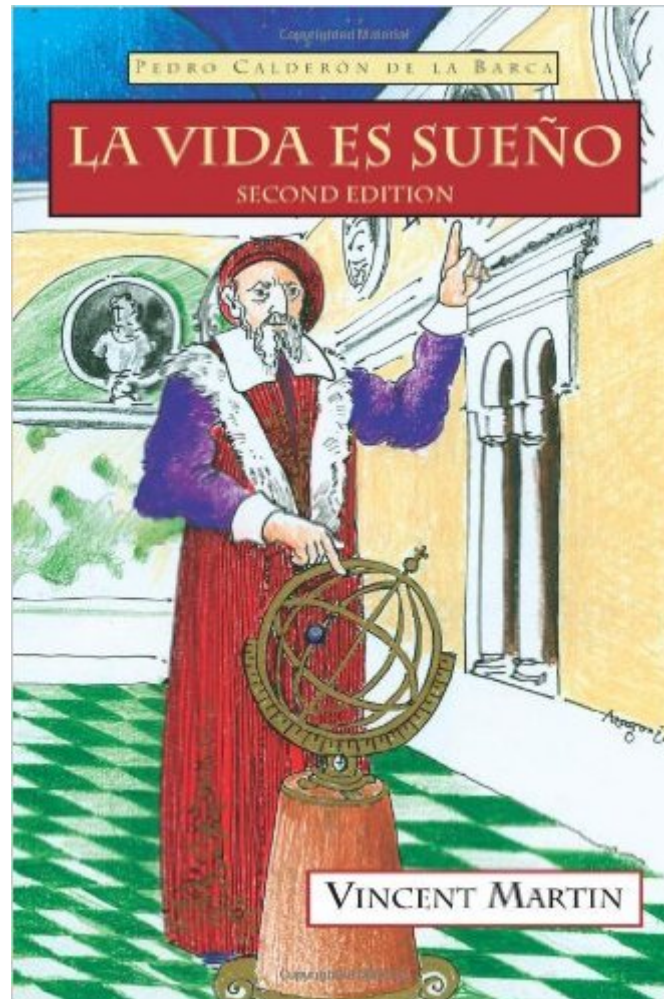


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La Vida Es Sueno / Life Is A Dream (Cervantes & Co. Spanish Classics) (Spanish Edition)



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Customer Reviews

Even though I have a fairly good level of reading comprehension of Spanish in general, I find the language of Spanish drama of this period to be difficult to understand. Many times I have tried to read *La Vida es Sueño* without commentary, only to put it aside. This edition with notes by Vincent Martin is excellent. There are helpful footnotes on particularly difficult verses and archaic words have a definition on the same page. One feature that is truly beneficial is the very succinct introductory explanation of prosody and line scanning. I have always been baffled by the meter of

dramatic poetry in de la Barca and de Vega, but not anymore. The only negative criticism is that the definition of the archaic words are printed on the right hand margin and often spill over to the next line where another definition begins. This can be confusing and takes some adjustment to understand. Ideally the play should be read without any notes, but for those who are in the position of requiring a commentary, this is a fantastic tool for obtaining a thorough comprehension of *La Vida Es Sueno*. Hopefully the publisher Cervantes and Co will provide us with more plays in this format. The commentary is in English.

This edition by Vincent Martin (San Diego State University professor) is great for readers whose first language is English and not Spanish. It provides footnotes with definitions from Spanish to English of difficult to understand words, as well as explanations of scenes and cultural notes. Furthermore, it provides an introduction with the biography of the author Calderón de la Barca, the history of the play, notes on how to read Spanish comedia and more. I highly recommend this edition for students learning about Golden Age theater. The story itself is intriguing (think Shakespeare, except this is his contemporary from Spain) and though much of the actions are archaic the result is still a compelling read. (Though it's even better if you get to see it performed.) I was lucky to take the editor's seminar at SDSU and listen to his lecture on the play and the author. He is highly entertaining and has deep knowledge on the work he edited. The book was not required but I was able to borrow this book to study it prior to the lecture. However, I am not biased, if you're a more advanced Spanish reader, I would recommend the Ctedra edition instead.

Calderon, Tirso de Molina & Lope equal, the three of them, England's one Shakespeare. Someone said this once, and I would not presume to argue one way or the other, but it is true that all three are rather difficult reading for modern students, at least those whose first language isn't Spanish, certainly much harder than Cervantes, who is long since about as universally received as any writer. So here is an annotated edition of "*La Vida es Sueno*". (NY = the characteristic letter of Castilian, can't get it to pop up on my machine, right now.) Calderon is perhaps a bit easier for the average student than the other two premier Spanish dramatists of the epoch, and this psychologically probing play is perhaps among the easiest to access, aesthetically and in terms of the background needed, for non-native speakers of Spanish who have little grip on "Golden Era" Spain and its assumed realities. The play centers upon a Caliban-like proto-kinglet, whose philosopher-king-father has secreted him a chamber distant from almost all human commerce; he fears he will topple him. Eventually, he decides, after some consideration, to raise the by-now scarcely human anthropoid to

the threshold of kingship. It doesn't work. This leads to some realizations on the part of the characters and the audience, relating to the nature of society and human rank. Like many philosophically probing works composed before the modern era, the piece has its elegance marred by a rather disingenuous ending. But we get the point, if we understand Spanish. There is also a boy-meets-girl subplot to entertain the masses. The annotations could be better. They are found at the bottom of page, and explain words and certain facts of history or Spanish culture. This edition is illustrated with cartoons that will annoy an adult; the type of adolescent imagination to which they might have appealed would not have understood the play and in fact may not exist in our day.

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