

# CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

# LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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## SYNOPSIS

*Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is a metaphysical mystery which reconstructs the 27-year-old murder of Santiago Nasar, a rich, handsome man who lived in the Caribbean town where the author grew up. He interviews people who remember the murder and studies documents assembled by the court, accumulating many different kinds of data, e.g., dreams, weather reports, gossip, and philosophical speculation. He makes a record of what happens first, second, third, and so on—in short, a chronicle of the murder.

Virtually everyone in town knew Santiago Nasar was to be murdered—who would do it, where, when, and why. Given so much knowledge before the fact, it is a mystery how the murder could actually have taken place. Some people in the town do try to stop the murder. Others, in contrast, are so awed by their foreknowledge of the murder that they look upon Santiago Nasar, even as he stands before them, as a dead man. The two men who feel obliged to murder him as a matter of honor actually pity him and want to be stopped. They advertise their intention, become spectacularly drunk, and flaunt their knives. "They were like children," says one spectator. To some people in the town, they are not really guilty, but rather just hideously effective despite themselves. Only children can do everything, says the witness. In contrast to them, nobody else can do even one effective thing to prevent the murder.

Santiago Nasar dies because he was accused of having stolen a bride's virginity. Before the wedding and even during the night-long revelry that follows, Santiago amuses himself trying to figure out how much the celebration cost, ironically unaware of the festivities' true price—his life. The groom, Bayardo San Roman, had been certain that his wife was a virgin. He returned Angela Vicario, the bride, to her family's home in disgrace for not being a virgin. Her mother beats Angela. Delirious with exhaustion and pain, she names Santiago Nasar as the man who took her virginity. Her twin brothers set out to avenge the disgrace.

Though Santiago Nasar is a gun collector, a "killer of innocent animals," and an arrogant womanizer, nobody can figure out how he could have seduced the bride. On the other hand, Garcia Marquez does not offer any logical reason that he did not. The murder has a motive but no clear justification. It remains unexplained and mysterious, and is further complicated by the strangeness of the bride and groom.

The bride, Angela Vicario, is best characterized by her "poverty of spirit." She does not love her intended at all. The groom, Bayardo San Roman, had simply appeared in town one day, his past uncertain. Very wealthy and elegant, he falls in love with Angela Vicario suddenly and totally. Vicario undergoes an extraordinary conversion after Santiago Nasar is murdered and discovers that she is as fiercely in love with Bayardo San Roman as he was with her.

Many aspects of the murder are never cleared up. For example, was the weather "radiant" or "funereal" on the fatal day of the murder? Was Bayardo the devil? Was he homosexual? Did Santiago Nasar steal the bride's virginity? Ironically, the more that is revealed about the murder, the less is known.

Like everyone else, Santiago Nasar knows that he is marked for murder. He finds out through dreams. He tells his dreams to his mother, who has "a well-earned reputation as an accurate interpreter of other people's dreams, provided they were told to her before eating." She does not think that her son's dreams foretell his death. Therefore, she blames herself for his death, and "succumbs to the pernicious habit of her time of eating pepper cress seeds."

The joke is funny, but it serves to obscure the very real fact that Santiago Nasar's mother does fail her son. Not only does she ignore the dream, but when her son is chased by the two knife-wielding murderers, she notices only them, not her son. As a result, she bars the door to the house—locking out her son. He pounds on the door, but she doesn't open it. Her actions ensure that he is butchered "like a pig."

Toward the end of the novel, Santiago Nasar's murder is presented over and over, each time with increasing ferocity. First it is foreshadowed in the kitchen, while Santiago Nasar watches a servant butcher a rabbit for lunch, "surrounded by panting dogs." Soon, Santiago Nasar will be butchered himself. The same dogs arrive at the autopsy, still panting with hunger. The murder is repeated at the autopsy. The pathologist does such a dreadful job cutting up the body that he actually admits, "It was as if we killed him all over again after he was dead." Then comes the murder itself, and the wounds described in the autopsy are recreated in the course of being afflicted. By the end of the story, Santiago Nasar is murdered more than anyone ever has been—more often, by more people, in more ways.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gabriel Garcia Marquez was born March 6, 1928, in the small Colombian village of Aracataca, near the Caribbean coast. Raised by his grandparents, Garcia Marquez did not meet his mother until he was eight years old; he never knew his father. Garcia Marquez was especially close to his grandfather, an impressive man who had fought in the Colombian Civil War. Called the "War of a Thousand Days," it took place from 1899 to 1902. Garcia Marquez was also very close to his grandmother; he credits her storytelling for helping to shape his imagination.

In 1940, Garcia Marquez left Aracataca to attend a Jesuit school in Bogota. After graduation, he studied law at the University of Bogota, but soon discovered, as he said, "that law had nothing to do with justice." When the university was closed because of political violence, Garcia Marquez transferred to the city of Cartagena. An indifferent student, he took

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a part-time job as a journalist. From 1950 to 1952, he wrote a column called "The Giraffe" for *El Heraldo* in Barranquilla. Ironic and humorous, the column prefigures the tone of much of his later writing.

Quitting law school, he became the center of a small group of journalists who knew his work. By 1954, Garcia Marquez had become a respected reporter and film critic for the Colombian newspaper *El Espectador*. During this time, he started to write short stories set in the village of Macondo, whose name comes from an old banana plantation near his hometown of Aracataca.

