

# Good example of research paper on guilt in chronicle of a death foretold

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Everyone suffers from guilt sometime in their life while some people suffer these bitter feelings for a lifetime. Guilt is a bothered conscience that occurs when a person commits an offense, crime or violates a moral standard or code. It is associated with the beliefs of what is right and wrong, moral and immoral. A person's guilt not only affects his/her own life but also the lives of everyone involved. This particular emotion is the subject of my analysis in which I have chosen to evaluate the novel, " Chronicle of a Death Foretold" written by a Colombian writer, novelist and journalist, Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Written in 1981, the novel was based on a true story of an actual murder in defense of a family's cultural tradition and honor. The highlight of the story evolves around the death of Santiago Nasar in a small town where people and society do not care about the value of human life. His murder has been associated with concealment, revenge and treachery which caused inner turmoil among the townspeople and brought negative impact into their lives. In this essay, I would like to argue that the characters' guilt is the result of a careless attitude of disregarding their knowledge of the murder plot which could have prevented the death of Santiago Nasar.

## **Gabriel Garcia Marquez**

Gabriel Garcia Marquez was born in Arataca, Colombia, he was considered one of the most important authors of South America and winning the Literature Nobel Prize in 1982 made him the pride of Colombia. In 1946, he studied Law in Bogota and published his first story in a Bogota newspaper in 1947. Gabriel Garcia Marquez believed that he learned everything from his grandfather who was a remarkable storyteller himself. As a writer of many languages, he has widened his readers' knowledge of reality in which his

fiction has established him as a masterful chronicler. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is a masterful novel and is considered one of his finest works.

## **Magical Realism Genre**

I chose Gabriel Garcia Marquez because I really enjoyed his writing style that denotes magical realism associated with modern Latin- American writing.

Magical realism is characterized by elements of fantasy integrated into the story with a vague sense of illustration. Its genre often bears serious commentary on art, culture and human nature associated with unusual events of sadism, torture and murder. Conclusions are often flawed which is a reflection of reality that left readers haunted and disturbed. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* reflects this genre where people struggle with situations that are extremely brutal, sad or frustrating like the tragic murder of an innocent man. “ Beautifully constructed and strikingly vivid, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* embeds a condemnatory anatomy of social mores in its seemingly pieced-together chronicle of the events leading to the killing of Santiago Nasar by the Vicario brothers” (Besner, 1991).

## **Colombian Culture**

In a Colombian tradition, women’s lives are restricted in a tradition to get married and have families where marriage is not based on love but on sacrifice. “ Girls have been reared to get married’any man will be happy with them because they’ve been raised to suffer’” (*Chronicle 2*). A woman is obligated to stay a virgin before marriage and is considered to be worthy as a wife only if she can dutifully manage all the aspects of household and child rearing. Being bounded by this tradition, Angela was obligated to marry

Bayardo San Roman, a man she had barely seen and whom her family imposed upon. On the night of their wedding, her husband found out that she was no longer a virgin and was returned to her family. One of the pillars of Colombian culture is the importance of men's honor and authority over women. " The values of the culture are presented in the novel: the machismo of men, the double standard virginity and the social rituals of marriage and defloration and the value of pride and honor" (Rendon, 1994).

### **Angela Vicario's Guilt**

When she falsely claimed that Santiago Nasar was responsible for the loss of her virginity, she became the primary source of guilt. Who would have thought that Angela, despite the severity of close watch under her mother was no longer a virgin? She grew up with her older sisters and she had never known any previous boyfriends and Santiago Nasar would be far from being one of them. They come from two different worlds where nobody would ever believe that Santiago Nasar could be the culprit. Scared of being rejected with her reputation and honor, Angela chose to accuse Santiago despite insufficient proof of the crime which cost him his life. " The final ritual of a town full of people watching a murder like spectators at a bullfight is the gruesome extension of a small community's obsession with public honor and social codes" (Christie, 1993). Angela's accusation led to the murder of an innocent man that left her with an overwhelming guilt that brought a lifetime of pain and misery in which not even the brutal beatings of her mother can relieve them. "'The only thing I can remember is that she was holding me by the hair with one hand and beating me with the other with such rage that I

thought she was going to kill me’” (Chronicle 2). The reasons why Angela chose to blame Santiago Nasar were never known although events of the story suggested that she was protecting someone and such revelation would entirely harm her family’s reputation and honor.

## **In Defense of Family’s Honor**

The Vicario brothers assume the role of avengers for their sister’s honor.

Upon learning of the man who was liable for the loss of their sister’s virginity, the twins Pedro and Pablo plotted to kill Santiago Nasar.

## **They let the townspeople know of their plan by proclaiming it to the**

whole community and began to prepare for the tragic event. “ The Vicario twins went to the bin in the pigsty where they kept their sacrificial tools and picked out the two best knives they wrapped them in a rag and went to sharpen them in the meat market” (Chronicle 3). Despite of the townspeople’s knowledge, nobody has ever attempted to interfere with Their gruesome plans because nobody could imagine that the Vicario brothers, coming from a poor family, could kill a rich man like Santiago Nasar. “ Their boisterous, as in the dynamics of machismo, conceals the hope that others will take action to stop them” (Rendon, 1994). While the whole town condemned Santiago Nasar for a crime he has never done, he was never given any justice because people in the community were stuck with their tradition and beliefs of public honor and social norms. “ Pedro and Pablo Vicario are as locked into their ritualistic revenge as they are to their ‘ duty’ of shaving” (Christie, 1993). They are bound by honor to kill their

sister's perpetrator as expected of them by the society because failure to do so will regard them as weak and unmanly. Having served in the army, Pedro has been trained to kill without conscience and considered the murder of Santiago as a duty being fulfilled.

