

Lope de vega



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Lope de Vega (full name Felix Arturo Lope de Vega y Carpio) was well known throughout the world as The Phoenix of Spain. He lived his life to become one of the most important playwrights and poets of the Spanish Golden Century Baroque. Born in Madrid on November 25th 1562, he started showing his enormous talent for writing at an early age. During his lifetime he wrote over 1800 comedia pieces and hundreds shorter dramatic pieces of which around 500 were published. Lope de Vega transformed the Spanish theatre and took it to its greater limits.

He died on August 27th 1635 and to this day his work remains popular all over the world. At the age of five, Lope was already showing signs of a genius in the making. He was reading and speaking fluent Spanish and Latin and by the age of 12 he had written his first play. Today, over 80 of his plays are considered masterpieces. When Lope was fourteen, he was enrolled in a Jesuit school in Madrid and studied at the University of Alcala. After his graduation he wanted to follow the footsteps of his patron, Bishop of Avila and become a priest, but his love for women was too great and he realized that the life of celibacy was not his style.

In 1583 he joined the military and was a part of the Spanish Navy. After his return to Madrid, Lope officially began his life as a playwright. Here he fell in love with a daughter of a theatre owner, Elena Osorio. She soon left him for another man and Lope started a vitriolic attack on her and her family. Because of this, he got thrown into jail, and soon after was banished from the court for eight years and two years from Castile. In the company of a 16-year-old Isabel de Urbina he went into exile. De Vega was forced to marry her after this.

After being married for only a few weeks, Lope went back to serving his country with the Navy. In 1588 the Invincible Armada sailed against England and Lope's ship was one of the few that returned unharmed. Upon his return he settled in Valencia working as a dramatist. In 1590 he served as the secretary of the Duke of Alba, and because of this he relocated to Toledo. Five years later Isabel died, and since his eight years of banishment have passed, he left Toledo and moved back to Madrid. Here he found more love affairs and more scandals.

He also had four children with Micaela de Lujan. Micaela was his inspiration for a rich series of sonnets. In 1594 he wrote a well-known play called *El maestro de danzar*, otherwise known as *The Dancing Master*. Yet in 1598 he married yet again, a daughter of a very wealthy butcher. Still his affairs with other women and Micaela continued. In this year he wrote *La Arcadia*, a pastoral romance which to this day is one of the poet's most wearisome productions. Also, he wrote *La Dragontea*, a history in verse of Sir Francis Drake's last expedition and death.

A year later he wrote a narrative life of Saint Isidore, the patron saint of Madrid, composed in octosyllabic quintillas, called *El Isidro*. In the 1580s and 1590s his Moorish and pastoral themed poems were extremely popular, partly because they were a reflection of Lope's own affairs and the characters have a lot in common with Lope and his life at the time, his numerous love affairs. In 1602 alone he published two hundred sonnets and in 1604 he republished them with new material in his *Rimas*. In the 17th century Lope de Vega's literary output reached his peak. He wrote *La Hermosura de Angelica*, a set of three books, in 1602.

He was truly one of the greatest poets of his time. After that decade however, Lope's life took a turn for the worse. Lope lost his son, his wife and at this point Micaela disappears as well. He gathered all of his children and moved them under the same roof. His writing in the early 1600's was full of heavier religious influences and finally, in 1614 he joined the priesthood. In 1614 his religious sonnets were published in a book called *Rimas sacras*, which once again became a bestseller. In 1627 he wrote the first Spanish opera titled *La selva sin amor* or *The Lovelorn Forest*.

Even though he was now a priest, he still continued to have affairs with many women. During this time one of his most notable and long relationships was with Martha de Nevared, who he stayed with until her death in 1632. In 1634 he published a third book *Rimas humanas y divinas del licenciado Tome de Burguillos* which was considered his masterpiece and the most modern poem book of the 17th century. In 1635, tragedy struck again when Lope lost another son and his youngest daughter was abducted off the coast of Venezuela. Lope de Vega was infected with scarlet fever and died later that year, in Madrid, on August 27th.

In his life's work, Lope de Vega broke the neoclassical three unities (place, time and action). He showed that he knew the established rules of poetry, but excused himself from them stating that a "vulgar" Spaniard cares nothing about them. He wrote so his readers could easily relate and understand him, he stood as a defender of the common language of ordinary life. Unfortunately, the books he read, his literary connections, and his fear of Italian criticism all exercised an influence upon his naturally robust spirit and,

like so many others he caught the prevalent contagion of mannerism and of pompous phraseology.

Lope's own records indicate that by 1604 he had composed, in round numbers, as many as 230 three-act plays, comedias. This figure rose to 1500 by 1632. Montalban, in *Fama Postuma* (1636) make a total of 1800 comedias and more than 400 shorter sacramental plays. Many of these pieces were printed during Lope's lifetime. It is hard to categorize Lope's work since it was of great variety. Nevertheless, his most celebrated plays belong to the class called *capa y espada* or "cloak and dagger", where the plots are love intrigues complicated with affairs of honor, most commonly involving the petty nobility of medieval Spain.

Some of the best known works of this class are *El perro del hortelano* (The Dog in the Manger), *La viuda de Valencia* (The Widow from Valencia), and *El maestro de danzar*. In some of these Lope strives to set forth some moral maxim and to illustrate its abuse by a living example. Lope found a poorly organized drama. Plays were composed sometimes in three, or even four acts. Though they were written in verse, the structure of the versification was left far too much to the caprice of the individual writer. Because the Spanish public liked it, he adopted the style of drama then in vogue.

Its narrow framework, however, he enlarged to an extraordinary degree, introducing everything that could possibly furnish material for dramatic situations: the Bible, ancient mythology, the lives of the saints, ancient history, Spanish history, the legends of the Middle Ages, the writings of the Italian novelists, current events, and everyday Spanish life in the 17th century. Prior to him, playwrights barely sketched the conditions of persons

and their characters; with fuller observation and more careful description, Lope de Vega created real types and gave to each social order the language and accoutrements appropriate to it.