

# Summary

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The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez (1982) The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez is a movie that retells an incident that happened in real life in Gonzales, Texas back in 1901. It depicts one of history's most famous manhunts that ever took place, which makes this movie an interesting watch. This movie is based on a well-known corrido which tells the story of a young Mexican-American man, Gregorio Cortez, who gets arrested and tried all because of a misunderstanding.

Gregorio Cortez was just a simple cowhand at a farm minding his own business. However, unfortunate events develop in his life when, after a horse-theft, he is mistakenly taken to be the criminal. The main problem that gave rise to such a thing was the use of a deputy (by the sheriff investigating the case) to translate what a witness to the crime said. The translator was used because Cortez could not speak in Spanish. The worst part was that the translator himself could not speak Spanish accurately-his inability to distinguish in Spanish between a caballo (horse) and a yegua (mare) leads to the sheriff believing Cortez to be the horse-thief. When the sheriff goes after him with a gun, Cortez rightfully fights back for his life-in the current century, this act of his would be called self-defense. His brother gets shot and killed in this process in the mayhem. Cortez accidentally shoots at the sheriff, killing him.

Soon after this occurs, Cortez takes off on horseback and heads for the Mexican border. He is pursued by sheriffs, the renowned Texas Rangers and posse across Texas, all of whom were unable to catch the ' fugitive'. The longer it takes for them to capture him, the more he is depicted as a hero by the press. Even though he steered clear of the several traps that his

capturers set for him, he eventually turned himself in when he found out that his family had been arrested by the authorities and kept as prisoners. The manhunt lasted for about eleven days. This whole incident results in the devastation of a family and the killing of an innocent man.

The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez is an amazing representation by director Robert M. Young of the injustice that Mexican-American workers and citizens in the Southwest suffered at the hands of the Texas Rangers. The director has effectively used the techniques of flashbacks to show the different accounts of what happened. Moreover, it is a bit intriguing to find out the real character of Gregorio Cortez. This is because his role in the story keeps changing from time to time- it all depends on who is telling the story.

There is, however, one drawback to this film. As Young is an experienced documentary director, the actors' performances-as well as their faces-do not seem to be adorned and dramatic; this leads to the film having a very realistic and ordinary look to it. In the end, it is safe to say that The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez is a beautifully shot film that is a must-see for all those against injustice.