

Gabriel García Márquez, No One Writes to the Colonel

Monthly and Bi-monthly Discussion Groups, entire novella

1. How would you characterize the relationship between the colonel and his wife?
 - Does the colonel love his wife?
 - How does his wife view the world and how does her view differ from the colonel's? Does either understand the other's perspective?
 - Does the novella lead the reader to take a side in their differences?
2. What action does the story narrate? Does it have a plot?
 - If it doesn't have a plot, how are we to interpret its stasis?
 - If it does have a plot, what is the central action?
 - Is there a turning point?
 - Is there a moment of realization?
3. Although references to the death of the colonel's son Agustín are brief and infrequent, is this loss an important determinant in the story's development?
 - Why is their son's rooster such a bone of contention between the colonel and his wife?
 - Why is the rooster and the up-coming January cockfight so important to the colonel, the neighbor children, Agustín's friends, and so many anonymous townspeople?
 - Does Agustín's rooster produce resonances in the story beyond its material value? Does it carry symbolic weight?
4. What does the reader learn about the town where the story is set—its climate, inhabitants, religion, social structures, economy?
 - What is the colonel's relation to the doctor, Sabas, Álvaro, Germán and his son's old friends?
 - How does the ambience of the setting impact the colonel, his wife, and what does or does not happen in the novella?
5. What does the reader learn about the colonel's past and present involvement in the political struggles of his country?
 - Does the reader need to know the history of Columbia's seemingly never-ending civil wars between Liberals and Conservatives in order to understand the colonel's plight?
 - Does the history of political struggle help the reader understand the colonel's motivations and decisions?
6. Despite the novella's preoccupation with death, poverty, and injustice, it made me laugh—often. You too?
 - How would you characterize the novella's humor?
 - What effect does the humor have on the reader's interpretation?
 - Is the novella's title ironic?