

Comprehension Questions for *Maria, Full of Grace* (2004)  
SPAN 325: Hispanic Cinema

1. Describe the film's historical and geographical context. Where does this take place and how does the discussion involve multiple countries?
  - a. The film takes place in Bogota, Colombia, New Jersey, and New York, however, the final destination is unknown after the protagonist leaves the airport.
2. Who are the film's protagonists and what are they like? Describe their motivating factors and their personal characteristics in terms of their character, moral standards, etc.
  - a. The primary protagonist is Maria, who is 17 years old. She is among the lower social class and finds herself pregnant and single. She is portrayed as defiant and rebellious, but also family oriented as she supports them. She can be seen as resilient as well.
  - b. Another character is Blanca, who is a flower grower. She is also part of the power social class. She is seen as ambitious, but also naive in comparison to Maria.
  - c. Lucy is an experienced drug mule that has a tragic ending. She supports her sister in Queens, NY, but finds herself ashamed and conflicted at times.
  - d. Carla is Lucy's sister who is pregnant. She is portrayed as a "successful immigrant." She is generous, empathetic, and has strong morale. Also portrayed as compassionate and forgiving
  - e. Don Fernando is well informed, selfless, understanding, practical and honest.
3. What does the film portray in terms of the role of women involved in the trafficking of drugs? What are their objectives and what purpose do they serve economically?
  - a. Women are portrayed as disposable, as they are merely carriers of the cargo-drugs. They are not given the proper medical care necessary even knowing when one of the bags has opened in their bodies. We are shown Lucy being cut after she passes in order for them to obtain the cocaine. These women are merely seeking stability and are portrayed as tragic victims in the drug industry.
4. How would you define the film's genre
  - a. The film would be defined as a historical drama and thriller.
5. What would you consider the film's central theme, or main idea to be?

- a. The film's central themes are survival and poverty in Colombia. Also crimes (delinquency) committed by lower social classes in order to survive as having a "decent" job will not support a family.
6. What observations can you make about the female vs male characters in the film?
  - a. The women are objectified and do not have many options in any aspects. The men have higher positions and lack the accountability for their actions. Women are portrayed as more vulnerable and defenseless in comparison to men, but also we see solidarity between women in their suffering.
7. After viewing the film, what does the film's title suggest? How does this play out in terms of its implied or symbolic meaning?
  - a. The film suggests a reference to the Virgin Mary and symbolic of the motherhood she experienced.
8. What does the film convey about social justice issues in Colombia regarding its lower social classes?
  - a. The film conveys that Colombia's lower social classes does receive sufficient support from their government and consequently many people turn to drug and human trafficking to in order to make a living and survive in their country.
9. Post reflection: What is the role of drugs in the film? Has the film changed your opinion about drug traffickers and the means they go about to make a daily living? Why or why not?
  - a. The role of drugs in the film provided another pathway in life for the people of Colombia in the film. I do not think the film changed my perspective on the drug industry. I think it cemented my thoughts and perspective on it more. This business is well established and successful and the only solution would be to make successful changes in government, starting with providing sufficient income to it's lower social class and healthcare. Yes the drugs are bad, however, this industry will not be demolished so easily and there needs to be resources available to those leaving it. Raising awareness is definitely a start though and this film did just that.