The most important point in his career as a journalist came in 1966 when a sailor named Luis Alejandro Velasco arrived at *El Espectador* to describe his incredible survival at sea. The sailor was steered to Garcia Marquez; the interview soon turned into a fourteen-chapter expose of the destruction of a Colombian naval destroyer struck by a storm en route home from New Orleans. The sailor claimed that the ship had been carrying black market goods. The eight sailors who survived had been knocked overboard by high winds. The sailor's story was true, to the government's great embarrassment.

All during this time, Garcia Marquez was writing fiction to good reviews but without gaining wide notice. He worked as an editor and film writer, too. By the early 1960s, he was known among a select group of writers and critics for four books of literary merit: the novels *Leaf Storm* (1955) and *The Evil Hour* (1961), a novella, "No One Writes to the Colonel" (1961), and a short story collection, *Big Mama's Funeral* (1962). But he still had not achieved widespread fame. In January 1965, while driving from Mexico City to Acapulco, he began plans for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. He worked on the novel eight to ten hours a day for a year and a half. By the time the novel was finished, Garcia Marquez was deeply in debt. His wife sustained the family by borrowing from friends and not paying their rent for half a year.

Garcia Marquez garnered enormous popular and critical success for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, published in 1970. Chronicling the history of the fictional town of Macondo, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* traces the rise and fall of the Buendia family from its placid beginnings under the founder Jose Arcadio Buendia to its decline through six generations of descendants. The novel is widely regarded as one of the first and finest examples of "magic realism," a style in which fantastic incidents are presented in an objective style to blur distinctions between illusion and reality.

In recent years, Garcia Marquez has become more and more politically active. He speaks out often for revolutionary governments in Latin America and organizes assistance for political prisoners. He lives in Mexico City but continues to write stories set throughout Latin America, including Cuba.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

Gabriel Garcia Marquez is considered one of Latin America's greatest living writers. He is best known for his short stories and novels, especially *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which is celebrated for its magical vitality and abundance of remarkable characters and incidents. In 1982 he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. Widely respected for his innovative style, characters, and plots, Garcia Marquez combines realistic storytelling with folklore and fantasy.

Wrote critic Stephen Minta: "One of Garcia Marquez's greatest strengths, I think, lies in his intuitive understanding

of both the infinite possibilities and the inherent limitations of his creative imagination. He knows all the power of nostalgia, and he never loses sight of the need to resist it." Writing about *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, John Leonard said, "With a single bound, Gabriel Garcia Marquez leaps onto the stage with Gunter Grass and Vladimir Nabokov, his appetite as enormous as his imagination, his fatalism greater than either. Dazzling."

Ricardo Gullon praised Garcia Marquez's writing style: "The difference between Garcia Marquez and other contemporary novelists lies in the fact that the latter may disperse themselves in a welter of techniques: he does not. His need to tell a story is so strong that it transcends the devices he uses to satisfy that need. Technique is not mere game; it is something that can be made use of. At its best, it serves only to relate the story. Should the novelist get lost in his own creation, it is so that he might find himself in it, in that imaginary world. . . inventions that are reserved for artists like Garcia Marquez who know how to revitalize the ancient and almost forgotten art of storytelling, reserved for those who practice it with the complex simplicity the genre demands."

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the interrelation of love and death
2. To discuss the concept of family honor
3. To compare and contrast life in Latin America and North America
4. To discuss the inevitability of death
5. To probe life in a small, close-knit village
6. To describe the literary school of "magic realism"
7. To contrast the needs of the family versus the needs of the individual
8. To decode symbols
9. To chart the effect of human cruelty and kindness
10. To describe different cultural norms

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the curious relationship between Angela Vicario and Bayardo San Roman
2. To note the entire society's passive complicity in a murder that everyone knows will happen
3. To understand why Bayardo San Roman rejected Angela Vicario on their wedding night
4. To discuss why Angela Vicario's two brothers felt compelled to uphold her honor by committing murder
5. To appreciate the author's use of humor
6. To describe Angela Vicario's reasons for naming Santiago Nasar as her seducer
7. To analyze the importance of setting to the novel's plot and theme
8. To describe the eerie parallels between Santiago Nasar and Gabriel Garcia Marquez
9. To analyze what the murder comes to symbolize
10. To explore how Garcia Marquez intertwines reality, symbolism, and surrealism

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers pinpoint the context in which the item appears.

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1. My mother told me about the letter, and at the end she made a comment that was very much like her: "It also seems that he's swimming in gold." (p. 29)

*(Bayardo San Roman came to town six months before the wedding. A mystery to everyone, he sailed in on the weekly boats carrying saddlebags decorated with silver that matched the other silver ornaments he wore. About thirty years old, San Roman was beautifully built and dressed—so much so that some of the townspeople suspect his masculinity. "He looked like a fairy," says one Magdalena Oliver, transfixed by his splendor. "And it was a pity, because I could have buttered him and eaten him alive," she adds.)*

*The townspeople find his wealth and background equally fascinating. He implies that he is a track engineer, he likes to drink, and is an excellent swimmer. It seems that he is capable of doing everything and has access to seemingly endless resources. As a result, the townspeople decide they like him. Garcia Marquez's mother writes in a subsequent letter to her son: "People like him a lot, because he is honest and has a good heart.")*

2. "Love can be learned too." (p. 38)

*(Many North Americans take as incontrovertible the belief that love is an undeniable physical and mental attraction, a frisson of electric tension between two people. As a result, the concept of arranged marriages or marrying for reasons other than love is often abhorrent. This is not the case in some other cultures and among many people who see marriage as an ideal way to cement family alliances, increase the family wealth, or climb the social ladder.)*

