

CHARACTERS

(G1) **José Arcadio Buendía** - patriarch of the Buendía clan

(G1) **Úrsula Iguarán** - matriarch of the Buendía clan

(G2) **Amaranta** - daughter of Úrsula Iguarán and José Arcadio Buendía, Amaranta; dies an embittered and lonely virgin.

(G2) **Colonel Aureliano Buendía** - second son of José Arcadio Buendía and Úrsula Iguarán. Aureliano grows up solitary and enigmatic; joins the Liberal rebellion and becomes a rebel commander

(G2) **Remedios Moscote** - child-bride of Colonel Aureliano Buendía; she dies suddenly

(G2) **José Arcadio** - first son of Úrsula Iguarán and José Arcadio Buendía, from whom he inherits his amazing strength and impulsive drive; after running off with the gypsies, José Arcadio returns a savage brute and marries Rebeca

(G2) **Rebeca** - earth-eating orphan girl who mysteriously arrives at the Buendía doorstep; after José Arcadio's death, she becomes a hermit

(G3) **Aureliano José** - son of Colonel Aureliano Buendía and Pilar Ternera; becomes obsessed with his aunt, Amaranta, and joins his father's army when she ends the affair; killed by Conservative soldiers.

(G3) **Arcadio** - son of José Arcadio and Pilar Ternera; when Colonel Aureliano Buendía places him in charge of Macondo during the uprising, Arcadio proves a vicious dictator; killed when the conservatives retake the village

(G3) **Santa Sofía de la Piedad** - a quiet woman who marries Arcadio and continues to live in the Buendía house for many years after his death, impassively tending to the family; when she grows old and tired, she simply walks out of the house, never to be heard from again

(G4) **Remedios the Beauty** - daughter of Santa Sofía de la Piedad and Arcadio; the most beautiful woman in the world; one day, she floats to heaven, leaving Macondo

(G4) **José Arcadio Segundo** - son of Arcadio and Santa Sofía de la Piedad; may have been switched at birth with his twin brother, Aureliano Segundo; thin, bony, solitary, and increasingly scholarly, like his great-uncle Colonel Aureliano Buendía; cockfighter and a

drifter; lone survivor of the massacre of the strikers; secludes himself in Melquíades' old study, trying to decipher the old prophecies

(G4) **Aureliano Segundo** - son of Arcadio and Santa Sofía de la Piedad; may have been switched at birth with his twin brother, José Arcadio Segundo; despite an early interest in solitary study, Aureliano Segundo begins to show all the characteristics of the family's José Arcadios; immense, boisterous, impulsive, and hedonistic; although he loves the concubine Petra Cotes, he is married to the cold beauty Fernanda del Carpio

(G4) **Fernanda del Carpio** - wife of Aureliano Segundo and the mother of Meme, José Arcadio (II), and Amaranta Úrsula; raised by a family of impoverished aristocrats; she is very haughty and very religious; tries unsuccessfully to impress her sterile religion and aristocratic manners on the Buendía house

(G5) **José Arcadio (II)** - eldest child of Aureliano Segundo and Fernanda del Carpio; Úrsula decides that José Arcadio (II) is supposed to become the Pope, but he in fact slides into dissolution and solitude; leads a life of debauchery with local adolescents who eventually murder him and steal his money

(G5) **Amaranta Úrsula** - daughter of Aureliano Segundo and Fernanda del Carpio; returns from her trip to Europe with a Belgian husband, Gastón; wants to revitalize Macondo and the Buendía household, but it is too late; falls in love with her nephew, Aureliano (II), and gives birth to his child, Aureliano (III), who proves the last in the Buendía line, born of incest, he has the tail of a pig; Amaranta dies in childbirth

(G5) **Gastón** - Belgian husband of Amaranta Úrsula; loving and cultured but feels isolated in the now-desolate Macondo; travels to Belgium to start an airmail company, and, when he hears of the relationship between his wife and Aureliano (II), he never returns

(G5) **Meme** - daughter of Fernanda del Carpio and Aureliano Segundo, Meme's real name is Renata Remedios; feigns studiousness and docility to please her mother, but she is actually a hedonist like her father

(G6) **Aureliano (II)** - illegitimate son of Meme and Mauricio Babilonia; concealed by his scandalized

One Hundred Years of Solitude
By Gabriel García Márquez

grandmother, Fernanda del Carpio; becomes a scholar who eventually deciphers the prophecies of Melquíades; with his aunt, Amaranta Úrsula, he fathers the last in the Buendía line, the baby Aureliano (III), who dies soon after birth

(other) **Melquíades** - gypsy who brings technological marvels to Macondo and befriends the Buendía clan; his mysterious and undecipherable prophecies torment generations of Buendías, finally translated by Aureliano (II) at the end of the novel

(other) **Pilar Ternera** - local whore and madam; a fortune-teller whose quiet wisdom helps guide the Buendía family; survives until the very last days of Macondo.

