

Review of “Amaneceres”

Title	Amaneceres
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Year of Publication	2024
Place of Publication	USA

Share and cite

Rodríguez Flores, S. (2024). Review of “Amaneceres” *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching [e-FLT]*, 21(1), 93–94. <https://doi.org/10.56040/srfr2117>

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After intensive research in teaching Spanish as a foreign language in the United States, the author appeals to the need for a textbook that includes all aspects of grammar, vocabulary, and conversation; as well as the history and culture of each Spanish-speaking country and bilingual activities. “Amaneceres” brings together in a single textbook all the mentioned components through a series of well-structured teaching units with authentic content that enhances communicative practice both orally and in writing. In short, it suggests an acquisition of Spanish as a foreign language with activities of a social, experiential, and authentic nature that allows the student an individualized experience in their learning process and style. To all this is added a workbook that also serves as a laboratory manual for the exposure and improvement of various phonetic aspects. This allows for a deeper practice of the four skills (listening and speaking, reading and writing) in Spanish, and through videos and recordings, it also represents and illustrates the different varieties of the language.

“Amaneceres” contains a total of 14 well-planned and structured units. Each lesson consists of 5 sections: 1) pronunciation and spelling, 2) culture, 3) contextualized grammar, 4) bilingual section, 5) reading comprehension and writing expression.

In the pronunciation and spelling section, the author does an excellent job of synthesizing the main phonetic aspects of the Spanish language. There is a constant comparison between Spanish and English, followed by a thorough explanation so that the student can understand and contrast the differences or similarities between both languages. The first chapters begin by addressing the necessary pronunciation of vowels and the different consonantal phonemes of Spanish, before addressing other issues such as sentence intonation or prosodic accent. The student can reinforce all the content of this unit with the complementary material available in the workbook.

Following the pronunciation and spelling section is a culture section. Here, space is dedicated for students to discover the culture of the different Spanish-speaking countries and relate to it. Each chapter contains essential information on aspects such as location, languages, currency, newspapers, artists, vocabulary, or some popular sayings. In total, the following 14 countries are represented: Spain, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Mexico,

Guatemala, Venezuela, El Salvador, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, and Argentina. However, what is particularly innovative about these cultural sections are the comic strips about the arrival of Cristóbal Colón in the American continent that gradually unfold the historical content. Through an original form, content of special relevance for the understanding of the current Hispanic world is presented. Subsequently, after these comic book readings, exercises are provided to ensure reading comprehension.

The third section is exclusively dedicated to working on grammatical aspects in context. The author introduces a novel way of explaining grammar through a blog created by herself. Here, a clear and structured selection of the most necessary grammatical elements at the beginner and intermediate levels is presented. It is especially useful that the explanations are direct and simple, with a variety of examples and using simple terminology. Additionally, the fact that they are written in English facilitates student comprehension. This section also includes authentic dialogues in which the different grammatical contents are inserted, a summary table of the new content, practice exercises, bilingual vocabulary, and external links to virtual content that supports learning. In general, each unit addresses a different grammatical content and frames it within a specific functional context, which in turn leads to learning semantically grouped lexical content.

The bilingual section works with a reading of several brief paragraphs in Spanish and English. This content aims to reinforce and expand the content worked on in the previous sections and includes instructions for carrying out different types of individual or group activities. Additionally, the contrast of the two texts in both languages allows the student to identify similarities and divergences in the linguistic patterns of English and Spanish, reinforcing bilingual thinking.

Finally, the most communicative section of all is the reading comprehension and writing expression section. Here, a series of activities are proposed where students practice the language for useful everyday tasks such as applying for a passport or getting a driver's license. This section is divided into 4 parts: a) LCC Activities, b) video, c) conversation tables, and d) questionnaire. As mentioned earlier, what stands out especially in this section is its practical nature. The authenticity of the materials is notable with examples of conversations and texts in public places, links to interesting websites, interactive activities with digital content, soap opera videos with questions, etc. Productive skills are not forgotten as spaces are proposed to practice oral and written expression with conversation topics and suggestions for compositions. The variety of activities provides this section with an excellent source of resources and ideas for practice.

In conclusion, "Amaneceres" is a rich and useful manual that can adequately meet the needs of both teachers and students of Spanish as a foreign language, especially in the American context. The manual can be used both with the support of a teacher and independently by autonomous learners. The selection and variety of resources and their content, combined with their authenticity, are the most remarkable aspects of this material, providing a pleasant language practice experience with a refreshing and enjoyable perspective.