

Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter Study Guide

Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter by Mario Vargas Llosa

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Plot Summary

Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter is the story of a young man finding his place in life. Marito is eighteen years old and he lives, works and goes to school in Peru between the towns of Lima and Miraflores. His parents left Peru to live in the United States, so Marito lives with his maternal grandparents. Miraflores is where his family was raised, so he has support and love from many family members still residing in Peru. Marito has a budding interest in becoming a writer and already has a love for literature, but he only shares this interest with his best friend, Javier. He takes his free time at work to write short stories and articles but ends up throwing most of them in the garbage. His family has dreams of him becoming a lawyer; therefore, he studies law at the University of San Marcos. It is clear that he isn't interested in law because he does just enough work to get by. Still, Marito seems to be a well liked young man and forges useful acquaintances and friendships with students and faculty at the university. Marito works for a local radio station named Panamericana, where he writes, edits and airs daily news reports. The reports air three times daily and he shares the work with an assistant named Pascual. Their office is a small shack on the roof of the Panamericana building, which is right next door to its sister station Radio Central. Both stations are owned by a father and son, Genaro Jr. and Genaro Sr. Radio Central is a more liberal, less conservative social radio station in comparison to the neighboring Panamericana. It is for this reason that Marito spends his free time at Radio Central as opposed to his own station.

These were the habits of Marito's life until he meets Pedro Camacho, the writer. Pedro is an odd looking writer from Bolivia, who the Genaros bring in to write the scripts for their radio soap operas. Pedro is quickly dubbed as a writing genius, but he has no social skills. Pedro is completely absorbed in the art of composing his work and claims to have no interest in social exchange. Something still draws Marito and Pedro together and Marito becomes Pedro's only friend. The friendship drives Marito to be a better writer and he finds passion for his work.

At the same time that Marito meets Pedro Camacho, he meets his Aunt Julia. Julia is a beautiful thirty-two-year-old woman who arrives in Peru from Bolivia after a divorce. She moves in with her sister and brother-in-law, Marito's Aunt Olga and Uncle Lucho. Marito visits his uncle and aunt weekly, so he starts spending time with Julia as well. They start out going to movies once in a while, and eventually a romance flourishes between them. Marito's tight knit family is against the relationship wholeheartedly. As soon as they learn of it, the family begins plotting to break them up. Marito responds to the challenge by proposing marriage to Julia. After overcoming a few obstacles, she becomes his wife.

Marito's relationship with both Pedro Camacho and Aunt Julia shape Marito's future. Ten years after he meets them he is a published writer, successful author and professor living in Europe. Unfortunately, by this time, he and Aunt Julia have divorced, and Pedro has suffered from a mental breakdown. Marito is forced to sadly remember the role they each played in his becoming a man.



Chapter One

Chapter One Summary

Marito is an eighteen-year old young man, living with his grandparents in Miraflores, Peru. He works as a news editor and director at the local radio station Panamerica, while studying law at the University of San Marcos. His pay is modest but he enjoys the work and the flexibility it allows him to do his own writing. When Marito gets bored with his duties at Panamerica, he goes next door to Radio Central. Panamerica and Radio Central are both owned by the Genaro family but are completely different genres. Panamerica offers serious radio with the educated upper class in mind as the audience. Radio Central has a more comfortable atmosphere and their programming targets the masses. Their most popular features are their weekly serials or radio soap operas.

Marito has a weekly Thursday lunch with his Aunt Olga and Uncle Lucho, and it is here that he is introduced to his Aunt Julia. Julia is Aunt Olga's sister. She remembers Marito as a child, but he has no recollection of her. Marito is immediately annoyed with the way she teases him like a child.

Marito marks the day that he meets Aunt Julia because it also the day he first heard the name Pedro Camacho. Genaro Jr., one of the station owners, raves about Camacho and his plans to bring him from Bolivia to Peru. The Genaros have become tired of the high price they pay to buy the current soap opera scripts from a company in Cuba called the CMQ. Upon meeting Pedro Camacho in Bolivia, Genaro Jr. offers him a job on the spot. Marito's first encounter with the new scriptwriter is bizarre. Pedro is very formal with Marito and his news editor, Pascual, but he is rude and dismissive at the same time. He demands one of the typewriters they have in the news office, and when he gets no response from Marito or Pascual, he proceeds to take it.

Chapter One Analysis

Aside from noting the title, it is already clear that both Pedro Camacho and Aunt Julia will be critical parts of Marito's life. It isn't clear yet what the influence on him will be. They are both introduced as very strong and confident characters that aren't necessarily conscious of others feelings. Aunt Julia simply thinks of Marito as a child; she has in fact known him since. She has already picked up that Marito is sensitive about being considered a child, so this becomes the focal point of her teasing. Due to Marito's opinion, Aunt Julia is already portrayed as a carefree woman who greeted him in rollers without a care that he may not find her beautiful. The entire family is already buzzing that she cares so little about appearances that she has dated four different men in the space of a week. Marito gets excited when he has the chance to see Aunt Julia with one of her suitors, because he has the opportunity to payback her verbal jabs. Because this particular suitor is an elderly, slightly perverted relative of Marito, he feels he has the



upper hand on the teasing this time. Aunt Julia flips the table with ease and gets out of her date with Uncle Pancracio by tricking Marito into taking her to the movies.

Pedro Camacho also brushes off social etiquette in a strangely polite way. Marito describes him as small in stature, comparable to a dwarf in a worn black suit and a neat appearance. Marito immediately notices his bulging eyes and the "disturbing, downright abnormal" gleam in his eyes. He speaks politely to Marito and Pascual but never introduces himself while stating that he has come to take one of their typewriters. When Pascual reacts to him like a thief, Pedro quickly becomes angry and defensive. Pedro is already an intriguing and suspenseful character after only spending a few minutes with Marito.



Chapter Two

Chapter Two Summary

Dr. Alberto de Quinteros is a gynecologist who is excited about his niece Elianita's wedding that afternoon. He starts his day by checking in on his patients at the clinic where he works, and then he heads to the gym to get an early workout. At the gym he meets up with his trainer, a few friends who he works out with and his nephew Richard, Elianita's brother. Alberto quickly picks up on a negative vibe from his nephew, but he can't figure out what is bothering him.

The wedding is a lavish affair planned out by Elianita's parents, and everyone is impressed by the ceremony and reception. Alberto is saddened to find Richard in more of a foul mood than when they met earlier. Richard refuses stubbornly to confide in Alberto and he is forced to leave his nephew to work through it on his own. As the party continues, the bride dances through the reception until she suddenly faints. Alberto rushes her to a private room, and when they are alone he discovers her problem. Elianita is pregnant and wore the tight dress in order to hide her condition. Alberto chooses not to embarrass Elianita any further by confronting her about the pregnancy, so he helps her to change her clothes and regain her composure before allowing the other family members back in.

Alberto sees Red and decides to talk to him about the precautions Elianita should take due to the pregnancy. Alberto quickly regrets his words when he realizes that Red didn't know about the pregnancy and the baby most likely wasn't his. Alberto leaves Red to process the information and goes back to the reception, reassuring the guests that Elianita is fine. Again, Alberto runs into Richard, only this time Richard is so drunk he can barely stand. Through Richard's slurred conversation, Alberto is able to decipher Richard's secret. He is furious that his sister is getting married when he is the one who really loves her. Alberto realizes that Elianita's unborn child belongs to her own brother.

Chapter Two Analysis

The story of Dr. Alberto Quinteros is one of Pedro Camacho's serials. From the opening lines, Pedro paints a picture for the reader as well as his audience, saying, "On one of those sunny spring mornings in Lima when the geraniums are an even brighter red, the roses more fragrant, and the bougainvilleas curlier as they awaken..." Television hasn't made its way to Peru yet so Pedro has to encourage his readers to envision first the environment the character is in. He also accomplishes the imagery by using Lima as the backdrop of the story. His target audience would be familiar with the location, the seasons, even the flowers.

Alberto Quinteros is a likeable character so far. He is an established and well known doctor who is good to his family and his friends. Alberto's likability and the happiness of



the wedding event make the plot twist more exciting and unexpected. The story is used to give the reader a glimpse into Pedro's talent and his style of writing. Like Pedro's listeners, the reader is also left in suspense to find out how the story of Alberto Quinteros and his family will end.



Chapter Three

Chapter Three Summary

The radio station sets up an office for Pedro Camacho in a tiny, rundown room previously used as the concierge's cubby room. Marito finds Pedro in the office hard at work very early one morning and invites him to have coffee. At the café, Pedro orders lemon verbena-and-mint herb tea rather than coffee, and they converse about Pedro's work. When they return to the office building, Pedro asks Marito to join him again in the future to help him become more familiar with his new surroundings.

Back at his rooftop office, Marito edits Pascual's grim morning news bulletin about a Panamanian freighter that sank, killing all its crew. As with all of his spare time that week, Marito spends the time between bulletins to work on a story he is writing. When the five page piece, based partially on a story his uncle Pedro once told him, is finally complete, Marito reads it for his friend Javier. Javier enjoys the story but also notes that no one will appreciate the story either due to the lack of reality or due to its overused religious references. Discouraged, Marito throws the story straight into the trash. Returning to his normal habits, Marito goes to his uncle Lucho's for their usual lunch.

At Uncle Lucho's, Marito gets a full report on Aunt Julia's new love interest, Adolfo Salcedo, a wealthy real estate owner and the senator of Arequipa. Adolfo's first wife left him during their honeymoon, declaring that Adolfo has erectile dysfunction. Marito thought he would be able to tease Julia about her new suitor, but she makes a joke of it before he can. She tells the family that Adolfo was robbed at knifepoint during sexual intercourse and the experience ruined sex for him since. "All that gossip turned out to be true. Senator Selcedo can't get it up! If I were certain he'd stay that way, I'd marry him for his dough...But what if I cured him? Can't you just see that old gaffer trying to make up for lost time with me?" Before leaving, Marito and Julia make plans to see a movie that night.

Pedro insists that all Argentine actors should be fired. Pedro was so adamant and even found support on the issue from some of the other actors, so Genaro Sr. eventually concedes. From this debate and his continued interaction with Pedro, Marito learns a lot of his mannerisms and his motivation. On this day, he spent so much time talking with Pedro that he forgot about his engagement with Julia. That night Marito receives a message from Julia joking that she is angry to have been stood up. He sends her flowers the next day to apologize.

