

 PRAGDA | SPANISH FILM CLUB

# DISCUSSION GUIDE



## SEVEN DOGS (SIETE PERROS)

A film by RODRIGO GUERRERO

Argentina / 2021 / 87 min  
Spanish with English subtitles

## 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 Rodrigo Guerrero at <https://pragda.com/film/seven-dogs>.

### 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 *Seven Dogs*:

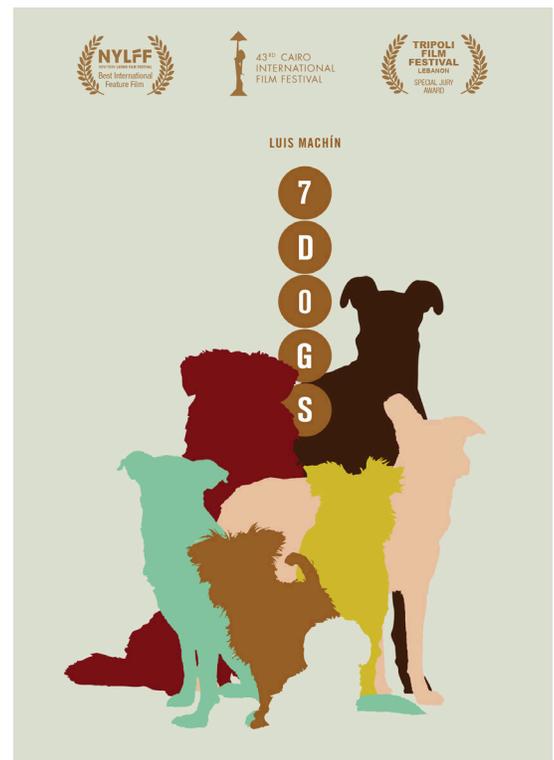
A canine family becomes the catalyst for human connection in this heartwarming film about a lonely man looking for a way to keep his seven dogs in his apartment despite the neighbors' threats.

Ernesto lives with his seven dogs in an apartment building in the city of Córdoba, Argentina. His lonely daily routine revolves around his pets' needs, his health problems, and his money problems. Tired of the constant barking, some of his neighbors arrange a mediation hearing, urging him to take his pets out of the apartment. But Ernesto cannot envision a life without his dogs, and he cannot afford to move elsewhere.

Thanks to the empathy of people who are also lonely, but share common spaces that connect them, Ernesto finds a way to solve the conflict.

*Seven Dogs* is a simple and bright film on prejudice, finger-pointing, and social harassment.

- > 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/seven-dogs/>) without the aid of the synopsis, can you make any assumptions regarding what the film is about?



## AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

### NARRATIVE

- > How is Ernesto introduced to the audience in the opening minutes of the film? What assumptions can one make based upon these short sequences?
- > Describe Ernesto as a person. What are some of his traits and mannerisms? Why do some of his neighbors like him while others despise him?
- > As the film starts, Ernesto is depicted as a loner. However, as the film progresses, he slowly becomes more engaged within his community. How do his relationships with his neighbors evolve throughout the film? What roles do his dogs play in this progression?
- > When Ernesto is faced with legal trouble regarding his dogs, how does he react? What solution does he come up with? Why does he refuse to find a new place to live?
- > Ernesto and his daughter seem to have a complicated relationship. While they are still on good terms, their calls often feel empty and forced. How does distance affect their relationship?
- > As the film progresses, Ernesto's health rapidly deteriorates. How do his habits affect his health? Why do you think he refuses the advice that his doctor provides?
- > After the death of Panchita, Ernesto is left devastated. How does Ernesto cope with this pain? What is the aftermath of this event?
- > *Seven Dogs* comes to an end as Ernesto celebrates New Year's Eve alone in his apartment. What has changed in Ernesto's life? What has stayed the same?



### CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

- > Approximately the first seven minutes of the film consists of a montage of Ernesto completing a variety of tasks with minimal social interaction with others. How does this montage sculpt the audience's understanding of Ernesto's way of life?
- > The apartment building exists as a complex setting that houses a variety of stories and situations from the different inhabitants. How does Rodrigo Guerrero manipulate the characters into developing a whole world inside this one building? What are some of the stories that are constructed outside of Ernesto's life?
- > *Seven Dogs* is a film that solely contains sound from within the world it exists in. Why do you believe that the filmmakers chose not to include non-diegetic sound? How does this help to mold the viewer's interaction with the film?
- > Ernesto lives on the bottom floor of his apartment and his terrace is situated at the center of the entire building. Whenever Ernesto looks up, he sees those that dislike him, while they literally look down on him. Was this decision made for narrative purposes or do you believe it also carries symbolic value? Explain.

## CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES *continued*

- Whenever Ernesto interacts with one of his neighbors within the apartment building, the camera frames the characters in very close proximity to one another. Examples of this include when Ernesto visits Matías in his home and when Ernesto consoles Martina in the stairwell. How does this framing add emotion to these moments? How does it make you feel?
- *Seven Dogs* primarily uses low-key lighting in most of its scenes. How does the lighting in this film compliment the mood it tries to display?
- In scenes where Ernesto is shown home alone with his dogs, the camera frequently remains static and films Ernesto from a distance. How do these shots interact with the viewers' perception of him?
- The ending of *Seven Dogs* can be described as quite abrupt. Following Ernesto's collapse, he is shown celebrating New Year's Eve alone before it cuts to the credits. The film never informs the viewer on what transpired after he was found by his neighbors. Why did Rodrigo Guerrero choose to end the film without a proper conclusion? What do you believe happened, and what is the trajectory of Ernesto's life?

## THEMES

- One of the principal themes of *Seven Dogs* is loneliness. Throughout the film, the various characters such as Ernesto, Luciana, and Matías demonstrate their own forms of loneliness. How do each of these characters cope with their loneliness? How do the dogs help to soothe this feeling?
- What role do the dogs play in each character's life? What does the film say about the relationship between humans and dogs?
- The relationship between Ernesto and his daughter is one that is filled with false promises; they frequently speak of wanting to meet each other and the daughter constantly says that she wants to send him money. Nonetheless, nothing ever comes of it. How do you think they reached this point? How can the death of one family member, in this case Ernesto's wife, affect the relationships between the rest?
- *Seven Dogs* emphasizes the importance of community. In what ways do the dogs help to build a community within the apartment building? How do these residents help Ernesto with his problems?
- During Ernesto's meeting with the building administration, he reminds them that the contract states the pets are permitted. Nonetheless the administration persists that he must remove them. Is Ernesto facing an injustice? What moral obligation does Ernesto have in regard to creating a healthy living environment for his neighbors?
- Speak on Ernesto's sense of responsibility. Why does he continue to bring food to the new owners of his dogs? What emotions drive him to do this (guilt, gratitude, embarrassment, etc.)? Explain.
- Ernesto is a character who has dealt with a lot of loss. His wife has passed away, Panchita was poisoned, and his relationship with his daughter is deteriorating. How does Ernesto navigate the grief and solitude that come with these losses?
- Ernesto is a retired man who is facing many challenges due to his old age. What are some of these challenges and how is he responding to them?
- Many of the characters in *Seven Dogs* make the inconvenient sacrifice of adopting a dog to support Ernesto. For instance, Matías lives in a tiny apartment yet adopts Ramiro, and Alina adopts Chula while living in an unstable household. Why do these characters make these sacrifices for Ernesto? How do these sacrifices in turn benefit them?

