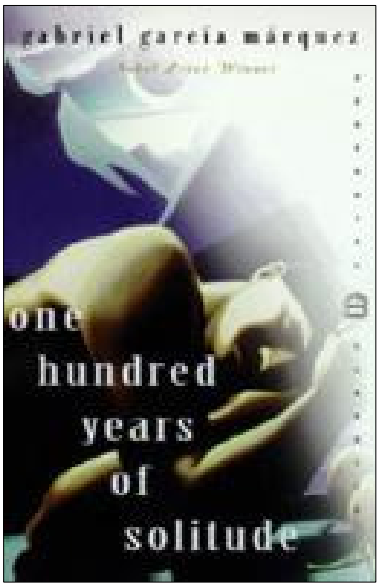


One Hundred Years of Solitude

by Gabriel García Márquez

Translation of Cien años de soledad
1970 (1st edition)
New York : Harper & Row
422 pages
0060531045
Winner of Oprah's Book Club pick

Summary

One Hundred Years of Solitude tells the story of the rise and fall, birth and death of the mythical town of Macondo through the history of the Buendía family. Inventive, amusing, magnetic, sad, and alive with unforgettable men and women -- brimming with truth, compassion, and a lyrical magic that strikes the soul -- this novel is a masterpiece in the art of fiction.

The mythic village of Macondo lies in northern Colombia, somewhere in the great swamps between the mountains and the coast. Founded by Jose Arcadio Buendia, his wife Ursula, and nineteen other families, "It was a truly happy village where no one was over thirty years of age and where no one had died." At least initially. **One Hundred Years of Solitude** chronicles, through the course of a century, life in Macondo and the lives of six Buendia generations-from Jose Arcadio and Ursula, through their son, Colonel Aureliano Buendia (who commands numerous revolutions and fathers eighteen additional Aurelianos), through three additional Jose Arcadios, through Remedios the Beauty and Renata Remedios, to the final Aureliano, child of an incestuous union. As babies are born and the world's "great inventions" are introduced into Macondo, the village grows and becomes more and more subject to the workings of the outside world, to its politics and progress, and to history itself. And the Buendias and their fellow Macondons advance in years, experience, and wealth . . . until madness, corruption, and death enter their homes. From the gypsies who visit Macondo during its earliest years to the gringos who build the banana plantation, from the "enormous Spanish galleon" discovered far from the sea to the arrival of the railroad, electricity, and the telephone, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's classic novel weaves a magical tapestry of the everyday and the fantastic, the humdrum and the miraculous, life and death, tragedy and comedy--a tapestry in which the noble, the ridiculous, the beautiful, and the tawdry all contribute to an astounding vision of human life and death, a full measure of humankind's inescapable potential and reality.

Reviews

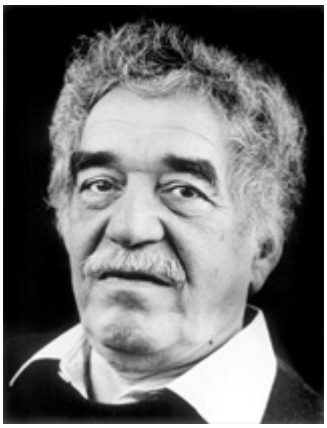
New York Times
One Hundred Years of Solitude is the first piece of literature since the Book of Genesis that should be required reading for the entire human race. It takes up not long after Genesis left off and carries through to the air age, reporting on everything that happened in between with more lucidity, wit, wisdom, and poetry that is expected from 100 years of novelists, let alone one man...Mr. Garcia Marquez has done nothing less than to create in the reader a sense of all that is profound, meaningful, and meaningless in life. " It is not easy to describe the techniques and themes of the book without making it sound absurdly complicated, labored and almost impossible to read. In fact, it is none of these things. Though concocted of quirks, ancient mysteries, family secrets and peculiar contradictions, it makes sense and gives pleasure in dozens of immediate ways.

From the Publisher
One of the 20th century's enduring works, One Hundred Years of Solitude is a widely beloved and acclaimed novel known throughout the world, and the ultimate achievement in a Nobel Prize–winning career.

The novel tells the story of the rise and fall of the mythical town of Macondo through the history of the Buendía family. It is a rich and brilliant chronicle of life and death, and the tragicomedy of humankind. In the noble, ridiculous, beautiful, and tawdry story of the Buendía family, one sees all of humanity, just as in the history, myths, growth, and decay of Macondo, one sees all of Latin America.
Love and lust, war and revolution, riches and poverty, youth and senility -- the variety of life, the endlessness of death, the search for peace and truth -- these universal themes dominate the novel. Whether he is describing an affair of passion or the voracity of capitalism and the corruption of government, Gabriel García Márquez always writes with the simplicity, ease, and purity that are the mark of a master.
Alternately reverential and comical, One Hundred Years of Solitude weaves the political, personal, and spiritual to bring a new consciousness to storytelling. Translated into dozens of languages, this stunning work is no less than an accounting of the history of the human race.

Bookworld
The fecund, savage, irresistable...you have the sense of living, along with the Buendias (and the rest), in them, through them and in spite of them, and all their loves, madnesses and wars, their alliances, compromises, dreams and deaths...the characters rear up large and rippling with life against the green texture of nature itself.

