

UNIT 11

A Letter to God

Gregorio Lopez Fuentes



Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

- Listen to texts and critically analyse the situations/events.
- Evaluate two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis.
- Use summary skills to
 - extract salient points and develop a mind map to summarize a variety of informational texts.
 - transfer the written text to a table, diagram, flowchart or work plan.
- Summarise complex concepts, processes, or information by paraphrasing them using correct language structure, transitional devices, own words and relevant punctuation marks. Make inferences to draw conclusions from, e.g. contextual information, writer's viewpoint, implied information.
- Recognize and use correlative conjunctions including pairs such as both/and, either/or, neither/nor, not/but and not only/but also, etc.
- Use summary skills to write an objective summary of the given text and poems.



Pre-reading:

- Based on the title "A Letter to God," what do you think the main character might be asking for and why?
- If you were to write a letter to God, what is the one thing you would ask for or say?

The house – the only one in the entire valley – sat on the **crest** of a low hill. From this height one could see the river and, next to the corral, the field of ripe corn dotted with the kidney bean flowers that always promised a good harvest. The only thing the earth needed was a rainfall, or at least a shower. Throughout the morning Lencho – who knew his fields **intimately** – had done nothing else but scan the sky toward the northeast. "Now we're really going to get some water, woman." The woman, who was preparing supper, replied: "Yes, God willing." The oldest boys were working in the field, while the smaller ones were playing near the house, until the woman called to them all: "Come for dinner..." It was during the meal that, just as Lencho had predicted, big drips of rain began to fall. In the northeast huge mountains of clouds could be seen approaching. The air was fresh and sweet. The man went out to look for something in the corral for no other reason than to allow himself the pleasure of feeling the rain on his body, and when he returned, he exclaimed: "Those aren't raindrops falling from the

sky, they're new coins. The big drops are ten-centavo pieces and the little ones are fives..." With a satisfied expression he regarded the field of ripe corn with its kidney bean flowers, draped in a curtain of rain. But suddenly a strong wind began to fall. These truly did resemble new silver coins. The boys, exposing themselves to the rain, ran out to collect the frozen pearls. "It's really getting bad now," exclaimed the man, mortified. "I hope it passes quickly." It did not pass quickly. For an hour the hail rained on the house, the garden, the hillside, the cornfield, on the whole valley. The field was white, as if covered with salt. Not a leaf remained on the trees. The corn was totally destroyed. The flowers were gone from the kidney bean plants. Lencho's soul was filled with sadness. When the storm had passed, he stood in the middle of the field and said to his sons: "A plague of locusts would have left more than this... the hail has left nothing: this year we will have no corn or beans..." That night was a sorrowful one: "All our work, for nothing!" "There's no one who can help us!" But in the minds of all who lived in that solitary house in the middle of the valley, there was a single hope: help from God. "Don't be so upset, even though this seems like a total loss. Remember, no one dies of hunger!" "That's what they say: no one dies of hunger..." All through the night, Lencho thought only of his one hope: the help of God, whose eyes, as he had been instructed, see everything, even what is deep in one's **conscience**. Lencho was an ox of a man, working like an animal in the fields, but still he knew how to write. The following Sunday, at day break, after having convinced himself that there is a protecting spirit he began to write a letter which he himself would carry to town and place in the mail. It was nothing less than a letter to God. "God," he wrote, "if you don't help me, my family and I will go hungry this year. I need a hundred pesos in order to re-sow the field and to live until the crop comes, because the hailstorm..." He wrote "To God" on the envelope, put the letter inside and - still troubled - went to town. At the post office he placed a stamp on the letter and dropped it into the mailbox. One of the employees, who was a postman and also helped at the post office, went to his boss, laughing heartily and showed him the letter to God. Never in his career as a postman had he known that address. The postmaster - a fat **amiable** fellow - also broke out laughing, but almost immediately he turned serious and, tapping the letter on his desk, commented: "What faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter. To believe the way he believes. To hope with the confidence that he knows how to hope with. Starting up a **correspondence** with God!" So, in order not to discourage the farmer's faith, revealed by a letter that could not be delivered, the postmaster came up with an idea: answer the letter. But when he opened it, it was evident that to answer it he needed something more than good will, ink and paper. But he stuck to his resolution: he asked for money from his employee, he himself gave part of his salary, and several friends of his were **obliged** to give something "for an act of charity". It was impossible for him to gather together the hundred pesos requested by Lencho, so he

