

RAMÓN GÓMEZ DE LA SERNA

SPAIN (1888–1963)

LANGUAGE: SPANISH

GREGUERÍAS

La *Q* es un gato que perdió la cabeza.

La *O* es la *I* después de comer.

Trueno: caída de un baúl por las escaleras del cielo.

El libro es un pájaro con más de cien alas para volar.

Las gaviotas nacieron de los pañuelos que dicen ¡adiós! en los puertos.

El perfume es el eco de las flores.

Las hormigas llevan el paso apresurado como si las fuesen a cerrar la tienda.

Ningún pájaro ha logrado sacar las manos de las mangas de las alas, salvo el murciélago.

De la nieve caída en los lagos nacen los cisnes.



Born in Madrid to an upper-middle-class family, Ramón Gómez de la Serna decided to become a writer rather than a lawyer or politician, as his father would have liked. Gómez de la Serna was always interested in looking at the world in new ways. In his writing, he found a creative outlet by turning the world upside down using a mixture of humor and imagery. He is best known for inventing poems called *greguerías*. Greguerías are short—usually one sentence—and express a single thought that is both witty and lyrical. While Gómez de la Serna is usually considered the inventor, the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges argued that *greguerías* were actually invented by the French writer Jules Renard, who used a formula to define this kind of poetry: “metaphor + humor.”

TRANSLATOR'S GLOSSARY		
WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
a (prep.)	indicates direction or position	to, toward, en route for, on the way to
adiós (exclamation)	a concluding remark when parting	good-bye, bye, so long, farewell, take care
alas (n.)	bird limbs for flying	wings
apresurado (adj.)	done in a hurry	hasty, hurried, in a hurry, quickly, swiftly
baúl (n.)	large traveling case	trunk, case, valise
cabeza (n.)	the top part of the body supported by the neck	head
caída (adj.)	having dropped rapidly from a higher place	fallen, dropped, tumbled
cerrar (v.)	to cover an opening or bring together the parts or edges of something	close, seal, close up, secure, lock up
cielo (n.)	region above the earth	sky, heaven
cien (adj.)	numbering one hundred	one hundred
cisnes (n.)	large white long-necked birds	swans
comer (v.)	to consume as sustenance	eating, dining, consuming, gobbling, devouring
como si (conj.)	indicates a situation that would be the case if	as if, as though, like
con (prep.)	possessing something as a feature or accompaniment	with, containing, having
de (prep.)	belonging to or coming from	of, from
del (prep. + art.)	contraction (<i>de + el</i>)—belonging to one thing as distinct from another	of the
después de (prep.)	later than	after, following, subsequent to
dicen (v.)	from the verb <i>decir</i> —to utter something	say, call, announce, declare
eco (n.)	repeated sound	echo, reverberation, resonance

WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
el (art.)	masculine singular form—indicates one as distinct from another	the
en (prep.)	a word used to express location	on, at, in, by
es (v.)	from the verb <i>ser</i> —to be	is
escaleras (n.)	series of steps	stairs, staircase, stairway, flight of stairs
flores (n.)	brightly colored parts of a plant	flowers, blossoms, blooms
gato (n.)	furry animal that purrs and meows	cat, feline
gaviotas (n.)	common sea birds	seagulls, gulls
greguerías (n.)	short, humorous poems, usually one sentence long	greguerías
ha logrado (v.)	from the verb <i>lograr</i> —to succeed in doing	has managed, has been able to, has succeeded in
hormigas (n.)	insects living in colonies	ants
la (art.)	feminine singular form—indicates one as opposed to another	the
lagos (n.)	inland bodies of water	lakes, ponds, lagoons, tarns
las (art.)	feminine plural form—indicates some as opposed to others	the
las fuesen (v.)	past tense of the verb <i>ser</i> —to be or to go	they were, they were going
libro (n.)	bound collection of pages	book, volume, tome, manuscript, paperback
llevan (v.)	from the verb <i>llevar</i> —to hold and transport somebody or something	take, carry, lead, bring
los (art.)	masculine plural form—indicates some as opposed to others	the
mangas (n.)	covering for arms	sleeves
manos (n.)	end of human arms	hands
más de (adj.)	greater in size, amount, or degree	more than, well beyond, over, more
murciélago (n.)	flying mammal	bat

WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
nacen (v.)	from the verb <i>nacer</i> —to be brought into being	are born
nacieron (v.)	past tense of the verb <i>nacer</i> —to be brought into being	were born
nieve (n.)	soft pieces of frozen water that fall from the sky	snow
ningún (adj.)	not any	no, not any, none of
pájaro (n.)	two-legged, winged animal with feathers and a beak	bird
pañuelos (n.)	square cloths used for wiping noses	handkerchiefs, hankies, tissues, kerchiefs
para (conj.)	for the benefit of	to, in order to, for, intended for, designed for, meant for, used for
paso (n.)	short movement with the foot	step, pace, stride
perdió (v.)	from the verb <i>perder</i> —to be unable to find	lost, mislaid, is missing, misplaced, vanished
perfume (n.)	fragrant liquid	perfume, cologne, scent
por (prep.)	the trajectory of a thing or person	along, down, by
puertos (n.)	location on the shore where boats are stationed, arrive, and depart	ports, harbors, waterfronts, seaports, docks, marinas
que (conj.)	used to introduce a new clause	that
sacar (v.)	to take something out of something else	to take out, to remove, to extract, to pull out, to release
salvo (prep.)	excluding	except, save, but
tienda (n.)	a place for selling goods	store, shop
trueno (n.)	a loud noise following lightning	thunder
un (art.)	used to distinguish something	a, one
volar (n.)	to move through the air	fly, soar, take wing, take off, take flight

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

PHRASE BY PHRASE

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REFLECTING AND FINDING MEANING

Group Member Names:

Date: _____

Pick a scribe for the group, and work together to answer the questions.

What are the best parts of this translation, and why do you think they are good?

What elements of the original poem did you lose in the translation? What did you manage to keep?

Did you achieve something new with your translation, and if so, does it make sense in the poem or not?
