

# **The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse Study Guide**

**The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse by Vicente  
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# Plot Summary

*The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* follows several members of a multi-cultural family, as World War I wages on around them. The novel begins in the days leading up to the war, introducing the Desnoyers family. The Desnoyers include the father, a retired rancher, his Argentinean wife, and their two children, son Julio and daughter Chichi. Also introduced are the family's German cousins. As the war begins, the family cannot believe that such a war can be bad for their family or their country. However, as the war continues, and they suffer many losses, the family quickly learns that war is not an affair to be taken lightly. *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* is a timeless story about family, love and loss that will continue to be enjoyed for decades to come.

Julio Desnoyers waits in the garden of Chapelle Expiatoire for his lover to meet him. Julio has just returned from a trip to Argentina in order to raise money for his impending marriage. While he has been gone, talk of war with Germany has increased. On his journey home, Julio traveled on a German ship. On board ship, the captain at first went out of his way to make all the French citizens feel comfortable. However, when news of the tensions between the two countries increased, the German captain and his crew members became increasingly hostile. Now, Julio watches as the people around him are reading more about these tensions in the evening papers. When Julio's love finally joins him, he becomes concerned about what these rumors of war will do to their impending marriage.

Julio's father is a French citizen who ran away from the conflict of 1870, traveling to Argentina rather than be a soldier in his home country's military. While searching for ways to become a rich man, Julio becomes employed by a local rancher. This rancher has no legitimate sons, so he takes Marcelo under his wing. Marcelo works as foreman on the ranch, putting up with his boss's hot temper and unusual generous nature in hopes of one day running the entire ranch. While being treated as a member of the family, Marcelo falls in love with the owner's oldest daughter. They marry. Soon after, the boss brings in a German accountant to help Marcelo oversee the books for the ranch. The boss's youngest daughter falls in love with the German and runs away with him, when the boss forbids their love. Soon, they return to the ranch and reside under Marcelo's protection from the boss. Grandchildren begin to fill the ranch, with Marcelo's children becoming the light of the old rancher's day, especially his son who is named after the old rancher. When the rancher dies, the majority of the estate goes to Marcelo and his wife. Soon after, the German brother-in-law sells his inheritance and returns to Germany with his family. Marcelo retires and moves his family to Buenos Aires.

After a short time, Marcelo's family becomes envious of the letters they receive from their aunt in Germany and suggest to Marcelo that they follow suit and move to Marcelo's native France. Soon Marcelo is infected with this same enthusiasm and prepares to move his family to Paris. Once there, Marcelo indulges in antique collecting, scouring many sources in order to find the best bargains. Soon the large apartment he has rented for his family in Paris is overcrowded. Marcelo finds a good deal on castle in the country and buys it, furnishing it with all the bargain antiques he can find. Julio, in



the time being, decides he wants to be a painter. The family buys him a studio in the city where Julio, instead of spending his time painting, spends his time drinking in the salons and waging honor battles. When Julio becomes a tango teacher and becomes the lover of a married woman, Marcelo washes his hands of the young man, outraged at his son's dishonorable behavior.

When war is declared, the family can only watch as other men are called to war. Julio is exempt from becoming a soldier since he is not a French citizen. However, his lover's husband and brother are called to duty. Soon all she can think of is the loneliness in which she watched her husband go to war. The lover becomes a nurse in order to help with the war effort. Soon after this, rumors begin that the German military is on its way to Germany. Marcelo sends his wife and daughter to the South while he goes to protect his precious antiques in his country castle. Julio's lover leaves town as well and he goes after her.

Marcelo arrives in the country just as the French retreat through the small village where his castle lies. Soon after the German's arrive, commandeering his castle for their general's headquarters. Marcelo is forced to sit idly by while the residents of the village are killed in cold blood and his castle is emptied of all its valuables. Soon after, the caretaker is murdered and his daughter raped. The next day, the general and his men move toward the battle taking place just on the other side of the river. More Germans come, using the castle as a hospital for the wounded. Once again, Marcelo is forced to sit idly by while they dig graves in his gardens to bury their dead. However, the battle turns, and the Germans retreat. The castle is destroyed as the French push the Germans even further, once again taking control of the tiny village.

During Marcelo's adventures, Julio searches for and finds his lover. Her husband has been wounded in a battle and she has come to care for him. Julio is heartbroken when she tells him that she still loves her husband despite her love for Julio and she plans to stay with him. Julio offers to become a soldier like her husband, but the lover refuses to waver in her decision. Julio joins the war effort anyway, stopping Paris only long enough to say farewell to his father.

In Julio's absence, his parents become frequent visitors to his studio where a friend has taken up residence. Marcelo becomes such a frequent visitor that the friend is overwhelmed by his presence. A senator friend of Marcelo's, to whose son his daughter is engaged, arranges for himself and Marcelo to go to the war front in order to visit their son's. The trip is dangerous and uncomfortable, but Marcelo is given the chance to see his son in the trenches and to realize that his son has now become a man. Shortly afterward, the senator's son is wounded and returns home. There is a quiet wedding after his wounds heal. During this time, Julio is also wounded in a face to face battle with a German captain who turns out to be the same captain who was on the boat Julio took from Argentina months before. After Julio returns to the front, his mother fears the worst. Soon after, word comes to the family that Julio has been killed in battle. The family goes to the battle site in order to visit his grave, the elder Desnoyers regretting their move to Paris and looking forward to their own deaths. Their daughter, at the same

time, feels deep relief that her husband is not one of the fallen and looks forward to their future together.



# Part 1, Chapter 1, The Tryst (In the Garden of Chapelle Expiatoire)

## Part 1, Chapter 1, The Tryst (In the Garden of Chapelle Expiatoire) Summary

*The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* follows several members of a multi-cultural family as World War I wages on around them. The novel begins in the days leading up to the war introducing the Desnoyers family, the father, a retired rancher, his Argentinean wife, and their two children, son Julio and daughter Chichi. Also introduced are the family's German cousins. As the war begins, the family cannot believe that such a war can be bad for their family or their country. However, as the war continues and they suffer many losses, the family quickly learns that war is not an affair to be taken lightly. *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* is a timeless story about family, love, and loss that will continue to be enjoyed for decades to come.

Julio is in the garden of Chapelle Expiatoire awaiting the arrival of his lover, Marguerite Laurier. Julio has been in Argentina arranging for the money he needs to marry Marguerite. While he waits, he looks around at all the people in the garden, surprised at their numbers in comparison with past tryst he and his lover have had here. There are rumors of war, and these people are all here in order to read about it in the papers and discuss it with each other. Julio has heard these rumors. His trip back to France from Argentina took place on a German ship.

In the beginning of the trip, the captain of the boat was quite friendly to the French passengers, playing Marseillaise to celebrate the great festival of France. However, as the trip progressed and talk of war became common, the friendliness of the German captain began to wane. Quite often at night, Julio would join the captain and other passengers in the smoking room and listen to the discussions. At first, Julio refused to comment, telling everyone that he was an Argentine citizen, and therefore had no concerns about the French involvement in these tensions. However, as the talk continued to grow tense, Julio could not stop his comments, although the wife of the captain, who had become his lover, attempted in vain to keep him silent. The closer the ship drew to Europe, the more they received news of the growing tensions between Germany and France and England. On the last day of Julio's voyage, they drew close to the coast of France and found the Channel Fleet there. The German's became quiet and encouraged the passengers to disembark quicker than had originally been planned.

Now Julio paces as he awaits Marguerite's arrival. Finally she appears, tense and determined to hide from prying eyes. Julio wants to kiss and hug her, but Marguerite will only allow him to hold her hands. They discuss Marguerite's husband, who owns a car factory and has practically taken up residence there. They discuss the war, which only bores Julio and makes him concerned over how it will affect their plans. Julio wants nothing more than to marry Marguerite and live happily ever after, unbothered by the



affairs of the world. Julio assures Marguerite that he has gotten the money he traveled to get and that they can marry as soon as her divorce is clear. Julio then tells her that he went to see his family. Julio went through the service stairs to the kitchen in order to avoid his father and was surprised to find his aunt in residence at the house as well. Marguerite has grown agitated over the possibility that they might be seen and refuses to go home with Julio. Marguerite tries to cut their visit short, but Julio pushes her into a taxi and takes her home anyway.

## **Part 1, Chapter 1, The Tryst (In the Garden of Chapelle Expiatoire) Analysis**

Julio is a young man whose biggest concern is marrying his lover. This opens up the list of character elements to this main character. Julio knows all about the tensions between France and Germany, but he does not worry about them except to the extent that they might cause him and his lover to have to put off their wedding. Julio clearly has weak morals as he is having an affair with a married woman and he also had a brief affair on the ship that he traveled from Argentina to France upon. However, it is unclear to the reader at this point if his morals overall are corrupt or if these actions are simply those of a young man who has not fully matured yet. This chapter foreshadows that thought, as the reader hopes the rest of the novel will show more about this young man and his character. It is important to note three other things in this chapter. First is Julio's relationship with Marguerite. This is clearly an important relationship to Julio and it foreshadows the course the relationship will take throughout the rest of the novel. It also touches on the theme of relationships. Also touching on this theme is the illusion to Julio's family. Julio goes home to visit his family but is careful to avoid seeing his father. This suggests that Julio and his father are currently on the outs with one another. This also foreshadows a time when this split will be explained as well as plot developments that will either further alienate father and son or bring them back together. Finally, the last important element to point out in this chapter is the presence of the aunt in the household. Although there is little information about this aunt at the moment, her presence foreshadows a time when she will become an important element in the development of the plot.





# Part 1, Chapter 2, Madariaga, The Centaur

## Part 1, Chapter 2, Madariaga, The Centaur Summary

Marcelo Desnoyers was forced to pick a trade at fourteen in order to care for his widowed mother. Marcelo chose wood carving. While Marcelo's mother lived in the country with relatives, Marcelo remained in Paris. Marcelo did not support the Empire, as most boys his age, so when the republicans began to rise up against the Empire and he saw the cruel treatment of the protestors, Marcelo left the country in protest against the Empire. Marcelo found himself on a ship bound for Argentina. Once there, Marcelo tried many professions in order to make his fortune, eventually finding himself working on a ranch outside of Buenos Aires.

The owner of the ranch, a transplanted Spaniard, took a special interest in Marcelo. The owner, Julio Madariaga, had no legitimate sons, and thought perhaps Marcelo might become a surrogate son to him. Madariaga was known in the area as a man with a cruel temper that he attempted to dull with a generosity that was unmatched. Madariaga also had a habit of spending time with women not his wife and taking their children under his care at the ranch.