*Angela Vicario believes that only love is a suitable base for marriage. Her mother, sensing that Bayardo San Roman would be an enviable catch for her daughter, will accept no discussion about love being the basis for marriage. This scene sets the stage for Mrs. Vicario's later fury at her daughter for being rejected on her wedding night for not being a virgin.)*

3. There had never been a death more foretold. (p. 57)

*(Garcia Marquez describes the inertia in a small town where everyday life continues its ordinary gossipy routine around two life-shattering events: the rejection of Angela Vicario by her new husband when he finds that she is not a virgin and her brothers' murder of a local dandy whom she names as her seducer. Many of the residents are passive accomplices in a murder that everyone knows will happen.)*

*There is no doubt that the murder will become a reality: When asked why he is sharpening his knife, Angela's brother Pedro replies, "We're going to kill Santiago Nasar." [p. 59] A little later on in the book, another member of the community asks him why he is staring at Nasar's window. "Just that we're looking for him to kill him," Pedro replies. [p. 62]*

*All told, the Vicario brothers had told their plans to more than a dozen people who are on their way to buy milk—not to mention all the others they had passed during the day. The news is so well spread that Hortensia Baute, another neighbor, opened her door just as the brothers were passing by. "I thought they had already killed him," she told the narrator, "because I saw*

*the knives in the light from the street lamp and it looked to me like they were dripping blood." [p. 71.]*

4. The report says: "It looked like a stigma of the crucified Christ." (p. 87)

*(The priest who had studied medicine and surgery before entering a seminary and the druggist who had virtually no medical training are appointed to do the autopsy on Santiago's body. They do not have the proper instruments—even though they would not be sure how to use them—and so they wreak havoc on the body. They remove half the cranium, throw the intestines in the garbage pail, and stuff the empty shell with rags and quicklime. They sew everything up crudely with coarse twine. The body is barely held together and so they hastily stuff it into the coffin.)*

*The autopsy becomes another murder. As the quote suggests, it is as though Santiago Nasar is crucified through the autopsy.)*

5. "I can't," she said. "You smell of him." (p. 90)

*(The narrator goes to visit Maria Alejandrina Cervantes, a prostitute. She is completely naked, squatting on her bed and eating a meal of epic proportions: veal cutlets, a boiled chicken, a pork loin, and enough vegetables for five people. The astonishing array of meat recalls the imagery of Nasar's entrails, stabbed with the knife and then torn away in the autopsy. The descriptions in the novel are sometimes gluttonously graphic, as is the case here. In other places, they are quite disgusting, as when Santiago walks around after the stabbing with his bowels in his hands or when the dogs grab the entrails of the rabbits and drag them around.)*

*The narrator and Cervantes begin to make love, but she stops and slips away because he smells like Nasar. Generated by the disorder of love, the Nasar murder is linked to sexual passion in this scene and many others. Sensual and harrowing passages like this create a sexual rhythm that reinforces the reason for the murder in the first place.)*

6. Santiago Nasar had expiated the insult, the brothers Vicario had proved their status as men, and the seduced sister was in possession of her honor once more. (p. 96)

*(Most of the people in the town do not view Santiago Nasar as the victim; on the contrary, they reserve their pity for Bayardo San Roman. According to the cultural norms, it is accepted that everyone else but Nasar had been doing what was expected of them, with dignity and even a certain grandeur. Angela had to identify her seducer; her brothers had to avenge her shame.)*

*This concept of honor may be difficult for many readers to accept, and they will see Nasar as the victim. It is never proven that he dishonored Angela. And even if he did, is his brutal death really justice?)*

7. The most current version, perhaps because it was the most perverse, was that Angela Vicario was protecting someone who really loved her and she had chosen Santiago Nasar's name because she thought her brothers would never go up against him. (p. 104)

*(The identity of Angela Vicario's lover is the central mystery of the book, and it is never solved. Readers never discover why she named Santiago Nasar. The slaying of Santiago Nasar will stand among the innumerable mur-*

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ders of modern literature as one of the best and most powerfully rendered, superior even to the great, slow murder of Quilty in *Lolita* or the sensational and bathetic murder of the German soldier in Mr. Sammler's Planet, or the various murders in Camus, Sartre, Capote, Mailer, and others. Flannery O'Connor's deftly stunning murders in *A Good Man is Hard to Find* compete well against Gabriel Garcia Marquez, but she too is a genius of the uncanny and the banal.)

8. "Well," he said, "here I am." (p. 111)  
(Angela Vicario did not love Bayardo San Roman when they married, and she is very open about her feelings. She marries him because her mother forced her. But something very odd happens to Angela some time after the wedding.)

She and her mother stopped at the Hotel del Puerto and asked for a glass of water. Angela's mother was drinking the water when Angela saw her own thoughts reflected in all the mirrors in the bar. Angela looks at her mother, returns home, and cries for three days. Reborn, Angela becomes obsessed with Bayardo San Roman. She cannot sleep; she cannot close her eyes without seeing him. In an effort to get some relief, she begins to write him letters. He answers none. As the years pass, she writes hundreds of letters, none of which he answers.

Ten years later, Angela wakes up convinced that Bayardo San Roman is naked in her bed. Feverish, she writes him a twenty-page letter. She continues to write to him for seventeen years. One day, he suddenly appears on her doorstep. She knows him at once. He drops his suitcase to show her he has all her letters. He has not opened a single one. Perhaps he was drawn back to her by the strength of her longing; perhaps he is equally obsessed with her. The reason for his reappearance is never explained.)