Biography



WINNER OF the NOBEL PRIZE in Literature 1982

Gabriel José de la Concordia García Márquez (born March 6, 1927) is a Colombian novelist, short-story writer, screenwriter and journalist. García Márquez, familiarly known as "Gabo" in his native country, is considered one of the most significant authors of the 20th century.

Gabriel García Márquez was born in Aracataca, Colómbia, near the coast of the Atlantic Ocean.The eldest of sixteen children, he was raised by his grandparents until he was eight. His grandmother, Tranquilina Iguarán Cotes, not only lends her names to One Hundred Years of Solitude, she spoke to García Márquez's about the supernatural as an accepted part of the world. His grandfather had fought in the Colómbian civil wars. The influence of both grandparents is clear in the novel.

At first, García Márquez prepared to study law, but in the early 1950s he decided to become a writer. His first short story was published in 1955. After spending three years living in Europe, he returned to Colómbia to marry the woman he had fallen in love with when he was 18 and she was 13, They have two sons, Rodrigo and Gonzalo. The family went to live in New York and then Mexico, where, in 1965, García Márquez decided to focus on writing his novel. Like Melquíades, García Márquez isolated himself for 18 months while finishing the book. When One Hundred Years of Solitude appeared, it met with great critical and popular success.

He lived in Spain in the late 1960s, but left after the death of the dictator General Franco in 1975 and has never returned. In 1982 he won the Nobel Prize for Literature "for his novels and short stories, in which the fantastic and the realistic are combined in a richly composed world of imagination, reflecting a continent's life and conflicts."

García Márquez has run into trouble with the governments of the United States and his native Colómbia for his political involvement, particularly in his writing. He has lived many places, including New York, Chile, and Paris, but he has spent most of the last few decades in Mexico. In 2006, he announced that he would no longer write. In 2007, he returned to his birthplace, Aracataca, after 20 years.

Bibliography

Novels

One Hundred Years of Solitude 1967
The Autumn of the Patriarch 1975
Chronicle of a Death Foretold 1981
Love in the Time of Cholera 1985
The General in His Labyrinth 1989

Of Love and Other Demons 1994
Memories of My Melancholy Whores 2004

Novellas
Leaf Storm 1955
No One Writes to the Colonel published 1961 in Spanish (written in 1956-1957)
In Evil Hour 1962

Short Story Collections
Innocent Eréndira, and Other Stories 1978
Collected Stories 1984
Strange Pilgrims 1993

Non Fiction
The Novel in Latin America: Dialogue 1968, with Mario Vargas Llosa
The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor 1970
When I Was Happy and Undocumented 1972
The Solitude of Latin America 1982
The Abduction 1983
The Fragrance of Guava 1982, with Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza
Clandestine in Chile 1986
News of a Kidnapping 1996
A Country for Children 1998
Living to Tell the Tale 2002

Interview with the Author (on Oprah.com website)

A conversation between novelist Gabriel García Márquez and scholar Gene Bell-Villada, June 1982 in the novelist's writing bungalow.

Gene Bell-Villada: Your *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is required reading in many history and political science courses in the United States. There's a sense that it's the best general introduction to Latin America. How do you feel about that?

Gabriel García Márquez: I wasn't aware of that fact in particular, but I've had some interesting experiences along the way. On one occasion, a sociologist from Austin, Texas came to see me because he'd grown dissatisfied with his methods. So he asked me what my own method was. I told him I didn't have a method. All I do is read a lot, think a lot, and rewrite constantly. It's not a scientific thing.

GB-V: There's a very famous strike scene in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Was it much trouble for you to get it right?

GGM: That sequence sticks closely to the facts of the United Fruit strike of 1928, which dates from my childhood; I was born that year. The only exaggeration is in the number of the dead, although it does fit the proportions of the novel. So, instead of hundreds of dead, I upped it to thousands. But it's strange, a Colombian journalist the other day referred in passing to "the thousands who

died in the 1928 strike." As my Patriarch says, it doesn't matter if it's true, because with enough time it *will* be!

GB-V: Some critics take you to task for not furnishing a more positive vision of Latin America. How do you answer them?

GGM: Yes, that happened to me in Cuba a while ago, where some critics gave *One Hundred Years of Solitude* high praise and then found fault with it for not offering a solution. I told them it's not the job of novels to furnish solutions.

GB-V: You're a writer with a very intimate knowledge of street life and plebeian ways. What do you owe it to?

GGM: [*He reflects for a moment*] It's in my origins; it's my vocation too. It's the life I know best, and I've deliberately cultivated it.

GB-V: With fame, is it hard, keeping up with your popular roots?

GGM: It's tough, but not as much as you'd think. I can go to a local café and at most one person will request an autograph. What's nice is that they treat me like one of their own, especially in hotels up in the States, where they feel good just meeting a Latin American. I never lose sight of the fact that I owe those experiences to the many readers of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

GB-V: And which of your books is your favorite?

