

**"Reply to Sor Filotea de la Cruz"**

**Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz**

**1648-1695**

**ENH 202**

**Module for World Literature**

**Linda Knoblock**

**Paradise Valley Community College**

**Phoenix, Arizona**

made on a sermon written forty years earlier by the Portuguese Jesuit Antonio de Vieira, he also added his own criticism of her, saying she should confine her attentions to religious matters. In writing his criticism, the bishop used the pseudonym Sor Filotea de la Cruz, thus the title for Sor Juana's reply.

While appearing to accept the bishop's rebuke, Sor Juana's humble reply shows great intellect and skill in defending women's rights to use their abilities and minds. She uses autobiography as a form of defense, something unfamiliar to most modern readers. Sor Juana also demonstrates her talents and her knowledge in this spirited reply. Not only does she promote education for women, Sor Juana's reply makes a powerful case for learning itself.

### **Objectives**

Students will be expected to demonstrate a knowledge of the following:

1. Background information
2. Life of Sor Juana
3. Use of autobiography for argument
4. Attitude, tone, and style
5. Use of allusions as support

### **How the Module Relates to World Literature**

Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz lived from 1648-1695. Though she was born into an upper class family and served as a lady-in-waiting in the Viceregal Court, she became a nun. She did not forgo intellectual pursuits, however, and spent much of her time studying, learning, and writing. She became known in Mexico as "The Tenth Muse."

Sor Juana's defense of her intellectual pursuits fits particularly well into the study of the Age of enlightenment, the period from roughly 1660 to 1770, when thinking, reason, and the power of the mind prevailed.

**Other Names for this Literary Piece Used in References**

The Spanish name for this piece is "Respuesta a Sor Filotea." In addition to being translated as "Response to Sor Filotea," the title is sometimes translated as "Response to Sor Filotea."

Role of the church

2. Sor Juana

Life

Education

Writing

3. "Reply to Sor Filotea de la Cruz

Background of letter

Publication of commentary on sermon

Commentary of bishop

Attitude – tone of letter

Appearance

Reality

Style of writing

Apology

Obsequiousness

References and allusions

Historical

Literary

Biblical

Support from other areas of study

Women's roles

Education

Interests

Implications for everyone

5. What does her attitude appear to be?
6. Why does she want to learn to read?
7. How does she manage to do this?
8. What does this enable her to do?
9. Why does she choose life in the convent?
10. Why does she need to know about each field of study?
11. What does she do when she forgoes reading?
12. What does Sor Juana's attitude toward learning really seem to be?

5. How does Sor Juana present her arguments?
6. What is the significance of many of the references to women being unknown today?
7. What characteristics does Sor Juana admire?
8. Discuss the use of examples to support the argument.
9. Discuss the attitude of Sor Juana as it appears. Is it really so?
10. Compare reading and other learning.
11. What are the implications for education?
12. Does any of this apply today?

2. Discuss the implications of learning in general.
3. Discuss the use of tone and style in argument.
4. Discuss the power of language and its importance in this reply.
5. Discuss the dominant emotion of the piece.

Harvard University Press, 1988.\*

Peden, Margaret Sayers. Poems, A Bilingual Anthology. Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press, 1985.\*

\*Available at Paradise Valley Community College Library.

