

Course Title: Rizal's Life, Works, and Writings

Course Code: GE109

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MT Lesson 3: Childhood Years in Calamba

Calamba, the Hero's Town

- Calamba
 - Natal town of Rizal.
 - Named after a big native jar.
 - The happiest period of Rizal's life was spent in this lakeshore town, a worthy prelude to his Hamlet-like tragic manhood.
 - Hacienda town which belonged to the Dominican Order.
 - The picturesque town is nestled on a verdant plain covered with irrigated rice fields and sugar lands.
 - A few kilometers to the south looms the legendary Mount Makiling and beyond this mountain is the province of Batangas.
 - East of the town is the Laguna de Bay.
- Un Recuerdo A Mi Pueblo (In Memory of My Town)
 - A poem written by Rizal in 1876 when he was 15 years old and a student of Ateneo de Manila.

Earliest Childhood Memories

- The first memory of Rizal, in his infancy, was his happy days in the family garden when he was 3 years old. He was given the tenderest care by his parents because he was frail, sickly, and
- undersized.
- His father built a little nipa cottage in the garden for him to play in the daytime.
- An *aya* (nursemaid), a kind old woman, was employed to look after him.
- He watched from the cottage, the *culiauan*, *maya*, *maria capra*, the *martin*, the *pitpit*, and other birds and listened "with wonder and joy" to their twilight songs.
- The daily Angelus prayer.
- The happy moonlit nights at the *azotea* after the nightly Rosary.
- The imaginary tales told by the *aya* aroused Rizal's interest in legends and folklore.
- The *aya* would threaten Rizal with the *asuang*, the *nuno*, the *tigbalang*, or a terrible bearded and turbaned Bombay would come to take him away if he would not eat his supper.

- The nocturnal walk in the town especially when there was a moon with his aya by the river.

The Hero's First Sorrow

- Death of Little Concha (Concepcion)
 - “When I was four years old, I lost my little sister Concha, and then for the first time I shed tears caused by love and grief...”

Devoted Son of the Church

- Young Rizal is a religious boy. He grew up a good Catholic.
- At the age of 3, he began to take part in the family prayer. His mother taught him the Catholic prayers.
- At 5 years old, he was able to read the Spanish family bible.
- He was so seriously devout that he was laughingly called *Manong Jose* by the *Hermanos* and *Hermanas Terceras*.
- One of the men he esteemed and respected in Calamba during his boyhood was the scholarly Father Leoncio Lopez, town priest.

Pilgrimage to Antipolo

- On June 06, 1868, Jose and his father left Calamba to go on a pilgrimage to Antipolo.
- It was Jose's first trip across Laguna de Bay and his first pilgrimage to Antipolo. He and his father rode in a *casco* (barge).
- He was awed by “the magnificence of the water expanse and the silence of the night”.
- After praying at the shrine of the Virgin of Antipolo, Jose and his father went to Manila and visited Saturnina, who was then a boarding student at La Concordia College in Santa Ana.

The Story of the Moth

The story of the moth and the flame was told to Rizal by his mother on a night when her mother was teaching him how to read a book entitled “The Children’s Friend” (El Amigos de los Niños).

His mother grew impatient with his poor reading and lack of focus and always strayed his eyes on the flame of the lamp and the cheerful moths surrounding it. Knowing his interest in stories, his mother decided to stop teaching him and instead read him an interesting story.

Upon hearing the story, it gave a deep impression of Rizal. However, it's not the story's moral that truly struck him, he actually envied the moths and their fate and considered that the light was so fine a thing that it was worth dying for.

Artistic Talents

- At the age of five (5), he began to make sketches with his pencil and to mould in clay and wax objects which attracted his fancy.
- A religious banner that was always used during fiesta was spoiled and upon the request of the town mayor, Rizal painted in oil colors a new banner that delighted the town folks.
- Jose had the soul of a genuine artist.
- At the age of 6, his sisters laughed at him for spending so much time making those images rather than participating in their games. He told them "All right laugh at me now! Someday when I die, people will make monuments and images of me!"

