

STUDY GUIDE



NUDO MIXTECO

A film by ÁNGELES CRUZ

Mexico / 2021 / 91 min
Mixteco and Spanish with English subtitles



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BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before watching a film, it is important to know the current events and history of the country that film comes from. Learning about the filmmaker is also a relevant way to gain insight on the context in which the film was produced. You can learn more about Ángeles Cruz at <https://pragda.com/film/nudo-mixteco/>.

INTRODUCING THE FILM

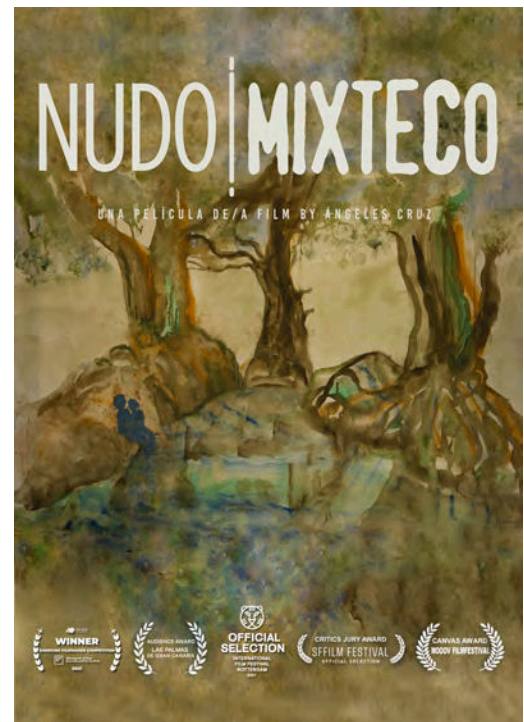
A **film synopsis** is a piece of text designed to summarize the film's narrative, genre, style, and key participants in a way that appeals to a wide audience. The synopsis is part of the film's marketing process and tends to follow a traditional format. Read this synopsis for *Nudo Mixteco*:

Taking place in a rural Mixtec village in Oaxaca, southern Mexico, *Nudo Mixteco* follows the return of María, Esteban, and Toña, each from a different direction. Each of them has a different reason for coming back, just like each had a different reason to leave in the first place. However, all three face a confrontation that will force a turning point in their lives.

María buries her mother, her father rejects her, and in uncertainty, she asks her childhood love, Piedad, to leave with her. Esteban returns after three years to discover that Chabela, his wife, is living with another man. Enraged he calls the village people to prosecute her in an assembly. Toña, faced with her daughter's abuse, relives her own pain when she returns to confront her family to protect her.

Narrated from the point of view of the women, the three stories momentarily intersect with each other and together paint an exceptional picture of the local culture, in which filmmaker Ángeles Cruz herself grew up. Festivities, rituals, and a village council that acts as a tribunal - these elements make up the fabric of a community that should offer protection, warmth, and security. However, the fates of the three protagonists will reveal a constant fight against age-old patriarchal power and prejudice.

- ❑ From the film synopsis, can you imagine the genre and tone of the film? From this same text, try to identify the main events of the film's plot and the socio-political context of the film.
- ❑ Do you think that the film will have a political message? Cite specific language from the synopsis to support your answer.
- ❑ How do the trailer, poster, and still images encourage you to watch the film?
- ❑ Viewing the marketing materials alone (i.e. trailer, poster, and still images available at <https://pragda.com/film/nudo-mixteco/>) without the aid of the synopsis, can you make any assumptions regarding what the film is about?



AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

NARRATIVE

- ❑ The film begins with the death of María's mother. How does this set the mood of the film and its themes? How does this opening compare or contrast with the film's ending?
- ❑ What can you say about María, Chabela, and Toña as the film's protagonists? How do you characterize these three women? What do they have in common and what differentiates them?
- ❑ How is time constructed in the film? Is it linear or non-linear?
- ❑ What challenges does migration from rural to urban landscapes bring up for different characters in the film? Analyze two different characters that illustrate these challenges.
- ❑ How does the film successfully reflect on the impact of migration on social norms? Analyze two situations that illustrate these changes.
- ❑ Do you think Fermín also molested his sister? Describe the relationship between Fermín and his sister.
- ❑ Reflect on the village assembly's judgement of Chabela and Esteban's conflict. Do you agree with the village assembly's ruling on their issues? Why or why not.
- ❑ What is the role of the village assembly? Is this an effective judicial system? Why or why not?
- ❑ Toña's partner wears a mask when they are intimate with each other. Why do you think he wears this mask?
- ❑ Why do you think the director chose to end the film the way he did?

CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

- ❑ Describe the film's cinematography referencing specific choices in color, lighting, camera lenses and angles, etc.
- ❑ How would you describe the color palette of the film? How does the film use color to reflect the film's themes?
- ❑ Why do you think the filmmaker decided to tell this story in the form of a fiction narrative? How do you think the spectator's experience of with the film would change if it were a documentary?
- ❑ Try to think about two or three shots that really spoke to you. What about them is significant and why specifically do they stick out in your mind?
- ❑ How would you describe the film's editing? Is it fast-paced or slow?
- ❑ When is music used in the film? What type of music does the director choose to include and how does it affect the mood of the scenes in which it is heard?
- ❑ What filmmaking techniques does the director use to weave the three narratives within the film together?
- ❑ Thinking about the way lighting is used, what differences do you notice between the lighting in the village and in the city?
- ❑ We see María and Piedad having sex and we also see Toña and her partner having sex. But these two scenes are shot very differently. Describe the difference and the impact of each scene.



THEMES

- ❑ Reflect on Piedad, Chabela, and Rosita's characters. What impact does migration have on those that are left behind?
- ❑ What do you think is the meaning of the film's title *Nudo Mixteco*? What themes or messages does it communicate to the audience?
- ❑ How would you compare *Nudo Mixteco* to other films portraying women's stories? Is this a feminist film? Why or why not?
- ❑ In different ways, María, Toña, and Chabela are excluded from their families and society. Can you identify any scenes or moments in the film that demonstrate these three women reclaiming their voice?
- ❑ How would you compare *Nudo Mixteco* to other films portraying migration stories? What aspects of a migration story were you expecting to see in the film but didn't?
- ❑ What does the city represent to the villagers of San Mateo?
- ❑ How are men portrayed in this film? Analyze all the male characters in the film and the roles they play.
- ❑ Think about the circumstances of many rural Mexican communities that may force people like Esteban and Toña to leave the village. What are some of the conditions in Mexican society that coerce people into migrant labor?
- ❑ How do gender roles play a significant part in the film's drama? How do different characters buy into and subvert their gender roles?
- ❑ Did you find yourself relating to any of the protagonists? Do you think women in the United States face the same societal pressures as these women do? Think of examples from your own life.
- ❑ How would you fit this film in the context of the #MeToo movement?
- ❑ How does the film explore women's sexuality? Think about the various sex scenes throughout the film and their tone.
- ❑ The director is an indigenous woman. How does her identity inform the film's approach?