Marcelo learned a lot under the direction of Madariaga. Marcelo also admired Madariaga's cool under pressure. Marcelo once watched Madariaga rail against a thief who butchered one of his cows and did not leave behind the skin. When the thief attacked again, this time killing three of his animals, but leaving behind the skin, Madariaga was not angry at all. Madariaga also liked to spend much time outside, riding around the expanse of his lands. Madariaga made Marcelo a part of his family, inviting him to the family table. Madariaga's wife, whom he called China, or native woman, was quiet, often allowing her husband to behave in outrageous ways without reprisal. Madariaga had two daughters, Luisa, who Madariaga referred to as Chicha, because she was so much like her mother, and Elena, who Madariaga called La Romantica for her interest in music, books, and other fine arts.

Both of Madariaga's daughters had many suitors. Marcelo would accompany them to church and listen to them talk afterward of the young men who would hang out by the church doors in order to steal a moment of their time. However, the suitors brave enough to come to the ranch would not last long because of Madariaga's dark temper. Then one day Marcelo, who was now manager of the ranch, went to Madariaga and told him he would be leaving. Marcelo had fallen in love with Luisa and wanted to end the absurd relationship. Instead, Madariaga gave permission for the two to be married.

Soon after, Madariaga began spending large amounts of time in the city. During this period, Madariaga brought a young German gentleman to the ranch in order to be his accountant. Madariaga is proud of his ranch and its many people of foreign



backgrounds. Madariaga himself is a Spaniard while Marcelo is French and Karl is German. Madariaga is proud to have all these nationalities represented without tension on his ranch. Marcelo soon after learned that the German was the friend of a stranded opera singer who Madariaga had been dating. The woman, however, had been using Madariaga for his money. When Madariaga learned this truth, he began to dislike the German accountant, Karl Hartrott. Not long after this, Madariaga learned that his youngest daughter, Elena, was in love with Karl. Elena claimed that Karl was of nobility, a fact Madariaga refused to believe. When Karl confessed his love for Elena and asked her hand in marriage, Madariaga pulled a knife on him and might have killed him had Marcelo not interceded.

Karl left the ranch and Elena followed. Madariaga wanted nothing to do with either, even after learning that they had had a son and named him Julio. Finally, Madariaga allowed Karl and Elena to return to the ranch, but refused to allow them to live in the main house with the rest of the family. Madariaga also refused to acknowledge their children as his grandchildren. Karl began to hide behind Marcelo for protection for Madariaga's temper.

When Marcelo and Luisa had a son, Julio, Madariaga took the boy under his wing, spending long hours riding horses with him, teaching him about ranching, and spoiling him with many material things. After Julio went to school in the city, Madariaga took his sister in his stead, sharing with her all the things he shared with Julio until Julio's return. The older Madariaga got and the more concerned his family became about his well being, the more determined he was to ride his lands as he did as a younger man. Madariaga's wife died, and suddenly she became the love of his life to be remembered fondly, rather than as the China whom Madariaga treated with disdain his entire marriage. At the age of eighty-four, Madariaga went off to ride his horse and fell off beside the highway, dying alone.

The will was a voluminous document. Marcelo and Luisa inherited the bulk of the estate with a large portion also going to Karl and Elena. The remaining assets were divided among eighty-five illegitimate children of Madariaga's who had come to live on the ranch. A final bequest was land left to Julio to make up for monies his father would not allow him to have. Marcelo thought that they should keep all the land together in order for him to continue overseeing it, a system that had worked well in the past. However, Karl insisted on selling his lands so that he and his family could start over in Berlin.

## **Part 1, Chapter 2, Madariaga, The Centaur Analysis**

This chapter is told in the past tense in order to show the reader how the Desnoyers family became what it is and how they came to be in Paris. Marcelo ran from certain military service when he fled his country in 1870. This is important, because it foreshadows not only the reasons why Marcelo did not return to his country in his youth, but a time when Marcelo will regret his choice. However, in moving to Argentina, Marcelo met the man who would not only offer him a job and introduce him to his future wife, but the man who would make him a millionaire.



Madariaga is a man with a quick temper and a quicker generosity. Madariaga is important to the story, because his position as surrogate father to Marcelo teaches him a great deal and shapes him into the man he will become. Madariaga teaches Marcelo business smarts, but he also teaches him about generosity, a trait that foreshadows a time when Marcelo will find himself acting with the same charity that he watched his father-in-law share. Also the reader sees how Karl Hartrott came into Marcelo's life, presenting tension into the plot as the reader is already aware of the tensions between France and Germany in the present tense of the novel, complicating family life for the Desnoyers due to their relations in Germany. This chapter also deeply illuminates the theme of relationships and family as it shows the development of a family as everyone is related to Marcelo.

The tensions between Madariaga and the German side of the family in this chapter begin to illuminate the tensions that will take place on a larger scale later in the novel. The mention of how the people of so many different nationalities could co-exist so happily on the ranch just days before Madariaga attempts to kill Karl and then shuts Karl and his own daughter out of his life despite their close proximity to his home, is a parallel of the tensions that are erupting in Europe at the time in which the first chapter of the novel took place. It is as though the small world of the ranch was an accurate prediction of the tensions of the various countries in the larger world. In this way, this chapter foreshadows not only the war, but the tensions that will develop between countries and family members.



# Part 1, Chapter 3, The Desnoyers Family

## Part 1, Chapter 3, The Desnoyers Family Summary

After Madariaga's death, Marcelo decided to retire. Marcelo leased some of plantations, handed over the inherited lands to their rightful owners, and moved his family to Buenos Aires. Soon the family began getting letters from Elena, expressing how wonderful their lives were in Germany. As was the tradition in Germany, Karl was granted the prestigious von to distinguish him from ordinary citizens due to his family's exemplary military service and his own wealth, with which he bought extensive lands and invested in munitions factories. Marcelo found all this interesting, because he knew that Karl had been run out of his country years before for stealing money from his military company.

Soon Marcelo's family started asking why they too did not live in Europe. Marcelo was from France and yet none in his family had ever seen it. After a while, Marcelo began to wonder the same thing. Marcelo had originally avoided returning to France due to his avoidance of military service, but that had ceased to be a concern. Finally, the family packed up and moved to Paris. Marcelo set his family up in a house on the avenue Victor Hugo. Marcelo soon began to buy antiques and such to decorate the house, forbidding anyone else to decorate it. However, Marcelo found so many bargains that the house became overcrowded with his purchases. Then Marcelo bought a castle to hold the antiques that did not fit or were not appropriate for the house. It was also through the purchase of this castle that Marcelo met Senator Lacour, a neighbor, whose son would soon catch the eye of Marcelo's daughter.

Marcelo was happy in his new life except for his children. Chichi was independent and insisted on taking up ice skating, a sport that annoyed Marcelo due to its lack of ladylike charms. Marcelo also disapproved of Julio's lifestyle. Julio had decided to become an artist and after some hesitation, Marcelo agreed and bought him a studio. However, Julio did not enjoy the actual act of painting and would spend much of his time attracting beautiful women to be his models and frequenting the night spots of Paris. Soon Marcelo heard of Julio's exploits through social acquaintances who were impressed with Julio's prowess with the sword. As an attempt to remove Julio from this lifestyle, Marcelo took his family to visit the von Hartrott family in Berlin. However, the visit proved to be unpleasant due to the conceited attitude of the von Hartrott family and their countrymen. Julio, too, found it unpleasant due to the wild nightspots to which his cousins took him, believing them to be better than the ones in Paris but proving them to only be less clean, less proper.

When they returned to Paris, Julio had a new roommate, a young Spaniard who was also a painter. Julio took to this young man and made him a sort of secretary in exchange for room and board. Argensola taught Julio how to paint the souls of his subjects and would often share with him the plots of the many books he would read. Julio found his expenses were beginning to stretch beyond the monthly allowance his father gave him, and the two would have many fights over an increase Julio thought he



deserved. Finally Julio began sending Argensola to visit his mother in order to receive money or goods they could exchange for money. Dona Luisa, aware of the tension between Julio and his father, would give the gifts willingly and would spend a great deal of time at church praying for the two men in her life.

The tango became a craze in Paris. Julio, who had grown up watching people perform the dance, became quite the celebrity when he began to perform the dance at the local dance halls. Shortly after, Julio began taking women to his studio to teach them the dance. It was during this time that Julio met Marguerite. Julio met Marguerite at the senator's home during a party that Marcelo also attended. Marcelo liked Marguerite and her husband, the owner of a car factory; therefore he was very upset when he learned that his own son was having an affair with the young man's wife. After a few months of sneaking around, Marguerite was followed to Julio's studio by her husband. The husband was quite angry, making the affair a public scandal. Soon after, Marguerite moved out to her mother's home and began divorce proceedings.

## **Part 1, Chapter 3, The Desnoyers Family Analysis**

This chapter is again told in the past tense as the narrator, in this case Marcelo, informs the reader how the family came to Paris from Argentina. Marcelo was born in France, but his family had never sent the country. Due to their jealousy of the German family, they encouraged their father to return. Here again Marcelo thinks about his decision to leave France rather than join the military, an important fact because it not only is the partial reason why Marcelo never returned to France, but it also foreshadows a time when Marcelo will regret his decision.

Marcelo begins buying antiques and searching for bargains as though he is beginning a new business. This is important to the development of the plot, because it introduces the castle that Marcelo buys in the country. This castle, along with the antiques housed inside of it, foreshadows a time when Marcelo will reside at the castle later in the novel. It is also important, because it shows the reader the depth of Marcelo's financial status, which will prove to be important in his relationship with his son. Julio has been spoiled since he was a small child, first by his grandfather and then by his father's money. Now, Julio has begun to live the life of a carefree bachelor, unconcerned with the rumors his father hears about him. When Julio goes to his father for more money, his father refuses. After all, Marcelo has already bought his son an art studio in which the boy is supposed to be making a living for himself. This break between father and son becomes deeper when Marcelo learns his son is having an affair with a married woman. This explores the theme of relationships, not only introducing the beginning of Julio's relationship with Marguerite which will prove important later in the novel, but also exploring the rift between Julio and his father, explaining why it exists, and foreshadowing a time when it will either grow deeper or heal.