The following night Marito travels with Javier to visit a medium whose psychic ability Javier swears on. When they arrive, it is clear that he has no real connection with the spiritual world and Marito is angry for travelling all the way out to Barrios Altos for the séance. At home, Marito finds another one of his Grandfather's notes saying that Julia called to thank him for the roses.



Marito is scheduled to have lunch with his Uncle Lucho, who is celebrating his birthday. Just as Marito is leaving, one of the bosses, Genaro Jr., pulls him away to have lunch and talk about Pedro Camacho. Pedro refuses to help write the advertisements to promote his serials. Overall, the Genaros are starting to wonder if Pedro Camacho is worth the trouble.

Marito arrives at Uncle Lucho's that evening and he takes Aunt Olga, Aunt Julia and Marito out to an exclusive restaurant called the Bolivar Grill. After eating, Marito dances with Aunt Olga and then with Aunt Julia. When they are at a safe distance from his relatives, Marito kisses Aunt Julia, much to her shock.

Chapter Three Analysis

Pedro Camacho's curious nature has grabbed Marito's attention, and he extends an offer of friendship to the man. Camacho doesn't seem to accept Marito's invitation for coffee as an acceptance of this friendship. He isn't rude, but he sees Marito as a guide in his new home rather than someone he can be friends with. Pedro thrives on the reality of his surroundings in order to create his art. For him, one cannot function without the other. It is his love for reality and art that drives him to ignore his meager office space and even his own odd appearance. It quickly becomes clear that Pedro lives in his own world and has no interest in pleasing anyone outside it. The Genaros pay his salary and can't get him to work under their constraints.

The reader also gets another hint of the set-up for Pedro Camacho's serials. He will express his clear dislike for Argentines, he will focus on the areas of Miraflores, San Isidro, La Victoria and El Callao and he takes pride in his age, making all of his central characters also in their fifties. So far only Pedro Camacho understands the reason for these choices and the reader is also left to wait for the answers. The author also uses real areas of Peru and gives the reader the idea that this account of Marito's life and experience with Pedro Camacho actually happened.

Marito's character has also started to unfold from a few angles. First the reader gets a glimpse of the side of Marito that is an aspiring writer. Marito is able to block all other aspects of his life when he is focused on completing one of his short stories. His diligence is interesting because it quickly becomes obsolete when he gets a negative report on his work. Marito's dedication to his personal writing is comparable to Pedro; perhaps Marito is partially attracted to Pedro for his ability to ignore criticism.

Among his family, and especially around Aunt Julia, Marito wants to be viewed as an adult. He is close with his family, especially his Uncle Lucho and Aunt Olga. Aunt Julia is single and sexy and again, uninterested in what other people think of her. The combination of these traits attracts Marito quickly. The scene in the Bolivar Grill is set up so that the reader is just as surprised by Marito's kiss as Aunt Julia is.



Chapter Four

Chapter Four Summary

Sergeant Lituma, a man in his fifties, is a respected member of the Civil Guard on his daily midnight rounds. He leaves the other officers, Lieutenant Jaime Concha, 'Snotnose' Camacho and 'Apple Dumpling' Arevalo at the Fourth Commissariat headquarters. Lituma starts his route on a cold night in the Puerto Nuevo area, the most rundown, crime infested part of his jurisdiction. Officer Shorty Soldevilla is supposed to be on duty in the area. Lituma is ready to write him up for dodging his responsibilities when he finds Shorty wrapped in a scarf, trying to keep warm under a lamppost. Lituma moves on to find another officer on duty, Corny Roman. On his way, Lituma hears a sound in an abandoned warehouse. He thinks he is pursuing a common thief, but once inside, he discovers a black man, naked, cold and confused. The man is covered in scars and doesn't speak English. Lituma has no choice but to take him back to the Commissariat. The officers there are shocked at the man's appearance and they put him in a cell until someone can decide what to do with him. Lituma goes back out to finish his rounds. He checks on Corny Romano, Humberto Quispe, Little Hands Rodriguez and Zarate.

Sergeant Lituma carries on with the remainder of his day and meets up with Pedralbes, an old friend, and they assess that the black man must have stowed away on a ship from Africa. Their theory would explain his lack of clothing, his scars and his inability to speak a recognizable language. That night Lituma arrives at the Commissariat and immediately receives orders regarding the black man. The orders are delivered by Lieutenant Jamie Concha and were given by their superiors. Lituma brings Apple Dumpling Arevalo with him, as it is revealed that the order has been given to kill the black man in cold blood. Arevalo is angry with Lituma for agreeing with the task in the first place. Arevalo tries to convince Lituma to let the man escape and tell their superiors that the task was taken care of as ordered.

Chapter Four Analysis

The character Sergeant Lituma is comparable to the last character in his initial description: "He was a man in the prime of his life, his fifties...broad forehead, aquiline nose, penetrating gaze, the very soul of rectitude and goodness." A pattern is already formed in Camacho's writing. It is interesting to have the opportunity to observe Pedro Camacho as a character and then observe his writing as a character of its own. Pedro initially gives the reader the same impression; he is the artist responsible for but separate from the art. Viewing Camacho's work first hand allows the reader to see where Camacho and his work actually overlap.

Again, the reader is also placed in the role of listener, sharing the suspense and curiosity of the radio audience in Lima tuning in to Camacho's serials. Like the character



in the first serial, Sergeant Lituma is an honorable man face with a conflicting scenario. This story is based in reality reinforced with the different emotions that each of the officers reflect. Sergeant Lituma is honorable and focused on the job. Ironically it's these qualities that bring the job of killing an innocent man to his door. The other officers who appear to be on the police simply as a job and not as a commitment all believe that Lituma should choose the life of a human being over looking good on the job. The question now arises whether Camacho is criticizing or glorifying the traits of honor and dedication through these characters.



Chapter Five

Chapter Five Summary

A famous Chilean bolero singer named Lucho Gatica visits Panamerica for a radio performance on a night that Marito and Aunt Julia have plans. The singer causes the building to be bombarded with frenzied fans, and Marito can't complete his work or leave the building. Genaro Jr. calls Marito and Pascual to come down to the station auditorium to help get the fans under control. The two manage to get downstairs and they join Genaro Jr. and a few others in getting Lucho Gatica out of the building and into the waiting car.

Marito therefore misses his date with Aunt Julia, but she found the story amusing. They have seen each other more frequently since Marito kissed Julia at the Grill the night of his uncle's birthday. He tries to convince her that he is mature enough to be taken seriously, she informs him that she will not allow herself to seduce a child. Even with this said, Aunt Julia and Marito continue to meet secretly every day.

Meanwhile, Pedro Camacho's serials become increasingly popular; even Aunt Julia and the other women in Marito's family have become fans. Throughout Lima, the papers and reviews are raving about Pedro Camacho's work, but he remains aloof and uninterested in the praise.

Chapter Five Analysis

Marito and Aunt Julia grow closer and they gradually become more comfortable with the idea of becoming a couple. Aunt Julia appears to be unmoved by what others think of her. Nonetheless, she is can't bring herself to be completely comfortable with a relationship with Marito. Marito tells Julia, "The difference in age between us wasn't all that tremendous..." "No all that tremendous, no" she answered, "But almost—I'm very nearly old enough for you to be my son." Later Julia jokes about what Pedro Camacho would name a serial about them; "The love affair of a baby and an old lady who's also more or less your aunt."

With the blooming relationship between Marito and Julia, the reader is finally given insight into a part of her life in her own words. She had lived with her husband for a few years on a quiet ranch. Their problems began when Julia couldn't get pregnant and the thought was too much for her husband to bear. He started drinking to deal with the possibility and that led to numerous problems in their relationship and eventually their divorce.

On the sidelines, Pedro Camacho and his serials are becoming as much a part of Marito's life as Aunt Julia. Marito and Pedro's characters are contrasted through the parallel between the serials and literature. "When I asked them why they like soap operas more than books, they protested: what nonsense, there was no comparison,

books were culture and radio serials mere clap trap to help pass the time...the truth of the matter was that they lived with their ears glued to the radio and I'd never seen one of them open a book." This comparison indicates why Pedro's character is the writer with complete confidence and an air that he is creating the true art. While Marito, the writer with true literary interest, is the character who is unseasoned, hesitant and unsuccessful.



Chapter Six

Chapter Six Summary

Dr. Don Pedro Barreda y Zaldivar is the examining magistrate for the First Criminal Division in the Superior Court of Lima. His secretary, Dr. Zelaya brings him the first case of the day, the accused rape of a minor named Sarita Huanca. The report states that Sarita Huanca was continually approached by Gumercindo Tello, another tenant in her tenement, with vulgar, lewd remarks and advances. One day the Gumercindo Tello comes to Sarita's home when her parents were out, asking to borrow kerosene to light his stove. Once allowed inside, Tello beat Sarita into submission and raped her. The arresting officers learn that he is a Jehovah's Witness and find him in the middle of a baptism. At the commissariat, Tello admitted knowing Sarita and her family but thought the accusation to be an incredulous test of faith.

When Dr. Zaldivar can't get more from Sarita's parents than pleas to make Gumercindo Tello marry their daughter, he dismisses them and calls for Sarita herself. She has the appearance of a child but the seduction of a grown woman. Against the magistrate's wishes, she launches into a vulgar, visual, rendition of the interaction between herself and Tello. Her behavior gives the magistrate some doubt about the validity of her claim so he dismisses her and calls in Gumercindo Tello. He asks all guards and officers to leave the chambers so he can talk to Tello alone. Eventually the magistrate's questioning causes Tello to break down. He outright denies the rape and wants to prove to the magistrate that they have the wrong impression of him. "I am pure, Your Honor, I have never known a woman. What other men use to sin with, I only use to pee with..." Tello proceeds to open his pants and has the intention of cutting off his penis.

Chapter Six Analysis

Again, the main character is a moral, upstanding figure faced with a grave and intense situation. "Dr. Don Pedro Barreda y Zaldivar, the very soul of rectitude and goodness—and in bearing his spotless moral virtue it was so apparent as to earn him people's immediate respect." The case brought before Zaldivar is so extreme that it would be a clear dilemma for him. He has experience in various types of cases and can't help by try to take the morally correct route in making his decision. First he meets the parents of the child, who on paper is the victim. He immediately wonders how such an elderly couple could be the girl's parents and how they handle her. He gets no help in his decision from them and is left wondering if they invented the story to marry their daughter off. He brings in the alleged victim and is ready to be swayed by her story, only to learn that she is a sexually wild child. Now the question arises whether she was ever even raped. Finally, accustomed to dealing with hardened criminals, he uses the same tactics on Gumercindo Tello, only to learn that although he annoys everyone with his religious rants, he thoroughly denies even being alone with the victim. Tello is even ready to remove his own sex organ to prove his innocence and complete devotion to

God. Pedro Camacho is sending a clear message that the most moral characters can't escape the insanity of the world.