GGM: It's always the latest, so right now it's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. Of course, there are always differences with readers, and every book is a process. I'm particularly fond of *No One Writes to the Colonel*, but then that book led me to *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Plot Summary (from Novelist database)

One Hundred Years of Solitude is the story of the Buendía family, a clan with such complicated connections and repetitive names that the family tree at the front of the book is essential for keeping everyone straight. While the exact location of the fictional town of Macondo is unclear, it is similar to Marquez's native Aracataca, Colómbia. Both the town and the family reappear in many of Marquez's works. Ursula Iguarán's parents fled after Sir Francis Drake destroyed Riohacha, Marquez explains, and so ended up in a small town in the foothills, where the Buendías lived. When, three hundred years later, Ursula married her cousin, José Arcadio Buendía, she so feared having children with pig's tails that she refused sexual relations for a year. When Prudencio Aguilar teases José Arcadio, he retaliates by throwing a spear through his taunter. Both Ursula and José Arcadio are so torn by guilt, not to mention haunted by Prudencio Aguilar, that they leave with some friends, arriving two years later at the edge of the mountains and establishing Macondo. This background, coming at the start of the second chapter, sets up many of the foci of the text: the way time flows, the entangled family history, the dead interacting with the living, the power of

sexuality. This early background also establishes the parallels between Colómbian history and the Buendía family tale that run throughout the text.

Urusla and José Arcadio (I)* have three biological children. Their youngest is Amaranta, who lives her whole life an austere virgin, although she is sexually aroused when caressing both her nephew Aureliano José and her great-great-grandnephew, José Arcadio (III). Colonel Aureliano Buendía is a Liberal leader in the civil wars against the Conservatives. José Arcadio (II) leaves with gypsies and returns many years later as a gigantic, tattooed man. Both of these men have an affair with a much older woman, Pilar Tenera, resulting in their sons Aureliano José and Arcadio. The two young boys are brought into the Buendía house and raised by the Buendía women. Ursula and José Arcadio (I) also have an adopted child, Rebeca, who eats dirt and whitewash off the walls.

An old gypsy, Melquíades, captures José Arcadio's (I) imagination with wonders such as ice and alchemy. He then disappears for awhile, returning to cure Macondo, where everyone has lost his or her memory because of an insomnia plague. Melquíades settles down to live in a little room in the Buendía household, writing a mysterious parchment that no one can understand. That parchment becomes a fascination for various members of the family over the next one hundred years. Melquíades is the first person to die in Macondo, and so he puts the town on the map of the dead. Thus, José Arcadio (I) comes into contact with many of the dead and goes mad, so his family ties him to a tree in the yard where he lives out most of the rest of his life.

Although Rebeca and Amaranta are raised as sisters, they fall into a bitter rivalry over the foppish Pietro Crespi, an Italian pianola tuner. He chooses to marry Rebeca, but fate and Amaranta's bitterness keep stepping in the way. Then, José Arcadio (II) returns, looking very manly and impressive, and he marries Rebeca, who had joined the family after he left with the gypsies. Pietro eventually begins courting Amaranta, but she rejects him and he commits suicide. Amaranta intentionally burns her hand and then wears a black bandage on it for the rest of her life as a sign of her virginity.

Colonel Aureliano Buendía, when he is young, cannot find a woman he wants to be with, until he meets the prepubescent Remedios Moscote. When she reaches puberty, they marry, and she moves in with her many dolls, having a surprisingly good influence on the family. She cares for Aureliano José, her husband's child by Pilar Tenera. She also cares for old José Arcadio (I), who is tied to a tree and speaking only in Latin. She is the means of a truce between the old Macondo families and her father, the representative of the national government. Remedios dies with pregnancy complications, and her picture becomes a central place in the house, with a light kept burning for the length of the story.

After Remedios's death, Colonel Aureliano Buendía realizes he is meant to be a Liberal leader and he goes off to lead the civil war. He leaves his nephew, Arcadio, in charge of the town, but the younger man becomes a virtual dictator. Arcadio marries the gentle Santa Sofía de le Piedad, fathering three children

before he is executed by the army. Meanwhile, Colonel Aureliano Buendía, off leading the war, fathers 17 sons by various women on his travels. Those sons later come to the Buendía house to be baptized. When they go to church on Ash Wednesday, they are permanently marked, and much later they are shot down by their father's enemies right through the ash cross on their heads. Colonel Aureliano Buendía, after fighting in so many wars, realizes he was fighting for pride and he becomes a recluse in the house, making and melting down little gold fishes. The Liberals all come to be just like the Conservatives, and sometimes the government even wants to honor Colonel Aureliano Buendía for all he did.