9. Our daily contact, dominated then by so many linear habits, had suddenly begun to spin around a single common anxiety. (p. 113)  
(This passage is a subtle and ironic comment on the novel's structure. The novel is anything but linear and chronological. The motivation for the action—Santiago Nasar's murder—is revealed quite early in the novel. The rest of the novel amplifies this action in a series of brilliant descriptions of the murder.)
10. Then they both kept on knifing him against the door with alternate and easy stabs, floating in the dazzling backwater they had found on the other side of fear. (p. 140)  
(Pedro Vicario and his brother Pablo attack and kill Santiago Nasar. The subject of the novel is the unthinkable—death. In a way everyone of us will be mysteriously murdered, in the sense that we know—like Santiago Nasar—that we will die, but we don't know why and when. Any effort to explain or rationalize our fate, especially in the linear fashion of a chronicle, must collapse into the absurd.)

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages from the novel.

### Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. What has Santiago learned from his father?  
(He learned how to use firearms and how to manage high-flying birds of prey. He also learned valor and prudence. Ironically, these last two attributes do not seem to help him foresee or prevent his own death.)
2. What problem does the news of Santiago Nasar's death present to the narrator's mother?  
(Santiago Nasar's death is a dilemma. On one hand, Santiago Nasar had been named for her and she was his godmother, so there is a very close bond of friendship. On the other hand, she is a relative of Pura Vicario, Angela's mother. Nevertheless, the narrator's mother decides that she must warn Nasar's mother at once. "It isn't right that everybody should know that they're going to kill her son and she the only one who doesn't," she says on page 25.)
3. Why are the Vicario girls considered ideal brides?  
(They had been raised to be married. They know all the desirable womanly arts of their time and place: how to do screen embroidery, sew by machine, weave bone lace, wash and iron, make artificial flowers and fancy candy, and write engagement announcements. They are also expert at the art of death. "They are perfect," says their mother, "because they've been raised to suffer" [p. 34]. Obviously, Garcia Marquez is making sharp and humorous social comments on the rearing of daughters in his society.)
4. How does Bayardo San Roman put an end to the mystery surrounding his family?  
(The town has been buzzing with curiosity about San Roman's background. His solution is simple: he produces his entire immediate family. There are four of them: the father, mother, and two provocative sisters. They drive into town in a sparkling Model T Ford, duck-horn blaring. His mother is a big mulatto woman from the Caribbean island of Curacao. The sisters are like two restless fillies. The main attraction, however, is the father, General Petronio San Roman, a famous and dashing war hero.)
5. What is the cause of the widower's death?  
(One night, Bayardo San Roman asked his fiancée what house she liked the best. Without knowing why, she answered that the prettiest house belonged to the widower Xius. San Roman immediately resolves to buy the house. The widower, however, refuses to sell because he considers the house still a part of his wife because they spent a lifetime together collecting its furnishings. San Roman offers to buy it empty; he offers to buy it with all its furnishings. The widower continues to refuse.  
Finally, San Roman offers ten thousand pesos, far more than the house is worth. In tears, the widower agrees to sell. The widower dies two months later of sorrow and grief. According to the doctor, the widower died because he had "tears bubbling inside his heart.")

### Questions 6-8 Interpretative Level

6. How does the issue of Angela Vicario's purity relate to the theme of appearance and reality?  
(Even in a town such as this where everyone knows everyone else's business, no one suspects that Angela Vicario is not a virgin. She had never been engaged

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before and had grown up under her mother's iron fist. Even after her engagement, Angela's mother Pura did not let her daughter go out with Bayardo San Roman alone. After the engagement, the entire family is enlisted to safeguard her honor—even her blind father!

Only Angela knows that she is not a virgin. She is so worried about what will happen that she confides in her bridesmaids. Older and more experienced than Angela, they teach her ways to deceive her husband on their wedding night. "And they taught her old wives' tricks to feign her lost possession, so that on her first morning as a newlywed she could display open under the sun in the courtyard of her house the linen sheet with the stain of honor" [p. 42].

Angela got married with that illusion. For his part, Bayardo San Roman probably got married with the illusion that his power and wealth would ensure him happiness. Both are deceived as reality intrudes. Bayardo San Roman discovers that Angela Vicario is not a virgin and that his social position and money cannot buy him happiness. For her part, Angela discovers that truth will win out. Garcia Marquez strips away the illusions from many of his characters. For his readers, he shatters the ultimate illusion: that a foretold death cannot take place before our very eyes, that our own death is preventable.)

7. What is ironic about Santiago Nasar's obsession with the cost of Angela Vicario's wedding?

(Before the wedding and even during the night-long revelry that follows, Santiago amuses himself trying to figure out how much the celebration cost. He draws up figures for the colored wreaths that decorated the streets, calculates the cost of the music and the firecrackers, and even factors in the price for the fistfuls of rice which would be thrown at the newly-married couple.)

Santiago Nasar shared his calculations with the groom, San Roman. Nasar had arrived at a figure of nine thousand pesos. Rather than thinking this question was rude, San Roman proudly calculates that the event will cost twice that before it is over.

Nasar is almost obsessed with figuring out if Bayardo San Roman's predictions are correct. Nasar even suggests that he jot down the cost of each and every item, so he can figure the cost to the last penny. Ironically, Santiago Nasar is unaware of the festivities' ultimate price—his life.)

8. If everyone knows that Santiago Nasar is going to be killed—even he and his own mother—why doesn't someone convince him to escape from town before it is too late?