The reader is again left in suspense after fully taking full part in the serial plot and delivery. This is the third serial, and like Camacho's audience, the reader is left wanting to know more about these characters and how they will resolve their extreme dilemmas. The more that the reader learns about the writer, he becomes more visible in the serial storylines. His impression of Jehovah's Witnesses comes quickly to the surface in this particular instance. He even gives real life examples of the Witnesses' reading material and baptism practices.



Chapter Seven

Chapter Seven Summary

Marito and Aunt Julia continue their secret romance. To hide from the family they work through the details of hiding, resorting to many furtive meetings in smoky cafes, and they eventually start to fall in love. One night, as Marito reads his story about Doroteo Marti to Aunt Julia, they are spotted by Javier, who becomes the first to know about the budding romance.

Meanwhile, Pedro Camacho's serials are under fire for his continually degrading depiction of Argentine people. The Argentine ambassador sends a protesting letter, but Genaro Jr. is afraid to address the issue with Pedro Camacho and hopes that Marito will take on the task.

One night Marito and Aunt Julia notice Camacho leaving radio central and approach him. Happy to meet a fan and fellow Bolivian in Aunt Julia, he invites them to have dinner at his apartment. They had a good night of conversation and laughter in Camacho's very small and meager apartment. When they leave, Aunt Julia couldn't help but express her surprise at his meager lodgings; she thought with the popularity of his work he would live more lavishly.

Chapter Seven Analysis

Marito's life is changing form, and without him noticing, Pedro Camacho and Aunt Julia have become major components. In this chapter their growth is marked by an overlap between the two with, Marito in the middle. It is first notable that both Aunt Julia and Pedro Camacho are from Bolivia, foreign to Marito's home in Lima. Both are more experienced than Marito; Pedro as a writer and Aunt Julia in age and in relationships. It seems to be Marito's innocence that attracts each character to him. They are each looking for an honest interaction with someone in a town where everything is new and everyone seems to have an agenda.

Marito's romance with Aunt Julia is meant to be a secret, due to their age difference and family status. They maintained their privacy for a while until Javier sees them. Their chance meeting foreshadows the possibility of any of Marito's family members learning about their relationship.

At work, Marito feels his friendship with Pedro growing but wonders if Pedro even notices, saying, "I had come to feel genuine friendship for him; about and the entomological curiosity he aroused in me, I truly respected him. But was the feeling mutual? Pedro Camacho didn't seem to me to be capable of wasting his time, his energy on friendships or on anything else that would distract him from 'his art.'" There is a clear distinction between Pedro's relationship with Marito and his relationships with everyone else. Nonetheless, Marito remains insecure about their friendship. He is still in

the role of apprentice since his respect for Pedro stems mainly from his work ethic and amazing writing ability.



Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight Summary

Don Federico Tellez Unzategui is married with four children and has made the business his life's work. As a child, Don Federico was left alone at home with his sister while his parents attended a baptism overnight. The weather was hot, so he took refuge outside near the river where he eventually dozed off to sleep. Don Federico woke at dawn and found himself surrounded by dozens of rats clawing and biting him. He called out to the farmhands working, and with their help managed to ward off the colony of rats. Unfortunately, when they went to check on his baby sister, all that was left of her were bones.

The tragedy led to an obsessive crusade against rats and turned Don Federico into a man with strange habits and eccentricities. He started Rodent Exterminators Inc., where he strictly enforced punctuality and tireless work ethic. At home, he subjected his wife and children to unreasonable rules like using only cold water, only sleeping for five hours per day and the ban of movies, dancing, radio and any fancy clothing, attire or home furnishings.

Don Federico's daughters were subjected to more restraints than the rest of the family. One day, when Don Federico stopped at a traffic light, a vendor tries to sell him a magazine. On the cover are two young women in skimpy swimsuits, who Don Federico quickly recognizes as his two daughters. When he confronts his wife and daughters about the magazine, his family is so fed up with his rules and his eccentric lifestyle that they lash out at him. His daughters start hitting him first, then his wife and two sons join in. As they beat the life out of him, Don Federico notices a mouse in the corner watching mockingly.

Chapter Eight Analysis

With Don Federico, Pedro Camacho has created a more intense character. All of the previous characters were successful in their vocations, but this character has been driven into his career. The reader gets insight into this character's background story for the first time. With this story is a man impassioned by the loss of his family, but the passion turns obsessive. He no longer has the ability to relate to his fellow human being, including his own wife and children. Everything that he understands in life is relative to eradicating the rodent population. Don Federico is used to show the development of Pedro Camacho's work. It is not made clear yet whether this development will hurt or help his career. It is important, however, to show Pedro Camacho's changes through his work since his character is complicated and very few of his peers know much about him. Since his characters are still based loosely on Pedro himself, (Don Federico is also in his fifties with 'a broad forehead and aquiline nose'). this erratic character may signal insecurities in Pedro.



Chapter Nine

Chapter Nine Summary

In search of a new story to write, Marito grabs onto an account he hears from Pascual of a group of teens levitating at the airport from the air pressure of the planes at takeoff. Meanwhile, Aunt Julia has been encouraged to date a new man that Marito learns about a few days later when visiting his Uncle Lucho's. Aunt Olga is happy to report that Aunt Julia is being courted by Dr. Guillermo Osoreo, a wealthy endocrinologist, a widower and a 'good match', and Marito is instantly jealous.

Marito goes back to work and tells Pedro about his trouble with Aunt Julia. Pedro's solution is to write her a letter to make her feel shamed for her actions. To Marito's surprise, Pedro even offers to write the letter on his behalf. His answer for resolving the hurt that Marito feels is Milk of Magnesia. Before leaving for the five o'clock serial, Pedro assures Marito that he has no time for loving a flesh and blood woman.

Marito arrives back at Panamericana to find Aunt Julia seated at his desk. After they argue and make up, Javier walks in and invites them to lunch. He is excited that Marito's cousin Nancy, who he has loved and been rejected by for years, accepted his invitation to the bullfight. At lunch, he tells them about his plans to woo Nancy, and says that he has already let her in on the secret affair between Aunt Julia and Marito and that she promises to keep the secret in confidence.

Chapter Nine Analysis

Marito's desire to be an established writer is quickly moving to the surface of the plot the more that he interacts with both Pedro Camacho and Aunt Julia. The chapter opens with him ready to work on another story; determined to write it the way he sees fit. As Marito develops as a character, he is less swayed by outside criticism regarding his writing. In the beginning, a mere discredit from Javier would cause him to scrap an entire work. He is now defending his work with more fervor. This is then reinforced by the recognition of his boss as a writer. "I said I didn't have any doubts as to how popular he was and made me blush by suggesting that, since I too had 'literary inclinations' I should follow the Bolivian's example and learn his tricks for winning a mass audience. 'You mustn't shut yourself up in an ivory tower.'"

Marito's relationship with Aunt Julia has become more serious. This chapter indicates the change in their interaction when Marito becomes jealous of one of her suitors. Before, he would joke with her about them, but he seems to be ready for her to take him seriously now. The dialogue in this chapter also indicates that Aunt Julia may feel more for Marito than she lets on, because her sister Olga mentions that she has been hanging around for a few weeks, not dating or searching for a husband like she should. This is clearly the period of time since she started dating Marito. She is more torn about

the age difference than Marito. He is either being naive or ignorant about the fact that their family may eventually find out and be angry about their relationship.

Pedro gives Marito love advice, showing the reader one of their few moments of direct interaction. Pedro says that he has never loved a flesh and blood woman, but his reaction to Marito's woes indicates otherwise. The first thing Marito notices is the cold stare he gives when he hears that the problem involves an unfaithful woman. Pedro composes himself quickly, but again the reader gets insight that Pedro's character goes beyond his 'art is life' ideals. In this chapter, one of the characters criticizes Pedro's work for the first time. There is an indication that the more Pedro appears human in the real world, his work will suffer.



Chapter Ten

Chapter Ten Summary

Lucho Abril Marroquin is a young and successful pharmaceutical salesman for Bayer Laboratories. He has left his beautiful wife at home for his usual work in Peru, visiting doctors and pharmacies to give Bayer samples and literature. On his way home, while going over a bridge, he gets into a terrible accident, running over a young girl. Lucho's shouts for an ambulance or doctor, and is met by a Guardia Civil officer. Just as the officer kneels beside Lucho and the lifeless child, an out-of-control truck barrels toward the bridge and all three of them are struck. The child and officer are killed and Lucho spends a month in the hospital.

The couple learned that they would have a baby, and Lucho begins to have violent nightmares of mutilating or murdering his own child, causing his wife to miscarry from the stress. Lucho's career also suffered because he developed an extreme phobia of driving and had to take a demotion to work in an office near his home. A year after the accident Lucho's wife leaves him to return to France, and it is clear that his life is crumbling. One of Lucho's coworkers refers him to a psychiatrist named Dr. Lucia Acemila whose methods are unorthodox. Her first exercise with him is for him to look in the mirror and tell himself "I'm an infanticide and a cowardly speed demon." She wants him to admit to himself through recreating the scene of the accident and through other exercises that he had a hidden hate for children and to return to her in eight weeks. Reluctantly, Lucho follows the exercises and finds it therapeutic. Unfortunately, he starts terrorizing children every chance he gets, and when he catches himself about to push a child in front of a moving streetcar, he jumps in a taxi and goes back to Dr. Acemila. When he gets there he argues with her but realizes that he took a taxi to her office and has been cured of his vehicle phobia. He also notes that due to his exercises, he had been sleeping full nights without any nightmares. With this realization, Lucho reclaims his life and his bride. The couple lives happily until his wife gets pregnant again and they are both afraid that Lucho's admitted hatred for children will cause him to harm their unborn baby. They return to Dr. Acemila with hopes that she can help again.