Santa Sofía de le Piedad's three children are Remedios the Beauty, Aureliano Segundo, and José Arcadio Segundo. Remedios the Beauty is of legendary beauty but is so simple that she prefers nudity and is dismayed by the men who want to see her. She is eventually carried away to heaven by the sheets. Aureliano Segundo and José Arcadio Segundo are twins who in their childhood keep switching identities, to the point where Ursula is convinced that they eventually traded places. Indeed, when they die of old age at the same time, their coffins are accidentally put in each other's grave. Aureliano Segundo marries Fernanda de Caprio, a stuck up woman of good lineage from the highlands. She is very cold and formal, and Aureliano Segundo keeps a mistress, Petra Cotes, in whose house he lives most of the time. Fernanda bears him three children, Meme, José Arcadio (III), and Amaranta Ursula. They give José Arcadio to Ursula to raise, and she is convinced he will be a Pope. He is sent off to Rome to study while Meme goes to a convent to study the clavichord. She has a rebellious heart and ends up conducting an affair with Mauricio Babilonia, a beautiful man who is preceded everywhere he goes by butterflies. While Mauricio is trying to sneak in to see Meme, Fernanda has him shot in the back. Meme stops speaking. Many years later, Mauricio dies a lonely death of old age, paralyzed, while Meme dies a lonely death of old age "with her name changed and her head shaved, and without ever having spoken a word, in a gloomy hospital in Cracow" .Fernanda is left to raise Meme's child, Aureliano. She tries to keep him hidden away, but eventually Aureliano Segundo finds him. Since this grandson is only a few years younger than their own daughter, Amaranta Ursula, they play together as children, often using the periodically senile Ursula as a plaything. Aureliano Segundo takes an interest in the two children and plays with them a good deal.

José Arcadio Segundo becomes a union leader at the banana company that moves in to the town and begins to exploit all its workers. One day, after the lawyers have managed to prove such things as "the demands lacked all validity for the simple reason that the banana company did not have, never had had, and never would have any workers in its service because they were all hired on a temporary and occasional basis" (p. 307), the union goes on strike. The authorities call all of the workers to the train station, saying that someone is arriving to resolve the issue. Instead, they begin firing on the crowd and then pile all the bodies into a long train. José Arcadio Segundo wakes up on the darkened train, surrounded by dead people, and manages to jump off, only to find upon his return that the authorities have managed to cover up the slaughter

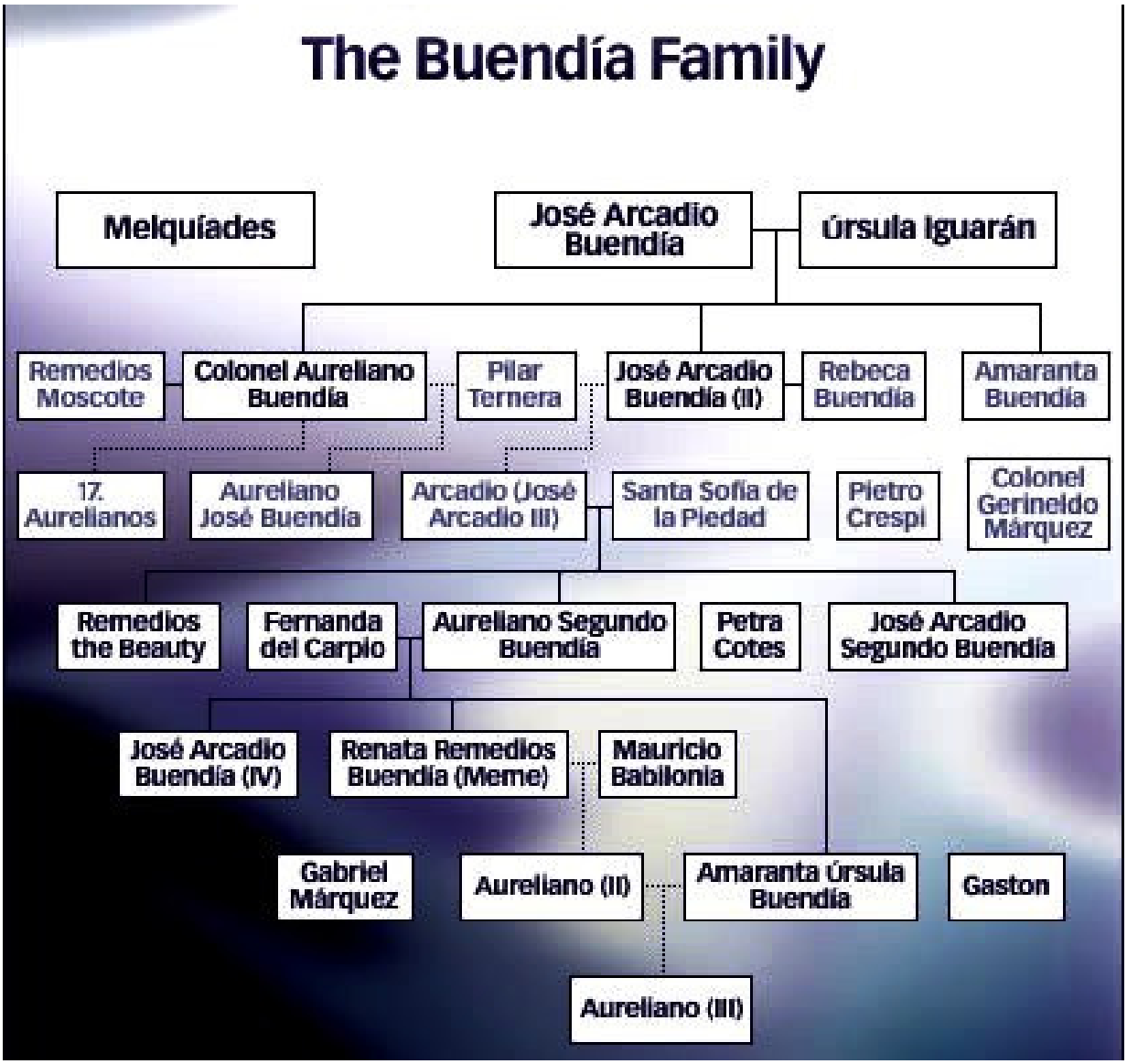
of over 3,000 people. José Arcadio Segundo is broken by this, and he goes into Melquíades's study to try to read the old gypsies parchments. When the army searches the house, they cannot see him in the room. Occasionally, Melquíades's ghost comes to visit José Arcadio Segundo, who otherwise becomes a hermit until his grand-nephew, Aureliano, begins also come to the study. When José Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo die, and his playmate Amaranta Ursula goes off to school in Brussels, Aureliano closes himself up in the room, trying to read the parchments that no one has yet been able to decipher.