(There are several possible reasons why no one convinces Nasar to leave town before he is killed. First, the townspeople—even his own mother—view his death as inevitable, another casualty of life. These people are so awed by their foreknowledge of the murder that they look upon Santiago Nasar, even as he stands before them, as a dead man. The death is foretold; the death will occur. Nasar's death, like the death of each of us, will happen. This view presupposes a certain fatalism which matches the mood of the town.)

Second, no one has a compelling reason to prevent his death. It is a dramatic event sure to liven up the sleepy town. Further, Santiago Nasar is definitely not a

saint and has offended a few people. He is an arrogant womanizer. Some people, like his father's aging mistress, Maria Alejandrina Cervantes, would like to kill him herself. The author implicates the entire town: "They [the murderers] didn't hear the shouts of the whole town, frightened by its own crime." [p. 140]

Third, no one can do even one effective thing to prevent the murder—although some people do try to intervene.)

### Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. Why is Santiago Nasar's murder repeatedly presented as the book progresses?

(Toward the end of the book, Santiago Nasar's death is presented over and over, each time with increasing ferocity. It is foreshadowed in the house when Santiago Nasar watches a servant butcher a rabbit for lunch. The servant is "surrounded by panting dogs," just as Nasar is surrounded by townspeople eager to see him die. He is soon similarly butchered.)

The same dogs arrive at his autopsy, starving for food, eager to be fed his entrails as they were fed the rabbits'. He is murdered again at the autopsy.

Then comes the actual murder itself. The knife went through the palm of his right hand and then sank into his side up to the hilt. Everybody heard his cry of pain. "Oh mother of mine!" he shrieked. Pedro Vicario then stabbed him in the same place again. Then Pablo stabbed him in the back. Mortally wounded, Nasar turned frontward and leaned his back against his mother's door. The men continue to stab him. At the end of the attack, "Santiago Nasar was still for an instant, leaning against the door, until he saw his own viscera in the sunlight, clean and blue, and then he fell on his knees." [p. 141]

By the end of the novel, Santiago Nasar has been murdered many people and in many different ways. This repetition serves to reinforce the fact that this murder—as with our own death—cannot be prevented.) [murdered often and by many people...]

10. How does Garcia Marquez use humor in the novel?

(There is a surprising amount of humor in Chronicle of a Death Foretold, considering the subject matter. Humor, the parts of a story that are funny, can be created through sarcasm, word play, irony, and exaggeration. Garcia Marquez uses humor, especially irony and word play, much as Shakespeare did, to lighten the mood before a climax. For example, on page 81, readers learn about the narrator's sister the nun, "who wasn't going to wait for the bishop because she had an eighty-proof hangover." This scene comes directly before we learn that one of the Vicario twins is terribly ill in jail.)

Later in the novel, the narrator's sister Margot tells him that she had bought a solid house with a large courtyard with cross ventilation, "the only problem being that on nights of high tide the toilets would back up and fish would appear flopping about in the bedrooms at dawn" [p. 102].

On page 117, the author revisits the question of whether Santiago Nasar was indeed guilty of the "crime" that led to his death. "The friends of Angela Vicario who had been her accomplices in the deception went on saying for a long time that she had shared her secret with them before the wedding, but that she hadn't revealed



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any name. In brief, they declared: 'She told us about the miracle but not the saint.'" This humorous scene paves the way for the graphic description of Santiago Nasar's death.

The *Flora Miguel interlude* is also very humorous: "Flora Miguel was waiting for him in the parlor, wearing one of the dresses with unfortunate ruffles that she was in the habit of putting on for memorable occasions, and she placed the chest in his hands" [p. 134]. This is the last humorous incident before the murder.)

### Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Gabriel Jose Garcia Marquez also writes under the pseudonym "Septimus." Based on what you learned about Garcia Marquez from his role as the narrator of this novel, create a list of five other pseudonyms that you think would fit his personality. Be prepared to explain your reasons for choosing each pseudonym.
12. Although many different events take place in the novel, a surprisingly short amount of time passes, just a few weeks. The events leading up to Santiago Nasar's murder are not arranged in chronological order. Make a time line to arrange events in the order in which they occurred. Include where they occurred as well as when.

### LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's style in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, present the following terms and applications in his novel:

**Point of view** is the position from which a story is told. Here are the three different points of view you will encounter most often in literature.

- **First-person point of view.** The narrator is one of the characters in the story and explains the events through his or her own eyes, using the pronouns I and me.
- **Third-person omniscient point of view.** The narrator is not a character in the story but instead looks through the eyes of all the characters. The narrator is "all-knowing" and uses the pronouns he, she, and they.
- **Third-person limited point of view.** The narrator tells the story through the eyes of only one character, using the pronouns he, she, and they.

*Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is a first-person narrative, told from the vantage point of a single observer — the author. It is relatively unusual to have the narrator be such an integral part of the story. This daring technique is a key aspect of the novel's brilliance.

**Setting** is the time and place where the events take place. The setting of a story may be stated outright, or readers may have to infer it from details in the story. Writers give clues to the setting in the characters' speech, clothing, or means of transportation. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is set in the town where the author grew up, near the Caribbean. The setting is not stated outright until page 16, so readers have to put together the details to identify it at first. The small-town atmosphere and sultry weather play a key role in the action. The clothing, foods, and occupations of the people are all suitable to the time and place.

**Characterization** is the different ways an author tells readers about characters. Sometimes writers tell about characters directly. Writers also let readers reach their own decisions by showing the comments, thoughts, and actions of the other

characters. Garcia Marquez uses both direct and indirect characterization in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. For example, readers can infer that the narrator is determined and focused by the way he gathers details about Santiago Nasar's death—more than twenty years after it occurs! In the same way, readers surmise that Santiago Nasar is rich and handsome from his way with women. Since the townspeople are quick to believe that he did indeed deflower Angela Vicario, readers can also assume that he is a womanizer, cold-blooded and calculating. Indirect characterization allows subtle shades of character development.

## ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

### Science and Health

1. On the day that he was going to be murdered, Santiago Nasar dreamed about trees. Placida Linero, his mother, has a well-earned reputation as an interpreter of people's dreams. She does not see anything ominous in his dream. Reread the dream and see how you would interpret it. Then check your interpretation in a reliable psychology book about dreams.
2. Santiago Nasar's murderers, Pedro and Pablo Vicario, are identical twins. They look so much alike that even the people who know them best had trouble telling them apart. How often do identical twins occur in the general population? Is the trait inherited? Report your findings to the class.
3. Discuss the different reasons why an autopsy might be conducted on a body. Based on your findings, argue that Santiago Nasar did or did not need to have his body autopsied after his death.
4. Imagine that you were tracing the path of Santiago Nasar's murder, just as the author had done. What clues would you use? Consider some modern technology such as DNA testing and fingerprinting as well as the methods the author uses.
5. Find out the proper way to conduct an autopsy. Create a chart to illustrate the method used.
6. On page 77, the author notes "the trickle of light from the Saint Elmo's fire in the cemetery." Explain what Saint Elmo's fire is and how it is created.

### History/Social Studies

1. Gabriel Garcia Marquez was born and raised in a small Colombian village called Aracataca, near the Caribbean coast. Find out more about this city.
2. Lead a discussion about the Colombian Civil War. Called the "War of a Thousand Days," it took place from 1899 to 1902.
3. Make an oral report on the different political opinions concerning the death penalty for capital crimes.
4. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* includes many words from Spanish. Create a glossary listing at least twenty of these words. In the first column, write the word. In the second column, write its definition. In the third column, write the pronunciation.

### Art

1. Delicate line drawings are scattered through the novel, such as the ones that appear on pages 18, 27, and 119. Make three new illustrations for the novel. Select three scenes that are not illustrated and draw small pictures to match those that already appear in the book.

## CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

2. Create a new cover for the novel. In your design, try to capture the flavor of the novel and the culture it describes.
3. With a group, create the outfits that Angela Vicario and Bayardo San Roman wore at their wedding.
4. Make a bulletin board showing what life is like in the small village described in this novel.

### Music

1. On page 76, the musicians serenade the bridal party with a round of songs. Make a list of at least three songs that they could have chosen. Try to find Spanish as well as English songs.
2. The story of Santiago Nasar's murder is more than twenty years old, now the stuff of legends. Write a ballad about the events surrounding Nasar's murder. Record your ballad and play it for the class.

### Language Arts

1. Was Santiago Nasar guilty of the crime for which he had been murdered? Debate this issue with a group of classmates. Use evidence in the book to support your opinion.
2. The author says on page 118: "My personal impression is that he [Santiago Nasar] died without understanding his death." What do you think? Give a speech in which you resolve this issue.
3. Write a newspaper article reporting Santiago Nasar's death.
4. On page 96, the narrator says, "For the immense majority of people there was only one victim: Bayardo San Roman." Who is the victim here? Is there more than one? Write an editorial to state your case.
5. Imagine that you are the judge in this case. Decide what punishment you would mete out to Pedro and Pablo.
6. Find three examples of irony in the novel and explain to a discussion group why each scene is ironic. You may wish to begin by skimming pages 20 and 111 for examples.

### Drama

1. Working with a partner, act out the scene at the end of the book where Angela Vicario and Bayardo San Roman are reunited. Try to capture each character's emotions at their long-awaited meeting.
2. With a partner, improvise a scene between Santiago Nasar and the narrator in which the truth about Angela Vicario emerges.
3. Select any chapter you especially liked and recast it as a script. Then work with a group of classmates to perform your script. You may wish to videotape your performance so you can watch it later.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* opens with the following quotation: "the pursuit of love is like falconry." Explain how the quotation fits the novel.
2. Find a copy of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, "The Solitude of Latin America," and read it to the class.
3. Join a discussion group to determine how the narrator feels about Santiago Nasar.
4. Explain the significance of the following quotation from

the novel: "He reminded me of the devil," she told me, "but you yourself had told me that things like that shouldn't be put into writing." The quotation appears on page 30 and concerns Bayardo San Roman.

5. Writing as Bayardo San Roman, explain why you came to town in the first place. You may wish to begin by rereading page 101.
6. Who murdered Santiago—the twins or the entire town? Debate this issue with a small group of classmates. Start by looking back over the actual murder scene on page 141.
7. Imagine that you are a person from the town. Write a note to Santiago Nasar warning him that he is going to be murdered.
8. Suppose that you were casting a movie version of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. List some actors and actresses who you think would be right to play the major characters in the novel. Next to each name, write a sentence explaining why you think this person would be suitable for the role.
9. List five ways that people can save their honor without resorting to drastic and dangerous actions.
10. Write a critical review of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* to be printed in the school magazine or newspaper. In your review, analyze the novel based on such elements as characterization, setting, plot, theme, and mood. Cite specific examples and quotations from the novel to support your opinion.

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List three scenes that show how everyone knows that Santiago Nasar is going to be murdered by Pedro and Pablo Vicario.
2. Describe the major scenes in the plot, especially those that show Nasar's character and his motivations. Describe each scene in detail and explain why it is important to the plot.
3. The mood (or atmosphere) is the strong feeling we get from a literary work. The mood is created by characterization, description, images, and dialogue. Some possible moods include: terror, horror, tension, calmness, and suspense. Identify the mood of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. Back up your opinion with specific details from the novel.