Chapter Ten Analysis

Pedro has strayed further from his story template with this serial. Unlike the other plots, the key character, Lucho Marroquin, isn't the character in his fifties with the 'broad forehead and aquiline nose.' He is a young man in his twenties, who is successful until faced with terrible tragedy. The psychiatrist, Dr. Acemila, who is the character in her fifties with the broad forehead and aquiline nose, is unstable. Her character is so outlandish it seems to the reader that she isn't meant to be taken seriously. The entire story has a mocking air, as if the entire plot is meant to be a joke. The entire plot takes a frenzied turn after Dr. Acemila is introduced, giving the reader the impression that the entire story is fanciful.



It has also become clearer that Pedro is inserting his own advice and experience into the serials. Through Dr. Acemila, Pedro Camacho's voice is heard giving tips about purging certain life experiences by purging the body; eating half dozen prunes daily. There is also the advice about drinking water at the edge of the glass to rid hiccups, stating that the character learned that from his mother. However, the character's mother was never mentioned before or after this instance. Pedro has grown accustomed to living as a mysterious artist; trying to prove to the world and his peers that art is his life. Now it seems that the life that he hides is unconsciously slipping into his writing. There is also an instance where a character and piece of plot from an entirely different serial is leaked into the story of Lucho Marroquin. When referencing Lucho's boss, Dr. Schwalb, and his job at Bayer Laboratories, Pedro writes, "He ran to kiss the hands of Don Federico Tellez Unzategui...pointing out that cured of not if his homicidal complexes, he was to show up for work on time at Rodent Exterminators, Incorporated or be fined."



Chapter Eleven

Chapter Eleven Summary

Marito's romance with Aunt Julia and his focus on his writing has caused him to fall behind in law school. So when midterm exams arrive, Marito has to seek help from a fellow student Guillermo Velando. On his way home, Marito notices Pedro Camacho working in his office, dressed in costume as a surgeon. Marito is surprised and amused and invites Pedro to join him for their usual cup of tea. They walk instead and Marito tries to make conversation, but Pedro barely notices him there. His mind is focused on a story he heard about a tenant in San Martin who weeps at moonlight. Pedro clearly wants to create a full story from this rumor and is just using his walk with Marito to stimulate his imagination.

Marito returns to his grandparents' home and finds Javier waiting for him ready for a full day planned out for him, Marito, Aunt Julia and Nancy. The day starts with a performance of *Death of a Salesman* and ends at Negro-Negro, a cozy artists' den. Aunt Julia and Marito dance closely, kissing and enjoying each other's company until Nancy announces that their Uncle Jorge is at the restaurant. Marito and Javier immediately paid the check and left with Nancy and Aunt Julia right behind. Marito spent the next week obsessively speculating about the family's silence on the matter. No one said anything to Marito, Julia or Nancy; therefore, Marito deduces that they are plotting something amongst themselves.

Chapter Eleven Analysis

Marito's life is gearing up for another change now that his family most likely knows about his affair with Aunt Julia. In light of the upcoming change, the reader is given the chance to see how Marito's character has developed so far. To sum it up, Marito is young, but he is claiming who he is and who he plans to be. The potential fallout from Marito's family regarding Aunt Julia clearly doesn't deter his claim to love her. Even when Marito tested with a flashback from his old life and given the chance to be young and carefree with his peers, Marito can't shake the new life that has morphed from his romance with Aunt Julia and friendship with Pedro Camacho. Marito has found maturity in his two loves; Julia and literature.

Meanwhile, Pedro Camacho is getting lost in his own success and his work is suffering. As forecasted in his last serial, Pedro Camacho has starting mixing characters. Genaro Sr. and many of Pedro's fans have noticed characters and plotlines showing up in the wrong serials and glaring inconsistencies. Everyone thinks that they must be intentional, but Genaro Sr. insists that he get control of his stories. Pedro gives no indication as to how he feels about the request. He silently walks out on Marito when the subject is brought up.



Chapter Twelve

Chapter Twelve Summary

The Berguas family consists of Senora Margarita Bergua, Don Sebastian Bergua and their daughter Senroita Rosa Bergua. The family moved to Lima with hopes of entering Rosa into the National Conservatory. The plan fails when Rosa is convinced that every man in Lima is trying to steal her virtue. The family began accepting boarders to help pay for their large house. A traveling salesman named Ezequiel Delfin arrives at the Berguas Estate, seeking a room to rent. Ezequiel was clearly religious, so the Berguas accepted him as a boarder and came to love him. Ezequiel had a sadness and mystery about. One day at lunch, Ezequiel burst into uncontrollable tears. Don Sebastian wants to help and offers to set up a bed in his room to help him through the night.

Later in the night, Don Sebastian hears Ezequiel rise from the bed and head toward the door. Don Sebastian tries to find the light, but before he can, Ezequiel begins stabbing him incessantly. After Don Sebastian suffers fourteen or fifteen wounds at his hand, Ezequiel strips himself naked and heads to Senorita Margarita's room. It is clear that he intends to rape her, and she screams and fights for her life. Rosa and the other boarders wake up from the noise and manage to subdue Ezequiel for the police.

After this day, Don Sebastian never spoke again. His family had to sell all of their assets to pay for his care. Ezequiel Delfin is sentenced to time in a mental hospital. The story twists and reports that after spending a few months in a Lima jail, he dies of a heart attack. Nonetheless, this tale ends when Ezequiel escapes the mental hospital with the mission of finding the Berguas family to finish what he started.

Chapter Twelve Analysis

Pedro's story of the Berguas family is particularly insulting to Argentines and lacks his stories' usual structure. Again, there is no main character identified in the beginning. Don Sebastian is eventually acknowledged as the main character; virtuous and kind, in his fifties with an aquiline nose. However, he is now characterized as old rather than in his prime. Beyond the lack of consistency in the plot, Pedro inserts contradictions in logic and flow of the story. It seems that as the story continues, Pedro loses track of what he wrote in previous paragraphs. At one point, the Berguas family is saved from persecution because Ezequiel dies of a heart attack in jail. A few pages later he is alive, escaping from the mental institution to seek revenge on the Berguas family. It is also notable that Pedro's character mixing is becoming worse. Toward the end of this story, he continues to switch the name and reference of the character Ezequiel Delfin. Ezequiel takes on the identity of Lucho Marroquin with his French wife, who is now Italian, and he becomes a medical-detail rather than a traveling salesman. The parallel is again made; the more Pedro inserts his personal issues into the plots of his stories,

the more confused his writing becomes. It seems that Pedro is blurring the line between fantasy and reality.



Chapter Thirteen

Chapter Thirteen Summary

Marito's story about the levitating teenagers was never published by El Comercio, the paper he submitted it to. In turn, Marito started on his next story, based on his real Aunt Eliana. Marito remembered Aunt Eliana, who disappeared when he was seven years old. Just as Javier and Aunt Julia begin their usual berating of the story of Aunt Eliana, Marito notices Nancy in the doorway, looking distraught. "The family's discovered what's going on, and they're up in arms."

Marito's family has apparently known about the affair between Marito and Aunt Julia for a while, but as Marito suspected, were plotting on what to do with the information. Two of Marito's uncles had already written to Marito's parents, and for the first time Marito is clearly worried.

When everyone leaves Panamericana, Marito feels the need to talk to Pedro Camacho about his problems. At Radio Central, Marito finds the serial actors rather than Pedro and they wait to speak to Marito privately. They confide in Marito that Pedro's character and plot mistakes in the serials were getting worse. The problem had apparently existed for two months and had now become unbearable. Genaro Jr. brushes the idea of time off for Pedro aside, insisting that they can't afford to give Pedro a vacation.

Marito invites Pedro to lunch later that day, hoping again to confide in him regarding Aunt Julia, but Pedro has his own confession to make, saying, "Something embarrassing is happening to me these days...I'm losing track of where I am in my scripts, I'm not sure of what I'm doing, and confusions creep in...I know you're a loyal young man, a friend who can be trusted. Not a word of any of this to the merchants!" Aunt Julia calls Marito at 4 pm, their arranged time, and confirms that his parents are angry and coming to Lima soon. Aunt Olga has asked Aunt Julia to return to Bolivia for good and Julia has decided to go. Marito responds by asking Julia to marry him.

Chapter Thirteen Analysis

Marito, Pedro and Julia are all faced with challenges that threaten to disrupt their lives. They have each come into a new phase of life since the beginning of the novel and they are each threatened with returning to the life they had before knowing one another. Marito and Julia's stories are directly tied and it is their relationship that has caused the problems they face. Now deeply in love, Aunt Julia and Marito don't know what to do about their family's plot to separate them. With the family's new involvement in the plot, the reader receives a clear reminder of Marito and Aunt Julia's age. Julia is immediately isolated as the person to blame for the entire affair because she is so much older than Marito. She has already been subject to scrutiny for her divorce, so her family has no problem assuming that she seduced Marito. Meanwhile, they know exactly what to do to



put Marito back in his place—they call his parents. This is the first that Marito's parents, more specifically, his father, have been mentioned. Marito has been fearless about this relationship until his parents are mentioned. Suddenly he is again the unsure teenager introduced at the beginning of the novel.

Outside of the situation brewing with his family, Marito is tied to the situation brewing with Pedro Camacho. The inconsistencies in Pedro's storylines have become so extreme that listeners are calling in to complain and even his staff is convinced that Pedro is unraveling. The actors bring their problem to Marito, hoping that he can help resolve things without getting Pedro fired. Marito is either so caught up in his family problems or has come to trust Pedro's genius so much that he is easily convinced that Pedro's slips are intentional. In the end, Pedro admits that he cannot keep up with his own work. It is also interesting to note that Pedro is also having a hard time keeping up with the real world. He doesn't remember meeting Aunt Julia or that Marito spoke about her on numerous occasions. Pedro also has a slip of the tongue that may indicate that he is originally from Argentina rather than Bolivia. Marito refers to Julia as Pedro's compatriot and his response is one of surprise. "My compatriot? Are you having an affair of the heart with an Argentine—pardon me—a Bolivian woman?"



Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Fourteen Summary

Reverend Father Don Seferino Huanca Leyva was born as the result of a rape during carnival season; his father was a young socialite and his mother a carefree laundress. The laundress was already the mother of eight children, and since she had no husband, she tried unsuccessfully to abort the baby. Growing up, Seferino took up various occupations in order to survive and find food. One day Seferino goes door-to-door in a wealthy neighborhood begging for shoes and clothes that he later planned to sell. When he arrived at the home of Mayte Unzategui, she was drawn in by the intelligence in his eyes and pledges to visit him at his home that evening. Mayte honors her word and arrived at 6 o'clock and offered to pay for Seferino's education and to give his mother ten thousand dollars if she would allow him to study to be a priest. Needless to say, Seferino becomes a student at Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo seminary. Seferino prospered in his studies at the seminary, but once he became a priest, he took on practices that worried his peers. Seferino called his tactics "armed preaching." He would take on the task of punishing sinners into his own hands. He severely whipped a couple having premarital sex and badly beat an abusive husband and a pickpocket.

Father Seferino volunteers to be sent to the crime-ridden city of Mendocita to set up a church, but no one comes. He learns that Jaime Concha, the former Guardia Civil officer, was the neighborhood faith healer and discouraged the community from attending church. Seferino settles the issue with Jaime with a fist fight that he wins. Seferino's plan worked, and with other little incentives, the numbers at Mass increased greatly, but he became a controversial figure.

Father Seferino is warned over one hundred times by the archbishop for lines crossed in his church, but he was never tempted to compromise his vow of chastity until a traveling social worker comes to town. She shares the name of many other female characters, Mayte Unzategui and comes to the church to work with Seferino. He is challenged for her love by a newcomer and Seferino tries again to gain respect by challenging the man to a fist fight. He has aged considerably and his plan backfires as he is quickly beaten. Out of anger and shame, Seferino plans to set the man's house on fire while he sleeps.

Chapter Fourteen Analysis

The story of Reverend Father Don Seferino Huanca Leyva is used to show that Pedro Camacho's stories are becoming increasingly erratic. There are numerous instances where Pedro incorrectly uses a name or reference from another story. Pedro's confession to Marito that he is unable to keep track of his storylines and characters is reinforced here. Beyond the inconsistencies is the fanciful nature that this plot has taken on. His first stories were dramatic, but he based the concepts on relatable issues.



He grounded his stories on the reality and intrigue of human nature and emotion. By the end of the story, the character of Father Seferino and his experience isn't relatable and therefore appears fictitious. The reader doesn't have the chance to understand why, after being saved from poverty, this priest would encourage prostitution and violence simply because he is in that environment. As in Pedro's last story, when Seferino reaches his fifties it is seen as a weakness, whereas in the beginning this age was considered prime. Pedro's insecurities about getting older and losing his memory and work ability has clearly influenced how the characters are shaped. It is also interesting to view his changing depiction of women. He now groups all women into one character. At first this character is pleasant, powerful and supportive. The female character by the end of the story is divisive, overly seductive and the root of the downfall of the main character.



Chapter Fifteen

Chapter Fifteen Summary

Nancy is the first person Marito tells about proposing to Aunt Julia and they start planning immediately. Nancy has a friend looking for a renter for an apartment and Marito accepts instantly. Once Marito tells Javier, they realize that they don't have much time to get everything finalized since the family has already asked Aunt Julia to return to Bolivia.

Javier and Marito start pawning their belongings and Marito also gets information on the documents they will need, including written and notarized permission from Marito's parents. Marito concludes that he will have to bribe one of the local mayors in order to get marriage approval. At first Aunt Julia protests the entire plan, ready to use the ticket she purchased back to Bolivia. Eventually Marito is able to convince her to go along with him.

Pascual overhears a conversation between Aunt Julia and Marito about the wedding and informs them that he has a cousin who is the mayor of Chincha and would marry them without question.

Chapter Fifteen Analysis

Marito's life has now taken on the form of one of Pedro's serials. "To get the Peruvian Minister of Foreign Relations to certify the Bolivian documents...I had to invent another involved radio serial." The drama surrounding his relationship with Aunt Julia is building. The relationship has now escalated to an engagement and potential marriage. The reader was given the impression that Marito asked Julia on a whim; he even admitted to have been almost joking when he proposed. Once Marito tells Nancy and the plans start moving, it becomes real for all of them. The obstacles they have to face become real as well. Again the reader is reminded of Marito's age, since the two biggest obstacles he faces is getting permission to marry as a minor and facing his father about his relationship. Marito's creative mind is at work the entire time and his actions are shaped by the life he envisions in his dreams. He is claiming the romance he reads about in his beloved literature, and this may another sign of his naiveté. Nonetheless Marito's big dreams are contagious and he manages to get the support of everyone around him. Aunt Julia was ready to give up and get on the plane back to Bolivia until he persuades her that they will have a happy life together. "She sat there looking at me, feeling sorry about all the trouble I was going to and at the same time deeply moved. A smile slowly appeared on her face. 'If you'll swear to put up with me for five years, without losing your heart to anyone else, loving only me, okay. For five years of happiness I'll do this utterly mad thing.'"



Meanwhile, Pedro's character is only mentioned through the bad reviews of his serials. Marito doesn't have any direct contact with the writer but he is audience to much of the criticism. Those who were fans think he is a joke and those who weren't think he is a mad genius. Either way, it is clear to everyone that he is going insane. The reader also gets a chance to hear what is going on in the serials in the midst of the real-life chapters; this is a first. Everyone who speaks about the serials are now offering details about the chaotic plots, and Marito even compares them to Pascual's disaster-ridden news reports. The line between the world of Pedro's serials and Marito's reality are starting to blur. It is as if the more Marito becomes an adult and takes on the form of a writer, the less Pedro is able to hold onto that role.



Chapter Sixteen

Chapter Sixteen Summary

Joaquin Hinostroza Belmont is a well known soccer referee and alcoholic. He was the only child in his family, born to very wealthy parents. As a child, he didn't excel in any academic area and his parents never noticed any interest in him until he was introduced to soccer. Excited, his parents build him a home soccer field, but to their dismay the other boys report that Joaquin would only want to serve as referee to their games. Joaquin's parents held onto hopes that his love for refereeing would shape into a love for other leadership roles, but these hopes were never fulfilled. Joaquin barely made it through high school and failed miserably when put to work at his father's businesses. After his parents passed away, Joaquin spent his time refereeing street soccer matches. It is in this capacity that he meets a girl-nicknames Virago—who refuses his love and drives him to drink.

Joaquin would constantly shower Virago with gifts until he could no longer afford them. His lack of income leads him to seek compensation for his skillful referee services. He was amazing at his job and was soon accepted as a referee for the Jose Diaz National Stadium. Here Joaquin continued to excel and gain much popularity and respect and was soon requested to oversee a huge championship event.

The soccer match started out normally and exciting and Joaquin worked honorably in front of a packed stadium and two impressive soccer teams. The mood is interrupted when a naked black man sprints onto the field with the clear intent to kill Joaquin. The police officers stationed in the stadium take action and shoot the naked man. The spectators take pity on the black man now that he is shot and bleeding on the field and the officers of the Guardia Civil have to throw grenades and tear gas to calm the crowd. The action has the opposite effect and everyone get crushed trying to escape through the locked gates. Virago tries to escape the chaos to reach Joaquin's side, but the head officer thinks she is another assailant and shoots her as well. Seeing his love die at his feet, Joaquin dies on the spot of a broken heart.

Chapter Sixteen Analysis

It seems as if Pedro is using this chapter as an attempt to bring closure to all of his characters and their serials. The plot begins about a man named Joaquin Hinostroza Belmont, who had no skill in life except to referee soccer matches. Halfway through life, Joaquin meets a woman named Virago whose real name is Sarita Huanca Salaverria. With her introduction, the reader and listener are waiting to see if she is the same Sarita Huanca Salaverria introduced in the previous serial. At first Pedro remains vague about her history and there is a possibility that Sarita and Joaquin's paths merely crossed. Then, Pedro inserts her history and it belongs to the character Elianita Quinteros. Pedro then stumbles through the remainder of Joaquin's story until he finds the perfect



instance to include as many of his main characters as he can recall. The soccer match is so highly anticipated that it entices the attendance of the Berguas family, Captain Lituma, Sergeant Concha, Delfin and even the Black stowaway from Lituma's original story. Pedro twists the plot so every character he can think of dies and the cliffhanger is what can be reborn from the ashes of this character assassination.

Pedro is second guessing himself through the entire story indicated by parentheses and question marks throughout the text. He needs the chance to start from scratch now that everyone knows he has lost track of his serial plots.



Chapter Seventeen

Chapter Seventeen Summary

Aunt Julia, Marito, Pascual and Javier arrive in Chincha, and after checking in at a hotel they all wait for the mayor. His secretary soon brings news that the mayor had gone straight to lunch. They go to see the mayor at the restaurant where he is dining and he is clearly already drunk and they leave.

Within the hour, they are summoned back to the mayor's office. The mayor's secretary brings the papers in announcing that Marito is too young for an authorized marriage. The mayor agrees and refuses to put his job at risk for the couple. He sends them to Tambo de Mora, a nearby village, to find the Martin, the mayor there. Unfortunately, after waiting for hours, the mayor of Tambo de Mora also refuses to marry them. Martin the mayor is sympathetic and suggests they try any of the small surrounding villages. The group resolves that they will start their search the following day.

The group spends the following day getting rejected by the mayors of every other village. They take a break around three in the afternoon, and while Aunt Julia and Marito sleep, Pascual and Javier try to come up with a plan. By seven that evening, Javier wakes the couple with news that the mayor of Grocio Prado will marry them as long as Marito changes the date on his birth certificate before the official ceremony. They get married in his small courtroom with their taxi driver as their witness.

Chapter Seventeen Analysis

Marito's life has really transformed into a drama right out of a radio serial. His plan to marry Julia is not going smoothly and they face adversity everywhere. The entire chapter is spent building the drama for the reader. Every time they face a challenge, the reader is returned to the idea that the marriage won't happen. Marito even seems naïve to keep his hope that someone will consent to marry them. The odds are stacked against them and no one wants to take the risk to overlook the law for their love. The legal issues appear to be enough to deter anyone, but Marito is insistent now that he is locked into the idea. To add to the drama of the unfolding story and the serial comparison, when they finally find a mayor who consents to marry them, he is described as an "impassive man of about fifty." This sounds like a line straight from Pedro Camacho. When they are finally married, the reader and Marito are returned to the reality that he still has to face his family about the whole matter.

Marito seems like a naïve boy in love and is even mocked by the court officers and mayors for this love. Nonetheless, as a character he hasn't been more resolute about what he wants from life since he was introduced at the beginning of the novel, saying, "I felt that I loved her very much and was happy to be marrying her...I vowed to myself that we wouldn't be like all the married couples I knew, one more disaster, but would live

happily ever after, and that getting married wouldn't stop me from becoming a writer someday."



