

One hundred years of solitude

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In his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel García Márquez makes several direct references to the Spanish culture. In addition, Márquez makes many allusions to historical events.

If inaccurate, these allusions could ruin the credibility and impact of the novel and its message. Throughout *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel García Márquez remains historically and culturally accurate while describing the Buendía household. Throughout the novel, it became clear that the Buendía family was set up in a matriarchal order, with Ursula as the leader. Ursula is the only character capable of commanding respect from all, and her approval is required before any other family members can make serious decisions. For example, when José wanted to court Rebeca, Ursula refused to accept it, and their relationship was broken up. In addition, Ursula is the only character in the novel to stand up to José Arcadio's barbaric ways.

José Arcadio was notorious for, "Tightening the tourniquet with unnecessary rigor until he became the cruelest ruler Macondo had ever known" (Márquez 115). Ursula stands her ground and tells Arcadio to, "Kill me too, son of an evil mother. That way I won't have the eyes to weep for the shame of having raised a monster" (Márquez 114.) She goes on to whip him and chase him around the courtyard until he surrenders. Ursula's presence was enough to instill fear in Arcadio, which was something that no male in the family or town was able to do. In Spanish society, a matriarchal figure was often considered to be the most vital member of the household because they instilled values into the children.

Marquez kept this point accurate by making Ursula in charge of raising the children with morals. While the Buendía clan is large, they still have close knit relationships with each other. Throughout her long life, Ursula stays involved in all her children's, grandchildren's, and great grandchildren's lives. A high level of communication is a common aspect of Spanish families to have, and children are expected to stay close to home even after they are married. Marquez illustrates this point accurately by having a majority of the family stay near the town of Macondo.

The members of the family that choose to leave, either with the gypsies, for war, or out of curiosity are painted in a negative light and resented by the rest of the family, showing that leaving is considered shameful. In Spanish tradition, it is common for children to maintain a line of communication from their personal lives to their parents. Marquez portrays this idea several times, but most prominently with Meme and her father Aureliano Segundo. At one point, Aureliano makes Meme, "promise that she would let him know about her first love affair with the same confidence" (Marquez 296). This quote between a father and daughter mimics the strong communication that is common in traditional Spanish households.

One major historical reference made in the book was to the Banana Massacre which occurred in 1928. This historical event took place in Columbia and left more than 2000 people dead. In the novel, Jose Arcadio Segundo organizes the protest for the banana plantation workers who were displeased with the unsafe working conditions. The company agrees to meet with the workers, but then murders them instead. When Jose asks those on

the train if they had seen what had happened to the workers, they reply that, “ nothing has happened in Macondo” (Marquez 331).

This quote is symbolic of the real historical Banana Massacre because to this day, no one knows the exact number of casualties that occurred. At first the number of dead was thought to be very high, but then a survivor claimed it was all false, and that others were making up rumors. Because one person denied the incident, doubt was raised as to whether or not this event even took place, much like in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Because of the descriptions given of the aftermath of the massacre, the book was very accurate in its portrayal of this event. Another historical event that Marquez was accurate in describing was the founding of Macondo.

Marquez directly drew from the history of his hometown of Colombia in the establishment of Macondo. Before settlements were made on the land, Colombia was inhabited by various Indian tribes. There was no firm settlement until the Spanish came and settled there. The discovery of land parallels how the town of Macondo was founded in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, with Jose Arcadio Buendía being the creator. When the Spanish came to the area of Colombia, not much was known about its preexisting conditions. It was fairly isolated with not many people or tribes coming and going.

However, the Spanish transformed this area and it soon became a bustling city center. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the Buendía's found Macondo and developed it so much that, “ the inhabitants of Macondo found themselves lost in their own streets” (Marquez 17). Macondo became very

busy as well, attracting those from all over, much like Colombia initially did. Marquez takes great care in his novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, by making sure references are accurate in regards to cultural and historical accuracy. The Buendía family has aspects of their culture that directly resemble the traditional Spanish culture. In his set up of the family, Marquez captures the matriarchal set up of the traditional Spanish family in his representation of the Buendía clan.

The relationships Marquez creates in his book imitate the types of strong connections that exist in Spanish families. He is precise in his descriptions of historical events such as the Banana massacre and the founding of Macondo. This accuracy adds to the deeper meaning of the novel, and enhances the overall credibility of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Works Cited Every Culture. N. p.

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