### MARQUEZ'S OTHER PUBLISHED WORKS

*The Autumn of the Patriarch.* (novel)  
*Clandestine in Chile: The Adventures of Miguel Littin* (novel)  
*The Evil Hour.* (novel)  
*The General in His Labyrinth* (novel)  
*The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Erendira and Other Stories* (novel)  
*Leaf Storm and Other Stories* (novel)  
*No One Writes to the Colonel and Other Stories* (novel)  
*One Hundred Years of Solitude* (novel)  
*The Story of a Shipwrecked Soldier* (novel)  
*Love in the Time of Cholera* (novel)

### RELATED READING

Rudolfo A. Anaya's *Tortuga*  
James Berry's *The Future-Telling Lady and Other Stories*

## CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

David Blair's *Fear the Condor*  
Lori M. Carlson's and Cynthia L. Ventura's *When Angels Glide at Dawn: New Stories from Latin America*  
Denise Chavez's *The Flying Tortilla Man*  
Ann Nolan Clark's *Secret of the Andes*  
Kevin McColley's *The Walls of Pedro Garcia*  
Ernesto Galarza *Barrio Boy*  
Rolando Hinojosa-Smith's *Fair Gentlemen of Belken County*  
Scott O'Dell's *My Name is Not Angelica*  
Tomas Rivera's *and the earth did not devour him*  
Charles Tatum's *Mexican American Literature*

## TEACHER'S NOTES

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Rolfe, Doris. "The Novel of Gabriel Garcia Marquez." *Graduate Studies in Latin America*. Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1973, pp. 63-75.
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## CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

### VOCABULARY TEST

Using the vocabulary words that follow, complete each sentence. You will have answers left over.

antics	contraband	impression	morass	revels
augury	furtive	infamous	ominous	rigor
bellow	havoc	languid	pastoral	serenades
centenarian	idyllic	linear	perdition	utilitarian
clamor	imposed	matriarch	revelation	viscera

1. Santiago Nasar's strange dream on the day of his death was a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ warning of trouble to come.
2. Unfortunately, he ignored this strange warning or \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The wild wedding preparations played \_\_\_\_\_ with the neat and tidy town.
4. The wedding \_\_\_\_\_ lasted all through the night with people drinking and dancing wildly.
5. There was nothing hidden or \_\_\_\_\_ about the plans for Santiago Nasar's murder; everything was out in the open.
6. Santiago Nasar's horror was a \_\_\_\_\_ to Victoria Guzman.
7. The narrator had spent many \_\_\_\_\_ nights with his women friends.
8. Their crazy \_\_\_\_\_ were known throughout the town.
9. The swampy \_\_\_\_\_ was filled with crocodiles and thick plants.
10. The thick, \_\_\_\_\_ air seemed to hang like heavy syrup over the town.
11. My personal \_\_\_\_\_ is that he died without understanding his death.
12. The whole town awoke with the earthshaking \_\_\_\_\_ of the bishop's steamboat.
13. She'd grown up along with her sisters under the \_\_\_\_\_ of a mother of iron.
14. He had the same \_\_\_\_\_ concept of marriage as his father.
15. Our daily conduct, dominated by so many \_\_\_\_\_ habits, had suddenly begun to spin around a single common anxiety.
16. It was inconceivable that they would abandon their \_\_\_\_\_ spirit to avenge a death.
17. I only awakened with the \_\_\_\_\_ of alarm bells.
18. Her parents \_\_\_\_\_ on her the obligation to marry a man she had barely seen.
19. He recounted that 205 cases of \_\_\_\_\_ alcohol had been consumed.
20. We took the musicians with us for a round of \_\_\_\_\_.

## CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Matching (30 points)

Match the following descriptions with each character from the novel. Choose your answers from the list below. Each answer will be used only once and you will have answers left over.

- |                           |                                |                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| A. Santiago Nasar         | G. Clotilde Armenta            | M. Wenefrida Marquez |
| B. Gabriel Garcia Marquez | H. Maria Alejandrina Cervantes | N. Flora Miguel      |
| C. General San Roman      | I. Placida Linero              | O. Bayardo San Roman |
| D. the nun                | J. Margot                      | P. the widower Xius  |
| E. Dr. Iguaran            | K. Pura Vicario                | Q. Luis Enrique      |
| F. Angela Vicario         | L. Pedro and Pablo             | R. Father Amador     |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. beats Angela for disgracing the family's honor
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. an aging mistress, once Santiago Nasar's great passion
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. the narrator's aunt, one of the last people to see Santiago Nasar alive
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. performs the autopsy
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. hog butchers—who butcher Santiago Nasar
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Gabriel Garcia Marquez's sister
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. the woman who wants to marry Santiago Nasar
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. the man accused of defiling the bride
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. had treated Santiago Nasar for hepatitis when the child was twelve
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. dies soon after he sells his house to Bayardo San Roman for far more than its market value
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Gabriel Garcia Marquez's brother
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. the bride returned to her mother's home in disgrace for not being a virgin
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. the narrator's sister, who suffers from an eighty-proof hangover
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. the famous, dashing civil war hero
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. the narrator, who bears a striking resemblance to Santiago Nasar

