



# La Casa de Bernarda Alba: A Framework for Analytical Writing in A Level Spanish

Based on Ana Ramos' approach — a structured guide for A Level students

# Why Lorca Still Matters

## Un acto político y literario

Written in 1936, days before Lorca's execution — the play is both a literary masterpiece and a political act

## El mundo de la obra

Set in rural Andalusia: a world of rigid honour codes, female oppression, and suffocating silence

## La tensión central

**Desire vs. repression** — the engine behind every character, scene, and symbol



# Historical & Social Context: The World Behind the Play



## Pre-Civil War Spain

Extreme social conservatism, Catholic patriarchy, and rigid class hierarchy shaped every aspect of life – particularly for women.

## Género y silencio

Women were confined to the domestic sphere. Honour – *la honra* – was defined entirely by silence and obedience, not by individual will.

**i** Understanding context is essential for AO1 – it frames every analytical argument you make in the exam.

# Key Themes: The Analytical Pillars



## Represión y control

Bernarda's authority as a microcosm of Francoist Spain – total domination disguised as tradition



## La honra

A destructive social code that silences women and drives the tragedy from the very first scene



## Libertad vs. encarcelamiento

The house as a prison – walls, black mourning dress, and locked doors are never merely literal



## El deseo

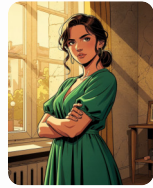
Adela's rebellion as the only authentic voice of freedom – desire as survival, not mere defiance

# Character Analysis: Who Drives the Conflict?



## Bernarda

Tyrannical matriarch — symbol of repression, tradition, and the wilful denial of reality. Her word is law.



## Adela

The rebel — her green dress signals life and defiance against the black of mourning. She is desire made visible.



## La Poncia

The insider-outsider — she knows the truth but is powerless to act, trapped by her own social position.



## María Josefa

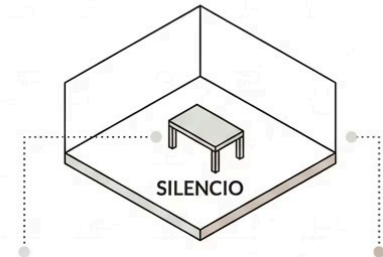
The "mad" grandmother — speaks the play's deepest truths through apparent madness. Her voice is the play's conscience.

# Lorca's Dramatic Techniques



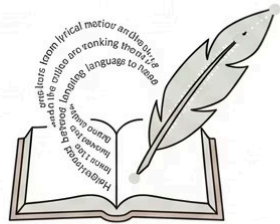
## Symbolism

Colors (white/black/green), water, the stallion carry layered meaning.



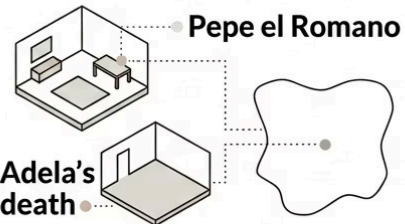
## Stage directions

Silence is as powerful as dialogue, used as literary text.



## Poetic realism

Heightened lyrical language blurs the line between drama and poetry.



## Offstage action

Key events happen out of sight, forcing interpretation.

## Por qué importan las técnicas

In A Level analysis, naming a technique is only the beginning. What earns top-band marks is explaining the **effect** it creates and linking it to theme and context.

- Ask yourself: what does Lorca want the audience to *feel* – and *why* does he choose this technique to produce that effect?

- Symbols are never decorative – they carry the ideological argument
- Silence is a dramatic act, not an absence of meaning
- Offstage events make the audience complicit in interpretation

# The Analytical Framework: PEEL in Spanish

1

P — Punto

State your argument clearly: *Lorca presenta a Bernarda como símbolo de la represión*

2

E — Evidencia

Embed a short, precise quote in Spanish — integrated naturally into your sentence

3

E — Explicación

Analyse language, technique, and effect: *el uso de... sugiere / refleja / simboliza...*

4

L — Enlace

Connect back to the question and wider themes for a cohesive, argued response

# Essay Language: Phrases That Earn Marks

## Frases esenciales para el análisis

Función	Frase modelo
Introducing analysis	<i>Lorca utiliza... para destacar / subrayar / ilustrar...</i>
Exploring symbolism	<i>El simbolismo de... representa / evoca / contrasta con...</i>
Linking to context	<i>En el contexto de la España de los años 30, esto refleja...</i>
Evaluating	<i>Se podría argumentar que... sin embargo, también es posible interpretar...</i>

## The Golden Rule

Every phrase you use must serve your argument. Sophisticated language is a vehicle for analysis – not decoration.

Vary your verbs: move beyond *mostrar* and *decir*. The richer your verb choices, the more nuanced your analysis appears.

- ✔ Top-band essays read as a sustained argument, not a list of observations.

# Common Essay Mistakes — and How to Fix Them



## Retelling the Plot

**Fix:** Describe what Lorca *does*, not what happens — analyse, don't narrate. Every sentence should contain an analytical verb.



## Vague Quotes

**Fix:** Choose short, specific quotes you can analyse word by word. One precise quote beats three vague ones every time.



## Missing Context

**Fix:** Always link your analysis to historical and social context — this is what separates good essays from top-band essays.



## Weak Conclusions

**Fix:** End with a clear evaluative judgement, not a summary. Take a position and defend it confidently.

# From Good to A\*: Your Action Plan

01

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## Construye tu banco de citas

Build a bank of 15–20 key quotes with ready-made analysis prepared for each one — so you never freeze in the exam

03

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## Aplica el marco de Ana Ramos

Every paragraph must analyse language, technique, AND context — all three, every time, no exceptions

02

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## Practica las introducciones

Practise writing introductions that answer the question directly and signal your argument from the very first sentence

04

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## Lee ensayos modelo

Read model A\* essays — identify the analytical moves they make and replicate them deliberately in your own voice