# Part 1, Chapter 4, The Cousin from Berlin

## Part 1, Chapter 4, The Cousin from Berlin Summary

While Julio was in Argentina, Argensola had made the acquaintance of the neighbors. In one apartment live a husband and wife who are very solitary and did not respond well to Argensola's attempts at friendship. It is rumored that the wife is German. The other apartment is home to a Russian man whom Argensola imagined was a great spy, but turned out to only be a translator of literary works and political pamphlets. One morning after Julio's return, Argensola is out in the hallway discussing the possibility of war with Tchernoff, the Russian, when a man appears asking for Julio. The visitor turns out to be Julio's cousin from Berlin.

Julius von Hartrott, the eldest of the German cousins, is a professor in a university in Berlin and has come to France to visit his mother, who is staying with the Desnoyers. The two cousins greet each other courteously, though they do not particularly like each other. The German has simply come to see Julio out of a sense of family obligation before returning to Berlin. Julius tells Julio and Argensola that he is in a hurry to return home, because he believes war will begin in a matter of days. When asked why he believes this, Julius begins a lecture that explains his position without the chance of misunderstanding. Julius believes the German race is the purest race of all in the world. Julius says that the Germans have a duty to take control of all the races that spawned from their own, including the French, the English, and the Russians in order to create one society ruled by one leader. The Germans would allow each of those countries to continue to have their own governments, but these governments would answer to the supreme government of Germany. Julius continues, speaking of all the reasons why Germans are the supreme race, sighting their advances in the sciences and higher education, as well as their emphasis on the military. Despite Argensola's outrage at Julius's speech, Julio humors his cousin and listens as Julius continues to extol the wonders of his race.

Julius believes the war will be won in only four months due to the superiority of the German military and that many of the inferior countries, such as France and Russia, will break out in revolution as soon as the war begins, weakening their ability to fight. Argensola argues that there really is no pure German culture, basing his argument on the philosopher Nietzsche. Julius says that Nietzsche cannot be taken seriously, because he was a poet and demented at death. When Julius leaves, Julio is suddenly more depressed and concerned about the possibility of war than he has been since the idea first crossed his mind. Argensola attempts to cheer him up by saying that France has known to surprise her people before, why should now be any different?



## Part 1, Chapter 4, The Cousin from Berlin Analysis

Foreshadowing future chapters, Argensola introduces the reader to the other occupants of the apartments in Julio's studio building. The first is a husband and wife who keep primarily to themselves. The fact that the woman is rumored to be a German is interesting in the face of possible war with Germany. The other is a Russian who works translating the written world and has many opinions about the war. This group of people foreshadow a time when they will reappear in the novel at pivotal points in the narration.

The appearance of the cousin from Berlin does three things for the development of the plot. First, it establishes that on the brink of war, Julio's aunt is still in residence at the Desnoyers residence. Second, it establishes the relationship between Julio and his cousins, which appears to be tense and uncomfortable. Finally, the cousin expresses his and his country's opinions on the war. The cousin, Julius, believes that the Germans are superior and that they should and will conquer all the European lands that require the help of the pure German race to help them run their countries. This is important, because it once again establishes the conceit of the Germans and it foreshadows future run ins with the Germans by members of the Desnoyers family and what they should expect at these meetings. Not only this, but this conversation also reveals some of the historic causes of World War I. This chapter also once again taps the theme of relationships and family, again establishing that the Desnoyers have relatives that will very soon be on the opposing side of an invading military in their country. This causes tension and it also sets up a time when the Desnoyers will learn the role of their family members in this war.



# Part 1, Chapter 5, In Which Appear the Four Horsemen

## Part 1, Chapter 5, In Which Appear the Four Horsemen Summary

Over the next few weeks tensions increase as rumors of war continue to mount. Russia is mobilizing its military, as is Germany. The Austrians are bombarding Belgrade. Austria has declared war on Russia. Germany has begun isolating herself by cutting off railroad and telegraphic communications with neighboring countries. The mood in Paris is cautious but friendly, with everyone seeming to know everyone else. Then, there is the assassination of Jaures. Suddenly, fears of a revolution spread, but they pass quietly in the night. Then the orders for mobilization are received. The mobilization began at midnight. The streets are filled with men walking bravely to the train station with their wives, children, mothers, sisters, walking beside them. It is impossible to get a taxi in Paris, because all cars have been reserved for use by soldiers called to duty.

Julio and Argensola, who are not required to join the military since they are not French citizens, meet at a cafe and watch the spirit of French pride run through the city. People in the cafe are discussing the war and singing patriotic songs. Argensola watches a woman he has been attempting to seduce for weeks go home with a man she barely noticed before, only because he is off to war the next day. Argensola leaves the cafe in disgust, dragging Julio along with him. On the streets they run into their neighbor, Tchernoff. Tchernoff is clearly drunk and talking about the Germans who he suspect are also celebrating the patriotism much the same as the French. Tchernoff is concerned about this war, because he once lived in Germany and he knows that the Germans have no great concern for humanity; that they intend to crush all they come in contact with.

Tchernoff suddenly surprises his friends by announcing that he is a Christian. Tchernoff says that despite his political beliefs, he is a socialist and believes that the strong should sacrifice for the weak. Tchernoff has never seen a German do any such thing. Nearly home now, the three men stop under the Arc de Triomphe. Tchernoff knew Jaures and is deeply saddened by his death. Tchernoff is concerned that if Germans invade Paris they may damage this monument to the past. The arch is a monument to all the soldiers of the Grand Military, as sacred as the Parthenon or the Coliseum. Tchernoff believes if the Germans reach this arch, it will be a dark day for humanity.

Tchernoff thinks about the couple who occupy the other apartment in the building. The woman no longer plays the piano and Tchernoff can hear them argue some nights. Tchernoff thinks the man joined the military, and the woman is unhappy to be left alone. Tchernoff knows the woman is expecting a child and is sympathetic of her fears, especially since she is German and afraid that she will be put in a concentration camp due to this nationality.





They enter their building then and Argensola offers Tchernoff some wine. They can hear a group of men walking toward the railway station singing a patriotic song. It is then that Tcheroff quotes a Biblical passage that talk about the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. When Julio asks what he means, Tchernoff repeats the entire passage. There are four horsemen. The first rides a white horse, in his hand he carries a bow and his name is Conquest, or Plague. The second rides a flaming red horse and carries a sword. His name is War. The third rides a black horse, carries a scale, and he is called Famine. The fourth horse is pale, the rider carries a sickle, and his name is Death. Tchernoff shows his companions a rare book in which the horsemen are portrayed in engravings. While the men look at these pictures, a commotion arises in the courtyard. The German woman has killed herself.

## **Part 1, Chapter 5, In Which Appear the Four Horsemen Analysis**

The war has begun, and the good men of France have been mobilized into action. Julio and Argensola find the whole thing interesting, but only as far as it seems like a game to them. Tchernoff, their neighbor, knows better. Tchernoff knows the German people and he is afraid of their tyrannical and inhuman ways. Tchernoff knows what the German people are capable of and he mourns for France as well as his own country, Russia.

This chapter foreshadows the war that is about to unfold as well as touching on the theme of war. As the plot continues to develop, the war will become a major character. Right now the Desnoyers family is untouched by this conflict except for the idea that their German cousins might be involved in the fight. However, their strained relationship with these cousins makes it easier for them to deal with this idea. In the future of the novel, the war will become bigger and bigger to this family until their lives are changed irrevocably by it. This idea is what is foreshadowed by this chapter and Tchernoff's glum outlook on their future.

The symbolism of the four horsemen of the apocalypse is important to the plot development. Julio thinks his life is difficult right now, fighting to get the money he needs to support himself and to marry Marguerite, his only concern that war will complicate these matters. However, Julio has not begun to suffer yet. The horrors that the four horsemen represent will slowly fall upon him and his family, in small ways at times and in larger ones at other times. The symbolism of the four horsemen is a foreshadowing of the events to come, and the world Julio and his family are about to find themselves in.



# Part 2, Chapter 1, What Don Marcelo Envied

## Part 2, Chapter 1, What Don Marcelo Envied Summary

Marcelo is not happy about the war, seeing it as an example of the madness of his countrymen. Marcelo did not see how France could win a war against Germany and felt the effort was a waste of time. The sight of his fellow countrymen mobilizing shocked him, but it also helped revive some of his patriotism. Slowly, Marcelo finds himself drawn into the enthusiasm of the moment. At night he watched the men march to the rail stations, their families following close by, people of all nations walking together into peril. The French, English, Greeks, Romanians, Scandinavians, North Americans; it seemed all of Europe is passing through these streets. During the day, Marcelo will go to the stations and watch the send offs, feeling ashamed that he had run from his country when he could have stayed and fought as these men are doing.

One day, Marcelo goes down the street where his son lives, hoping to catch sight of him. While there, Marcelo visits the home of his carpenter and learns that he too plans to join the fight, despite the fact that he opposes all kinds of authority. The carpenter also has a wife and child he will be leaving behind. Again Marcelo is ashamed of his own lack of service for his country, wishing he could fight for her now but knowing he is too old. Marcelo watches a father send his father to war, and thinks about his own son fighting for France. However, Julio is not French but Argentinean and not required to fight. Marcelo is racked with guilt for his lack of military service for France and his inability to fight now, envious of those who are going and those who have relatives going.

## Part 2, Chapter 1, What Don Marcelo Envied Analysis

This chapter is all about Marcelo's character motivations. Marcelo watches the men go off to join their regiments, to fight in the front lines of this war, and he feels a deep sense of patriotic duty and wishes he had not run from his chance to fight for his country years before. Marcelo also regrets that his son will not be required to fight for his beloved France. This foreshadows a time when Marcelo's regrets will cause him to do something rash and unwise. This chapter also illuminates the theme of duty. Marcelo believes it is the duty of anyone who cares for his country to stand up and defend her in times of trouble. This is what haunts Marcelo, what makes him wish he was still young enough to fight.



## Part 2, Chapter 2, New Life

### Part 2, Chapter 2, New Life Summary

Julio has been unable to cash the check he brought back from Argentina, because the banks have refused to release any monies due to the war. This concerns Julio, because he wishes to use this money in order to marry Marguerite. However, Marguerite has not been coming around as often as he would like, either. Now is a time when money would truly come in handy, as well. Remembering the lack of supplies during the conflict of 1870, people have begun to stockpile food and drink. Argensola would like to do the same, but has no money. So Argensola has begun to get supplies from Dona Luisa who has been able to stock her own pantries quite well. Argensola has also found that the women left behind by the soldiers make great companions.