#### Part II: True/False (20 points)

Write **T** if the statement is true or **F** if the statement is false. Write your answer in the space provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. On a later visit, Divina Flor confessed to the narrator that after her mother had died, that the latter hadn't said anything to Santiago Nasar because in the depths of her heart she wanted them to kill him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The novel is set in a small town in the Florida Keys, where it is very hot and humid.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. No one is sure of the weather the day of the murder: some people say that it is clear and sunny; others, that it is rainy and windy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The murder of the rich and handsome Santiago Nasar took place twenty-seven years earlier.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. It emerges that almost no one in town knew Santiago Nasar was to be murdered—who would do it, where, when, and why.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Garcia Marquez looks so much like his friend Santiago Nasar that Santiago Nasar's old, dying mother even mistakes Garcia Marquez for her son in a brief hallucination.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Santiago Nasar is murdered because he was accused of having stolen the bride's money.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. At the wedding, the bride, Angela Vicario, is deeply in love with her groom, Bayardo San Roman.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Very wealthy and elegant, Bayardo San Roman possesses supernatural talents.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Toward the end of the novel, Santiago Nasar's murder is presented over and over, each time with increasing ferocity.

## CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

### Part III: Cause and Effect (20 points)

Finish each of these statements. Write your answer in the space provided.

1. Santiago Nasar is murdered because

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2. Bayardo San Roman throws his wife out of their house on their wedding night because

---

3. Gabriel Garcia Marquez tells the story of Santiago Nasar's murder because

---

4. Santiago Nasar's mother locks him out of the house because

---

5. Few people come to Santiago Nasar's aid when they learn he is to be murdered because

---

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answer one of the following questions in an essay of at least 250 words. Try to include specific details from the book in your answer.

1. Explain how Bayardo San Roman and Angela Vicario feel about each other before their wedding, on their wedding night, and twenty years later.
2. Analyze what the murder symbolizes in the novel.
3. Summarize the mood of the story.

## CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Select the best answer for each question. Write your answer in the space provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Divina Flor confessed to the narrator that after her mother had died, the latter hadn't said anything to Santiago Nasar about his murder because  
a. she wanted them to kill him. b. she was in love with him. c. he already knew. d. it was a big secret.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The novel is set in a small town in a. Mexico. b. the Caribbean c. Puerto Rico. d. Cuba.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. On the day of the murder, the narrator gets conflicting reports on  
a. whether Santiago Nasar will be murdered. b. his mother's health. c. the wedding food. d. the weather.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The murder of rich and handsome Santiago Nasar took place  
a. the previous week. b. the previous month. c. five years ago. d. twenty-seven years earlier
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Everyone in town knew a. Bayardo San Roman's past before he arrived.  
b. Santiago Nasar was to be murdered c. their prayers. d. it was all a dream.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Santiago Nasar can best be described as  
a. kindly. b. a poor butcher. c. wealthy and handsome. d. poor but honest.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Garcia Marquez looks astonishingly like  
a. Placida Linero. b. Pura Vicario. c. Santiago Nasar. d. General San Roman.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Santiago Nasar is murdered because he was a. universally hated.  
b. accused of having stolen the bride's virginity. c. in the wrong place at the wrong time. d. a foreigner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Very wealthy and elegant, Bayardo San Roman possesses  
a. a famous horse. b. a Model T Ford c. great military honors. d. supernatural talents.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Santiago Nasar is killed with a. poison. b. guns. c. knives. d. ropes.

#### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Explain the significance of the following details from the novel.

1. the cost of the wedding
2. the murder
3. dreams
4. mistaken identity
5. honor

## CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

### Part III: Character Identification (20 points)

Place an X next to any statements that refer to Santiago Nasar.

- 1. a rich, handsome man
- 2. madly in love with the nun, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's sister
- 3. aware that he was going to be killed.
- 4. accused of having stolen something that belonged to Angela Vicario and Bayardo San Roman
- 5. first cousin to Pedro and Pablo
- 6. marries Angela Vicario at the end of the novel
- 7. really the widower Xius in disguise
- 8. murdered as a matter of family honor.
- 9. unsure of his place in society because of his foreign birth
- 10. bears a strong resemblance to the narrator of the novel.

### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answer one of the following questions in an essay of at least 250 words. Try to include specific details from the book in your answer.

1. Compare and contrast Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Santiago Nasar.
2. Analyze the author's use of figures of speech in the novel.
3. Explain the author's use of humor in the novel.

## CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

### VOCABULARY TEST

- |               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. ominous    | 11. impression  |
| 2. augury     | 12. bellow      |
| 3. havoc      | 13. rigor       |
| 4. revels     | 14. utilitarian |
| 5. furtive    | 15. linear      |
| 6. revelation | 16. pastoral    |
| 7. idyllic    | 17. clamor      |
| 8. antics     | 18. imposed     |
| 9. morass     | 19. contraband  |
| 10. languid   | 20. serenades   |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Matching (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. K | 6. J  | 11. Q |
| 2. H | 7. N  | 12. F |
| 3. M | 8. A  | 13. D |
| 4. R | 9. E  | 14. C |
| 5. L | 10. P | 15. B |

#### Part II: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T  |
| 2. F | 7. F  |
| 3. T | 8. F  |
| 4. T | 9. T  |
| 5. F | 10. T |

#### Part III: Cause and Effect (20 points)

Answers will vary.

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

## ANSWER KEY

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. a | 6. c  |
| 2. b | 7. c  |
| 3. d | 8. b  |
| 4. d | 9. d  |
| 5. b | 10. c |

#### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Answers will vary.

#### Part III: Character Identification (30 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. X | 6.    |
| 2.   | 7.    |
| 3. X | 8. X  |
| 4. X | 9.    |
| 5.   | 10. X |

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



**CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD**

**TEACHER'S NOTES**

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