(other) **Petra Cotes** - Aureliano Segundo's concubine

(other) **Mauricio Babilonia** - sallow, solemn lover of Meme. Fernanda del Carpio disapproves of the affair and sets up a guard who shoots him; fathers Meme's child, Aureliano (II).

(other) **Pietro Crespi** - gentle, delicate Italian musician who is loved by both Amaranta and Rebeca. Rebeca marries the more manly José Arcadio and Amaranta ultimately rejects him; commits suicide

(other) **Colonel Gerineldo Márquez** - comrade-in-arms of Colonel Aureliano Buendía; falls in love with Amaranta, who spurns him

(other) **Don Apolinar Moscote** - father of Remedios Moscote; government-appointed magistrate of Macondo; Conservative

PLOT

One Hundred Years of Solitude tells the story of the Buendía family and the fictional town of Macondo. The first chapter introduces José Arcadio Buendía, the founder of Macondo, his wife, Úrsula, and the gypsy Melquíades, who brings inventions to Macondo. José Arcadio Buendía, is impulsive and inquisitive. He remains a leader who is also deeply solitary, alienating himself from other men in his obsessive investigations into mysterious matters. These character traits are inherited by his descendants throughout the novel. José Arcadio and Úrsula have two sons: the older, José Arcadio, is large, strong, and physically precocious, the younger child, Aureliano, is quiet, solitary, and clairvoyant. In each generation of Buendías, there are characters named José Arcadio and Aureliano, just as there are female characters called Remedios, Amaranta, and Úrsula. The characters named alike share similar characteristics.

The early chapters also introduce the village of Macondo and its founding. In the days before the founding of Macondo, José Arcadio and Úrsula (who are cousins) marry. However, Úrsula fears that the result of incest will be the birth of a child with a pig's tail. Consequently, she is opposed to consummating their marriage. When Prudencio Aguilar announces to the town that José Arcadio's masculinity is suspect, it results in two things: first, José Arcadio consummates the marriage in spite of Úrsula's protests; and second, he kills Prudencio Aguilar. The dead man continues to visit the Buendías until they decide to leave their town and start anew by founding the town of Macondo.

In the beginning, the town is young; it is a place where no one is over thirty-years-old and no one has died yet. Except for occasional visits from Melquíades and his troop of gypsies, the three hundred inhabitants of Macondo are completely isolated from the rest of the world. Although José Arcadio leads a band of townspeople on a mission to try to establish contact with the outside world, he is unsuccessful. Later, Úrsula sets off to find her son José Arcadio, who has unexpectedly run away with the gypsies. Although Úrsula does not find her son, she finds a route to another town, connecting Macondo to the world. As a result, people begin to arrive in Macondo, including a governmental representative, Don Apolinar Moscote. Aureliano falls in love with Apolinar's beautiful child, Remedios. Another new arrival to the town is the orphan, Rebeca. The family adopts her and raises her as a sister to their daughter, Amaranta and grandson, Arcadio, the missing José's illegitimate son by Pilar Ternera. Gradually, the village loses its innocent, solitary state when it establishes contact with other towns in the region.

The village contracts a plague of insomnia and memory loss. The people of Macondo resort to placing signs everywhere to remind themselves of the names of things. Through the intervention of Melquíades (who died in the previous chapter, only to return because he was bored) the town is saved. Not only does Melquíades return from the dead, the ghost of Prudencio Aguilar returns to keep José Arcadio company. José Arcadio is overcome with nostalgia and goes mad. Úrsula ties him to a tree in the courtyard, where he remains, speaking only in Latin.

After the insomnia plague, another outsider, Pietro Crespi, arrives. He comes to Macondo to give music lessons. Both Rebeca and Amaranta fall in love with him; the result of this love is tragedy, as the two women engage

One Hundred Years of Solitude
By Gabriel García Márquez

in plots and revenge. Even after Rebeca rejects Pietro in favor of the returned José Arcadio, there is bad blood between the two women. Another tragic love story is that of Aureliano and Remedios. Although no more than a child, Remedios is engaged to Aureliano. He waits patiently for her to mature enough so that they can marry. They do so, but the marriage is short-lived; little Remedios dies of blood poisoning during her first pregnancy.

