



VILLARREAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISES

ENDEAVORS IN PROGRESS

Adalberto Elías González

Storytelling, Culture, and the Power of Film

When people think about history, they often imagine textbooks, museums, or famous speeches. However, movies can also shape the way people understand the past. Films tell stories about families, communities, heroes, and everyday life. Because of this, movies influence how audiences remember history and how they understand different cultures (Hershfield & Maciel, 1999).

One of the many artists who helped bring Mexican stories to audiences throughout the Spanish-speaking world was **Adalberto Elías González**. During a career that spanned several decades, González worked as an actor, comedian, and screenwriter. Although he was not always the leading star, his performances helped create memorable films that entertained millions of viewers across Mexico, Latin America, and Hispanic communities in the United States (Filmoteca UNAM, n.d.; Cineteca Nacional, n.d.).

González appeared in numerous films during what historians call the **Golden Age of Mexican Cinema**, a period from the 1930s through the 1950s when Mexico became the world's leading producer of Spanish-language films (Paranaguá, 1995). During these years, Mexican movies were shown throughout Latin America and became an important source of entertainment and cultural pride. Audiences enjoyed stories that reflected their own language, traditions, humor, music, and daily experiences (Agrasánchez, 2001).



Among the films associated with Adalberto Elías González are *Fantasia Ranchera*, *Club Verde*, *La Inmaculada*, and *La Cautivadora* (Filmoteca UNAM, n.d.). Through performances in films like these, González helped portray characters that audiences could recognize and appreciate. Rather than focusing only on famous historical figures or wealthy elites, many Mexican films

highlighted ordinary people whose lives reflected the experiences of working families and rural communities (Hershfield & Maciel, 1999).

In addition to acting, González also contributed to the film industry as a **screenwriter**. Writers play an essential role in filmmaking because they create the dialogue, develop the characters, and shape the stories that audiences see on the screen. A well-written script allows actors to bring believable characters to life while communicating ideas about family, community, justice, and identity (Hershfield & Maciel, 1999).

The success of the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema was made possible by thousands of people working together. Directors, actors, writers, musicians, cinematographers, costume designers, and editors each contributed to creating films that represented Mexican society. Artists such as Adalberto Elías González helped sustain this remarkable period by contributing their talents to productions that celebrated Mexican culture while reaching audiences across the Spanish-speaking world (Paranaguá, 1995).

Studying artists like González also teaches an important lesson about **media literacy**. Every movie, television program, documentary, or streaming series presents a story from a particular point of view. Filmmakers decide which characters become heroes, which events deserve attention, and which voices will be heard. These decisions influence how audiences understand history, culture, and even current events (Sadler, 2010).

Because of this, students should become **critical consumers of media**. Instead of simply accepting every story they watch, thoughtful viewers ask important questions. Who created this film? What message does it communicate? Whose perspective is represented? Whose voices are missing? Does the story challenge stereotypes, or does it reinforce them? Does the film present historical events accurately, or does it simplify or change them for entertainment? Asking these questions helps students become informed viewers who can enjoy films while also thinking carefully about the messages they communicate.

The career of Adalberto Elías González reminds us that artistic expression is an important part of every society. When communities create their own films, music, literature, and art, they have the opportunity to share their own stories with the world. By studying these works thoughtfully, we gain a deeper understanding of both history and the diverse cultures that continue to shape our global community.

This reader synthesizes information from scholarly books and archival film collections. Institutional archives such as the Filмотека UNAM and the Cineteca Nacional were used to verify biographical and filmographic information, while scholarly publications provide the historical interpretation presented in the text.

Discussion Questions

1. Why was the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema an important period in the history of Latin America? Use evidence from the reading to support your answer.
2. How did Adalberto Elías González contribute to Mexican cinema as both an actor and a screenwriter? Why are both roles important to the filmmaking process?
3. According to the reading, how can movies influence the way people understand history and culture?
4. What does it mean to be a **critical consumer of media**? List at least three questions students should ask while watching a movie or television program.
5. Why is it important for different communities to produce and support their own films, literature, music, and other forms of artistic expression?

Writing Prompt - Media Literacy and Historical Understanding

Movies and television programs influence how people understand history, culture, and identity.

Write one well-developed paragraph explaining why students should think critically about the films, television programs, documentaries, and streaming content they watch. In your response, explain how filmmakers influence the stories that audiences see and why considering multiple perspectives leads to a better understanding of history and culture. Support your response with evidence from the reading.

Resources

Agrasánchez, R., Jr. (2001). *Mexican Movies in the United States: A History of the Films, Theaters and Audiences, 1920–1960*. McFarland.

Cineteca Nacional. (n.d.). *Archivo y acervo cinematográfico mexicano*.

Filmoteca UNAM. (n.d.). *Catálogo y archivo histórico del cine mexicano*.

Hershfield, J., & Maciel, D. R. (Eds.). (1999). *Mexico's Cinema: A Century of Film and Filmmakers*. SR Books.

Paranaguá, P. A. (Ed.). (1995). *Mexican Cinema*. British Film Institute.

Sadlier, D. J. (2010). *Latin American Melodrama: Passion, Pathos, and Entertainment*. University of Illinois Press.