to suffer. He matures, face to face with impassive nature, holding always this notion: that he should not and cannot rely on anyone but himself alone. . . Like the Mohican he has every sense sharpened as though it were an indispensable weapon: has acquired the hearing and scent of a wild animal, the keen vision of a falcon; and he likewise possesses that bodily insensibility, that resistance to cold and hunger, that faculty of enduring and pain and healing his injuries, characteristic of lower organisms. . . He 'hires out' on some estancia, but almost never for long; since he prefers to wander in quest of festivity, brandings, and races,

urged by the incurable desire for adventure and the homesickness for the desert. With all his vices and peccadilloes, one always comes to love him, for he is frank, brave, hospitable, very loyal, and even ingenuous beneath his hirsute exterior.

Hilario Ascasubi: The gaucho inhabits the Argentine plains: he is an extraordinarily expert horseman, cattleman, and all-round ranchman. As a rule, he is poor, but independent, because of his very poverty and few requirements; he is hospitable, profoundly intelligent and shrewd, physically alert, of few words, wise and energetic in action. In communicating with strangers he shows great caution. In beliefs and language, he has a vast fund of romance and superstitions. Nothing could surpass his ability to traverse alone the immense Argentine deserts, with no other equipment than his lasso and bolas, obtaining food, horses, and whatever else he may need.