Chapter Eighteen

Chapter Eighteen Summary

The story of the bard of Lima, Crisanto Maravillas, begins with his birth in room H off of a small alleyway in the Plaza Santa Ana. Crisanto was born crippled in his legs to parents Maria Portal and Valentin Maravillas. Crisanto remains dwarflike in appearance because his legs barely grow, but his parents love their only child anyway. Crisanto soon learns that his talent is in music and his muses are his poetry and the young woman he falls in love with. Crisanto's mother helped bake goods for sale at the convent, so Crisanto was allowed to hang around and wait for her. He meets a young orphan there named Fatima and loves her instantly.

Crisanto teaches himself music by ear and before long begins to compose songs. One day when Crisanto is around eighteen years old, he is banned from visiting the convent. Crisanto's sadness from no longer seeing Fatima's face inspire the most beautiful music the young composer has ever written, and it isn't long before he is known all over the country. He has no interest in the fame and focuses his attention on finding new ways to see Fatima. As the years pass, she becomes a nun but still shared a quiet love for Crisanto. Crisanto's music becomes popular even in the church and they consent to have a concert of his music to raise money for their foreign efforts. Many people show up to hear the composer live but an earthquake strikes and tragically kills everyone in attendance.

Chapter Eighteen Analysis

Two significant things are occurring in this chapter. First, Pedro Camacho has exposed himself more than in any other story. Second, the condition of his memory is much worse than the reader may have assessed from previous chapters. The chapter has almost a biographical air about it and the character Crisanto is closely comparable to Camacho. Pedro gives so much detail regarding the boy's birth and shortcomings, family and accomplishments the reader can gather that the story is partially his own. In the past, Marito made many references to Pedro's strange dwarflike and unappealing appearance. The same words are used to describe the character Crisanto. In the plot, the reader is also led to recollect the story of the weeping man that intrigued Pedro one day while he and Marito walked. Marito was confused by what was so appealing about this story and the answer may be that it brought up a memory from Pedro's past. The final comparison between Pedro and Crisanto comes in the form of their talent. Like Pedro, Crisanto had so much passion for his work he didn't care about getting paid for it. He didn't care about recording it or protecting it from plagiarism. The conclusion can therefore be made that like Crisanto, Pedro's art stemmed from and was dedicated to someone special.



It appears as the chapter begins that Pedro's mass death scene in the previous serial was successful in offering him the clean slate he needs. With the death of all his characters Pedro has the chance to form new ones with new storylines. In the beginning he seems to take advantage of this opportunity, but by the middle of the story everything once again goes awry. It is clear that Pedro isn't simply mixing his stories; he is losing his sanity. He brings back old characters once again, with wrong references and even loses track of the new characters he has created. By the close of the chapter, Crisanto and Fatima have completely lost their identity in the mix of numerous past characters.



Chapter Nineteen

Chapter Nineteen Summary

Javier doesn't call until early the following morning and his news is discouraging. Javier is greeted at his home by Marito's father, who is livid and threatens him with a revolver, demanding Marito's whereabouts. Aunt Julia and Marito are upset that Marito's father has turned to violence and threats and that Javier suffered at their expense.

Nonetheless, the newlywed couple is resolute to see the situation through. They arrive first at Uncle Lucho and Aunt Olga's house and persuade them to let Julia stay at their home until things work out. Marito returns to his grandparents' house and finds his mother in tears, anxiously awaiting his arrival. She informs Marito that his father is getting legal advice on annulling the marriage and has threatened Julia if she doesn't leave the country immediately. More focused on keeping his job, Marito gets dressed and makes his way to Panamericana.

Marito is surprised to find out that no one noticed his absence because while Marito was gone, Pedro Camacho was committed to an insane asylum. It all started when the serials unraveled completely and every day Pedro aired scripts of only death, disaster and mayhem. He was killing his characters over and over and hiding the listeners' complaints was no longer a possible option. When the Genaros confronted Pedro, he broke down into hysterical crying and ripping his hair. The Genaros call in a psychiatrist, who confirms that he is going insane and that his recovery could take months or years. With Pedro gone, their previous serial supplier, CMQ, quadruple the cost of new serials that would take a month to arrive from Cuba. The Genaros call Marito in to fill the month's gap to avoid losing their audience and advertisers. They offer Marito a pay raise to sift through the discarded, pre-Pedro CMQ serials and compile new serials to air. Javier walks in with a threatening letter from Marito's father warning that Julia had forty-eight hours to leave the country. Javier also has a summons for Marito to appear at the commissariat the following morning.

Javier and Marito visit a lawyer and relative of Javier for advice. He tells them that annulling the marriage would take a court proceeding that his father may not want to go through. Marito's father could, however, bring Julia up on charges for corrupting a minor. The lawyer assesses that he probably wouldn't win the case but it would be ugly for Julia to go through. Marito seeks refuge from the ordeal at his Aunt Olga and Uncle Lucho's house. There he learns that everyone in the family is convinced that Marito's father will honor his threats and the only solution is for Aunt Julia to leave.

Two days later, Aunt Julia leaves for Chile and Marito gets to work finding side jobs to support his new wife and facilitate her return to Lima. He finds seven odd jobs to add to his job at Panamericana. Marito was unable to gauge his father's feelings because they didn't see each other for weeks, but eventually Marito decides to visit him. After warnings from his mother not to antagonize his father, they meet at his father's old office on the Jiron Carabaya. He outlines how he has organized his time and finances to



manage marriage, school and life in general and asks his father's permission to send for Julia. After giving Marito a fatherly lecture, Marito's father consents Julia's return to Lima.

Chapter Nineteen Analysis

Marito's biggest critic and judge, his father, has noticed Marito's maturity. "He realized that I'd fallen in love, there was nothing wrong with that; after all, it proved I was a man." Marito and his father have their first honest conversation, and their relationship seems to shift to a better place. It seems that as much as everyone thought Marito and Julia's relationship was insane, they can't deny how much it helped Marito grow. In the beginning chapters, Marito's character description was of a young man just passing through life. He wasn't passionate about anything or driven toward any of his endeavors, including his dream to be a writer. This character is completely different from the young man conversing with his father about his plans to work, go to school, support his wife and build a career and future for himself.

Marito is the only one who knows how much Pedro Camacho helped his coming of age. He finds homage to Pedro in many of his choices and still looks up to Pedro as the kind of writer he wants to mirror his life after. In Pedro's absence, Marito has to ironically fill the scriptwriter's shoes for a while. Marito doesn't create masterpieces as Pedro did in the beginning, but the Genaros' trust in Marito marks his official transformation into a writer. Sadly, Marito is the only one who is worried about Pedro's personal state. He has such an impressive opinion of Pedro that he can't bring himself to visit Pedro at the insane asylum. Marito knows that his image of the scriptwriter will then change from writer and artist to a mad man once he sees Pedro in the sad environment.



Chapter Twenty

Chapter Twenty Summary

Marito and Julia shared a successful marriage for eight years. In this time, Marito gave up law school to move to Paris and pursue his writing. He became a successful writer and published many books. Marito's family had grown to accept Marito and Julia's relationship, and many were sad when they announced their divorce. Marito had found great success in Europe and remained living there after the divorce and a year later when he married his cousin Patricia. Nonetheless, he cherished visits to his hometown. Marito managed an agreement with two publications to submit articles in exchange for plane tickets home to Lima. With this arrangement, Lima became Marito's muse.

It was one year, during one of his visits to Lima, that Marito is approached by Big Pablito in the street. Pablito looks younger and better kept than he did during his days at Panamericana. He had fallen in love with a beautiful woman, gotten married and started a successful restaurant with her. They set off to find Pascual with plans to go to Pablito's restaurant for lunch. They arrive at Extra, the publication where Pascual works as a copy editor. The headquarters for the weekly magazine is in bad condition and Pascual looks the same. Nonetheless, he is very excited to see Marito and to join them for lunch. While Marito and Pablito wait for Pascual to finish work, Marito is shocked to see Pedro Camacho walk in. He is so thin and dressed so poorly that Marito doesn't initially recognize him. Marito waits until the magazine editor severely chastises Pedro and is disturbed further when Pedro doesn't recognize him. Marito makes attempts to try to refresh Pedro's memory, but it is no use. Even Pascual and Pablito join the editor in mocking Pedro. "The thing is, Pedro doesn't want to remember when he was somebody, now that he's a fifth wheel around this place." After Pedro leaves, Marito learns that he was given the errand job at Extra merely to entertain the editor. Pedro was financially supported by a woman he was once married to in Bolivia. According to the three men, she left him to pursue other men but moved to Lima to be with him when he was committed to the asylum. Marito leaves the three men saddened by what is left of the scriptwriter.

Chapter Twenty Analysis

This is the final summary of Marito's life after marriage to Aunt Julia. The drama surrounding their marriage eventually subsided and their relationship lasted longer than anyone figured, including Julia. The family was sad to see Aunt Julia and Marito separate but was happy that he had a real wedding with his new bride Patricia. Marito has made his dreams come true and is so committed to his career as a writer that the family even accepts him dropping law school. He proves that he can make a living doing what he is passionate about and he is happy and settled.



The reunion with Big Pablito and Pascual lets the reader know how much has changed since Marito was a young boy attending the university there. It is in a moment of nostalgia as Marito walks the changed neighborhoods of Lima that he runs into Pablito. The change from the passing of time has been good to Pablito and he has found happiness in a simple life. Pascual is in a worse position but he appears to be content with his position in life as well. It is the state of Pedro Camacho's life that is the most tragic. Again, Marito is more concerned than anyone about what Pedro's life has become. Even Pedro has fooled himself into thinking he has a decent life, job and companion. The editor of Extra doesn't even believe that Pedro was once a sensation. The very qualities that made Pedro a genius and artist are the qualities that those who know him use to mock him.



Characters

Marito

Marito is an eighteen-year-old student in Miraflores, Peru. He studies law at the University of San Marcos and works at Panamericana, a local radio station. His job consists of managing and airing news casts on the station a few times a day. Marito has dreams of being a writer but only writes sporadically and without passion. He passes his days and free time between work with friends and doing only enough to get by at both school and work. Marito's closest friend is Javier and his closest family member and confidante is his cousin Nancy. They both know about Marito's love for literature but don't understand it. They are usually the worst critics of his work and think that he lacks the imagination to make a really successful story.

