

# Love in the time of cholera persuasive essay

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The setting for the novel "Love in the Time of Cholera" is during the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century in a Spanish city somewhere in South America. This is much like the author's country of origin which is Colombia. Much of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's writings were shaped by his own life experiences along with his life in Colombia. Marquez incorporated much of Colombia's cultural strife and society in his novels. The large gap between the rich and the poor, along with the injustices is a way of life in South America, and social class is always incorporated into his writings.

He was born in 1928 in the small town of Aracataca and was raised by his grandparents until he was eight and his grandfather passed away. He is often quoted as saying "that it was during this time that all of the most exciting things happened in his life and after this period nothing really exciting ever happened" (McNerney 16). When Marquez responded to an interview that he saw stories and created them from a single image and his image of this story was, "two old people dancing on the deck of a boat dancing a bolero" (Matuz 55: 135). He was true to that image.

In researching the author and the novel I noticed that many references were made towards his grandmother's influence in his writings and especially when looking at the mystical aspect of his writings. His grandmother, Tranquilina Iquaran Cotes believed in the supernatural and it was incorporated into their daily life, "many of the tales he heard during this period find their way into his fiction, it is the matter of fact tone with which his grandmother said the most outrageous things that characterized his work" (McNerney 7). Many of his female characters mirrored his

grandmother's attitude and beliefs. Female characters were fundamental in his writings, just as they were to him in reality.

Women were strong, but knew their place. With Fermina Daza her duties were to her husband up until his death. When an event happened to a character it was usually on a grand scale, such as the love Ariza has for Daza, this was said to mirror Marquez's life he would say, " Everything that happened to me in the street had an enormous resonance in the house. The women in the kitchen would tell the stories to the strangers arriving on the train, who in turn brought other stories to be told" (McNerney 24).

Marquez said his first contact with the written word was when he was five by way of his grandfather. And it was on a trip as an adult to his grandparent's home that gave him the inspiration to be a writer. His use of symbolism was probably because of his grandmother and is blended with all of his writings. The novel " Love in the Time of Cholera", revolves around a strange love triangle between a husband and his wife who through the course of fifty years showed how another man loved the woman enough to wait until her present husband would die then he could replace him having the woman for himself.

As the story unfolds Fermina Daza, the female character and wife of Urbino's the doctor, only married him for security but after awhile began a love for him. The man who had loved her all during this time, Florentino Ariza, believed his love was beyond this realm, spiritual making it indestructible and forever. Florentino believed that love constituted his entire reason for being. With Marquez's writing of Florentino he linked love and suffering very

well. Marquez's grandmother would say, "Take advantage and suffer all you can now that your young things like this won't last your whole life" (McNerney 89).

The reflection of Florentino's mother underestimation of her son's ability to love was probably the same with Marquez's grandmother. When asked what was the creation of "Love in the Time of Cholera" Marquez replied that "it came from two sources the first was the love affair between his parents", which he compares to his parents and the other was a story he had read about the death of two Americans who for forty years had meet in Acapulco, but on their last trip they had taken a boat ride and was killed by the boatman and robbed. It was because of their deaths and how their romance was found out that intrigued him (Matuz 55: 134).

The novel begins with de Saint-Amour's suicide and Urbino is called as a doctor to come to investigate. Saint-Amour has taken cyanide because of his getting older and his belief that his mistress doesn't really love him Urbino believes "the fate of unrequited love" (3). His getting older was truly the core of his own suicide. Urbino is saddened by his friend's suicide and reflects on his own aging self.

This part ends with Urbino's death. Then the story really begins to unfold with Florentino, who loves Urbino's wife and has been waiting for her for exactly fifty-one years, nine months, and four days can now re-profess his love to her. After the funeral Florentino tells Fermina how he feels, he tells her of his "vow of eternal fidelity and everlasting love" (50). She becomes angry at Florentino and tells him to leave her house forever because of

cursing her husband's memory by just saying that. But strangely shedreamsthat night are of Florentino, a love she passed on so many years ago.

The middle of the novel tells a tale of love between Fermina and Florentino, but also chronicles Fermina's long marriage to Urbino. Fermina and Florentino were forced apart by Fermina's father and how they kept in contact, by telegraph, was the same as Garcia Marquez's parents. In reading this part of the book I found that his devotion is moving. Once during the years apart he happened to see Fermina's reflection in a restaurant mirror, and he had to buy it from the owner and persuaded him to sell it so he can take it home, this was a good representation of the mystical realism the book had.

He believed that her reflection was captured in the mirror and having the mirror gave him a sense of having her. By the time they are able to be together because of Urbino's death Ariza is seventy-six and Daza is seventy-one. He was not an attractive man but he also was not faithful to his love on this earthly plane, but was only faithful on the spiritual plane. Florentino's drive for writing, which mirrors the authors, has him writing of his hundreds of sexual encounters. He estimated it at 622 encounters that were of a long term status. He had written them in twenty-five notebooks that he gave the title of " Women".

Florentino has a romantic belief in love and would do anything even total devotion to his love. He loves writing love letters and that is how he won the love of Fermina when they were young. It took almost two years to win

Fermina's heart back again. Florentino persuades Fermina to take a cruise with him up the Magdalena River on a boat that was named New Fidelity.

Their love grew and eventually they consummated their love on this cruise. How Marquez describes their aging bodies as time that had passed between them is kind of sad. On the first night of the trip Fermina finally allowed Florentino to touch her hand they realized how different than when they first touched, but soon realized how really it was the same, "the hands made of old bones were not the hands they had imagined before touching. In the next moment, however, they were" (329). Their love making was too hurried at first and not as satisfying as they would have hoped by still they are "satisfied with the simple joy of being together" (341).

The title of the novel is because of the many aspects the novel has. Urbino first met Fermina because she became ill during a cholera epidemic. Fermina's father thought that possibly she had cholera, but she just had the stomach flu instead. In another part of the novel Florentino becomes ill and believes his symptoms mean he has cholera, but his was because of his suffering because of his love. He had two episodes like this one when he was a young fellow and another when Fermina allowed him back into her house after banishing him a year before when her husband had died.

At the end of the novel Florentino also has the boat captain fly a cholera flag to have privacy. It works because of the bodies in the river could be victims of another cholera epidemic. But they have problems when they can't dock because of the flag and Florentino vows to protect her with his love and under the cholera flag "forever". When Gabriel Garcia Marquez was

interviewed by Marlise Simons he was asked what intrigued him about plagues he replied, " They make people want to live more. It's that almost metaphysical dimension that interests me" (Matuz 55: 134).

The novel is very complex and should not be interpreted literally. It allows the characters Florentino and Fermina to claim their age but to still explore life with vigor. Author S. M. J. Minta wrote, " It is a novel about commitment and fidelity under circumstances which seem to render such virtues, absurd, about refusal to grow old gracefully and respectably, about the triumph sentiment can still win over reason, and above all, perhaps, about Latin America, about keeping faith with where, for better or worse, you started from." (Matuz 55: 143). Marquez's writing of love is truly heart felt and inspiring.

His love and imagination for writing is clear in this novel. The mystical realism in his novels flows so easily because it flows so easily in his own life. Galen Strawson wrote, " Garcia Marquez's insight into human turpitude and pettiness is inseparable from and amusement and forgiveness, and from intense affections" (Matuz 55: 144). This is a good description of what the novel was all about.

## **Works Cited**

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