After Ursula and Amaranta die, Santa Sofía de le Piedad leaves forever. The only Buendías left in the house are Fernanda and Aureliano, who does not even know how he is connected to this family whose name he carries. Fernanda has long been engaged in writing letters to doctors far away, detailing the ailments she suffers. The letters do no good because she uses euphemisms to refer to everything. She is also involved with a fictitious correspondence with both of her children, Amaranta Ursula and José Arcadio (III). She lies to them about how things are going in Macondo, and they lie to her about what they are doing with their lives. When she finally dies, the reclusive Aureliano preserves her body for four months until José Arcadio (III) arrives. Greedy and shallow, José Arcadio (III) continues to restrict Auerliano to his room while he laments the lack of the fabulous inheritance that Fernanda had pretended existed. Only shortly before his murder at the hands of four children he befriended does José Arcadio (III) find hidden gold and make friends with Aureliano.

After José Arcadio's (III) death, Auerliano begins to leave the house more, making a group of close friends. He is sorely out of touch with what passes for reality: he believes José Arcadio Segundo's tale that 3,000 people died, rather than the official reports; he only knows what he has read in Melquíades's parchments; and he does not even know his connection to his family. His friends help him to begin to join the outside world, and he meets Pilar Tenera, who is now well past 145 years old. She gives him much the same affection that she has given so many other Buendías, but eventually she dies. Amaranta Ursula returns with her husband Gaston, awakening a passion in Aureliano. As neither one of them know their blood relationship, they become lovers. When Gaston leaves for an extended trip, they lose themselves in their passion, forgetting to maintain the house or his friendships. She dies giving birth to their son, Aureliano, who finally has the long expected pig's tail.

Aureliano is stunned to realize how alone he has become again. As he watches ants carry off his son, he suddenly understands Melquíades's parchments, which many others failed to comprehend because it was not yet the appropriate time. He runs off to the study, and as the wind pulls the Buendía house down around him, he reads the story of his whole family that Melquíades predicted. Melquíades did not write linearly, but rather "had concentrated a century of daily episodes in such a way that they coexisted in one instant" . As Aureliano skips forward to read about the last of his family's being destroyed once he finishes reading the parchment, the reader realizes that she has been reading Melquíades's manuscript.

Characters in One Hundred Years of Solitude



COLÓMBIAN HISTORICAL CONTEXT (from Novelist database)

Much of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* reflects the violence of Colómbia, as do many of García Márquez's other works. Colómbia has been independent since 1810, but since the middle of the 1800s has been besieged by violence between the Liberals and Conservatives. These are not so much political parties as warring factions. Their ideologies are not really all that different, and both parties are violent and corrupt. From 1899 to 1902, the groups fought the War of a Thousand Days, which led to the death of 100,000 people. García Márquez's grandfather, a veteran of this war, told him stories about the violence.

The banana company of One Hundred Years of Solitude is based on the United Fruit Company, a corrupt and abusive American company. In 1928, the Conservatives massacred hundreds of strikers and later made more disappear. Eventually, they made the whole event disappear, striking it from the history books. The period from 1946 to 1953 is know as la violencia, a time when 150,000 Colómbians died due to battles for power between the Liberals and Conservatives. Each group had its own guerrilla army, and assassinations and killings were common. While García Márquez fictionalizes all the events in his book, the Buendía family story reflects much of the reality of twentieth-century Colómbian political history.

Some Themes in Marquez' work

Solitude

The theme of solitude runs through much of García Márquez's works. As Pelayo notes, "Love in the Time of Cholera, like all of Gabriel García Márquez's work, explores the solitude of the individual and of human kind...portrayed through the solitude of love and of being in love".

In response to Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza's question, "If solitude is the theme of all your books, where should we look for the roots of this over-riding emotion? In your childhood perhaps?" García Márquez replied, "I think it's a problem everybody has. Everyone has his own way and means of expressing it. The feeling pervades the work of so many writers, although some of them may express it unconsciously."

In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, "Solitude of Latin America", he relates this theme of solitude to the Latin American experience, "The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own, serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary."

