

Blood Wedding **Study Guide** Julie Nevin, dramaturg



Dramaturg's Note

From the first time I read *Blood Wedding*, I was fascinated with the writing of Lorca. His deeply eloquent poetry is so powerful and beautiful; I was entranced immediately. And then I found this quote from him, "The theatre is that poetry which rises from the book and becomes human."

We use theatre as a means of exploring humanity in all its glory. It opens doors for us to discover human meaning, relationships and even our own selves. I believe that it is through theatre we can most learn who we truly are. When we allow our hearts to be stirred by the poetry within plays that is when theatre comes to life. *Blood Wedding* presents many difficult issues including love, deceit, death, loyalty, and family. Such subject matters may be difficult to watch but necessary to understand as audience members and as people. In every performance we can find moments that correlate with our own lives. It is what we do with the information received that truly matters. How can we use this experience to improve and enrich our lives and eventually all human kind?



Federico Garcia Lorca

Federico García Lorca is one of Spain's most acclaimed poets, playwrights, and artists. He wrote sixteen original full-length plays, published five collections of poetry and also wrote a screenplay for a silent movie about his ventures in New York City.

Federico García Lorca was born in the province of Granada, Spain, on June 5, 1898. His life was filled with music, art, and passion. He gained personal relationships with many influential artists such as Salvador Dali and Emilio Aladrén.

The Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936, between the Spanish Army and the Spanish Second Republic. Lorca supported the new ideologies of personal freedom expressed by the Spanish Second Republic. This was contrary to the traditional Spanish and Catholic culture. Although Lorca made no outward political claims his lifestyle and associations with many left-winged scholars led to his death in 1936. On August 18 at the age of thirty eight Lorca was taken by the Spanish army. He was shot in pit with three others and covered with barrels of limes, to conceal the bodies.

Art was a part of Lorca's life from childhood. He began playing the piano at age eleven. His interest in theatre developed when he was a young boy with puppet theaters and his own reenactments of Catholic ceremonies. Catholicism played a large part in his art as well; he used his poetry and art as a way to express his conflict between sexual desire and the Catholic Church.



Spanish Gypsies

Lorca seems to find great pride with the Gypsies of Spain. His collection of poems and songs titled *The Gypsy Ballads* is dedicated to the Spanish Gypsies. He said the Gypsies in the poems are symbolic, in an effort to touch “the Gypsy, the Black, the Jew, the Morisco that every one of us carries in his heart.” Lorca uses these poems to create a larger connection between the sufferings of suppressed races and our own lives.



The Spanish Gypsies originally came from Egypt, earning the name Gitano, which is synonymous for gypsy in Egyptian.

The Gypsies arrived in Spain around the fifteenth century and have been a large influence in Spanish art, especially with Flamenco music and dance.

Throughout history Spanish Gypsies have faced great persecution. Spanish Kings often decreed discriminatory and occasionally intentionally contradictory laws pertaining to the Gypsies. For example, Gypsies were banished from churches, yet forced to be faithful Christians. Although they have, for the most part, transient spirits, laws forced them to be agriculturalists and forbade them from blacksmithing. The punishment for disobedience of such laws was as serious as death.

The Gitano culture is so bold and the traditional Spanish culture so deeply grounded, that as they are blended together, we can better understand the relationship between the lingering and the rising generations within *Blood Wedding*. The layering of these two cultures illustrates the unsettled nature of the characters' spirits. The Gypsy culture correlates strongly with the new generation; they both have a sense of independence and freedom. Whereas the traditional Spanish culture and older generation symbolize dependence upon family, connection to the earth, and the natural order of life.

Traditional Spanish Wedding Customs

In the 1930s, most Spaniards were Catholic, although a wide percentage of them were not entirely devout. However, almost every Catholic Spaniard practiced the rituals of baptism, confirmation, and marriage.

Spanish weddings were a community event rather than a private exchange of vows. After the wedding, the wedding party and guests would participate in dancing the *seguidillas manchegas*.

Traditionally the Spanish bride wore a black silk wedding dress, a tall mantilla, and beautiful lace veil for the ceremony. The bridegrooms wore an embroidered shirt hand- made and given to him by the bride.

Before the wedding ceremony, the groom presented the bride with thirteen gold coins to prove his commitment to support her financially. She would carry these gold coins with her to the ceremony.




On the wedding day, an orange blossom wreath was given to the bride by her groom. She wore the orange blossoms during the wedding ceremony as a symbol of her love. Giving and receiving orange blossoms is a deep Spanish tradition and orange blossoms are the flower of choice for a young bride's wedding day. The orange tree is unique because it bears both fruit and blossoms at the same time. The orange blossoms have become a symbol of fertility as well as maturity and love's abounding happiness.

Greek Tragedy & Fate

Aristotle said, "Tragedy...is an imitation of an action." Perhaps he means that tragedy is to be shown as a drama, rather than told as a narrative. Within *Blood Wedding*, Lorca supports Aristotle's idea of tragedy by using images to explore the experiences of the characters. Through his gift of language the words became images that leap to life as they are spoken. In this way, this is not just a story, but also a series of pictures that present the souls of the characters.

The deities of the Three Fates represented the Greek understanding of fate. The Three Fates were sisters who determined the fate of each human. One spun the thread of life, one determined its length and the last cut the thread at the proper time of death. They are often personified as the three stages of life. The spinner of life was a young maiden, while a careful matron determined the span and an old woman to administer the final cut.