## **Vicario Brother's Guilt**

Brutally killing Santiago Nasar right in the doorstep of his house made the Vicario brothers extremely guilty that's beyond forgiveness. While in prison, they refused to receive confessions from the priest and both became ill where Pedro was unable to release his waste while Pablo developed an acute diarrhea. In addition, they can't get rid of Santiago's smell of death, the sleepless nights and the loss of appetite. Pedro confessed, "'I was awake for eleven months'" (Chronicle 4) and this statement is a clear indication that the Vicario brothers were stricken with guilt for killing an innocent man and their illness signifies their sins and forgiveness.

## **Bayardo San Roman's Guilt**

An image of wealth and affluent roots, Bayardo San Roman decided to marry Angela Vicario, a woman from a poor family. When he discovered that his wife was no longer a virgin on the night of their wedding, he returned Angela to her family. " Bayardo San Roman grabbed her by the arm and brought her into the light. Her satin dress was in shreds and she was wrapped in a towel up to the waist" (Chronicle 2). This denotes an exaggeration of male masculinity and dominance

over women in which Bayardo San Roman is also guilty of treating Angela cruelly and leaving her to suffer the consequences despite of his profound

admiration for her. “ The minimal distinction of the novella lies in the exactness with which its author has recorded the mores of the community in which machismo is the basic ethos” (Burgess 1983). A victim of deceit and unable to accept his blemished pride and honor, Bayardo San Roman succumbed to social withdrawal and alcohol. For years, he was never able to escape from guilt and returning to Angela was the only way to get rid of his torment.

## **The Community’s Guilt**

The guilt of the townspeople is visible through their obsession of Santiago Nasar’s death and the role they played in the tragic event. The narrator states that, “ for years, we couldn’t talk about anything” (Chronicle 5). Everyone knows the plot to kill Santiago but very few attempted to warn him. Even Santiago Nasar’s cook, Victoria Guzman and her daughter, Divina Flor knew about the plan but denied their knowledge. “ I didn’t warn him because I thought it was a drunkards’ talk” (Chronicle 1). However, Divina Flor, haunted by her guilt, later confessed to the narrator that her mother did not warn Santiago Nasar because deep in her heart, she wanted him dead. Being a frightened child without the courage to decide, Divina Flor also failed to warn him. Placida Linero, Santiago Nasar’s mother was guilty for not opening the door when Santiago was desperately knocking for help thinking that her son was already in bed. Although she was known to be able to predict the future through a person’s dream, she is guilty for failing to see the bad omen that was coming for her son. With this behavior, the whole community took part in the tragic plan and was therefore, guilty for not

having the courage to stop the Vicario brothers which could have made the murder impossible.

## **Impact of Guilt**

The testimonies and confessions of the characters in the story are mainly for reasons of relieving them of guilty emotions. In trying to rid them of guilt, they remain to believe that it was pointless to have made any move to prevent the murder of Santiago Nasar. “ The novel also stresses the townspeople’s inability to transcend the mystery of Santiago’s murder” (Christie, 1993). The narrator himself couldn’t get away with guilt which is the reason why he came back to the old town after many years to resurrect the tragic event that he cannot forget. He added that, “ Most of those who could have done something to prevent the crime and did not, consoled themselves with the pretext that affairs of honours are sacred monopolies, giving access only to those who are part of the drama” (Chronicle 5). Unable to bear the guilt, some of them fell ill, ruined their lives and completely lost their minds. “ Hortensia Baute, whose only participation was having seen two bloody knives that weren’t bloody yet, felt so affected by the hallucination one day she ran out naked into the street” (Chronicle 5). For most of the townspeople, forgiveness seems impossible to achieve and obsession about the events of the past that constitute their guilt is the only way to forgive them. Placida Linero tried to establish a connection with the past by spending her last days in the hammock where her son was last seen. Angela on the other hand, struggled for forgiveness from her inner turmoil while trying to heal herself from the

public disgrace and misfortune that she suffered. She never attempted to shed light on the murder or reveal the real perpetrator in which the identity of the man liable for the loss of her virginity remains to be a mystery.

## **Angela's Liberation**

In trying to hide from public disgrace, her mother took her to another town called Indian death village but instead of hiding her misfortune, she talked about it to everyone without any restrictions. This is a way of liberating herself from the laws of her parents in which she began to question the beliefs of her family and their ethnic tradition. She struggled to rise out from the morals of conservative stupidity which people in their society don't have the choice to refuse. " Embroidered with the views of citizens locked in a tradition that they see no reason to break" (Burgess, 1983). For her, being stuck in an old tradition means a lifetime of misery and guilt. She believes that talking openly of her misery can relieve some of the pain and guilt that she suffered. It was also another way of concealing the real pain that has been burning inside her. The pain of sudden realization that she was falling in love with Bayardo San Roman, the man she married. She tried to conceal this pain and express her love by constantly writing letters to him. " Through a desperate and insistent effort of letter writing, the poor woman, however, manages not only to realize her existential servitude , but also to recover the lost love of her husband as she learns to accept herself" (Rendon, 1994). As the story unfolds Angela's struggle to free herself from destructive emotions, the guilt and shame that she harbored for many years were eventually replaced with love, acceptance and forgiveness.

The Chronicle of a Death Foretold is a story that illustrates the chain of guilt that influenced the lives of the people in the whole community. It denotes the importance of guilt as a social factor that signifies self-worth. As human beings, it is our responsibility to show empathy and concern to other members of the society while being vigilant in adhering to the standards of right and wrong. The conclusion of the story reflects acceptance and forgiveness which proves that love and compassion can overpower guilt.

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