Marguerite's brother has been called to duty. Marguerite's mother is so upset by the prospect of losing her son that she could not accompany him to the rail station, so Marguerite goes. While saying goodbye to her brother, Marguerite sees her husband joining the mobilized soldiers, alone, with no one to wish him farewell. Marguerite finds it difficult to forget this vision. Marguerite also tells Julio about the letters she receives from her brother talking of her husband's heroic actions. Then, in the same breath, Marguerite will tell Julio it is a good thing he is a foreigner and does not have to go to war.

Marguerite begins training to become a nurse in order to offer some sort of service to her country. At times it seems to Julio that his Marguerite no longer exists, but at other times she talks of the nurse's uniform as she once talked about her own clothing, worrying over the overall look of the outfit. Marguerite stops coming by the studio as often as she once did, so Julio begins meeting her outside her classes to share a few minutes with her. While waiting, Julio runs into women he once taught the tango to. They ask why he is not at war, remembering belatedly that he is a foreigner.

Marguerite shares with Julio all she is learning, expressing a joy in her studies and suggesting that perhaps she should become a doctor. Marguerite also shares a desire to work on the battlefields while in the same breath expressing relief that Julio is not required to fight. This relief on Marguerite's side is beginning to make Julio feel as though she is protecting him, treating him like a child. Julio tells Argensola that they are in a poor position by not being required to go to war. Argensola agrees and aspires to create a legion of volunteers, comprised only of Spaniards and South Americans. However, Argensola found so much competition among the few members to be captain that he quit.



## Part 2, Chapter 2, New Life Analysis

Life has changed for people in Paris and this is what this chapter begins to describe. However, it quickly narrows its focus in order to show how life has changed for Julio. In the theme of relationships, Marguerite has become very important to Julio as he plans to marry her. However, the sight of her husband and brother going off to war has inspired in Marguerite a type of patriotism that developed in Marcelo in the previous chapter. Now, Marguerite wants to be a nurse in order to provide a service to the soldiers and to her country. This experience changes her from the spoiled girl she was before the war, showing a great amount of character growth in her, although Julio has not grown at all. Marguerite has also found a new compassion for her husband after having seen him in uniform and hearing of his heroic deeds at the front, foreshadowing a time when her feelings for her husband will overshadow her feelings for Julio. Julio feels left out, as though he is doing something wrong by not going to war or that Marguerite is protecting him as though he is some sort of child. This too foreshadows a time when Julio will begin to experience a desire to do more for this country that has become his home.



## Part 2, Chapter 3, The Retreat

### Part 2, Chapter 3, The Retreat Summary

Elena von Hartrott is forced by the war to remain in France with the Desnoyers family. This fact is an irritant to Marcelo, because Elena has strong opinions about the German side of the war and she is not shy to share them. At first it is her habit to share these opinions at the dinner table, but Marcelo put an end to that. Then Elena began sharing her opinions with Luisa who would later share them with Marcelo. Marcelo wants Elena to turn into her husband so that he can deal with her man on man. Chichi too has opinions about the war. Chichi imagines herself fighting along side the men or being employed as an assassin, often practicing her knife thrusts in front of the mirror. Luisa is scandalized by her daughter's behavior.

Belgian refugees begin flooding into Paris, forced from their homes and full of stories of the atrocities they have suffered at the hands of the Germans. As Belgium losses battle after battle, rumors begin that the German forces will soon be entering Paris. Luisa and Elena begin going to church to pray for the soldiers, Luisa for the French, Elena for the German. Marcelo sees Elena pray and is almost afraid that she will confuse God or cause Him to aid the wrong side. When Elena begins to come home with news about Germany that she did not get from the papers, Marcelo becomes alarmed not only about what she is saying, but that she may reveal her husband's nationality and bring shame on him and his family. Marcelo goes to see the senator and learns that there have been two major losses, and the possibility of the war coming to Paris had increased.

Marcelo arranges for his wife, daughter, and sister-in-law to travel south, away from the advancing forces. Later, Marcelo walks the streets of Paris, wondering what his son is up to, and he meets more groups of refugees. Marcelo hears many stories that concern him regarding the behavior of the German troops and remembers the gold bathtub that is in his castle in the country, right in the path of the moving troops. Marcelo decides he must go to the country and defend his property personally. Marcelo once more goes to the senator who thinks he is crazy. Even the government is preparing to leave Paris and to set up in Bordeaux as they did in 1870. Marcelo is determined to go, however, and the senator eventually arranges the passport required to travel.

The journey that should have taken only a few hours takes Marcelo fourteen hours. The trains are full of soldiers and supplies, stopping often to drop off or pick up more soldiers and supplies. When Marcelo arrives at the country train station, there is no one there to greet him and no car to be found. Marcelo must walk the eight miles to the little village where his castle sits. On the way Marcelo passes many people walking the opposite direction, hoping to reach Paris before the advancing soldiers. Marcelo stops at a country tavern for lunch, and the woman there wonders why everyone is so worried. War is about soldiers and has little to do with country folk. When Marcelo reaches the village he finds it nearly empty. The mayor and the priest, two men who have feuded in



the past, are there and appear to be friends once more. Many of the people, who once resented Marcelo for his heavy handed ways, welcome him back like an old friend.

Marcelo arrives at his castle and finds the Keeper still in residence with his wife and daughter, but the rest of his employees gone. Marcelo spends the day checking the grounds, finding everything in order except the majority of the animals have been confiscated for the war effort, and the fruit is heavy on the vines with no one to pick them. By afternoon there has begun a procession of French soldiers through the village, beginning with the wounded. Marcelo watches them and wishes he could do something for them. Marcelo begins to hand out bread and wine until a doctor stops him, informing him that many of these men are not in a condition to make it wise to eat and drink. In the morning, full regiments begin to march past the castle. Marcelo once again hands out wines, hoping to help in a small way these brave soldiers, trying not to wonder what it means that they are marching toward Paris rather than away.

The next morning the progression of the soldiers has slowed to a trickle. A few stragglers remain, so tired and sore from walking that they can barely march another step. Some of these stragglers have built a barricade at the entrance to the village. Marcelo remains at the barrier, watching the soldiers filter in. Time passes and Marcelo has no idea how much. Then, using the field classes he often uses to catch marauders on his property, Marcelo sees more troops in the woods, but these troops are wearing green uniforms rather than the French blue and red. These are German troops. The stragglers have seen this as well and have created a line of riffles behind the barriers. They begin to fire on the Germans, killing several soldiers before the regiment disappears behind the trees once more.

## **Part 2, Chapter 3, The Retreat Analysis**

The war seems to be taking place on a smaller scale in Marcelo's own house as it is in the open fields of Belgium. Elena has strong opinions about the war and her husband's country, suggesting to Marcelo and his family as often as possible that France will quickly fall to their strength. Marcelo does not like this implication and does not want to have anything to do with Elena's opinions, often wishing she were a man so he could kick her out of his house. This situation parallels that of the ranch of Madariaga, as the different nationalities lived on the same ranch and attempted to co-exist.

Marcelo begins to hear rumors that the Germans are headed toward Paris. In order to reach Paris, they must pass right through the village where Marcelo's castle sits. Marcelo, who has been discouraged at his inability to fight this war for his beloved France, has decided that he may be too old to join the military, but he is not too old to defend his own small piece of France. This leads to his journey to the small village, and the hardships he must endure in order to get there. This not only illuminates the strain that war has had on the country, but it also touches on the theme of war as the war becomes a deeper part of Marcelo's life. Before the war was just a hypothetical idea, but now it has become a reality that has forced him to send his wife away and to move to protect his property. This also foreshadows two separate scenarios. First, Marcelo has



watched the French military march past his castle, foreshadowing the arrival of the Germans and his involvement in their arrival. It also foreshadows his wife's distance and her possible return. What will Luisa find should she return to Paris? Will Marcelo be there?



## Part 2, Chapter 4, Near the Sacred Grotto

### Part 2, Chapter 4, Near the Sacred Grotto Summary

A German plane has begun flying over Paris at a predictable time, dropping propaganda pamphlets and bombs. Argensola finds the plane more interesting than keeping track of the movements of the troops on a map. Argensola plans to remain in Paris through the entire war since he always admired the people who witnessed the Siege of Paris in 1870.

Julio has received a note that informs him that Marguerite and her mother have left Paris. There is no explanation, no notice of where they have gone, just that they have. Julio, aware that his own family has left town, assumes she is attempting to escape the possible invasion of German troops. Julio goes to her house and learns from the concierge that a family member has been wounded in the war. Julio assumes this to be Marguerite's brother. Julio decides to follow her south, hoping to hear word of her in Bordeaux. Julio's trip is long and overcrowded, much like his father's trip north. Once there, however, Julio learns Marguerite is not there but possibly in Biarritz. Julio continues his journey and runs into his own sister. Julio visits with his family who are expecting to hear word any moment of the invasion of Paris. However, does not stay long. Once, he locates Marguerite's mother and learns that Marguerite is most likely in Pau.

Once again, Julio continues his journey, arriving in the sacred city where the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared once. Julio thought how strange it was to be here when he knew his mother would have liked to see the sacred grotto where the memorial to the Virgin sits. However, Julio is not here for religious reasons. Julio wishes only to see Marguerite. The park surrounding the grotto is filled with convalescing patients wounded in the war. Julio comes here every day while he awaits a meeting with the head of the hospital, hoping to spot Marguerite. One day he does.

Marguerite is with a patient, who has bandages around his eyes. Marguerite clearly does not want Julio to address her while she is with the patient. Marguerite settles the patient on the bench and then meets Julio a distance away. Julio immediately wants to know who the patient is and Marguerite confesses that it is her husband. The man has lost his left eye and might lose his right. Marguerite has been by his side almost since the moment she learned of his injury, but she has not told him that it is she who cares for him. Marguerite suspects that he knows, but she is not sure. Julio asks if she loves her husband and Marguerite confesses that she does. Marguerite says that she loves them both but duty requires that she stay with her husband. Their affair is over. Julio argues, unwilling to let her go just like that. Julio asks if he were to join the military, would it make a difference. Marguerite tells him no, that it is already too late. Marguerite says goodbye, that this is the end. The next day Julio returns to the park, hoping to convince her that their love is too strong to end like this. Julio sees her and she implores





him with her eyes to not speak, to leave her in peace. Julio feels bad for his behavior and does as she wishes, making plans to return to Paris.

