

Time in house of spirits and chronicle of a death foretold



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The fragmentation of time is a major characteristic portrayed in Latin American literature. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende highlight the significant impact that time has on narrative. Time plays a role in the development of both novels through firstly structuring the books. This structure is by no means linear, but a recurring notion of themes. The numerous instances of foreshadowing and flashback have a great impact on both novels' development.

The thought of the past and future as closely entwined also lays the basis for fate, as repetition leads the reader to believe that the future is set and uncontrollable. Time also gives the reader an insight into the recollection of the past and how witnesses can be unreliable. These two novels portray different methods of remembering the past. In *Chronicle*, Marquez interviews people who were there at the time whilst in *House of the Spirits* Allende uses diaries as documented testimonies. The cyclical structure of both novels means that they flip between the past and future.

In the *House of the Spirits* the transition between times is used to give different viewpoints as it follows a family over several generations. The structure of the big house on the corner in the *House of the Spirits* is a metaphor for the structure of the entire novel. Esteban builds a house that on the surface is straightforward, if somewhat pretentious. Similarly, *The House of the Spirits* can be read as a traditional romance novel, following a single family over several generations. However, the narrator informs us as Esteban builds the house that it will end up full of complicated, twisted, and impractical additions.

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Despite its apparently traditional structure, *The House of the Spirits* contains an enormous number of complicated twists of plot. The title of the novel underlines the association: *The House of the Spirits* refers both to the book as a whole and also to the big house on the corner, which, thanks to Clara, is always full of ghosts and spirits. While much of *The House of the Spirits* seems to have very straightforward third-person ("he/she") narration, in fact there are three distinct narrative voices in the novel.

The first voice is that of an unnamed first person ("I") narrator whom the reader does not discover is Alba until the epilogue. From this narrator's opening paragraph, the reader is made aware that this account has been reconstructed from Clara's notebooks. After this disclosure, however, the majority of reconstruction is told in the third person, with all characters referred to as "he" or "she." This second narrative voice is omniscient, or "all-knowing," able to relate what the various characters are thinking or feeling.

This method of telling a story as a re-creation is not so unusual, except that it is interrupted at times by yet another narrative voice. This third voice belongs to Esteban Trueba, whose first person ("I") accounts serve to express either his intense passion or his acute suffering. (It is also interesting that all but the first of Esteban's encounters with Trinito Soto are told in his voice.) Esteban's first-person accounts serve two purposes: first, they reinforce the idea that the novel has been reconstructed from the family histories, both written and oral.

More important, however, is the way in which Esteban's words reveal the emotions he does not express in front of others. Without Esteban's narration, it would be easy to dismiss him as a cruel, heartless tyrant; including his heartfelt declarations, however, shows him to be a complex character struggling to battle his inner demons of passion and anger. The constant shifting from the past to the future underlines the cyclical nature and the development of fate in both novels.

This is shown through the constant reminder that anyone moment connects the past and future. example) In both novels the future is repeated as a certain event that cannot be changed. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Marquez states over and over that " they were going to kill Santiago Nasar. " Clara's Clairvoyance in *The House of the Spirits*, continually allows her to understand people's fate which she believes cannot be changed. This is shown through her submissiveness on the point of her marriage. She sees that she is " going to be married soon... to Rosa's fiance ". Clara is so certain about this point that she does nothing to try and stop it.

She believes that the future cannot be changed and later that month " Esteban Trueba... showed up at the door to ask for Clara's hand. " herself marrying Esteban Trueba and does not The use of testimonies is rife throughout both books. The memories of witnesses are tested by time as Marquez finds in *Chronicle*. What he encounters is a town full of people with varying and often conflicting memories of the events he is investigating. Consequently, what begins as an attempt to fill the gaps, to find out once and for all what really happened that ' dark and drizzly morning' - or was it ' bright and sunny'? becomes instead a parody of any attempt to recapture <https://assignbuster.com/time-in-house-of-spirits-and-chronicle-of-a-death-foretold/>

and reconstruct the past. He describes it as trying to “ put the broken mirror of memory back together from so many scattered shards. ”

A completely contradictory view is portrayed in *The House of the Spirits*. On the novel’s first page, the omniscient writer confides: “ I would use [Clara’s] notebooks to reclaim the past and overcome terrors of my own. ” Alba in fact tells this story by piecing together Esteban Trueba’s memories, her own recollections, and Clara’s writings from her “ notebooks that bore witness to life. As she closes *The House of the Spirits*, Alba seems to speak in Allende’s own voice as she proclaims: “ Memory is fragile and the space of a single life so brief, passing so quickly that we never get a chance to see the relationship between events; we cannot gauge the consequences of our acts, and we believe in the fiction of past, present, and future, but it may also be true that everything happens simultaneously. ” Time is used as a gate way through which many aspects of these novels can be reached.

Different view points can be attained as can the change of opinion through time. Fate is woven through time which binds the past and future even closer together. Recounts are a commonly used method of rediscovering the past. Through *Chronicle* we learn of the impossible task of reconstructing the truth, as many believe that the whole truth can never be known especially after so many years. In *house of spirits* Clara’s writings are used as a way of piecing together their “ true” family history. Time plays a key role constructing and revealing a whole dimension of these novels.