

# Descriptions in pedro paramo: an essay regarding confinement



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The work *Pedro Paramo*, written by author Juan Rulfo, explores in an abundance the notion of confinement in relation to its physical, mental, and metaphorical manifestations. Through his use of temperature description, overwhelming sound imagery, and oppressive family characterization, Rulfo emphasizes how confinement can come in many forms as well as how it negatively affects those who are confined.

Initially, to explore the meteorological representation of confinement in *Pedro Paramo*, Rulfo includes a wealth of detail about changes in temperature. This heavy emphasis, especially on heat, accentuates the pressing, suffocating nature of Comala's weather. As Juan Preciado and Abundio are first making their way down to Comala, Rulfo includes details about their venture such as, "... the August wind blows hot," (Rulfo 4), " We had left the hot wind behind and were sinking into pure, airless heat," (Rulfo 5), and even uses a biblical analogy, writing, " That town sits on the coals of the earth, at the very mouth of Hell," (Rulfo 6). This heat is oppressive simply because of how insistent its existence is—Juan cannot escape it, and it is constantly pushing down on him, a reminder of how close he is to Hell. It demands to be acknowledged. As well as heat, cold is also used to highlight feelings of confinement throughout the book. When Juan is taken in by the incestuous couple, (Donis and his unnamed wife/sister,) he begins to feel drastically ill. During this period, he is, for the most part, bedridden or incapacitated. In his time of suffering, Juan experiences drastic changes in temperature over his entire body. Juan expresses this by narrating, " The heat woke me up just before midnight. And the sweat," (Rulfo 57). Then again, when he is recalling how he died, Juan explains, " I wasn't hot

anymore. Just the opposite, I was cold,” (Rulfo 59). Rulfo is exploring how one’s own body can be a prison, in a sense. Juan is undoubtedly trapped by these changes, unable to stop them. He is at the whim of his own bodily pain.

Additionally, Rulfo puts immense emphasis on the sound imagery in *Pedro Paramo*. In this, the overpowering force of sound leads the characters in the book to not only feel confined, but hopeless as well. A prominent example of this is Juan’s experiences with the murmurs. When Juan first encounters the murmurings among the many ghosts of Comala, the sound is foreign and uncomfortable to him. Later, during the scene of Juan recalling his death, Juan narrates, “ The murmuring killed me. I was trying to hold back my fear,” (Rulfo 58). The murmurs surround Juan as he is dying, suffocating him to the point that he feels as though he is drowning. They cloud his senses, what was initially detected as merely noise manages to manifest itself as physical suffering. Confinement through the usage of sound continues even after Juan is buried with Dorotea. From inside their grave, the two are able to hear the incessant mumbles and ramblings of others who have died. They even hear the voice of Susana, and are immediately intrigued, Juan eagerly saying, “ You hear? I think she’s about to say something. I hear a kind of murmuring,” (Rulfo 79). The muted voices, dulled due to their travel through soil and other debris, serve as yet another reminder of just how trapped Juan and Dorotea really are. They cannot escape the fact that they are dead.

Continuing, Rulfo touches heavily on family in this novel, especially unconventional or dysfunctional ones. These familial relationships are written as toxic and oppressive to the people involved in them. This theme is <https://assignbuster.com/descriptions-in-pedro-paramo-an-essay-regarding-confinement/>

especially present in the way that Rulfo describes Susana's relationship with her father. In dialogue between Pedro and Fulgor, Rulfo writes, "' Wasn't it his daughter?' ' Well, the way he treats her, she seems more like his wife,'" (Rulfo 82). In Mexico in the 1920's, women, especially wives, were held at a certain expectation of submissiveness. The fact that Susana is thought to be her father's wife only further highlights how controlling he is over her life. In a more literal sense of how Bartolome oppressed and confined Susana, one can refer to an event described in her early childhood. Her father forces her through, "... a small opening in some boards," (Rulfo 90), as she was, "... dangling from a rope that cut into her waist and rubbed her hands raw," (Rulfo 90). Her terror is clearly described, and Rulfo makes this apparent by writing, "... she stood there dumb with fear ...The yell from above made her shiver," (Rulfo 91). Susana almost seems more afraid of her father's barking voice than of the chilling space surrounding her. During this event, young, impressionable Susana is completely at her father's disposal; he quite literally has her life on a string. She is not given a choice about her role in this situation, and is forced into this physically confining space by her mentally confining father.

Ultimately, by exploring the theme of confinement in Pedro Paramo using temperature, sound description, and familial ties, Rulfo demonstrates the many forms that confinement can take. Moreover, through these devices, the novel investigates how people react differently when experiencing confinement itself.