## Part 2, Chapter 4, Near the Sacred Grotto Analysis

Argensola still thinks the war is a game to be played as he rushes through town following a German fighter plane, touching on the theme of war and how it affects each of the characters in the novel. Argensola also plans to stay in Paris even if it is invaded, because he has always admired the people who witnessed the Siege of Paris in 1870, foreshadowing a time when this topic will once again appear within the text. Julio, on the other hand, has lost track of his lover's whereabouts and plans to go find her. This search parallels the same journey his father took in the previous chapter, both experiencing similar obstacles on their journey except that Marcelo's traveling companions were mostly soldiers and Julio's were citizens attempting to escape Paris.

When Julio finds Marguerite, he finds her playing the role of companion to her husband, a man she supposedly was in the middle of divorcing in order to be with Julio. This event was foreshadowed in a previous chapter as Marguerite spent a large portion of her time thinking about and speaking of her husband. It also touches on two major themes of the novel, relationships and duty. In the first, Marguerite has found herself caught between two men that she loves. Marguerite loves Julio with the passion of a young woman who has never known the power of passion until she met Julio. However, Marguerite also loves her husband in a different way, with the love of a woman who admires her husband's heroic nature and feels pity for his loneliness. Marguerite cannot be with both men and this is where the theme of duty comes in. Marguerite feels it is her duty to stay by her husband's side, because he is wounded and will need constant care for the rest of his life, especially if his right eye does not heal, as the doctor suspect. Julio, despite his heartache, understands this and decides to take action on his own part in the realm of duty.



## Part 2, Chapter 5, The Invasion

### Part 2, Chapter 5, The Invasion Summary

After the stragglers from the French military begin to fire on the German soldiers, the mayor comes out of his home and begs them to stop, aware that they will blame the villagers for the resistance. Marcelo goes back to his castle. For a while nothing happens. Marcelo watches the tree line and the river with his field glasses, seeing nothing in the woods but sees the last of the French soldiers navigating the river despite the fact that the French soldiers before them have already blown the bridge. Then the Germans begin to bombard the village with cannons and rifles. Before the artillery is focused on the castle, the villagers drop a white flag from the church tower. Down in the castle garden, the Keeper is burying all the weapons on the property. Then they hear shots in the village.

The Germans were entering the village and shooting everyone they saw. Soon they were at the gates of the castle. The officer surveys the castle and declares it the perfect place for the general to make his headquarters. The officer tells Marcelo that they are killing everyone in the village for shooting at them and killing four of their soldiers. Marcelo attempts to tell him that it was soldier who did that, but the officer does not believe him. The officer tells Marcelo to get into his car and come with him to meet the general. Marcelo sees soldiers everywhere, making their camp anywhere they could, celebrating, because they believe they will be in Paris in a few days. In the village there are many dead, bodies lying abandoned in the streets. Houses are burned no matter if there are people still inside or not. From one building, the soldiers drag out French soldiers who were too exhausted to continue their journey. The soldiers are shot in the head.

On the outskirts of the village where the barricade was built, Marcelo is taken to meet the general in charge. Marcelo expects to be shot, but the man barely takes notice of him. The officer with him is surprised as well. The officer then shows Marcelo where the bodies of their fallen soldiers lie, calling their deaths murder. The mayor and the priest, as well as a few other villagers, are being held prisoner at the side of the road. The officer orders their execution, and they are shot.

Marcelo rides back to the castle with the officer and warned not to leave the castle grounds. Marcelo wanders his property for a while before finally finding refuge in the home of his Keeper. The wife takes pity on him and feeds him dinner. Marcelo is surprised to find himself quite hungry, despite all he has seen that day. In the morning, Marcelo is informed that the German regiments are moving on. Left behind is the head of the reserve brigade, called the count, and a few officials. Marcelo takes this opportunity to explore his property and finds that the gardens have been destroyed. While he is looking around, a group of trucks line up outside the house and Marcelo can only watch as many of his priceless antiques and furniture are moved out of the house.



Toward midday, Marcelo is back in the Keeper's house and is told that there is a German soldier asking to speak with him. Marcelo goes outside and finds Otto von Hartrott, one of Elena's children, waiting to speak to him. Otto is the second oldest of the von Hartrott children. Otto has visited the castle in the past and although he is with another regiment, has come ahead to see it one last time. Otto invites Marcelo to join him and the Count for lunch. While they make their way to the house, Marcelo tells Otto of what has occurred in the village and at his castle since the day before. Otto says it is unfortunate, but that is war. Otto also warns him uncle not to interfere since there is nothing he can do to protect him.

The dinner is a difficult affair for Marcelo as he eats at his own table but feels like a stranger. The Count attempts to be friendly and draw Marcelo into the conversation, but Marcelo finds the situation difficult, especially when the Count speaks of an uprising in Paris that has not occurred. Otto must return to his regiment after dinner. Marcelo walks him to the gate where Otto writes a message in chalk requesting that the Germans not sack this house. When Marcelo returns to the house he finds the Count taking his coffee outside with several other officers where they are listening to the sounds of a distant battle. When the Count leaves, Marcelo remains with one of the other officers, Commandant Blumhardt, and they discuss their families. Blumhardt has eight children and a wife at home. Marcelo finds this makes the man seem more sympathetic and he finds himself drawn to this officer.

Later Marcelo is taken to the Count who has been sleeping in his bedroom. The Count invites him to return to his bedroom that night as he prefers Luisa's bedroom and intends to take Luisa's furniture with him when he leaves. The Count then admires the pictures Marcelo has of his family on the dresser, especially a picture of Julio. The Count also shares with Marcelo a picture of a young man he calls his best friend. Marcelo misinterprets the Count's affections of this young man as a fatherly love. The Count dismisses Marcelo after this and goes downstairs to play the piano. Marcelo goes for a walk on his property and speaks with a young man who was studying law and is now secretary to the Count. They discuss the war, disagreeing on nearly every point.

Marcelo watches as the Keeper's family takes mattresses and bedding into the house in order to sleep in the servants quarters that night to be close to their master. Blumhardt continuously watches the young daughter as she goes by. Blumhardt is writing a letter and later Marcelo learns that Blumhardt has taken lingerie from his daughter's room and believes him to be sending it to his wife. A commotion arises at the gate. A young family had been hiding in their burned out home and had come out in order to get food. The soldiers saw the woman's oldest boy, a child of about eighteen, and decided they must kill him in order to prevent him from joining the military at a later date. The mother is protesting and she pulls Marcelo into the argument, hoping his influence will stop this murder. Marcelo accompanies one of the officers up to the house to get his orders from the Count. Marcelo believes that the Count has ordered the boy set free, but learns that he was wrong. When Marcelo voices his outrage, the Count shrugs it off as one of the consequences of war.



Marcelo goes to hide in his bedroom, overwrought by all these atrocities. The Keeper's wife comes to check on him and tells him that the officers are downstairs drinking too much, defecating in the drawers, and ruining what furniture remains. The Keeper's wife is concerned over her daughter but believes they have her hidden well. However, late in the night Marcelo hears a commotion in the hallway and runs out to find the Keeper bleeding on the floor. Marcelo sees Blumhardt in a doorway with a gun and believes that he is after the Keeper's daughter. Marcelo too tries to stop him, but he is grabbed by the other officers and locked away in the cellar. The next morning Marcelo is rescued by the Keeper's wife and learns that the soldiers have once again moved on. However, the Keeper is dead, the daughter is violated, and there is no food left. Marcelo goes into the village to find food, but only finds survivors of the village also looking for food. Marcelo gives them each a gold coin and returns to the castle.

## Part 2, Chapter 5, The Invasion Analysis

Marcelo sees the Germans coming and instead of leaving, he continues to stay at the castle, believing he can somehow protect his belongings. However, Marcelo learns quickly that this is not possible as he witnesses the deaths of every person in the village. The Germans blame the villagers for the deaths of four of their soldiers and want revenge. Ironically, when Marcelo complains of this behavior to his nephew, Otto, he is told this is war. However, the deaths of the Germans were part of war too, so why were the villagers killed in retaliation for something they did not do and in the name of a war they did not want?

The meeting with Otto foreshadows a time when Otto's name will surface in the narration again, later when Marcelo returns to Paris, and it also touches on the themes of relationships and duty. Otto is Marcelo's nephew by marriage, but he is also an officer in the German military, the same German military that just killed all of the villagers and stole the majority of Marcelo's belongings. Marcelo is polite to the young man, however, out of a sense of duty to his family obligations as well as out of fear for his own life. This young man whose father Marcelo protected for many years while they all lived together on the ranch in Argentina is now in essence Marcelo's protector. Perhaps this too comes out of a sense of duty for the young German.

Marcelo becomes almost friendly with one of the Germans, thinking he is a good family man who is only part of this war because of his nationality. However, the moment Marcelo begins to trust this man, he overlooks clues to the evil the young man has in his mind. It is this same kind family man who kills Marcelo's Keeper and rapes the Keeper's daughter, all in the name of war, another theme of the novel. Now, Marcelo has learned, too late, that no Germans may be trusted. When they have all gone, Marcelo is stuck with two wards and no food. Marcelo goes to the village to find food and finds survivors instead. Marcelo gives them gold coins, foreshadowing a time when these coins will come in handy for Marcelo's survival.



# Part 2, Chapter 6, The Banner of the Red Cross

## Part 2, Chapter 6, The Banner of the Red Cross Summary

By the time Marcelo returns to his castle from the village, he finds more cars and men on his property. The castle is now to be turned into a hospital for the Germans wounded in the battle taking place on the other side of the river. The dead are removed from the house and buried in the garden, along with body parts that have been amputated in surgery. A phone line is strung up outside the castle and it rings almost constantly. Marcelo is desperate for food and tries to convince the officers running the hospital of his needs, but they will not listen. Finally Marcelo sees a sergeant out in the garden eating a sausage on a piece of bread. Marcelo offers the sergeant a gold coin in exchange for the food. While Marcelo eats, the sergeant returns to the kitchen for more food which he also exchanges for gold. Marcelo takes this second sandwich to the Keeper's wife and daughter.

