

Dry september as
depicted in chronicles
of a death foretold



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* and William Faulkner's "Dry September" are very similar to each other structurally and thematically, despite being separated by fifty years and a regional and linguistic barrier. They both use nonlinear story-telling to unravel tales of a wrongful murder. However, beyond this surface similarity, further analyses of the stories show that there are striking similarities between their characters that reveal a harsh reality of their societies. Both *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* and *Dry September* have "villains", represented by Angela Vicario and Minnie Cooper, respectively, whose words of accusations influenced by societal pressures led to brutal measures to be taken against the named men. In addition, they both have "heroes", represented by Clotilde Armenta and Henry Hawkshaw, whose cowardice to confront the societal pressure prevented both from truly being heroic in averting the tragedy that would ensue in their respected tales. Overall, the narratives illustrate how powerful the status quo can be in a society, not only because it justifies brutal action in order for it to be maintained but also because its pressure allows for the brutal action to be supported by those who may not explicitly have ill will.

In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, a pure woman is lauded in the small, fictional town where Angela Vicario grows up. Furthermore, Angela was raised by Purisima del Carmen, who held an exceptionally high standard of purity for her. Angela knew how important this standard was in her family and in her community, so she knew that there would be severe consequences to her and anyone involved if it were to come out that she had gone against this standard by losing her virginity before marriage. This may explain why when she was questioned by her brothers on who the other man

was, she “nailed it to the wall with her well-aimed dart” by falsely naming Santiago Nasar (Marquez, 47). She anticipated that her brothers would be expected to avenge her honor by going after whoever her scapegoat was, and by giving them Santiago she gave them a person whose womanizing history not only made him all the more believable, but also removed her from blame by making Santiago out to be a perpetrator. Santiago was an easy pawn she used to directly protect her honor within the family, and indirectly protect her family’s honor in the community

Just as Santiago was a pawn for Angela to protect her status, Will Mayes was a pawn for Minnie Cooper in Dry September. The society Minnie lives in is also unfair to women, scorning those who are of a certain age and still not settled down – those like Minnie. The unfairness toward women is especially shown in how Minnie is “relegated into adultery by the public” when she begins dating a widowed banker (Faulkner, 4). Minnie, who held the town in the palm of her hand in her prime younger years, may then be attempting to reclaim her relevancy by starting a rumor that something happened between her and Will Mayes. Because Will Mayes is a black man, she knows that he is the perfect man to use in order to attach attention to her rumor and therefore attention to herself. Furthermore, her use of Will Mayes would stigmatize her less because her position as a white woman automatically turns her into the victim of the story. Both Minnie and Angela, then, use their knowledge of their society’s standards to their own advantage, even if it comes with deadly side effects.

Clotilde Armenta and Henry Hawkshaw are both perhaps the most morally right people in their respected towns, which is why they might be considered <https://assignbuster.com/dry-september-as-depicted-in-chronicles-of-a-death-foretold/>

heroes. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Clotilde is the proprietress of a local milk shop, and on the morning that Santiago is killed she alerts several people to warn the soon to be murder victim, including Father Amador and Cristo Bedoya. In addition to this, she attempts to get the twins drunk while they are in her shop so that they will be unable to carry out the gruesome deed. In *Dry September*, Hawkshaw is a local barber, and when news comes in about the cruel rumors about Will Mayes, he defends Will against the accusation, and chases after McLendon's mob on their way to lynch the man. Both of the actions taken by these characters suggest that they do care about the well-being of the victim. However, in both books the "heroes" remove themselves just enough from the situation to prevent any heroism from actually being done. Clotilde never makes any direct attempts to interfere with the twins' murder plans, even though she had ample opportunity to. For example, when they first come into her shop and see Santiago, she tells them "Leave him for later, if only out of respect for his grace the bishop" (Marquez, 16). In this moment, she could have told them to not follow through with their plans. Instead, she only delayed them, and even entertained the notion of them killing Santiago. Her lack of appropriate action is an indicator of the fallibility of human nature. She is clearly well-intentioned and does not want to enable the twins to do any wrong, however the importance that the town places on upholding honor seems to somehow justify the actions enough to make it incredibly difficult to come outright against it.

Hawkshaw faces a similar dilemma: the general consensus in his town seems to be that it is wrong for a black man to ever associate with a white woman,

and if he were to ever do so he ought to be punished. So, while Hawkshaw was able to speak in favor of Will Mayes and get in the car with the lynch mob, he jumped out of the car right before the killing actually took place. If he were to stay involved in this very moment, he would permanently brand himself as a “ nigger-lover” as McLendon suggests - a stigma that would take a great strength of will to hold (Faulkner, 6). Hawkshaw simply does not have this strength of will. His intentions are good, but all in all not enough to overcome the expectations that are bound up with his racist society.