Then Marito meets Pedro Camacho and his perspective on what it means to be a writer completely turns around. Pedro Camacho is hired at Panamericana's sister station, Radio Central. The station is already fairly popular for the radio soap operas, or serials that they air daily. Radio Central purchased their serial scripts from a company in Cuba until one of the owners finds Pedro Camacho in Bolivia. Pedro moves to Lima to take the job at Radio Central as their exclusive scriptwriter, and he is brilliant at his job. Pedro has no friends and no desire for anything other than his work, but he and Marito slowly form a real friendship. Watching Pedro's dedication shapes Marito as a writer and he starts to desire more from his writing career. Contrastingly, the more that Marito grows and succeeds at his writing, the less Pedro does. In the end, the tables turn, and Marito shapes his life into that of a successful writer and scholar while Pedro ends up destitute and mocked.

Around the same time that Marito meets Pedro, he is reacquainted with his Aunt Julia through marriage. She has moved to Peru from Bolivia after a divorce and she is staying at Marito's Uncle Lucho and Aunt Olga's house. There is an instant attraction between the two, and even though they fight it and despite their ten year age difference, a relationship forms between them. Their relationship faces its biggest obstacle when their family vows to break their relationship apart. Marito and Julia prove that their feelings are real and find a way to get married. Marito's relationships with both Pedro and Julia transform him from boy to man, husband and successful writer by the end of the novel.

Aunt Julia

Aunt Julia is related to the main character Marito through marriage. Her sister Olga is married to Marito's uncle Lucho. Julia arrives in Miraflores, Peru from Bolivia. She is a thirty-two year old divorcee who moves to Miraflores with hopes of finding a new husband. Her first marriage ended because she couldn't have children and her husband had a hard time accepting the terms. Julia dates many interested men before an



unexpected romance forms between her and Marito. Marito is the first to make an advance on Julia but Julia quickly finds herself drawn to the young man.

Their relationship remains a secret for a while but there are so many family members in their city that eventually they are discovered. When the family starts forming a plan to separate Marito and Julia, Marito proposes marriage. After some persuasion Julia accepts. They face enormous challenges in order to make the marriage happen quickly and without parental consent on Marito's behalf. In the end Marito forges a document in order to make the marriage happen but they are blissfully happy. The entire family blames Julia for their relationship and insists she leave the country even after the marriage. Julia moves to Chile for a while and Marito organizes his life and their future. The family is eventually able to accept the Marito and Julia's choice and their marriage lasts eight years.

Pedro Camacho

Pedro Camacho is a writer and dramatic artist born in Bolivia. When he is introduced to the story the main character, Marito, immediately notices his dwarflike appearance. Pedro is small in stature due to extremely small legs, with bulging eyes and a strangely unattractive face. Pedro is hired by the owners of Radio Central and Panamericana to write the scripts for the daily serials. Pedro jumps into the job head first; organizing the actors to give powerful and realistic performances and working non-stop. Pedro's scripts are immediate hits and all of Lima buzzes about the exciting storylines. Eventually all of the incessant work hours and Pedro's personal issues took a toll on his writing. Pedro never kept record of his serials because he saw them as masterpieces to be left with the listener. However, he soon began to lose track of his characters and his storylines and all of the serials became jumbled. Eventually, none of his work followed any logical pattern. Every day he killed characters with hopes of starting over, but it never worked. Pedro lost his grip on reality through his work and was committed to an insane asylum. Ten years later, when Marito visited Lima, he runs into Pedro and learns that he never recovered fully from the breakdown. Marito found him working as a lowly messenger for a failing tabloid magazine.

Nancy

Nancy is Marito's cousin and confidante. They are close in age so they have always been close. Nancy is the first family member that Marito tells about his relationship with Julia. She helps the couple facilitate the marriage and finds them a place to live. Marito's friend Javier has been in love with her for as long as he has known Marito.

Javier

Javier is Marito's long time best friend. The two appear to be inseparable, and in the beginning he was the only one Marito would share his writing with. He would always criticize Marito's work but it never changed their friendship. Javier is the first person to



find out about Marito and Julia's relationship. Marito's family knows how close he is with Marito and when they learn of Marito's marriage, Javier is the first person they look to in search of Marito.

Pascual

Pascual works on the news reports at Panamericana with Marito. They are comparable in age but clearly have different interests. Marito complains incessantly about the type of news he tries to broadcast because he loves to share disaster stories. Marito has to filter through the news report daily to ensure that Pascual includes news other than death and mayhem.

Uncle Lucho

Uncle Lucho is Marito's maternal uncle and Aunt Olga's husband. He is very fond of Marito and seems to be the father figure in Marito's life. Marito visits Lucho every Thursday for lunch and they enjoy one another's company.

Aunt Olga

Aunt Olga is Julia's sister and is married to Marito's Uncle Lucho. She loves her family and offers Marito and Julia refuge when the family turns against them for their relationship.

Big Pablito

Big Pablito is an older worker at Radio Central. Before Pedro Camacho's arrival, he performed the sound effects for the radio serials, but Pedro quickly replaces him. He has worked for the Genaros for so long that they don't want to fire him. In the end, they move him over to Panamericana to help Pascual and Marito with the news broadcasts. When Marito sees Pablito ten years after marrying Julia, he is in great shape. He had since found a new wife and opened a successful restaurant.

Genaros

Genaros are the father and son owners of Radio Central and Panamericana. Both characters pop in and out of the story, usually to put out fires at the radio stations. They are characterized as business minded and money driven. They like Marito and eventually confide in him with issues the radio stations face. They are resourceful and when they lose ratings with Pedro's departure, they start a popular radio game show that brings their numbers right back up. Within ten years of that, they open a successful television station.



Objects/Places

Radio Central

Radio Central is the radio station where Pedro Camacho worked. It is the station that aired the serials and was owned by the Genaros and where Marito spent a lot of his time.

Panamericana

Panamericana is the conservative sister station to Radio Central and is in the building next door. Marito works in an office on the roof at Panamericana as a news writer and editor. The station is also owned by the Genaros and its subject matter is more refined than that of Radio Central.

Lima

Lima is the town in Peru where Marito works and goes to school. It is also the focal point for all of Pedro Camacho's new serials.

Chincha

Chincha is a small village two hours outside of Lima where Marito and Julia hoped to be married. Pascual's cousin is the mayor of the town and first agreed to marry them but changed his mind at the last minute.

Uncle Lucho's House

Uncle Lucho's house is like Marito's second home. Marito's parents no longer live in Miraflores, so he resides at his grandparent's house but spends much of his time at his Uncle Lucho's house. This house is where he meets Aunt Julia and where they find refuge when things start looking bad for their relationship.

University of San Marcos

The University of San Marcos is the school where Marito is studying to become a lawyer. He isn't interested in the degree but makes good connections with the students and faculty at the school.



Pedro's House

Pedro's house is a meager apartment without a bath or kitchen. Pedro never apologizes for the condition of his home and shares the little he has with Marito and Julia when they visit him. None of the other characters indicate to visiting him there or even knowing where he lives.

Marito's Father's Revolver

Marito's father's revolver is the object used to threaten Javier when Marito's family is searching for him. Marito's father heard the news that he planned to marry Julia, and he is ready to use the revolver in order to get any information on Marito. Marito's father references the revolver again when he sends a letter threatening to use it to kill Marito in the street if Julia didn't leave town immediately.

Pedro's Office

Pedro's office is a former closet that was cleaned out and set up for Pedro's use. Pedro was more than happy in the small office with one window, and it becomes the place he spends most of his time. When Pedro is committed, Marito finds himself in the office trying to find some trace of the scriptwriter, but there is none.

Marito's Office

Marito's office is a small shack built on the roof of Panamericana. The office was constructed to facilitate Marito and Pascual while they worked on their newscasts. Julia would often meet Marito there when they began meeting in secret.



Themes

Love Inspired Art

The two writers of novel, Marito and Pedro Camacho, are considered artists. Their lives and work are shaped by love. Marito's life is outlined in greater detail than Pedro's; he is a young man going through the motions of life without being thoroughly committed to anything. He dates, he goes to school and work and spends time with his family. He claims a passion for writing, but the passion is second guessed every time he receives a negative criticism about his work. With the exception of one friend, Marito doesn't share his interest in writing with his peers. Marito barely describes writing as an art form or something to really aspire to until he meets Aunt Julia. Aunt Julia becomes Marito's reason for growing up. He begins to vocalize his desire to be a writer, even telling members of his family who are still bent on him finishing law school. His love for literature comes rushing to the surface to the point where he is almost giddy. Even with Aunt Julia criticizing his work, just as Javier used to, he reads her every short story he comes up with. When he proposes to her, she is sure that they will live in love and penniless, but through love, Marito has finds his art and he shapes it into a career.

Pedro's character is shaped conversely to Marito; while Marito grows, Pedro shrinks. Their middle ground is their love of writing. It is Pedro's love for the art of writing and performing that drives him to work incessantly. Where Marito's love for a woman blossoms his talent, Pedro has to remain far from flesh and blood love in order to create his masterpieces. It is the love of a woman that apparently drove him to leave Bolivia and later drove him insane. Pedro's love and muse is the art itself, and his complete dedication to that love makes him an artistic genius. When Pedro is distracted from his work by flesh and blood issues, he loses his mind completely; his art is the only thing he knows how to love unconditionally.

Imagination from Reality

The most repeated criticism of Marito's work is that it lacks imagination. Marito is too grounded in reality to make his fictional stories exciting. On the opposite side, Pedro dives so deeply into the world of his imagination that he doesn't know how to live in the real world. His imagination eventually sucks him in too far and he loses his grasp on reality. Through the time spent with Pedro and finding passion in his work, Marito finds a balance in the middle of the two extremes.

"Why is it you like radio serials so much? I asked my granny one day. 'What do they offer that books don't, for example?' I made a similar survey among some of my other relatives...because they were entertaining, sad or dramatics, because they were diverting and set a person to dreaming..." (p. 91) he says. Through the radio serials, Pedro has used his imagination to encourage his readers to use theirs. They envision themselves within the characters and settings that Pedro sets up. As a writer, Pedro



envisions himself in every character as well; he dresses as them to create a physical fantasy where he can be a doctor, judge, police officer, man, woman or child. Pedro creates worlds based on the reality of Lima, but with an element of intrigue and drama, making it a new world. The listeners recognize elements of their Lima home but characters with amazing life stories are placed into the scene. Pedro's mistake is putting so much of himself into the story that he blurs the lines between imagination and reality. It is clear in this novel that reality is a necessary function of the imagination but the creator of the fantasy needs both to thrive.