Similar to the classic Greek tragedies, the characters of *Blood Wedding* are guided by the will of fate. Fate is ever present, for our players seem to be faced with choices. The questions include, Is choice a façade with the outcomes predetermined? Or do the characters have the power to change their destiny by selecting a different path? Or does fate allows them only those choices whose circumstances result in no real change to the predetermined course?

A Greek Chorus is an integral part of a tragic drama. The unity of the Chorus creates one character on stage. The Chorus has the ability to work as a liaison between the audience and the actors. At times the Chorus has the power to separate the audience from the play, and at other times bring them together in unanimous emotions. They can represent the average audience member, or the social structures and ideologies surrounding the drama. They can also be a voice of truth, reason, and morality toward the tragic figures. The Chorus proves to be an essential part of Greek tragedy, no matter which role they play.

The Women of *Blood Wedding*

Throughout the play there is constant tension between Spain's traditions and the changing culture. The Bride symbolizes a new generation and a rising new culture, whereas the Mother is the lasting tradition. The complexity of their relationship grows from this juxtaposition. Within the Bride we see the struggle to express her own identity inside the traditional culture. There is uneasiness inside the Mother as the new generation begins to rise.

Within the Spanish culture, the most binding relationship lies between a mother and a daughter. After a young couple marries, if they have no land of their own, they live with the bride's family so as not to separate the sacred bond between the mother and daughter.

The story of *Blood Wedding* is truly about the women in the play. It is a story of the Bride, Mother, Wife, Servant, Mother-in-Law, fates of the Gypsy Chorus, and even the Beggar Woman. These women are the heart of the story. In much of Lorca's work we see women as predominate figures. I believe that through Lorca's art he was trying to understand these complex relationships that are essential to Spanish women and women in general.



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Jennie Pardoe

The Mother

From Southlake, Texas. Senior in acting. Jennie recently returned from serving in the Russia Samara Mission. Credits include Portia in *Julius Caesar* at the Castle Theatre, Penelope in *See How They Run* at the Plaza Theatre, BYU credits include Guildenstern in *Hamlet*, Alexandra in *Little Foxes*, and Margaret in *Angels Unaware*. Jennie was also dramaturg for BYU's productions of *Getting Married* and *Angels Unaware*.

Danielle Peterson

Chorus Member

From South Jordan, Utah. Sophomore in pre-acting with a pre-medical minor. This is her first BYU main stage production. Recent credits includes Liz in *What's the Worst that Could Happen*, Miss Cleanly in *Where There's a Will*, and Kate in *Oklahoma!*

Briana Shipley

Violinist

From West Jordan, Utah. Sophomore in pre-music dance theatre. Recent credits include Nancy in the Mask Club *I Love Lysistrata*, Hamlet in the Mask Club *Abridged Shakespeare*, a tapper in BYU's World of Dance, and MC Dog in *Go, Dog. Go!* Briana received a nomination for the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship for her work in *Go, Dog. Go!* last year.

Brighton SloanViolinist/ Chorus/
Voice of the Moon

From Salt Lake City, Utah. Sophomore in theatre arts studies. Past credits include Prospero in *The Tempest* at BYU, Ida in *See How They Run*, Susannah Cibber in *Joyful Noise*, and Mina Harker in *Dracula*. She recently directed *Pride and Prejudice* for Spotlight Productions, and will be directing *Jane Eyre* this spring.

Miki Smith

Guitarist/ Chorus

From Murrieta, California. Sophomore in English with a music minor. This is her first BYU production. Recent credits include Patricia in a Mask Club of *The Last Yankee*. Her poetry will be featured in this year's *Inscape*, BYU's creative writing journal.

Brittany Sweeney

Flautist

Senior in humanities with an emphasis in English and a minor in theatre studies. This is her first mainstage play at BYU. Other credits include a Mask Club improv show where she played Cinderella and a recent Mask Club *I Love Lysistrata*, based on Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, where she was a chorus member.

Bethany Talley

Neighbor/ Chorus

From Copley, Ohio. She is a senior in theatre and modern dance. Her credits include *24-Hour Theatre Project* with the Experimental Theatre Company, Louisann in *The Imaginary Invalid* at the Castle Theatre, the title role in the mask club *Dora*, Cobweb in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at BYU, and Jenny in *Waiting Room* with the New Play Project.

Mari Toronto

Cellist

From Beijing, China. Freshman pre-acting. Recent credits include being co-producer of the Experimental Theatre Club *24 Hour Theatre Project*, Lucy in a Mask Club *Flight Lines*, and Justine/Claire/cellist in the New Play Festival show *The Monster of Dr. Frankenstein*. This is Mari's first BYU main stage production.

Justine Trotter

Wife

From Las Vegas, Nevada. Senior in theatre arts education. Recent credits include Rachel/Azure_skies_80 in *Standing Still Standing* at Provo Theatre Company and Izzy in *Rabbit Hole* with the BYU Experimental Theatre Club. Justine has also served as the properties designer for several productions at BYU including *Children of Eden*, *The Taffetas*, and *The Giver*.

Britain Kalai Young

Musical Director/ Vocalist

From Boston, Massachusetts. Senior in vocal performance. Britain recently competed in BYU Young Artists of Voice competition. Her credits include Narrator One in *The Wolf and the Lamb* in BYU opera scenes, *Les contes d'Hoffmann* at BYU, and Hermia and Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the original-practice Grassroots Shakespeare Company.

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