was able to send the farmer only a little more than half. He put the bills in an envelope addressed to Lencho and with them a letter containing only a signature: GOD. The following Sunday Lencho came a bit earlier than usual to ask if there was a letter for him. It was the postman himself who handed the letter to him while the postmaster - experiencing the contentment of a man who has performed a good deed - looked on from the doorway of his office. Lencho showed not the slightest surprise on seeing the bills – such was his confidence – but he became angry when he counted the money. God could not have made a mistake, nor could he have denied Lencho what he had requested! Immediately, Lencho went up to the window to ask for paper and ink. On the public writing table, he started to write with much **wrinkling** of his brow, caused by the effort he had to make to express his ideas. When he finished, he went to the window to buy a stamp which he licked and then affixed to the envelope with a blow of his fist. The **moment** that the letter fell into the mailbox the postmaster went to open it. It said; “God: Of the money that I asked for only seventy pesos reached me. Send me the rest, since I need it very much. But don’t send it to me through the mail, because the post office employees are a bunch of crooks. Lencho.”

Theme

In it, the theme of communication and collaboration is explored through a lens of profound irony and human fallibility. Lencho’s earnest letter to God, pleading for financial aid after a devastating hailstorm, represents a form of direct, faith-driven communication that transcends conventional means. The postmaster and his colleagues, moved by Lencho’s unwavering belief, collaborate to collect money and send it anonymously, embodying collective human empathy in action. However, the resulting miscommunication—when Lencho receives only part of the requested sum and accuses the post office employees of theft—reveals the fragile and often misinterpreted nature of human interactions. Ultimately, the narrative underscores that while collaboration can spring from noble intentions, imperfect communication can lead to unintended misunderstandings, highlighting the delicate balance between goodwill and perception.

About the author

Gregorio López Fuentes stands as a seminal figure in the landscape of Mexican literature, celebrated for his profound and empathetic portrayals of rural life and the struggles of the indigenous peoples during the early 20th century. A master of narrative simplicity and emotional depth, his works bridge the personal and the political, offering readers a window into the soul of a nation in transformation. Through novels and short stories rich with authenticity, López Fuentes gave voice to the marginalized, weaving tales that resonate with universal themes of justice, resilience, and human dignity. His contributions not only enriched the literary canon but also fostered a greater cultural awareness and social consciousness, cementing his legacy as a compassionate chronicler of Mexico's heart and history.



Glossary

Words	Meanings
amiable	friendly and pleasant
conscience	sense of right and wrong that guides a person's actions
correspondence	communication by exchanging letters or messages
crest	the top or highest point of something, like a hill or a wave
intimately	in a close, personal, or detailed way
moment	a very short period of time
obliged	thankful or grateful; also means required to do something
wrinkling	forming small lines or folds, especially on skin or cloth



Reading and Critical Thinking

A. Answer the following questions:

1. What was the "only thing the earth needed" in the beginning of the story, and why was it so crucial?
2. How did Lencho react when he received the letter? Why was his reaction surprising?
3. What did Lencho's second letter reveal about his faith and his perception of the post office employees?
4. In the beginning of the story, why was Lencho so certain that it would rain? What does this tell you about his character and his relationship with nature?
5. Describe the event that transformed Lencho's hopeful anticipation into despair. What was the specific cause of this transformation?
6. When the postman and postmaster read Lencho's letter, what was their initial reaction? Why did the postmaster decide to help him?
7. Why was Lencho not surprised or filled with gratitude when he received the money? Instead, what emotion did he feel and why?
8. The story is built on a powerful irony. Explain the contradiction between what Lencho believes happened to the money and what actually happened.
9. What does the "house - the only one in the entire valley - sitting on the crest of a low hill" symbolize about Lencho and his family's place in the world?
10. Based on the ending, what do you think is the author's main message about faith? Is it a story that criticizes blind faith, or celebrates its power despite human flaws?

