

The non-linear time  
structure as a  
revelatory tool in  
chronicle of a death  
foreto...



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

After having been awakened from a gentle slumber in a brothel expecting to meet the bishop later that day, Santiago Nasar is met with his untimely demise; His death being the product of a pre-existing indifference ingrained within their Caribbean society. In Gabriel Garcia Márquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, the death of Santiago Nasar highlights his greater purpose in which he asserts the notion that society is inactive towards issues present within it. It is this inactive nature of the society that leads to Nasar's tragic death. Nasar's death is the consequence to the issue that Márquez is trying to express within his purpose and message, which is what makes his death significant. By telling the story of Santiago Nasar's murder in a non-linear fashion, Márquez allows himself to fully develop and shape not only the events occurring in the novel, but also the meaning and significance within Santiago Nasar's death without having to be mindful of or focused on the strict progression of time. Through his use of a non-linear time structure, Márquez exemplifies that the significance of Nasar's death through instances of society's inaction that spans from many years before the incident to 27 years after the incident. With this freedom to develop the story without the constriction of time, Márquez is able to order the events that occur within the novel based off of their importance and pertinence to the central event, that being the death and murder of Santiago Nasar, and his purpose.

Márquez begins the novel with the events that occur on the morning of Santiago's murder, starting from his waking moments and ending at the bishop's arrival, moments before Santiago's death. From the beginning sentence of the novel, the reader is thrown into the midst of the action without any sort of indication as to who Santiago Nasar is or why he was

being murdered; the reader just knows that Santiago Nasar was going to be killed. Where Santiago first wakes up and begins preparing himself for the bishop's arrival is where the reader gets their first glimpse into Santiago's lifestyle and the reality in which the novel is set in. Within the period in which he gets ready for the bishop's arrival, Santiago is characterized as a religiously-based individual with predatory tendencies and the society: religiously-based as well. The importance of the bishop's arrival, in the case of Santiago Nasar, is shown through the instance in which Nasar dresses himself in "special" attire for the bishop's arrival (Marquez 5). This same significance placed on the bishop's arrival extends into the actual townspeople themselves when they're shown to be crowded around the dock with "well-fattened roosters" as a gift for the bishop (16). These two instances both create the atmosphere that which the rest of the book is set; it sets the reality in which the perception of issues present within their society are fundamentally based off of the religious values that are a part of the fictional town's culture. It is with this information that the reader now takes into account the societal implications of Santiago's murder. By describing the present events of the novel first, Márquez sets the foundation that the rest of the book is built upon. This foundation then allows the reader to fully grasp the significance of Santiago's death by the end of the novel.

With this foundation that has been set with the present events of the novel, Márquez includes a description of the past. This description provides context for the present events for the sole purpose of fully explaining the circumstances of Santiago's murder. The wedding of Angela Vicario and Bayardo San Roman is the defining event of the past that aids the reader in

understanding the conditions that had prompted Santiago's death. After learning that Angela wasn't a virgin at the time of marriage, Bayardo drops off Angela at the doorstep of her home. From there, Angela is left with her mother who beats her for revealing her impurity to Bayardo, which leads to her two brothers, Pablo and Pedro Vicario, going on a quest to figure out who had taken Angela's virginity. Angela, who "took the time necessary to say the name" of her violator, reaches the conclusion that Santiago Nasar was the one who had deflowered her (47). Considering that Márquez has already established Santiago's predatory nature in the present-day of the novel, the reader can now use that information to understand the Vicario Brothers' reasoning in killing Santiago. With the information that had been provided in the present of the novel, the reader can infer that the Vicario brothers killed Santiago because they saw it reasonable that Santiago was fully capable of taking Angela's virginity, given Santiago's predatory nature that had been established in the present-day of the novel.

The reader is now taken to the future to understand the effect of Santiago's murder. He uses the events that occur in the future to show the reader the effect of Santiago's murder within their society. One of the main events that occurs in the future of the novel is the autopsy of Santiago Nasar. Within this scene, we have a now-deceased Santiago Nasar on an operating table with Colonel Aponte and Father Amador in charge of performing the autopsy. Despite their lack of experience in this particular medical field, Colonel Aponte and Father Amador manage to successfully perform the autopsy. It is from this autopsy that the reader learns the greater extent by which Santiago's death has been affected by the community and the community

has been affected by Santiago's death. While the effect of the community on Santiago is shown through his seven "fatal" wounds and decaying form, the effect of Santiago's death on the community is shown through the "single common anxiety" that surrounded the town (75, 98). This common anxiety affected not only those who knew Santiago personally, but the town as a whole, in that it affected the "daily conduct" and the "many linear habits" of the townspeople (98). With the autopsy scene, Márquez establishes the idea that society's actions relative towards Santiago and their perception of Santiago had a direct effect on Santiago as an individual. The direct effect mentioned is represented through his body decaying and rotting away after being seen in the public eye in his deceased state. The people of the town were forever changed because of his death; His death was more than just simply dying. His death brought out all the pre-existing problems within their society. His death was the catalyst for a supposed change that could possibly reshape the culture and way of understanding for their little Caribbean town.

With the present events (the morning of Santiago's murder and the bishop's arrival) now fully developed with the events of the past and the future, Márquez brings us back to those moments before Santiago's murder, which he describes in full detail. Márquez does this to bring about the purpose of the novel. Now that the reader has been given all of the necessary information and important details regarding how Santiago's death came to be and the effects of such murder, they are now presented with his actual death. By piecing together the puzzle pieces of the past and future to create the greater image of the present, the reader is now able to fully understand the extent and circumstance in which Santiago's murder had occurred. The

actual murdering of Santiago Nasar reveals the significance behind the action in that his death is a direct product of their fictional society's negligence and nonintervention towards the issues that are prevalent within it. His death highlights Márquez's overall purpose in writing the novel, his purpose being that he is trying to bring to attention the apathetic nature society holds towards problems they are fully aware of and are capable of fixing. His death marks the beginning of a period in which their society begins questioning their methods of handling the problems within their culture.

By telling the story of Santiago's murder in a specific sequence that goes beyond that of a chronological timeline, Márquez is able to fully utilize the events of the past, present, and future to fully develop the importance of Nasar's death. The significance of Santiago Nasar's death stands beyond the boundaries of the novel; It is not only a reflection of the inactive and hypocritical nature of the fictional culture within the novel, but it is also a reflection of the reality of society in our world. It emphasizes the point that we, as a society, choose to stay indifferent towards the problems that are widespread in our culture. It is that indifference that perpetuates and even creates the problems that exist in our realm.