After Remedios' death, Aureliano becomes Colonel Aureliano Buendía, a soldier for the Liberal Party and a leader in a civil war between the Liberals and the Conservatives. The Colonel loses all of his battles, but seems to live a charmed life otherwise. He survives numerous assassination attempts and one suicide attempt and becomes Commander-in-Chief of the revolutionary forces. During his 32 civil war campaigns, Colonel Aureliano Buendía has 17 sons by 17 different women, each named after their father. Four of these Aurelianos (A. Triste, A. Serrador, A. Arcaya and A. Centeno) will end up staying in Macondo and become a permanent part of the family. Eventually, as revenge against the Colonel, all are assassinated by the government, which identified them by the mysteriously permanent Ash Wednesday cross on their foreheads

The civil wars bring violence and death to peaceful Macondo, changing from an idyllic, magical, and sheltered place to a town irrevocably connected to the outside world through the notoriety of Colonel Buendía. Macondo's governments change several times during and after the war. At one point, Arcadio, the cruelest of the Buendías, rules dictatorially and is eventually shot by a firing squad. Later, a mayor is appointed, and his reign is peaceful until another civil uprising has him killed. After his death, the civil war ends with the signing of a peace treaty.

When the wars are finally over, Colonel Aureliano Buendía retires to his home, where he leads a solitary life making little gold fishes. His solitude increases, and he is overcome with nostalgia and memories. After recalling once again the day that his father took him to see ice, he dies.

Meanwhile, Americans arrive in the prospering town of Macondo to farm bananas. The farm workers eventually launch a strike against the American company, protesting their living conditions. Soldiers arrive and slaughter some three thousand workers. José Arcadio Segundo is present at the slaughter and narrowly escapes with his life. When he attempts to find out more about the massacre, however, he discovers that no one knows that it even happened. No one has any memory of the event except for himself, and no one will believe that it really occurred. Likewise, the official governmental account of the event is accepted: "There was no dead, the satisfied workers had gone back to their families, and the banana company was suspending all activity until the rains stopped."

The rains, however, do not stop. Instead, they continue for another four years, eleven months, and two days. Over this time, the rain washes away much of Macondo. When it clears, Úrsula, the last of the original Buendías, dies. She takes with her the memories of the founding of the town and the relationships among people. This failure of memory leads to the union of Amaranta Úrsula, great-great-granddaughter of the original José Arcadio Buendía, to Aureliano, great-great-great grandson of the same man. Aureliano, the bastard child of Amaranta Úrsula's sister, Meme, had been raised by the family since his birth. Nevertheless, only his grandparents, Fernanda and Aureliano Segundo, knew the secret of his parentage. His match with Amaranta Úrsula recalls the original Úrsula's fear of incest: the marriage of one of her aunts to one of her cousins led to the birth of a child with the tail of a pig. Likewise, Amaranta Úrsula's relationship with her nephew Aureliano results in the birth of a child with the tail of pig, thus bringing the story of the Buendías full circle.

The book ends almost as it began: the village is once again solitary, isolated. The few remaining Buendía family members turn in upon themselves incestuously, alienated from the outside world and doomed to a solitary ending.

In the closing chapter, Amaranta Úrsula dies giving birth, and her son is left in the street, to be devoured by ants, due to the carelessness of Aureliano. In the final pages of the novel, Aureliano finally is able to read the manuscripts left by Melquíades years earlier. As he does so, he realizes that what he is reading is the story of his family. As he finishes the text, a giant wind sweeps away the town of Macondo, erasing it from time, space, and memory.

MAJOR THEMATIC CONCERNS

Existence

- reality is how we perceive it; truth is subjective
- the end of everything is in its beginning; there is nothing that is wholly new; fate must run its course; nothing lasts forever
- to live implies suffering at the hands of an indifferent universe; our goals and aspirations are thwarted by the absurdity of existence and the impermanence of our lives on earth; any meaning to life can only be personal and short-lived
- one is defined largely by one's circumstances (heredity, family ties, society); this makes authentic action difficult, as one inherits a set of behaviors and stereotyped responses from these external forces

Solitude

- not loneliness *per se*, but seclusion (by space, madness, absolute power, obsession, forgetfulness, nostalgia)
- solitude of this type and destructive to others
- isolation is spiritually impoverishing and ultimately consumes the individual
- must seek balance between engagement with the world and fueling one's passions

Love

- one cannot possess love; it must be allowed its freedom
- passion is both liberating and a type of insanity
- one does not choose passion; it chooses you; and one cannot escape the dictates of fate
- love both fulfills (at least temporarily) and complicates one's life (often leading to destruction)

Knowledge

- to know too much is potentially dangerous; the world is safer when it is innocent
- self-knowledge is elusive and potentially dangerous
- progress and greater understanding of the world is double-edged; one loses one's innocence even as some things improve
- progress is an illusion, as all things are but echoes of previous things; for every gain something else is lost

Politics

- power vested in elites leads to corruption
- even good intentions go awry, as the human frailties of those who wield power interfere with the ability to secure good results
- capitalism is exploitive; the rich take advantage of the labor of the poor
- the unflagging commitment to a cause, no matter how noble, is a destructive passion that consumes the individual and those around him/her