The next morning the sergeant has a napkin full of food for Marcelo, but he insists on five coins. Other orderlies force Marcelo to dig a grave until he gives them the required amount of coins to get out of the labor. The next day is like the day before, but the morning after that Marcelo intuits a change around him. More injured arrive, many more than the days before. Everyone seems down, as though the battle is not going well. The sounds of the battle began moving closer and that night orders are given to evacuate the castle. One more ambulance comes despite the orders and Marcelo recognizes the law student who had been the Count's secretary. The secretary tells him that all the officers who had been at Marcelo's castle were now dead. During the night the sounds of the battle are so close that Marcelo cannot sleep. The next morning the cannons cease, but the evacuation is in full swing. The sergeant remains, however, and he gives Marcelo food that morning without asking for gold coins.

A group of German soldiers come to the castle that day and begin cutting holes into the fence in order to make room for their rifles. Cannons are installed in the garden. A German officer notices Marcelo and asks what he is doing there, but does not say anything else at that point. A French plane flies over and Marcelo guesses that the red cross banner still hanging from the top of the castle no longer fools the French. Soon after he is proven right as the garden is bombarded by cannon fire. Soon the castle itself is struck, and the roof is ruined. Marcelo runs, finding refuge in the cellar after he sees that the Keeper's house has been destroyed. After a while, however, Marcelo feels like a coward and he returns to the garden. Here he runs into the same German officer he spoke to earlier and is ordered to get water for the soldiers. Marcelo wickedly wishes he could kill the German officer and finds a short time later that the officer has been blown apart by cannon fire. Marcelo himself is nearly killed several times by exploding



shells. Soon Marcelo realizes that the Germans are retreating, and the French have arrived. Marcelo hugs the first French officer he sees. Several German officers are marched out of the house, and the sergeant who helped Marcelo get food claims to be his friend. Later, Marcelo is surprised to find the Keeper's wife and daughter still alive.

Marcelo takes a final look at the destruction of his castle and bids it farewell, unsure if he could ever come back here again. Marcelo begins the walk back to the train station, finding many corpses lying along the road, as though abandoned rag dolls. When Marcelo passes the tavern where the old woman had said that the war did not involve country folk, he found a corpse just inside the door. At the train station Marcelo is surprised to find a taxi. The driver has brought a group of reporters out so that they could see the battlefield. Marcelo offers him five hundred francs to drive him back to Paris, which the driver accepts. Within a few hours, Marcelo is home, surprised to see it still standing and unharmed. Two days later a soldier comes to say goodbye to Marcelo. Julio has joined the military. Marcelo advises him to kill all Germans without consideration.

## **Part 2, Chapter 6, The Banner of the Red Cross Analysis**

The theme of war is flowing through every paragraph of this chapter. The Germans have finally left Marcelo's castle only to be replaced by the medical corps for the Germans. There is a battle going on across the river from Marcelo's home and it is from this battle that the wounded come. Marcelo can only watch as the last of his furnishings are destroyed, Germans are buried in his gardens, and they feast as he starves. Marcelo is able to buy food from one German who clearly believes it is in his best interest to befriend Marcelo, as proven by the man's sudden affection for Marcelo when the French come.

Marcelo has felt guilt for not fighting for his country when he was a younger man and by chance has found himself in the middle of a battle, unable to do anything to change the course of the battle. It is an ironic twist of fate that Marcelo is present for one of the most important battles early in World War I, but unable to do anything to help his country. In fact, Marcelo is forced to aid the other side by providing shelter and serving them water. It is also ironic when Marcelo comes across the tavern of the woman who said that war is about soldiers, not country folk, and he finds her dead. War is about everyone, this statement seems to say, the soldiers and the civilians, women and children just like the men. When Marcelo returns home, he learns that his son has joined the military, as foreshadowed in a previous chapter, and he is happy about this despite all he has seen. Marcelo still feels a sense of duty to his country, another theme of the novel, and he feels that if his son is fighting, it is just as good as if he were fighting. Marcelo also advises his son to kill every German no matter what. This advice foreshadows a time when Julio will be forced to do just that.



## Part 3, Chapter 1, After the Marne

### Part 3, Chapter 1, After the Marne Summary

At the end of October Luisa, Chichi, and Elena return home. Rene, Chichi's fiancy has joined the military. However, because of his father's influence, he has been assigned to a clerical post in Paris. The battle of the Marne has turned the tide of the war and helped Paris escape certain invasion. Marcelo is pleased to have his family back, although he is not happy to have Elena back. They both begin to argue over the war once more, though Elena spends the majority of her time worrying over her own family, especially her sons who have gone to fight. Marcelo does not tell Elena about his meeting with Otto at his castle. Marcelo does not want to speak about any of the things he saw at the castle, though he does eventually tell her that he saw Otto and he was fine, but does not discuss their meeting in detail.

Luisa has begun spending most of her time at church praying for her son. Elena attends, as well. Marcelo is upset by this, afraid Elena will take God's attention off of Julio. Now that Julio has joined the military, Luisa spends less time relating to Marcelo. Elena's opinions on the war, becoming almost hostile toward Elena herself. One day Elena announces that she is leaving, going to Switzerland from where she can travel back to Berlin. The Desnoyers family is quietly relieved. Luisa began visiting Argensola in her son's studio, hoping that being in the studio would make her feel closer to Julio. Argensola has taken the opportunity of Julio's absence to allow a few of his female friends to move in and spends a great deal of the first moments of Luisa's visit hiding evidence of these friends. They discuss Julio and his letter, Argensola telling Julio's battle stories with his own elaborations. Argensola still looks at the war as though it were a game. Argensola has a certificate on his wall saying that he survived the latest siege on Paris, suggesting that the battle of the Marne was close enough to Paris to qualify. Argensola also talks of other things he has seen, such as the mobilization of the military.

After Elena's departure, Chichi begins attending mass with her mother. However, Chichi does not pray for her brother's safety, but for her fiancy. Rene realized that Chichi was embarrassed by his service in the military and took it upon himself to be transferred to an artillery division. Chichi was thrilled when she learned this news.

### Part 3, Chapter 1, After the Marne Analysis

The family's return to Paris is diminished by Elena's presence and her constant talk of the German side of the war. Even Luisa has grown tired of her talk now that Julio has joined the military. Elena is concerned for her children, especially her three sons who are in the military, foreshadowing a time when her concern will be touched on again. Marcelo refuses to tell her the details of his meeting with Otto, but does allow that Otto



was alive and well at the beginning of the battle of the Marne. Finally Elena leaves the house, giving the Desnoyers some amount of peace for the time being.

Luisa is missing her son and concerned about his life. Luisa spends much time in church and has begun visiting Argensola in order to discuss Julio and feel closer to him. This foreshadows not only a time when another member of the Desnoyers family will begin visiting Argensola to be close to Julio, but it also foreshadows a time when Luisa's concerns for her son will be warranted.

Argensola, in direct contrast to Marcelo's experiences, feels that the war is still just a game and he brags of his part in it, which is really just as a spectator from a very distant perspective. Argensola has a certificate on his wall saying he lived through the Marne battle when Marcelo is the one who really lived through the battle in an ironic sort of twist. The theme of war touches here again, not only as far as Argensola's perspective is concerned, but also to the extent of how it has affected the Desnoyers family. Luisa, who always protected her sister, is now hostile toward her for her opinions, also touching on the theme of relationships. Chichi, whose fiancy was safe in Paris, has talked him into going to the front, foreshadowing his possible death. Marcelo, who lived through the battle of the Marne is forever changed, foreshadowing a time when the changes in him will be more visible.





## Part 3, Chapter 2, In the Studio

### Part 3, Chapter 2, In the Studio Summary

Marcelo comes to the studio in order to visit with Argensola and to be close to Julio's things. Marcelo makes a big deal over the paintings lying around the studio, assuming them to be Julio's works when they are really Argensola's. Marcelo attempts to learn all he can about Argensola in order to make him a friend just as he was Julio's friend. Marcelo would invite Argensola to his home for dinner, but Argensola found these dinners boring and found excuses not to go. However, Marcelo would use these missed dinners as an excuse to visit to the studio again. Marcelo has lost interest in all of his former pastimes, only concerned with his son's welfare. Marcelo sees Marguerite downtown with her husband. The senator told Marcelo that the divorce was forgotten and Marguerite and her husband had returned to a normal married life.

Marcelo and Argensola talk about Julio and the war. Marcelo's opinions on the war have changed since the battle of the Marne. Tchernoff often joins these discussions, surprisingly becoming a good friend of Marcelo's. Tchernoff believes that the war will last a long time despite Marcelo's belief to the contrary. Tchernoff says that both countries will be crushed by the war, but that in the end Germany will emerge victorious, because they lack humanity. Shortly after this discussion, Marcel stops going to the studio as much.

One night the senator asks Marcelo if he would like to see Julio. The senator is arranging a pass for himself and one other to go to the front in the pretext of reviewing the troops and their methods of battle, and he intends to see the regiment that both Rene and Julio belong to. Marcelo is excited by the idea and he badgers the senator until the arrangements are made.

### Part 3, Chapter 2, In the Studio Analysis

As foreshadowed in the previous chapter, Marcelo follows his wife's example and begins visiting to studio in order to be close to Julio. Marcelo takes the experience a step further, however, and attempts to become Argensola's friend. Marcelo thinks that if Julio thought Argensola worthy of friendship that he too should. Marcelo misses his son and is desperate to be close to him, touching on the theme of relationships. Although Marcelo and Julio have been distant in recent months, Marcelo loves his son and he wants desperately for him to be okay and to come home. The introduction of Tchernoff into the mix with his poor, but realistic opinions of the Germans causes Marcelo to lose interest in the studio and to stop finding comfort in it. When the senator offers to take him along on a trip to see their respective sons, Marcelo jumps at the chance despite the possible dangers, foreshadowing the next chapter.



## Part 3, Chapter 3, War

### Part 3, Chapter 3, War Summary

Marcelo and the senator are on a woody hill walking among the cannons of Rene's artillery unit. They are escorted by two officers and taken to the command room that consists of a small building built into the hill itself. There they are shown maps of the enemy locations and watch as the commander gives the order to begin firing on the enemy. A few minutes later they are taken down the row of cannons behind a wall built into the hill to meet with Rene. Rene is happy to see them, though he spends most of his time discussing Chichi with Marcelo rather than speaking to his father. The senator talks to his son about their family's legacy of military service, encouraging him to make them all proud. The enemy begins returning fire, so Rene must go back to work. Marcelo is impressed with the ease by which Rene works. The senator and Marcelo are escorted out of the area among the 75s firing above the muddy trench where they walk.

