

Discussion Guide for El Bola

At first glance the film appears to be about the issue of child abuse. Do you agree or is child abuse a vehicle for another theme? If so, what is that theme?

The film focuses on the complex relationship between fathers and sons. What is the film saying about those relationships? About masculinity?

Are we expected to believe that Pablo's (El Bola) father had something to do with his brother's death? Did El Bola? Why is El Bola beaten by his father?

How is the Director, Acheró Manas, portraying the modern family? What role do women play in the film?

How do both Alfredo and Pablo's fathers leave a mark on their sons, literally and figuratively? What is the parallel between the fathers and the families?

The character of Felix seems to pop-up throughout the film? What does his role signify? Does Felix's situation further comment on the issues of masculinity set up throughout the film? Is Manas making a statement about sexuality?

What is the significance of the title, El Bola, which literally means a small metal ball-bearing? What does it signify when the ball bearing drops out of his hand at the hospital and is finally run over by the train at the end?

The image of the train is repeated throughout the film including the opening and closing shots. Is it simply a plot mechanism, or metaphor?

Why does Pablo finally explode in anger at his father? What drives him to rebel at that time?

Many of our audience are upset when Pablo is returned to his family despite obvious evidence that he has been abused. What are possible reasons for this?

What do Pablo and Alfredo find in each other's friendship? How does their friendship change them?

How do the shots of post-Franco Madrid influence your decisions about the characters? How was the music meshed into the movie?