First Poem by Rizal

- At the age of eight (8), Rizal wrote his first poem in his native language entitled "Sa Aking Mga Kabata" (To My Fellow Children).
- He wrote it in an appeal to our people to love our national language.

First Drama by Rizal

- At age 8, Rizal wrote his first dramatic work which was a Tagalog Comedy. It was staged in the Calamba festival.
- A gobernadorcillo from Paete purchased the manuscript for 2 pesos.

Rizal as Boy Magician

- He learned various tricks, such as making a coin appear and disappear in his fingers and making a handkerchief vanish in thin air.
- He entertained his town folks with magic-lantern exhibitions. This consisted of an ordinary lamp casting its shadow on a white screen.
- He also gained skill in manipulating marionettes (puppet shows).
- In Chapters XVII and XVIII of his second novel, *El Filibusterismo* (Treason), he revealed his wide knowledge of magic.

Lakeshore Reveries

- During the twilight hours of summertime, Rizal, accompanied by his pet dog, used to meditate at the shore of Laguna de Bay on the sad conditions of his oppressed people.
- When he became a man, many years later, he wrote to his friend, Mariano Ponce: "In view of these injustices and cruelties, although yet a child, my imagination was awakened and I made a vow dedicating myself someday to avenge the many victims. With this idea in my mind, I studied, and this is seen in all my writings. Someday God will give me the opportunity to fulfill my promise."

Influences in the Hero's Boyhood

- Hereditary Influence

According to biological science, there are inherent qualities that a person inherits from his ancestors and parents.

- From his Malayan Ancestors, Rizal, inherited his love for freedom, his innate desire to travel, and his indomitable courage.
- From his Chinese Ancestors, he derived his serious nature, frugality, patience, and love for children.
- From his Spanish Ancestors, he got his elegance of bearing, sensitivity to insult, and gallantry to ladies.
- From his father, he inherited a profound sense of self-respect, a love for work, and a habit of independent thinking.
- From his mother, he inherited his religious nature, the spirit of self-sacrifice, and the passion for arts and literature.

- Environmental Influence

According to psychologists, environment, as well as heredity, affects the nature of a person which includes places, associates, & events.

- The scenic beauties of Calamba and the garden of the Rizal family stimulated the inborn artistic and literary talents of Jose Rizal.
- The religious atmosphere at his home fortified his religious nature.
- His brother, Paciano, instilled in his mind the love of freedom and justice.
- From his sisters, he learned to be courteous and kind to women.
- The fairy tales told by his *aya* awakened his interest in folklore and legends.
- His three (3) uncles, brothers of his mother, exerted a good influence on him. *Tio* Jose Alberto, who had studied for eleven (11) years in a British school in Calcutta, India, and had traveled in Europe inspired him to develop his artistic ability. *Tio* Manuel, a husky and athletic man, encouraged him to develop his frail

body by means of physical exercises, including horse riding, walking, and wrestling. *Tio Gregorio*, a book lover, intensified Rizal's voracious reading of good books.

- Father Leoncio Lopez, the old and learned parish priest of Calamba, fostered Rizal's love for scholarship and intellectual honesty.
 - The sorrows in his family, such as the death of Concha in 1865 and the imprisonment of his mother in 1871-74, contributed to strengthen his character.
 - The Spanish abuses and cruelties which he witnessed, awakened Rizal's spirit of patriotism and inspired him to consecrate his life and talents to redeem his oppressed people.
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- The Aid of Divine Providence
A person may have everything in life- brain, wealth, and power- but, without the aid of Divine Providence, he cannot attain greatness in the annals of the nation.
 - Rizal was providentially destined to be the pride and glory of his nation. God had endowed him with the versatile gifts of a genius, the vibrant spirit of a nationalist, and the valiant heart to sacrifice for a noble cause.

References

Zaide, G. F., & Zaide, S. M. (1999). *Jose Rizal: Life, Works, and Writings of a Genius, Writer, Scientist, and National Hero*. All Nations Publishing Co., Inc.