Macondo

Another important theme in many of García Márquez's work is the setting of the village he calls Macondo. He uses his home town of Aracataca, Colombia as a geographical reference to create this imaginary town, but the representation of the village is not limited to this specific area. García Márquez shares, "Macondo is not so much a place as a state of mind." Even when his stories do not take

place in Macondo, there is often still a consistent lack of specificity to the location. So while they are often set with "a Caribbean coastline and an Andean hinterland... [the settings are] otherwise unspecified, in accordance with García Márquez's evident attempt to capture a more general regional myth rather than give a specific political analysis." "This fictional town has become well known in the literary world. As Stavans notes of Macondo, "its geography and inhabitants constantly invoked by teachers, politicians, and tourdepictsist agents..." makes it "...hard to believe it is a sheer fabrication." In Leaf Storm García Márquez depicts the realities of the Banana Boom in Macondo, which include a period of great wealth during the presence of the US companies and a period of depression upon the departure of the American banana companies. As well, Hundred Years of Solitude takes place in Macondo and tells the complete history of the fictional town from its founding to its doom.

In his autobiography, García Márquez explains his fascination with the word and concept Macondo. He describes a trip he made with his mother back to Aracataca as a young man:

The train stopped at a station that had no town, and a short while later it passed the only banana plantation along the route that had its name written over the gate: Macondo. This word had attracted my attention ever since the first trips I had made with my grandfather, but I discovered only as an adult that I liked its poetic resonance. I never heard anyone say it and did not even ask myself what it meant...I happened to read in an encyclopedia that it is a tropical tree resembling the Ceiba.

Magical Realism

While magical realist stories from around the world can vary greatly in tone, context and content, they share some common elements. Identifying these features can help you differentiate between magical realism and other kinds of imaginative writing.

Take a look at some of the characteristics below. Elements of the magical and the mundane are interwoven seamlessly, making it impossible to determine where reality ends and the extraordinary begins.

The story is set in an otherwise ordinary world, with familiar historical and/or cultural realities. Story events are not always explained by universal laws or familiar logic.

The ordinary aspects of the story are what produce the greatest magic.

Objects and settings within the story may take on lives of their own in a way that is ordinary to the characters in the story.

Constructs of time do not follow typical Western conventions. For instance, stories may be told in spiraling shapes rather than in straight lines.

The story, as it unfolds, gives the reader a sense of being inside a puzzle or maze.

Contradictions, inconsistencies and ambiguities color the point of view, making you question what you understand about the world at large, as well as what happens inside the story.

A metamorphosis takes place in the story. It's treated not as a miracle, but as an everyday event.

The story bears the influences of oral tradition: fables, myths, tall tales, urban legends, a charmed storytelling narrator (who may or may not be reliable).

The magical elements in the story may enhance a subversive message or personalized point of view. Often the point of view is revealed through voices, ideas, and places which exist outside the mainstream or majority perspective.

Magic occurs without using devices typical to the fantasy genre unless the devices (i.e. ghosts, angels) are employed in a context that makes them ordinary. Ghosts or angels may exist in a magical realist story, for instance, but not in a way that is surprising or unusual to the characters in the book.

One of the most extraordinary ways in which magical realism mixes the extraordinary with the ordinary is the accumulation of realistic details in describing an impossible event. This technique is a particular strength of García Márquez's fiction. The trail of José Arcadio's blood, by now an icon of magical realist description, is an outstanding instance:

A trickle of blood came from under the door, crossing the living room, went into the street, continued in a straight line across the uneven terraces, went down steps and climbed over curbs, passed along the Street of the Turks, turned a corner to the right and another to the left, made a right angle at the Buendía house, went in under the closed door, crossed through the parlor, hugging the walls so as not to stain the rugs, went on to the other living room, made a wide curve to avoid the dining-room table, went along the porch with the begonias, and passed without being seen under Amaranta's chair as she gave an arithmetic lesson to Aureliano José, and went through the pantry and came out in the kitchen, where Úrsula was getting ready to crack thirty-six eggs to make bread. — Gabriel García Márquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude

Because a trail of blood cannot normally climb curbs and turn corners at right angles and does not possess a humanlike capacity to direct it's own progress, the more realistic details the trail of blood accumulates (such as the name of the street, the kind of flowers, and the exact number of eggs), the more magical its progress appears.

La violencia

In several of García Márquez's works, including No One Writes to the Colonel, Evil Hour, and Leaf Storm, he references la violencia (the violence), "a brutal civil war between conservatives and liberals that lasted into the 1960s, causing the deaths of several hundred thousand Colombians." Throughout all of his novels there are subtle references to la violencia, for example, characters living under various unjust situations like curfew, press censorship, and underground newspapers. Evil Hour, while not one of García Márquez's most famous novels, is notable for its portrayal of la violencia with its "fragmented portrayal of social disintegration provoked by la violencia". However, although García Márquez does portray the corrupt nature and the injustices of times like la violencia, he refuses to use his work as a platform for political propaganda. "For him, the duty of the revolutionary writer is to write well, and the ideal novel is one that moves its reader by its political and social content, and, at the same time, by its power to penetrate reality and expose its other side

Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of solitude occur in the novel (for example, solitude of pride, grief, power, love, or death), and with whom are they associated? What circumstances produce them? What similarities and differences are there among the various kinds of solitude?

