

Gabriel García Márquez, Love in the Time of Cholera

Monthly Discussion Groups, pp. 165-278

1. In our last discussions, we considered whether Florentino Ariza, during his courtship of Fermina Daza, is more laughable or pitiable. Considering how he has lived his life since Fermina's rejection, how do you view him now?
  - As a monomaniacal egotist or as the epitome of undying love?
  - As a caricature to be laughed at, an idealist to be admired, or a pervert to be scorned?
  - If Florentino's story dramatizes a life lived for love, what is Márquez suggesting about love?
2. Márquez gives us multiple perspectives on his characters.
  - How does the town's perspective on Florentino Ariza differ from what Florentino thinks of himself and his motives?
  - How does Florentino's perspective on Fermina's married life differ from what we learn about Fermina's experiences of her life with Juvenal Urbino?
  - What ironies do these different perspectives produce?
3. Are Florentino's sexual conquests simply meaningless escapism or does he learn something valuable about women's lives in these relationships?
  - If so, what does he learn?
  - How might we compare his sexual conquests to Urbino's one extramarital affair?
  - What kind of husband would Florentino have been to Fermina?
4. Love in the time of Cholera is a decidedly politically incorrect novel.
  - What do you think of the episodes focused on
    - the Chinese poet
    - Urbino's and Jeremiah de Saint-Amour's mixed-race lovers
    - Leona Cassiani
    - América Vicuña?
  - Would you categorize this novel as racist and sexist, or as a portrait (realistic and/or satirical?) of a racist and sexist culture? Or as something else?
5. The first chapter of the novel describes Urbino's and Jeremiah's experiences of aging, while this section describes Florentino's epiphany that he too is subject to time.
  - How do these characters differ in their confrontation with the inevitable march toward death?
  - What realizations does each man achieve?
  - What does each prioritize?
6. Love in the Time of Cholera is a love story about private lives, but its characters often cross paths with historical and political figures--for example, the author Oscar Wilde and the president of Colombia Rafael Reyes. Moreover, the lives of Florentino, Fermina, and

Urbino are impacted by historical figures like Simón Bolívar's arms dealer Juan Bernardo Elbers, and by historical events like the Colombian slave trade.

- To what degree is this novel the story of a country as much as a love story?