The senator and Marcelo return to their car and drive out of the area, passing soldiers who carry spades and shovels for moving the earth. That night they stay in a hotel that has been damaged by French 75s. Early the next morning they set out once again, passing thousands of troops who are bivouacking in the open, making due with the few shelters they can find or build. The car stops suddenly, and they begin to walk through fields where trenches have been built. The trenches are deep and twisting, built with the idea of confusing the German soldiers should they attempt to sneak up on the regiment hidden ahead. The walk for hours, nearly losing their a few times guide when he disappears around sudden turns. At one point, they hear bullets whizzing over their heads. When they arrive at the place where the majority of the unit is based, they find that the soldiers have made homes of the trench by building roofs with doors and wood salvaged from a nearby building and putting pictures on the soft walls.

Marcelo and the senator are introduced to the Chief and told that Julio is at an advanced site that is not safe for visitors, but that he will be sent for. Marcelo is anxious to see his son and feels the wait is much too long. Finally Julio appears, covered in mud but smiling widely. They embrace and Marcelo looks into his son's face. There Marcelo sees changes in his son. Marcelo asks if Julio is okay and Julio remarks that he is content. Suddenly Marcelo realizes that his son is now a man. They talk about home, family and friends, and Marcelo asks if there is anything Julio needs. Julio does not need anything, but suggests a few things he would like to have in order to share with others in his unit. The atmosphere around them changes, and they become aware that the enemy has begun to fire at them. Julio excuses himself to return to his men. Marcelo worries about Julio as they walk out of the trenches, but then he is overcome by a feeling that no one would dare kill his son.



## Part 3, Chapter 3, War Analysis

Again the theme of war is laced through every paragraph of this chapter. The sight of the guns and cannons that Rene's unit commands and the trenches where Julio fights his part in the war are symbols of the mechanics of a war that changed the world. Marcelo is not affected by the sight of the cannons and guns, but the sight of the trenches and his son affect him deeply. Marcelo is suddenly painfully aware that his son could die and he refuses to entertain this thought, telling himself that no one would dare hurt his child. Not only is this unrealistic, but it foreshadows a time when these words will come back to haunt Marcelo.

This chapter also shows great character growth in Julio. No longer is he the young man who goes out drinking into the early hours of the morning, or spends his time looking for young women who might be willing to share his bed. Julio has matured. Julio has become the same generous spirit that his grandfather was and his father is becoming. Julio is no longer concerned for his own well being, but concerned for the men in his unit who do not have family or money to receive the generous gifts from home that make living in muddy trenches bearable. Julio is now a man and a good one at that.



## Part 3, Chapter 4, No One Will Kill Him

### Part 3, Chapter 4, No One Will Kill Him Summary

Four months later the Desnoyers receive word that Julio has been wounded. The senator arranges for Julio to convalesce for two weeks in Paris. They also learn that Julio has been promoted to sub lieutenant and given a medal. Marcelo is proud of his son when he comes home, telling everyone that he looks like him now and spending every moment he can with him. Whenever Julio leaves the house, his father is there at his side. One night while Julio and Marcelo are taking a walk, they pass Marguerite. Marguerite never looks at Julio, though Marcel turns and sees her watching them from behind. Love and hurt are clear in her eyes. Marguerite is pregnant now, happy with her husband. Marcelo never tells Julio that she did know him and that she stopped to watch him walk away.

Marcel likes to hear Julio tell the story of how he was wounded, but Julio does not so his father will often tell it for him. Julio's unit had run the German's out of the ruins of a sugar refinery near the trenches, and they wanted to send a small group in to make sure they were all gone. Julio volunteered to lead the group. When Julio turned a corner in the building he ran into a German captain. They stared at each other for a moment and Julio was able to draw his gun first. Julio killed the captain, but did not know there was a corporal nearby. The corporal shot Julio in the shoulder and Julio killed the corporal. However, something Julio never told anyone is that the captain recognized him and he recognized the captain. At first Julio thought he might be one of the cousins from Berlin, but then realized he was the captain of the ship by which Julio traveled from Argentina to France before the war.

When Julio returns to the front, Marcelo spends a large amount of time writing letters and sending packages to him. Luisa is despondent, more convinced than ever that her son will be killed. Marcelo refuses to even consider the idea. Luisa receives a letter from Elena that informs them of the deaths of two of her sons, the injuries of a third, and the deaths of her daughter's fiancys. Luisa is saddened for her sister, but Marcelo feels that it is her political beliefs that have brought this pain on her family.

Rene is also injured in the war. A shell exploded over his battery, killing most of his comrades. Rene had to be dragged out from under a pile of bodies. Rene has lost one hand and suffers injuries to his legs, chest, and head. The senator has his son transferred to a hospital in Paris. Chichi fights with the nuns at the hospital until she is allowed to stay with Rene constantly. Chichi is pleased to have Rene back and more than happy to spend the rest of her life caring for him and his wounds. When Rene finally heals, the senator and Marcelo arrange a small, private wedding for the young couple.

Marcelo has read about the people in Paris who often die from the stress of the war, so he has sworn to himself not to allow it to stress him. One night, Marcelo sees



Marguerite on the street again, her pregnancy obvious now. Marguerite is dressed in black, because her brother has died. Despite the fact that the baby cannot be Julio's, Marcelo promises himself to be generous toward the child just as if he were. When Marcelo arrives home, his wife meets him in the hall and informs him that the senator is there. Marcelo goes into the room, determined not to believe it is bad news. However, Luisa soon hears him crying for their son.

## **Part 3, Chapter 4, No One Will Kill Him Analysis**

Once more the theme of war invades the lives of the Desnoyers. Julio returns to Paris for a short time in order to recover from a wound. Julio has received his wound in the ironic twist of fate that found him killing the German captain of the ship that he sailed on upon his return to France shortly before the war. Julio feels remorse for this situation, although he did not feel remorse for sleeping with the man's wife. This too is ironic, but it also shows once more the amount of character growth Julio has experienced since the war began.

Marcelo has become obsessed with his son and refuses to allow himself to believe that anything bad could happen to him despite the news that Elena has lost most of her sons to the war. Luisa on the other hand is terrified for Julio's death. When Rene is injured and returned to the family in Paris, a subtle wedding takes place that is nothing like the huge affair the family most likely would have thrown, showing once more the affect of the war on the family. However Chichi is happy and so does Rene appear to be. The climactic end of the chapter is clearly the announcement that Julio has been killed, in complete contrast to Chichi and Rene's happiness and in contrast to Marcelo's belief that his son could not possibly be killed. However, the theme of war comes in here again, showing that no one is protected from the horrors of war.



## Part 3, Chapter 5, The Burial Fields

### Part 3, Chapter 5, The Burial Fields Summary

Rene, Chichi, Luisa, Marcelo, a driver, and a soldier all travel by car over the battlefields where Julio was killed. They are searching for Julio's grave. The senator arranged the trip but could not come because of rumors of a change in the cabinet. There are hundreds of tombs, most marked in such a way that the markings are quickly fading. Many of the graves hold two, three, or four men. Behind the white crosses there are larger mounds marked as the graves of German soldiers, some containing more than three hundred men.

The car stops from time to time, and Chichi and Rene get out to read the markers. It is difficult to distinguish one group of markers from another, and the fading writing is also a problem. Marcelo watches the graves move past the car windows, thinking of how young most of these young men were, how much life they still had in front of them. Marcelo wished the university professors in Berlin who spoke so carelessly of war could be here to see this. Marcelo is filled with rage at the Germans who created this war and who fight it. Finally they find where Julio's regiment fought and is laid to rest. The entire family climbs out of the car and begins to search the field for a cross with Julio's name on it. Finally Chichi finds it. Someone has carved Julio's name and rank into his cross with a knife, preserving it better than the others. Marcelo and Luisa sit down by their son's grave, Marcelo thinking of the time when he will be able to remove his son's body and give it a proper burial. Luisa begins to cry. Marcelo becomes angrier, raging at the fates, at destiny. Luisa voices her wish that they had never moved to Paris. Marcelo agrees. However, he begins to think that very soon he and she will be dead, at rest. Chichi looks around the graveyard and only thinks of how glad she is Rene does not lie there as well.

### Part 3, Chapter 5, The Burial Fields Analysis

In this climactic ending that parallels Marcelo's and the senator's trip to see their sons, Marcelo and his family search for the grave of their son. Marcelo is angry and beyond consolation at the death of his son. Luisa is a little more accepting, but wishes they had not moved to Paris in direct contrast to her husband's deep sense of pride earlier in the novel. Marcelo had been obsessed with his lack of military service in the name of France early in his life and thought that perhaps his son providing this service would make up for something. However, the death of his son has ended this fierce pride in a way that the possibility of his own death did not. In one swift moment, everything has changed for the Desnoyers family. It is ironic if the reader considers the circle that Julio and Marcelo's relationship, one of the book's themes, has followed through this novel. Marcelo stopped talking to his son early in the novel due to Julio's relationship with a married woman. Then Julio joins the military and father and son have found a love for each other that they had lost. Now that Julio has died, Marcelo has lost his faith in

everything and is ready to simply lie down and die himself. Ironic how quickly feelings can change.



# Characters

## Marcelo Desnoyers

Marcelo Desnoyers is a French man who left France during the conflict of 1870 in order to avoid military service. Marcelo moved to Argentina where he became the progeny of a rich rancher and later married the rancher's daughter. After the death of the rancher, Marcelo became rich from his inheritance and retired from ranching. Soon after, in response to pressure from his family, Marcelo moved his family back to France and set up residence in a house in Paris.

Once in Paris, Marcelo finds himself fascinated with his ability to sniff out a bargain and make outrageous purchases. Soon he has filled up their apartment and buys a castle in order to house his large collection. When the war begins, Marcelo is envious of the men going off to fight, regretting his decision to run away in 1870. Marcelo also envies the fathers of the men going off to war, wishing his son were a French citizen so that he too could go off to war. When the German forces move closer to Marcelo's castle, he decides to go defend it himself in order to make up in a small way his refusal to serve before. Once there, however, Marcelo finds himself a victim of the Germans, forced to watch them plunder his estate and walk away with all his precious valuables. Soon, however, Marcelo learns that there are some things more important than material possessions.