2. What are the purposes and effects of the story's fantastic and magical elements? How does the fantastic operate in the characters' everyday lives and personalities? How is the magical interwoven with elements drawn from history, myth, and politics?

3. Why does Garcia Marquez make repeated use of the "Many years later" formula? In what ways does this establish a continuity among past, present, and future? What expectations does it provoke? How do linear time and cyclical time function in the novel?

4. To what extent is Macondo's founding, long isolation, and increasing links with the outside world an exodus from guilt and corruption to new life and innocence and, then, a reverse journey from innocence to decadence?

5. What varieties of love occur in the novel? Does any kind of love transcend or transform the ravages of everyday life, politics and warfare and time itself?

6. What is the progression of visitors and newcomers to Macondo, beginning with the gypsies? How does each new individual and group affect the Buendias, the town, and the story?

7. What is the importance of the various inventions, gadgets, and technological wonders introduced into Macondo over the years? Is the sequence in which they

are introduced significant?

8. What is Melquiades's role and that of his innovations, explorations, and parchments? What is the significance of the "fact" that Melquiades "really had been through death, but he had returned because he could not bear the solitude"? Who else returns, and why?

9. When and how do politics enter the life of Macondo? With what short-term and long-term consequences? Do the social-political aspects of life in Macondo over the years parallel actual events and trends?

10. What types of women (from Ursula and Pilar to Meme and Amaranta Ursula) and what types of men (from Jose Arcadio to Aureliano Babilonia) are distinguishable? What characteristics do the men share? What characteristics do the women share?

11. What dreams, prophecies, and premonitions occur in the novel? With which specific characters and events are they associated, and what is their purpose?

12. When, how, and in what guises does death enter Macondo? With what consequences?

13. On the first page we are told that "The world was so recent that many things lacked names." What is the importance of names and of naming (of people, things, and events) in the novel?

14. How do geography and topography--mountains, swamps, river, sea, etc.--affect Macondo's history, its citizens' lives, and the novel's progression?

15. What aspects of the Buendia family dynamics are specific to Macondo? Which are reflective of family life everywhere and at any time? How do they relate to your experience and understanding of family life?

16. How does Garcia Marquez handle the issue and incidence of incest and its association with violence beginning with Jose Arcadio and Ursula's marriage and the shooting of Prudencio Aguilar? Is the sixth-generation incest of Aureliano Babilonia and Amaranta Ursula inevitable?

From Oprah's Book Club (questions for 4 parts)

Discussion Questions, Pages 1—87

1. Read the first sentence very closely. How many time periods are covered? The beginning of this novel is considered one of the most fabulous openers in the history of literature. What do you like about it? Why do you think it's considered to be so unique?

2. Discuss the opening chapter. How do you feel it sets up the novel? What do you learn about Macondo that is important? What do you learn about the

author's style?

3. In the first chapter, José Arcadio Buendía (the patriarch of the novel) uses the lab built by Melquíades to distill his wife's inheritance, essentially wiping it out. What do you think this act represents in the broader context of the book?

4. What is the significance of the fact that Macondo is surrounded by water and hidden from the rest of the world? How does this fact impact the way you read the events that happen in Macondo? Do you see similarities between Macondo and other historic or literary places?

5. In the first chapter, we are introduced to José Arcadio and Aureliano. These two names are then passed down from one generation to the next throughout the history of the Buendía family. Read carefully the way each is described. What can you take from the information García Márquez has provided you about each type of man?

6. What is the significance of the fact that in this novel, ice is considered the "greatest invention of our time?" What does this say about Macondo or its culture?

7. The gypsies return to Macondo with each spring season. Why is this significant? How do you read the gypsies are different from or similar to the inhabitants of Macondo?

8. Plagues that have affected humanity throughout the ages have been diseases that impact the body. What is the significance of the fact that the insomnia plague is a plague of the intellect? How do you read the fact that even though they can't sleep, the inhabitants of Macondo don't die?

9. Talk about the ghosts that crop up in the first part of this novel.

10. José Arcadio Buendía doesn't die, but at the end of Part One he ceases to participate in the activities of his family— his wife essentially takes his place at the head of the family. Why do you think this happens? How do you feel about the way it happens?

Discussion Questions, Pages 87—195

1. On page 90, we discover that Father Nicanor Reyna, who has come to Macondo to officiate Aureliano's wedding, can levitate when he eats chocolate. What do you think this episode might represent in the broader context of the novel? How is it written to seem real? How is it written to seem fantastic?

2. Why do you think Rebeca repeatedly postpones her wedding after the death

of Remedios? What does she gain—if anything—from the community by remaining single? What do you make of her choices?

3. Discuss the political events that take place from pages 103–111. What do you make of the "mad operation," undertaken by table knives and tools, commanded by Aureliano as the chapter ends? What do we learn about war in Macondo or war in general? What does it reveal about Aureliano's character?

