

La muerte del apetito

By Dan Johnston, BYU student

Objectives:

- Students will be able to understand how Convent Theater fits within cultural and literary contexts.
- Students will be able to show knowledge of the plot, background, and meanings in the play *La muerte del apetito*.

Materials needed:

- Plot Summary (Provided)
- Pictures of religious and allegorical plays (*Las cortes de la muerte*, *La muerte del apetito*) <http://spanport.byu.edu/GoldenAgeTheater/index.html> [[Photo Gallery](#)]

Suggested

time Activity

5-10 mins	<p>Warm-up. Define virtue and vice. Draw or make a web of the characteristics of a virtue or vice. This should lead the students to start thinking about possibilities of an allegorical figure/character.</p> <p>Start out as a class making a web of characteristics for an example. The students then can work individually or in pairs. They should either make a web similar to the example, or draw a person that represents the characteristics. Have them share with another student or pair of students. For virtues/vices, either use the list of the traditional ones (extravagance/lust, gluttony, avarice/greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride vs. chastity, abstinence, temperance, diligence, patience, kindness, and humility) or you can brainstorm with the class other ideas.</p>
5 mins	<p>Plot outline. This can be read by the students out loud, acted out, etc.</p> <p>Characters: Alma; Represents the soul and every person. Apetito; Represents the appetites of the flesh, vice, sin, and temptation. Mortificación; Represents virtuous living, self-denial, and spirituality. Desnudez; Represents pure honesty, ‘true conversion’ to righteous living and to God.</p> <p>Plot: Mortificación tries to persuade Alma to choose a more righteous path in life. To do this she needs to leave Apetito behind. Her conflict is that the life of Mortificación seems hard and not fun, and that the life with Apetito is much easier and, while less honorable, more enjoyable. While trying to make this decision, Apetito is trying to persuade her to move in the exact opposite direction, adopting a</p>

	<p>life of carefree, pleasurable living. Alma has tried to leave Apetito behind before, but he always comes back. Mortificación suggests that the only way of definitively leaving him behind is to kill him. Alma has trouble finding the strength to make such a big step, so she enlists the help of Desnudez: the only person Apetito fears. Together, the two virtues weaken the position made by Apetito and together they kill Apetito. While instructing Alma in her new life of righteous choices, Apetito returns to persuade Alma again. She must gather her courage, and with the support and influence of the two virtues, she kills Apetito again, for good.</p>
10 mins	<p>List traditional virtues/vices. [Extravagance/lust, gluttony, avarice/greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride.] [Chastity, abstinence, temperance, diligence, patience, kindness, and humility.]</p> <p>Describe historical context and understanding. They existed within a society saturated by the Catholic church and its doctrine. Since there was little education for the public, the knowledge the people had came from the church officials. The virtues/vices were a tool to help the people conceptualize the fruits of sin or righteousness.</p> <p>Relate to modern life. How do we see virtues/displayed in our society? (Ex.: laziness vs. hard-work) What would they look like? What do you imagine them acting like? This can vary depending on how detailed you get in the introduction.</p> <p>In a play, how could you portray Alma? Apetito? Mortificación? Desnudez? How would they <i>act</i> so if they were talking to a friend, walking, or doing other things in a normal life situation?</p>
5 mins	<p>Define allegory. Discuss the purpose and practice of allegorical writing. Why express yourself/ideas through allegory? What can we learn as an audience? What can we learn as writers?</p>

Assessment/Homework:

Write a theatrical scene or dialogue between two allegorical characters. This can be based on the web/drawing they did in the introduction. This can also be done by students alone, in pairs, or at this point, possibly small groups. They can present it in written form or act it out. It can be a modern or historic setting.

Note: This was written for adaptability in student age, classroom style, and time. The time given is only suggested, and can vary depending on detail given, maturity, and the time available. The activities provided are meant to have a variety of lecture and directed discussion, single and group work.