Mariano Azuela’s novel, *The Underdogs*, provides a personal view of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Azuela, who served under Pancho Villa as a medical doctor, incorporates his firsthand knowledge of the revolution into this story. It is this personal insight that makes Azuela’s novel successful and, furthermore, very personal to the reader. The novel is made up of two main characters that represent differing views of the revolution itself. These two main characters represent Azuela’s own feelings for the revolution. Azuela believed in the ideals of the revolution, not the actual fighting itself (xi). As the novel progresses, the reader is able to acquire a sense of what a revolution does to a person or group of people involved in it. Through a closer examination of the two main characters and their respective roles within the novel, one can better understand how the Mexican Revolution of 1910 comes to life in *The Underdogs*.

Demetrio Martinez, the protagonist of this novel, does not simply join the cause of the revolution but rather is forced into it for the protection of his family (17). Given this insight, Azuela molds the character of Demetrio into a revolutionary. The process is a gradual one for Demetrio, and as he is given higher rank advancement, he gains prestige and honor among his fellow rebels. He goes from being a peaceful individual to a compulsive fighter. Yet, Demetrio later becomes disillusioned with the revolution. Azuela uses the character of Demetrio to present the view of what went wrong with the revolution. Therefore, Demetrio represents Azuela’s own disillusionment in the goals and ideals of the revolution. “It is clear that Azuela was in favor of what the revolution ideally represented, but the depth of his disillusion… made him withdraw” [from the revolution] (xi). The reader is not given detailed insight about what is going on with the revolution but is left to piece together information along the way.

Within the first section of the novel we are introduced to the other main character of the novel, Luis Cervantes. Cervantes embodies the positive hopes, dreams, and ideals of the revolutionary effort. As he states to Demetrio’s men after being captured, “I want you to be convinced that I am truly one of your coreligionists... that is to say, a person who possesses the same religion, who is inspired by the same ideals, who defends and fights for the same cause you are now fighting for” (22). Cervantes, ironically, had a better understanding of the goals of the revolution than did Demetrio. Right after completing this speech Demetrio asked: “What are we fighting for?” (22). The lack of understanding of the revolution itself on the part of Demetrio is made up for in the character of Cervantes. Cervantes then imparts his ideals of the revolutionary struggle and its meaning to Demetrio.

Unfortunately, Demetrio never really gains a full understanding of Cervantes’ “teachings.” It is late in the course of the novel that we gain a fuller understanding of Demetrio’s disillusioned views about the revolution as the fighting draws to its end with Villa’s defeats. Demetrio states, “I love the revolution like a volcano in eruption; I love the volcano because it’s a volcano, the revolution because it’s a revolution” (146). He has, by this point, reached
the view that fighting is all he knows how to do. He, like Azuela, loses sight of the ideal goals that the revolution stood for. The end of the novel reads: "his [Demetrio’s] eyes leveled in an eternal glance, continues to point the barrel of his gun" (161). In the end, he has returned to where he was first captured, only to be silenced eternally.

Azuela uses the interwoven plots and interaction of these two characters to make The Underdogs a successful novel. This novel represents Azuela’s own personal insight into the Mexican Revolution. He truly brings the events of the revolution to life by fusing his own experience and understanding of the revolution into these two fictional characters. It is the combination of these factors, as well as lifelike characters, that make this work a highly significant contribution to better understanding the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

Work Cited