4. Discuss the episode of Arcadio's death. What do you make of his calmness at the end and his final pronouncement?

5. What do you think about the fact that Colonel Aureliano Buendía escapes the firing squad and seems to have "nine lives?" How is the plight of Aureliano portrayed convincingly throughout this section of the book?

6. Talk about Úrsula. In the first section of our reading, you learn of her strength and cunning. How does that continue to show itself throughout the book? In what ways is Úrsula innovative? If she is the natural Matriarch of the family, what decisions does she make that you agree with? Does she make any that you disagree with or are confused by?

7. During this section, what do you learn about the Liberal Party? What is its importance in the community of Macondo?

8. Why does Amaranta never marry? Especially, why does she reject Pietro Crespi after she has yearned for him for years? Is there any religious meaning to her virginity?

9. Discuss the complicated, fecund and very unusual sexual patterns of the Buendía clan. Do you find them to be different from the sexual mores of the United States in the 21st century? If so, how?

10. Talk about the role of Colonel Gerineldo Márquez. Why do you think the author gives this man his namesake and not the rest of the Buendía family? What is his place in the structure of the novel?

Discussion Questions, Pages 197-313

1. Talk about the role the ghost of Melquíades plays in the lives of all the Buendías that he continues to visit after he dies—especially Aureliano Segundo and Aureliano (II). Link this with the "traffic of the dead" that passes through Macondo. What do the ghosts have in common?

2. Spend some time thinking about all the different kinds of love that exist in the novel. Are there loves that seem to transcend the ravages of everyday life,

warfare, history, and time itself? What kind of love is the most prevalent?

3. How is old age treated in this novel? Do you feel that a person's place in the Buendía family changes as they grow old? How is their wisdom utilized by the community, and how could it possibly be utilized better? Do you think the characters themselves changed as they aged?

4. Do you feel any of the characters "learn" from their mistakes or heartaches? If so, who and in what ways?

5. The narrator states on page 213, "Remedios the Beauty was not a creature of this world." What sets her apart from the other Buendías? Are there any other literary characters that she reminds you of?

6. Discuss the icons of female beauty and power used throughout the book. In what ways do you consider the female characters to be strong—and similarly, how do they appear weaker or more fragile than the male characters?

7. Talk about the many jubilees, festivals and other kinds of celebration that occur in Macondo. Do there seem to be more of them in these pages than there were at the beginning of the book? If so, why do you think that might be?

8. "The innocent yellow train that was to bring so many ambiguities and certainties, so many pleasant and unpleasant moments, so many changes, calamities, and feelings of nostalgia to Macondo" blows into town on page 239. Put this into context with your general knowledge of progress in Macondo. Did you have a feeling of elation or foreboding when the train/banana company first arrived?

9. Discuss the significance of Úrsula's decision to raise José Arcadio (IV) to be the next Pope. What does this say about her, and why does she do it? What does his "reaction" to his schooling say about him? How do you think it plays into other religious elements in the novel?

10. So far, which character do you connect with most strongly? Name the three things you like about that character most. What do you think this character says about human nature, morality, family, or life in general?

Discussion Questions, Pages 315—The End

1. Discuss the lasting impact of Meme's love affair with Mauricio Babilonia. What do his lingering yellow butterflies represent? What do you think about the way love seems to derail some of the Buendías, including Meme?

2. Talk about the banana strike. What details do you find interesting about the way García Márquez portrays it? Does what happened seem realistic to you? If not, why do you think it doesn't?

3. Take some time to consider the way that the government has changed or developed over the course of the novel. Do you feel that the way the Buendía family is "governed" has shifted? Do they have less or more power than they did in the beginning of the book?

4. "It rained for four years, eleven months and two days." What does the rain represent?

5. What about the culture or the family seems to be in decline during the final portion of the book? What is "decline" and how, specifically, is it manifested?

6. Talk about the deaths of many of the substantial characters. What is similar about the ways they die? What do you think the way death is portrayed in this novel says about the author's view of life and death?

7. Think about Aureliano and Amaranta Úrsula's love affair in terms of how it's different from other love in the book and also the same. What does the fact that they give birth to the fabled last of the line say about their affair? How do they, together and separately, carry on the spirit of the Buendías?

8. Do you believe that this novel is important for people to read? If you were going to recommend it what would you say to persuade him or her to read it?

9. Talk about the final paragraph. How did it make you feel?

For Further Reading

William Faulkner. The Sound and the Fury (1929) Faulkner was one of Gabriel García Márquez's strongest and earliest professional influences.

Franz Kafka. Metamorphosis (1919) This story of a young man who wakes up to find himself transformed into a huge bug . When he read the book in translation, García Márquez realized how effective a nonlinear plot could be
Isabel Allende. The House of the Spirits (1985) Allende is one of the better known writers to follow in García Márquez's footsteps as he paved the way for global recognition of Latin American writers and the magical realism genre.
Poetry by Pablo Neruda Neruda is a twentieth-century Chilean poet who uses imagery that compares nicely with García Márquez's imagery. It is quite interesting to discuss a poem of Neruda's like "I Crave Your Mouth, Your Voice, Your Hair" with One Hundred Years of Solitude.