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FOR 100 YEARS OF SOLITUDE.

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100 YEARS OF SOLITUDE

By

Gabriel Garcia Marquez



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KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

The setting of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is the fictional town of Macondo, Columbia, which is much like García Márquez's own hometown of Aracataca. The time span is unclear at times, but it is roughly from the early-mid 19th century to the mid-20th century. Macondo is isolated, rural, and surrounded by jungle.

CHARACTERS

Major Characters

Úrsula Iguarán

The Buendía matriarch who keeps the story of the pig's tail alive in the family; as she ages, she shrinks, until she looks like a doll and people have forgotten she is still even alive.

José Arcadio Buendía

The Buendía patriarch who marries his cousin but is prevented from consummating the marriage for months because of fears surrounding the story of the pig's tail; discovers Macondo and kills Prudencio Aguilar.

Melquíades

The mysterious gypsy who is the friend of José Arcadio Buendía; returns periodically to Macondo, even when he is thought dead. His parchment turns out to be the story of the Buendías written in Sanskrit.....

CONFLICT

Protagonist

There is no one protagonist in this novel. It is the story of a family, the Buendías. Collectively, the family is the protagonist. Certain characters have.....

Antagonist

If there is an antagonist in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, it is.....

Climax

The climax occurs at.....

Outcome

The Buendías, their memory.....

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Gabriel García Márquez was born on March 6, 1928 in the rural Colombian town of Aracataca. Primarily his grandparents, who he claims are the source of his stories and his style, raised him. He worked as a journalist for a while, and then spent many years "becoming a writer." By 1965, he had written two novels, a novella, and a collection of stories, and had worked on some films with Carlos Fuentes, but none of this would mark him as one of the great 20th century writers. In 1965, he began to write *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. How he wrote it is a story which itself has achieved mythic status: according to García Márquez,.....

LITERARY/HISTORICAL INFORMATION

One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967) is one of the classic examples of "magical realism." A good, but simple definition of magical realism is fiction in which the supernatural or magical occurs within the realm of the everyday without attracting excessive attention to itself. Although one could apply this term to many different texts.....

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES

CHAPTER 1

Summary

novel begins by telling us that in the future Colonel Buendía will remember when his father took him to see ice. We are also told that the colonel will face a firing squad and that in the not-too-distant past, Macondo was a very small village. Early in the town's past, gypsies would visit and bring in elements from the outside world; for example, one March, they brought magnets to the town and Melquiades sold a pair to José Arcadio Buendía. Instead of the gold that he had hoped to uncover, José Arcadio Buendía only found an old suit of armor. The next year he traded the two magnets along with three gold coins for a telescope, which ended up being equally worthless. He spent long hours with the telescope and maps and discovered that the world was round, which his wife, Úrsula, thought crazy.

We are introduced to Melquiades, who in the beginning appears to be José Arcadio Buendía's age, but by the next time the gypsies return, he looks much older. Melquiades is in a constant struggle with death, having survived countless potentially fatal diseases.

We discover that José Arcadio Buendía is responsible for the settling of Macondo, and he is the one who planned the city: each house received the same amount of sun and had the same degree of accessibility to water. According to the narrator, it is a happy village and no one died in it for the first thirty years. Although the city of Macondo is described as being Edenic, there are hints that it is not: suits of Spanish armor and a galleon in the jungle are evidence that this village is not truly alone. There is a fear that since Macondo is so isolated, they will "stagnate" and "rot away," and many want to move the town, including José Arcadio Buendía. However, Úrsula does not want to leave and insists on their staying; this is when she asserts herself as matriarch of the family.

Aureliano is the first child born in Macondo and is said to be observant from the moment of birth: he is looking around while he is being born. He is also clairvoyant. José Arcadio (II) had been born while the group was looking for a place to settle and the family was quite happy he did not have any animal features (incest prohibition); he lacks imagination.

One year, when the gypsies arrive, Melquiades is not with them. José Arcadio Buendía asks about him and they tell him that Melquiades finally died of a fever in Singapore. This year, ice is the "invention" that the gypsies bring to Macondo; José Arcadio (II) refuses to touch it, but Aureliano does and says "it's boiling."

Notes

The awkward tense at the beginning should inform the reader that this will be a novel that is all about time, and the movement between past, present, and future.

José Arcadio Buendía is interested in newness. He is responsible for founding this town, and each year when the gypsies arrive, he purchases the latest novelty. He is also a pseudo-scientist. His work is sincere, but his conclusions and applications are sometimes flawed.

Melquiades is introduced, and he seems near death from the beginning. However, as we will discover, he seems to exist most comfortably between life and death. He dies, but that seems not to mean anything since he can pass between life and death as he chooses.

Macondo is described at the beginning as Edenic. Things are good, secluded, and peaceful. No one dies. This is important to remember because this paradise is fleeting.

The galleon and the suit of armor are vital to the symbolism of the novel. This novel is about forgetting the past. José Arcadio Buendía settles Macondo to forget that he has killed Prudencio Aguilar. The armor and the galleon are reminders that years before Spanish killed the indigenous peoples and the English later attacked the Spanish. No one in Macondo remembers this. Their fate is to be part of the cycle of destruction and conquest.

Úrsula asserts her control as matriarch in this chapter when she decides that they should stay in Macondo. Her power is not usurped until she is near death and Fernanda takes over.

Since Aureliano is the first born in Macondo, we should look at him as symbolic of the town itself. He is the hero for a while, he is an enemy of the state, and he is a hero again. However, by the end of the novel, no one remembers who he is. Streets are named after him, but the citizens think that he is a myth that was created by the town and government.

OVERALL ANALYSES CHARACTERS

In this novel, plot and character are nearly synonymous: essentially, the plot is the repetition of character. A good way to think about this novel is realize that García Márquez is heavily influenced by William Faulkner. In the same way that Faulkner creates the entire county of Yoknapatawpha, Mississippi through a few families from different social strata, García Márquez creates Macondo, Columbia from its founding to its destruction by focusing on one family. The Buendía males, according to Úrsula, repeat

PLOT

While most of the plot is tied to the repetition of family names, there is also the repetition of similar events or cycles. From the discovery in the jungle of the Spanish galleon and the suit of armor, we can project backwards to events of the Spanish conquest and later the English pirate raids. The settlement of Macondo is described in Edenic terms.

THEME

All of the themes of this novel are related to time. The cyclic nature of time in Macondo is represented through the characters and the plot. The danger of forgetting is exemplified through the forgetfulness plague and the fact that no one in the town remembers the heroics or deeds of Colonel Aureliano Buendía.....

Questions

1. What does García Márquez mean by his closing comment that "races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth"?
2. How does the introduction of technology affect the town?.....

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