

Topic/Title: Character, Passion & Culture/*Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Grade Range (suggested): 11 – 12 Honors or AP Literature and Composition

Submitted by (optional): Michalene Hague

Overview: Marquez's journalistic interview style and touch of magical realism explores the workings of a Columbian town culture that shaped the wedding and murder events of its existence and that is shaped by the outcomes of those events. The narrator seeks to resolve the truths of those events twenty years after their occurrence by interviewing as many relatives and villagers who participated in any way; in his first person search for understanding and revelation of secrets, he reveals the power of memory, the relativism of point of view and the fluctuating codes that operate within the classes of his culture. Working the narrative from the present to the past and back to the present again, he presents the parochial interactions of people and the universalities of their human natures, without ever solving the culpability of the main character – which is not the point at all, and leaves discussion joyously open-ended.

Common Core State Standards: RL 1-6, MA. 8.A.; W 1 a-e, MA. 3.A., 4, 7-9; SL 1, 4; L 1-2, 5-6.

Essential questions: How do we define ourselves? How does a society define its "heroes"? How do cultures define themselves and their standards? How do they promote their standards and adjust to those of others? What roles do memory and point of view play in carrying a culture's legacies? What is the meaning of the individual within the community?

Goals/Objectives: This book is used in comparison to other texts, such as *Medea*, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, *Cry the Beloved Country* and/or *Confessions of an Ugly Step Sister*, sometimes with *Their Eyes are Watching God* when the focus is on the "love story." So the objectives are as follows:

1. To provide students multiple opportunities to interpret plot, characterization, symbols, allusions and representations of cultural archetypes.
2. To have students apprehend the importance of points of view and how they shape "story" and themes.
3. To explore the importance of cultural codes and expectations on local and universal levels.
4. To understand how an author's structure within a work serves characterization and theme purposes.
5. To compare literary works from different times while expanding applications of interpretive skills.
6. To apply knowledge and understanding to writing literary analysis and to creating visual representations of student interpretations.

Assessment: Completion of the following:

1. Reading check quiz(zes)
2. Character Profile Chart (3 personality traits; motivations; viewpoint of wedding or murder)
3. Quotation Sheet (2 applicable and usable quotations pertaining to the character's personality)
4. Character worksheet, preparatory to essay (2 characters, information and quotations from above, one paragraph each as skeleton framework for a longer piece)
5. Character analysis essay (may be comparison/contrast if paired with another novel)
6. Group poster – Choose a quotation and 5 characters to which it applies to represent with explanations of their links and an applicable theme statement; on the flip side, a one page list of evidence in support of a choice of controversial claim, connected to characters on the front. These are presented to the class as part of whole class, wrap-up discussion.

Steps to check for student understanding

Lesson Sequence:

1. Introduce the book with background about the author and his times, and the Columbian culture of the times. May go to computer lab.
2. Assign the book to be read within two weeks, answering any incidental questions during that time.
3. Suggest students take notes and fill out the character profile sheets as they read
4. Reading check quiz at the deadline. Discuss and clarify plot, conflicts and general motivations.
5. Class work on sharing observations from profile sheets as a platform for discussions.
6. Discussions of viewpoints, related allusions and symbols, dipsticking for textual evidence.
7. Focus on ironies, parallel realities and symbolic applications to the Santiago/Angela/Bayardo sets
8. Whole class discussion of characterization and themes, with evidence, and author's structure.
9. Pair work on finding quotations and events evidence for character analysis. Essay deadline.
10. Group poster work and presentations.

Materials Needed: Hand-outs on Garcia Marquez, Columbia of his time; Lists of characters; Posterboard and markers; Composition books, if necessary, for note-taking; Teacher-generated activity charts.

Other Resources: Optional - Access to computer lab to research information on author and book – discuss credibility of these sources. Watch some video interviews; read a few articles about this Nobel Prize winner, or about his town and family(the bases of the story).

(websites, videos, books, etc.)

Additional Information: The graphic detail in this book and some language issues caution that it requires a mature group of students to address it. Otherwise, its brevity is appreciated and the edition with the pictures is preferred to the one without them. The real challenge is getting them to keep the characters straight, especially those who are related to each other.