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*Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo A. Anaya

Rudolfo A. Anaya was born on October 30, 1936 in Pastura, New Mexico. He is an educator and an author, his work mainly focuses on Chicano literature. He has written a couple of novels, but one of his all time best ones is *Bless Me, Ultima* published in 1972 receiving the Premio Quinto Sol for this novel. From this novel, there was also a movie made in 2013. In this essay I will focus on the handwritten novel.

*Bless Me, Ultima* has multiple characters and some of them are, the protagonist Antonio Marez, Ultima the curandera, Gabriel and Maria Marez: Antonio's parents, Narciso: the town drunk, Tenorio Trementina and his three daughters, Cico, Florence, Antonio's friends: Abel, Bones, Ernie, Horse, Lloyd, Red, and the Vitamin Kid, Lupito, Antonio's brothers: Andrew, Eugene and Leon Mares, Antonio's sisters: Deborah and Theresa Mares, Antonio's uncles: Juan, Lucas, Mateo, and Pedro Luna, Father Byrnes, Chavez and Jason Chavez: father and son, and Samuel. The narrator in this novel is Antonio Mares. The argument of the novel is that Antonio is a young boy that is just learning about life itself. Antonio is a boy that is serious, and is excited about going off to school, however, he is stuck between two different pathways for his future. His father wants him to ride the llano and appreciate the prairie, while his mother wants Antonio to become a priest. Through his life journey he meets Ultima who becomes his guidance in life.

This novel has a variety of different themes but the one I will focus on is the importance of Ultima in Antonio's life journey.

Ultima is an elderly curandera, that has a huge role in Antonio's life. She is his personal mentor that helps him cope with everything as well as his anxieties, and uncertainties. The bond that Antonio has with Ultima is a very unique bond as well as the most important one in the novel. She becomes Antonio's teacher in gaining his moral independence. The bond was created when Ultima was Maria's midwife to giving birth to Antonio. Ultima has had an impact in Antonio's life ever since. When Antonio's parents are both making plans for Antonio's future, Ultima is the one that says that only she will know what his future will be like (Anaya). This shows how Ultima cares for Antonio and she does not decide what he will be in the future, rather she just says that only she knows his future. Ultima's way of seeing things was very open, as well as her religion, she never really made Antonio do something forcibly, she instead explained to him and let him decide for his own if he wanted to do things or not. After Lupito's death when Antonio walks into the church with Ultima and talks with her about his wonder on death, sin, and hell, Ultima explains to him that life is based on moral decisions, that everyone should pick and choose their own values and live life with that (Anaya). This is another example of how Ultima teaches Antonio in life rather than making decision for him and making him follow through. She understandably explain all his doubts and lets him for himself to see what is best for him to believe and put as values, this is what makes the bond between them two even better. Rudolfo Anaya writes to us how even when Ultima dies her spirit will be the guidance for Antonio (Anaya). This basically says that even after death she will still remain with him, death is not

powerful enough to break their bond. This is something powerful in the novel because it shows how important and significant the presence of Ultima is Antonio's life.

*Bless Me, Ultima* is a novel with many lessons one can relate to. How a bond with a special person will not be broken even after death, how a person can grow and make their own moral decisions in life. It teaches readers how much the presence of one person can influence your life, like Ultimas to Antonios. Along with that it has much more life lessons. This novel is recommended to everyone, the messages the author sends to the readers are inspirational and some readers might even relate to the novel. Overall, this novel is mainly focusing in the bond of Antonio with Ultima, it shows how Ultima was the guidance in his life.