

**Gill, Mary McVey, Deanna Smalley, and María-Paz Haro. *Cinema for Spanish Conversation*.**

**Massachusetts: Focus Publishing, 2006. ISBN 1-58510-231-8.**

*Cinema for Spanish Conversation* is the new edition of an old favorite. This edition features three new films, *María llena de gracia*, *Diarios de motocicleta*, and *Mar adentro*, in addition to the fifteen films from the previous edition, which include such well-known works as *El Norte*, *¡Ay, Carmela!*, and *Como agua para chocolate*, to mention just a few.

By way of introduction, the text goes over basic vocabulary useful for discussing film, which is especially helpful to students who have never studied cinema. This section includes words such as: plot, script, cast, voice-over, etc. Like the vocabulary in each section, cognates are presented first and then unfamiliar words are introduced with their English equivalents. There is also a chart indicating the length of each film in minutes and the rating so that teachers can plan accordingly. High school teachers should be aware that R-rated films are included; in fact, ten out of the 15 films discussed are R-rated.

The text is divided into sections that cover one film each. Each section begins with a short overview of the film to be studied, written in Spanish. There is just enough information given to pique your students' interest. Afterwards, there is some information provided on the director and the actors, also in Spanish. For the most part, the vocabulary used is very much geared toward student abilities. These sections vary in length, depending on the film and the actors. For *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios*, it is quite lengthy, given the extensive careers of the main actors, Carmen Maura and Antonio Banderas. The others tend to be much shorter, generally no longer than a paragraph or two.

Next, there is a section titled *Preparación*, which presents crucial vocabulary, beginning with cognates and moving to more difficult and unfamiliar words. Vocabulary exercises follow, to reinforce mastery of essential words. These activities seem useful, although this reader did find a mistake in exercise B on page 19, where a question was left without an appropriate answer. The *Preparación* section also introduces some of the main topics featured in the film selected. If necessary, a linguistic note is included. Sometimes these linguistic notes are on a particular pronunciation students will hear in the movie, or, for example, in the case of *El Norte*, the use of a particular linguistic variance, such as the use of "vos" in Guatemala instead of "tú."

After viewing the film, students can complete the *Exploración* section. Here they are asked specific questions about what they have seen. There are true/false questions to check comprehension, as well as thoughtful questions about plot and characters, ideas for compositions or conversations about the film, and, finally, a reading section called *Más allá de la película*, which goes beyond the scope of the film in some way. For example, the *Más allá de la película* section for *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* is a critique of the film. Students can read the critique and then answer the questions included.

Overall, this is a useful text for studying Spanish-language film. This text is nothing like other film study packets on the market. The films included are culturally relevant and of interest to students. The overwhelming presence of R-rated movies may be a problem for some, but if carefully previewed, most of these movies could still be shown to high school students. The three new films in this edition were carefully chosen and add three important titles to an already strong list.

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## **Publisher's Response**

We very much appreciate this very gracious review of the second edition of *Cinema for Spanish Conversation*. This text was designed first and foremost for college level courses, primarily third-year courses in which film can be used to study language and culture. Clearly, film is the most engaging way of teaching real-life language skills and culture at the fourth-semester level.

The author of the review is quite correct in saying that this book should be used with caution at the high school level. There are a number of R-rated films in it. Obviously, what might spell trouble in a typical high school classroom is less of a problem at the college level where, after all, cinema is an integral part of popular culture and where students (as well as their parents) generally are less impressionable. We have considered doing a book more appropriate for the high school level; however, compelling films that meet the necessary ratings are few and far between. To that end, of course, we are always interested in ideas and suggestions from the teaching community.

Meanwhile *Cinema for Spanish Conversation* still can be effectively used at the high school level, as the reviewer notes, and continues to be an inspiration to college teachers who wish to integrate film into the Spanish language curriculum.

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