

El otro árbol de Guernica - Luis de Castresana

First published in 1967, *El otro árbol de Guernica* is a semi-autobiographical story about the experiences of Santiago Celaya and his sister Begoña who, in order to protect them from the danger and horrors of the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s, are evacuated along with many other children, first to France and later to Belgium. Told from the perspective of Santi, we see how the children learn to adapt to a new way of life, a different culture and to support each other through the trials and tribulations of pre adolescence. The meeting point for these young exiles is under the large oak tree in the patio of their temporary home, the 'Fleury', where they share their memories and hopes that soon they will return to their beloved Basque country.

Activity 1	<p>Description of activity and suggested uses:</p> <p>Students read the first chapter of the novel and are introduced to the main character's family and different personality traits as the different members react to the prospect of the evacuation of the children. The true / false exercise will show understanding of the way in which the different members of the family are feeling at the start of the novel. Students read the statements and decide whether they are true or false. If they are false, they must correct them in Spanish. There is a suggested correct answer for them to refer to.</p> <p>This could lead to class discussion about the different characters and follow up written exercises.</p>	<p>Skills covered:</p> <p>Reading and writing skills are developed, as well as a more in depth knowledge of the plot. There is also some vocabulary building.</p>
Activity 2	<p>Students read chapter iii of the novel and show comprehension by unjumbling sentences which are centred on showing moods or personality traits of some of the child evacuees and don Segundo, one of the accompanying adults. This is a demanding task which requires thought and patience and could be done individually or in pairs. Students should be encouraged to look for grammatical clues in addition to working out meaning.</p> <p>Students can check answers at the end and have a print facility.</p>	<p>Reading and grammatical skills are developed. An appreciation of syntax is required.</p>
Activity 3	<p>Students read an extract from chapter xi and write a short 70-80 word summary in Spanish. The extract focuses on an episode in the novel which shows the cruelty of one of the teachers in the home where the children are living and the reaction of Santi when subject to provocation. They should aim to write succinctly. Sharing of summaries and peer assessment would be a worthwhile follow up activity. There is a suggested response for students to refer to.</p>	<p>Reading and writing skills are developed especially with reference to summary writing.</p>