

DIRECTIONS: Choose ONE of the following tasks. The two easier tasks require more writing (two paragraphs, each with a quote) than the two harder ones (which are more difficult to find evidence and explain).

1. On page 117, Felipe Montero refers to a “sterile conception.” In other words, something was “born” in the night, but it was sterile (most obviously, this point in the novel marks where the past meets the present). This, of course, is impossible because sterility is the inability to have children, so how can a birth be described in terms of infertility? This contradiction (where the two concepts seem to cancel one another out) is called a *paradox*. Write a paragraph about how this paradox can be explained, especially in light of Fuentes’ idea that the past always haunts the present (that is, that what we experience as the present is conditioned by what has happened before and what will endlessly repeat again). Use textual evidence (quotation) in support of your answer (one paragraph with two quotes).
2. The book gives us two versions of the main characters: Señora Consuelo/Aura and General Llorente/Felipe Montero. Choose one of these pairs and argue which of the two is the *true* version of the character, explaining why you believe that Fuentes wants the reader to think of the character in that way. Use textual evidence (quotation) in support of your answer. If you choose this task, it must be at least TWO paragraphs in length (one for why one half of the character is the *true* version and one for why the other half isn’t the *true* version-- both paragraphs need a quote).
3. An “aura” is the atmosphere surrounding something that is generated by the thing itself. For example, one could say that a “ceremony contains an *aura* of mystery” because the events of the ceremony are themselves mysterious (creating the atmosphere). A related use of this term is in mystical literature, when an *aura* is defined as an emanation from a person (in the same way that light radiation emanates from a light source), and this emanation is only visible by those with the power to truly see things as they are. Think of it as a reflection of one’s soul. Write a paragraph explaining how the name for Aura in the book is an appropriate one. Use textual evidence in support of your answer (one paragraph with two quotes).
4. Literary critic Michael Bell has suggested that Fuentes’ *Aura* is a metaphor for the power of literature, in the way that the reader is bewitched or enchanted by an illusion generated by the author and how this illusion is both imaginary and true (or at least able to offer real insights into the way the world truly is). Write about how such a comparison makes sense. Use textual evidence (quotation) in support of your answer. If you choose this task, it must be at least TWO paragraphs in length (one devoted to how this comparison works in the novel and one devoted to how it works in literature-- both paragraphs need a quote).