Marito succeeds by learning from Pedro's mistakes, his imagination sparks when he finds true happiness in reality. His search for creating a good story begins with roots in reality—he wants most for his stories to be true. He quickly learns that the people around him are amused and intrigued by his experiences with Pedro, at the radio station and his love affair with Aunt Julia. Unlike Pedro, Marito finds life first, and it is this that offers him the most imaginative stories and experiences.

Significance of Family

Marito is the perfect character to display the importance of family to the author. Through Marito, the author gives the reader a parallel between strong family bonds and a fulfilled life. Marito's parents no longer live with him in Peru, but the reader barely notices their absence until they return. Marito faithfully enjoys a weekly lunch with his aunt and uncle. The relationship with his Uncle Lucho is one of the first things the reader notices because it is the first thing Marito seems truly happy about. Through his interaction with his uncle, the reader can tell that Marito is passionate about his family. Soon his cousin Nancy is introduced, then his grandparents, then more aunts and more uncles. They all know each other, they all look out for one another and they all want to see Marito succeed. "Everybody in the family was hoping you'd amount to something. We're heartsick at seeing you dive headfirst into mediocrity" (p. 337). His family almost causes the demise of his relationship with Aunt Julia, but his uncle explains that it is only because they want the best for him.

The author also uses Pedro Camacho to emphasize the important role of family to life. It can be assumed that Pedro Camacho's story and upbringing has been the opposite of Marito. Pedro has no one; he makes no mention of any family or friends he may have ever had. He leaves his home of Bolivia without a second glance and lives as if he has no time for deep relationships, compared to Marito and his family. When Pedro's life takes a severe turn and he ends up in a mental institution, no one comes to help him. He is left to be saved by a former wife and prostitute who may be part of the reason he went insane in the first place. Marito defied his family, but he admits through the course his life takes that he couldn't have found happiness without them.

Style

Point of View

Eleven of the twenty chapters are told from a first person point of view. The main character, Marito, details his experiences during a specific time in his life. The author uses the point of view to make the story seem significant to the reader and almost biographical. The first point of view gives the impression of a true account of this young man's experience. Using another voice would not have given the reader an equally honest insight into how Marito's life was changed internally by the introduction of Aunt Julia and Pedro Camacho. Marito's life truly took form when he meets Pedro and falls in love with Aunt Julia, but it isn't a transformation that any of his peers or family notices until it has already taken effect. With this point of view, Marito has the opportunity to account firsthand having wine for the first time or quietly emulating Pedro's work ethic.

The remaining nine chapters are told from a third person narrative point of view. These chapters are samples of Pedro Camacho's serials. The stories outline various characters and their experiences. The use of a narrative voice places the reader in the position of one of the radio listeners. The reader experiences the anticipation and intrigue of Pedro's stories without having to be told by someone else. In the chapters about Marito's life, the reader doesn't get much insight into Pedro Camacho. His dialogue with Marito is often short and vague but the reader can view Pedro in his true form through the serials.

Setting

The chapters about Marito's life and the chapters with the serials themselves are all set in Peru, mainly in the city of Lima. There are references in the novel to Chile, Argentina, Cuba and Bolivia. The main character, Marito, and his family were born and raised in Miraflores, Peru and most still reside there. Marito works and goes to school in Lima, Peru and this area is the focal point for Pedro Camacho's stories. Pedro's home was Bolivia before moving to Peru for the job at Radio Central. Pedro uses a map of Lima and its surrounding area as a key ingredient to his writing. He wants to learn the setting for his stories to portray his characters through race and class and any other existing elements. Lima is a busy area with restaurants, schools and other businesses. It is clearly in the early stages of development because it is largely changed within the few years that Marito is away in Europe.

In the chapters with Pedro Camacho's serials, the city of Lima becomes a character of its own due to the fantasy and fiction used to depict the city. The most attractive feature for Pedro's radio serials is that Lima is recognizable yet completely different from the city they know. Through Pedro's imagination, the listeners have a more exciting version of their city. Although each listener gets lost in this imaginary world, the author uses Pedro's Lima to draw a direct parallel with the real city and its inhabitants. Many of



Marito's escapades have elements that compare to Pedro's serials. With an imaginary city and a real city side by side, the author is able to show the reader how reality functions with and without fantasy. Realism without imagination will not survive any better than imagination without reality. It is a fine line that Pedro and Marito must learn in order to be successful writers and storytellers.

Language and Meaning

Marito is the young star of his Peruvian family; he is educated, driven and still sociable with everyone around him. The main chapters of the story use his voice in the form of comfortable language and colloquialisms while still informing the reader that the main character is educated and witty. The native language of all of the main characters is Spanish, but there are only a few Spanish references left as such without translation into English. The radio serials are used to offer the reader a better look at the variety of levels of class and education through language. The characters in the serials come from all walks of life, and the serials speak directly through their voices. Although biased against certain groups, Pedro Camacho aimed to use language and dialogue to fairly represent the feelings, emotions, and lifestyles of every character.

Structure

The novel is made up of twenty chapters and 374 pages. The chapters are divided into two types of plots, and the novel becomes almost two books in one alternating consecutively. Eleven chapters are built on the story of the main character Marito and are told from his point of view. His experience includes the story of his life and when his path crosses with Pedro Camacho, his family, his friends and Aunt Julia. To give the story of his life more emphasis and to slow the pace of his coming of age, the chapters of his life are followed the written accounts of Pedro Camacho's radio serials. The remaining nine chapters of this novel are dedicated to these serials which, within themselves, allow the reader to get true insight into a major character. Overall, the chapters are moderate in length and flow smoothly even with the plot jumps.



Quotes

"On one of those sunny spring mornings in Lima when the geraniums are an even brighter red, the roses more fragrant, and the bougainvilleas curlier as they awaken..."
p. 18

"All that gossip turned out to be true. Senator Selcedo can't get it up! If I were certain he'd stay that way, I'd marry him for his dough...But what if I cured him? Can't you just see that old gaffer trying to make up for lost time with me?"
p. 47

"He was a man in the prime of his life, his fifties...broad forehead, aquiline nose, penetrating gaze, the very soul of rectitude and goodness."
p. 60

"The difference in age between us wasn't all that tremendous...'No all that tremendous, no' she answered, 'But almost—I'm very nearly old enough for you to be my son.'"
p. 88

"The love affair of a baby and an old lady who's also more or less your aunt."
p. 90

"When I asked them why they like soap operas more than books, they protested: what nonsense, there was no comparison, books were culture and radio serials mere clap trap to help pass the time...the truth of the matter was that they lived with their ears glued to the radio and I'd never seen one of them open a book."
p. 91

"I am pure, Your Honor, I have never known a woman. What other men use to sin with, I only use to pee with..."
p. 119

"Dr. Don Pedro Barreda y Zaldivar, the very soul of rectitude and goodness—and in bearing his spotless moral virtue it was so apparent as to earn him people's immediate respect."
p. 103

"Dr. Don Pedro Barreda y Zaldivar, the very soul of rectitude and goodness—and in bearing his spotless moral virtue it was so apparent as to earn him people's immediate respect."
p. 103

"I had come to feel genuine friendship for him; about and the entomological curiosity he aroused in me, I truly respected him. But was the feeling mutual? Pedro Camacho didn't seem to me to be capable of wasting his time, his energy on friendships or on anything



else that would distract him from 'his art.'"
p. 127

"In order to make certain that his daughters would end up virtuous females, Don Federico organized their lives in rigorous detail: no low necklines, dark stockings and long-sleeved smocks and sweaters both winter and summer, no nail polish, lipstick, rouge, eye makeup, no bangs, braids, ponytails; no sports or diversions that might bring them into proximity with males, such as going to the beach or attending birthday parties."
p. 146

"I said I didn't have any doubts as to how popular he was and made me blush by suggesting that, since I too had 'literary inclinations' I should follow the Bolivian's example and learn his tricks for winning a mass audience. 'You mustn't shut yourself up in an ivory tower.'"
p. 167

"He ran to kiss the hands of Don Federico Tellez Unzategui...pointing out that cured of not if his homicidal complexes, he was to show up for work on time at Rodent Exterminators, Incorporated or be fined."
p. 189

"The family's discovered what's going on, and they're up in arms."
p. 229

"Something embarrassing is happening to me these days...I'm losing track of where I am in my scripts, I'm not sure of what I'm doing, and confusions creep in...I know you're a loyal young man, a friend who can be trusted. Not a word of any of this to the merchants!"
p. 241

"My compatriot? Are you having an affair of the heart with an Argentine—pardon me—a Bolivian woman?" p. 239

"To get the Peruvian Minister of Foreign Relations to certify the Bolivian documents...I had to invent another involved radio serial." p. 272

"She sat there looking at me, feeling sorry about all the trouble I was going to and at the same time deeply moved. A smile slowly appeared on her face. 'If you'll swear to put up with me for five years, without losing your heart to anyone else, loving only me, okay. For five years of happiness I'll do this utterly mad thing.'"
p. 272

"I felt that I loved her very much and was happy to be marrying her...I vowed to myself that we wouldn't be like all the married couples I knew, one more disaster, but would live happily ever after, and that getting married wouldn't stop me from becoming a writer someday."
p. 299



"He realized that I'd fallen in love, there was nothing wrong with that; after all, it proved I was a man."

p. 356



Topics for Discussion

The two entities, "Aunt Julia" and "The Scriptwriter" almost form their own plots within the same story. Beside Marito, what are the elements that join these two plots?

Explore reasons why Aunt Julia and Pedro Camacho have origins in the same country.

What is the significance of Pedro Camacho's mental breakdown and loss of status?

Hints of Pedro's life appear in his serials. What are the key characteristics that Pedro shares with his characters? What do these characteristics indicate about Pedro?

Marito's relationships with Pedro and Julia are the focus of the plot, but he is clearly influenced by his family as well. Explore the role Marito's family plays in shaping his life.

What indications does Marito give that he is maturing? Compare his character at the opening of the novel to him at the ending.

Why do Marito and Pedro's lives grow conversely and what makes one succeed while the other plunges?