B. Choose the correct option.

1. The house sat on the **crest** of a low hill.
a) base b) top c) side d) shadow
2. The field was **dotted** with kidney bean flowers.
a) erased b) sprinkled c) coloured d) replaced
3. He was **mortified** by the turn of events.
a) excited b) embarrassed c) humiliated d) amused
4. He experienced the **contentment** of a good deed.
a) sadness b) satisfaction c) confusion d) regret
5. He needed to **re-sow** the field.
a) plant again b) water c) harvest d) sell
6. He made a **resolution** to answer the letter.
a) joke b) promise c) decision d) mistake
7. Lencho had an **unyielding** faith in God. What is the best synonym for "unyielding"?
a) Flexible b) Adamant c) Temporary d) Questioning
8. Lencho's field needed a **downpour** to have a good harvest. Which word could replace "downpour"?
a) Drizzle b) Deluge c) Breeze d) Drought
9. The postmaster and his employees made a **conscientious** effort to help Lencho. What does "conscientious" mean?
a) Careless b) Meticulous c) Secret d) Quick
10. When Lencho found only a portion of the money, he assumed the post office employees were a **bunch of crooks**. What is a synonym for "crooks"?
a) Heroes b) Benefactors c) Swindlers d) Officials



Vocabulary and Grammar

Instructions: Read the following sentences or phrases from "A Letter to God" and answer the questions that follow.

1. "It's really getting bad now," exclaimed the man. "I hope it passes quickly."
The word **exclaimed** suggests the man spoke in a _____.
a) quiet and sad tone. b) loud and sudden way, expressing emotion.
c) formal and polite manner. d) slow and thoughtful whisper.
2. The hailstones are described as "frozen pearls" and "new silver coins." This is an example of _____.
a) a simile b) a metaphor c) personification d) hyperbole

-
3. The postmaster was a fat, amiable fellow. What is the best synonym for **amiable**?
- a) serious b) friendly and pleasant c) wealthy d) lazy
4. Lencho showed an unshakable faith in God. The word **unshakable** means ____.
- a) easily broken b) not able to be weakened or doubted
c) religious d) new and untested
5. The hailstorm left the valley **desolate**. What does **desolate** mean?
- a) empty of people and offering no comfort; devastated
b) ready for a new planting season
c) beautifully covered in white d) peaceful and quiet
6. Based on the context of the entire story, what does **conscience** mean, as in the postmaster being "stirred by Lencho's conscience"?
- a) a person's moral sense of right and wrong
b) a large amount of money
c) a feeling of anger d) a clever plan
7. The word **contentment** is used to describe Lencho's feeling before the storm. What is its meaning?
- a) a state of happiness and satisfaction b) a feeling of great worry
c) the things that are inside something d) a strong desire for more
8. Lencho's letter was a **petition** to God. A **petition** is a _____.
- a) formal request, often written. b) thank you note.
c) declaration of war. d) a short story.



Oral Communication Skills

- A. Students form a group and hold discussion on: "Lencho possesses an unshakeable faith, while the postmaster and his employees act out of a combination of compassion and amusement. How do these two central ideas—unwavering faith and human compassion—interact and build upon each other throughout the story? What complex conclusion does this interaction lead us to know about human nature?"



Writing Skills

- A. Lencho's unwavering faith and the post office employees' compassionate response are two central ideas in the story.**
- a)** Analyse how these two ideas develop and interact with each other over the course of the text. How does Lencho's faith initiate the action, and how does the employees' response create the story's central irony?
 - b)** Based on your analysis, write an objective summary of the story. Your summary must paraphrase the main events, highlight this central relationship between faith and action, and conclude with the story's final outcome. Use correct transitional devices to ensure your summary flows logically.
 - c)** Write a short paragraph (4-5 sentences) from the perspective of the postmaster after he reads Lencho's second letter. Your paragraph must express his mixed feelings of disappointment and resolve.