Soon after returning to Paris, Marcelo learns that his son has joined the fight. Afraid for him, Marcelo is also very proud. After some time, Marcelo arranges with a senator friend to visit his son on the front. Marcelo sees for the first time how his son has become a man. Shortly afterward, Julio is injured. Marcelo refuses to believe, despite his son's wounds, that the Germans would dare kill him. However, soon after his return to the front Julio is killed. Marcelo no longer believes in duty or country and visits his son's grave, grateful that he will soon die and join his boy, regretting now his decision to return to Paris.

## Julio Desnoyers

Julio is the Argentine born son of Marcelo Desnoyers. Julio was raised at his grandfather's side, spoiled and allowed to do as he pleased. This behavior continues into his adulthood. Julio decides he wants to be a painter despite the fact that he is not really good at it and does not really enjoy doing it. Soon he forgets the paints and spends his time drinking and socializing, making a reputation for himself as a good fencer and the winner of many honor fights. Julio does not believe the allowance his father gives him is enough, and the two soon have a falling out over this and Julio's behavior. When the tango becomes a craze in Paris and Julio is found to know it well, he also develops a reputation as a tango teacher. It is soon after this that Julio begins





an affair with a married woman. This affair significantly damages Julio's relationship with his father.

When the war begins, Julio's lover is more interested in her brother and husband who have gone off to fight than she is in her relationship with Julio. Marguerite becomes a nurse in order to offer her services to the war effort. Marguerite and her mother leave town when the rumors of an approaching German force reaches Paris. Julio follows her only to find she has become a nurse to her injured husband. Marguerite has made her choice and it is not Julio. Out of his heartbreak Julio decides to join the war effort as a soldier. Julio's father is very proud of him, forgetting their petty differences. However, Julio is injured and subsequently killed in battle.

## Marguerite Laurier

Marguerite Laurier is a society dame in Paris whose biggest concern before the war is her wardrobe. Marguerite goes to Julio for dance lessons and soon finds herself falling in love. Marguerite is married to a school friend of her brother's, a man she married more for the social status than for love. Marguerite feels affection toward her husband but it is nothing like the passion she feels with Julio. Marguerite leaves her husband after she learns of her infidelity and intends to marry Julio when the divorce is final. However, war breaks out before then.

Marguerite's brother goes to the war and when Marguerite escorts him to the train station, she sees her husband arrive alone, with no one to wish him well. Marguerite cannot forget this image. Marguerite studies to become a nurse, becoming more and more fascinated with the exploits of her husband as reported to her through her brother's letters. When Marguerite gets word that her husband has been injured, she goes to him immediately without telling Julio. When Julio finds her, Marguerite tells him that she loves her husband and it is her duty to stay by his side. Marguerite never sees Julio socially again. When they pass in the street shortly after Julio's injuries in the war, Marguerite looks at him with all the love and longing she still feels, but Julio is not aware of it, only Marcelo sees.

## Argensola

Argensola is a painter who has moved to Paris from Spain. Argensola believes he can paint a person's soul in the eyes of his portraits, a talent that fascinates Julio. Argensola sleeps on Julio's couch for a while as many of Julio's friends have done. However, Argensola remains, taking up the role of secretary to Julio, helping him prepare himself for dates and such things. Argensola is also an avid reader and it is through him that Julio learns the plots of most of the popular literature of the day, as well as some philosophical texts from the past.

Argensola finds the war fascinating, spending the first weeks following the movements of the troops through the newspaper and on a map he has put up in the studio. When a German plane begins flying over Paris dropping propaganda and bombs, Argensola



makes a game out of chasing it to guess where its bombs will land next. It is all a game to Argensola. When Julio goes off to join the military, Argensola follows his exploits through his letters with great fascination, often sharing his version of the story with Julio's parents. Argensola takes over Julio's studio after he leaves and Julio's parents befriend him in an effort to remain close to their son.

## **Dona Luisa Desnoyers**

Dona Luisa is the oldest daughter of Don Madariaga, the owner of the ranch where Marcelo worked and from whom he inherited his millions. Dona Luisa is married to Marcelo. Dona Luisa is a quiet woman who does not complain much. Dona Luisa is also a religious woman who attends church as often as she can, especially after the war breaks out.

When Julio and his father have their falling out, Dona Luisa often gives gifts to Argensola in order to help supplement Julio's income, including her jewelry and bottles of wine from the wine cellar. After Julio goes to war, Dona Luisa spends time with Argensola at the studio in order to feel closer to her son. Dona Luisa also spends much time in church praying for her son's safe return. After Julio is wounded, Dona Luisa begins to suggest that his first wound was just practice and he would soon return to them wounded once more or dead. Dona Luisa's prediction soon comes true when news of Julio's death reaches the family.

## **Chichi Desnoyers**

Chichi is Dona Luisa and Marcelo's daughter. Chichi is engaged to the son of a senator who has become a good friend of Marcelo's. Chichi is deeply interested in the war when it first begins, imagining herself going into battle with the men or training to be an assassin and killing their Emperor. Chichi is deeply proud of any man who goes off to fight. When her fiancy joins the military she is pleased despite the fact that he is only part of the clerical workings of the military due to his father's influence. Chichi wants her fiancy to be safe, but the longer the war goes on, and the more people look at him with scorn on the street, the more Chichi wishes he would go to the front. Soon her fiancy understands her feelings and arranges to join a regiment at the front. However, proud as Chichi is of her fiancy, she is forced to face the realities of war when he is badly wounded. Chichi stays by her fiance's side all through his recovery and then is married in a quiet ceremony at her parents' home. Chichi realizes the depth of her husband's sacrifice when they go to the battlefield where her brother died.

## **Elena von Hartrott and Family**

Elena von Hartrott is Luisa's sister. Elena married the German accountant who worked for her father, a fact that upset her father and caused him to treat her children as though they were the dirty children of peasants. Her father, despite his dislike of her husband, left Elena and her family a large inheritance. Elena and her husband, Karl, took this



money and returned to Berlin in grand style. Elena adopts her new country whole heartedly and accepts all the propaganda that the German media perpetrates. When the war begins, she forces her brother-in-law to listen to her opinions as often as possible despite his belief that her opinions were wrong and infuriating. Elena is visiting the Desnoyers family when the war begins, so she is forced to remain well into the beginning of the war. Marcelo wishes every day that she will go away. Soon she does.

Elena has six children, four boys and two girls. The oldest boy is a professor in the university who has strong opinions about the war and shares them with Julio shortly before it breaks out, the other three boys in the military, and the two girls engaged to military men. Soon after Elena's return to Germany, she learns that two of her sons are dead, one wounded, and both her daughters' fiancys are dead. Despite Elena's great beliefs in the war, she has lost nearly everything that matters to her.

## Senator Lacour and Rene

Senator Lacour is a member of the French government whose son, Rene, becomes engaged to Marcelo's son. Through this relationship, Marcelo and the senator become good friends. The senator arranges for Marcelo to go to his castle at the beginning of the war despite the approaching German forces. It is also the senator who arranges the visit to the front in which Marcelo and he are allowed to visit with their sons. It is during this visit that Marcelo sees how mature his son has become. Finally, it is the senator that informs the Desnoyers family when Julio is killed. Marcelo wants to see his son immediately, and the senator arranges for his family to go to the battle site where the graves were dug.

The senator's family has a long history of military service. However, the senator has only one child, Rene, and does not want to see him killed in battle. The senator then arranges for his son to be given a clerical post in Paris to avoid this possibility. However, Rene feels pressure from his fiancy to go to the front and decides to go. Here Rene is nearly killed, wounded badly, and returns to Paris to recuperate. Rene remains in the military after his injuries, though he has returned to a more clerical position.

## Madariaga

Madariaga is the father-in-law of Marcelo and father to both Dona Luisa Desnoyers and Elena von Hartrott. Madariaga is a man who has a quick temper and just as quick a generosity streak. Madariaga often cheated on his wife, creating children that he would then take onto his property and treat like any other employee. Madariaga is a free spirit who lives his life the way he wants to. Madariaga teaches Marcelo many things that he takes into his adulthood, especially his generous streak. Madariaga did not like Karl, the German, and treated his children as second class citizens. This situation seems to foreshadow the events of the war on a small scale.



## The Keeper and His Family

When Marcelo arrives at his castle he finds the Keeper still in residence with his wife and fourteen year old daughter. When the German's arrive, the Keeper is forced to service these gentlemen, finding them the supplies they need and readying the rooms for them to sleep in. When they find that Marcelo has become somewhat friendly with the Germans due to the appearance of his nephew, they become brave and move into the servants' quarters of the castle. That night the Germans become drunk, defecate in the castle, and hunt down the Keeper's daughter. The Keeper attempts to stop them from harming his daughter and is killed for his efforts. Marcelo also tries to protect the girl and finds himself locked up in the cellar. The next morning the Keeper's wife rescues Marcelo and tells him that the Germans violated her daughter, who is now afraid of all men, Marcelo included. When the French begin to push the Germans back and return to the village, the Keeper's wife and daughter are trapped in the demolition of their home by a French bomb. Marcelo is surprised to find them still alive.



## Objects/Places

### Gold Bathtub

Marcelo, in his quest to buy every bargain in France, buys a bathtub made out of gold and puts it in his castle. This bathtub is why Marcelo decides to go to the castle when he learns the German forces are coming toward Paris.

### Bottles of Wine

While Julio and his father are on the outs, Argensola often goes to Dona Luisa to request objects that Julio can sell for income. Dona Luisa gives Argensola wine bottles which he stores in the studio. Marcelo also gives wine from his wine cellar to the French soldiers retreating past his castle before the battle of the Marne.

### Paintings of the Soul

Argensola also fancies himself a painter who can paint the souls of people in their eyes, a trick he attempts to teach Julio.

### Garden of Chapelle Expiatoire

It is in the Garden of Chapelle Expiatoire that Julio meets Marguerite after his trip to Argentina.

### Madariaga's Ranch

Madariaga's ranch is where Marcelo went to work after fleeing France for Argentina. Here Marcelo met and married his wife and it is from his inheritance from Madariaga that Marcelo became a millionaire.

### Julio's Studio

Julio's parents buy him an artist's studio when he decides he wants to be an artist. It is here where Julio lives with Argensola and where Argensola continues to live after Julio goes to war.

### Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires is where Marcelo retires to before his family talks him into moving to Paris.



## **Paris, France**

Paris is the capitol of France. Paris is where the Desnoyers family goes to live after Marcelo's retirement from ranching.

## **Berlin, Germany**

Berlin, Germany is where the von Hartrott family goes to live after the death of Madariaga.

## **Villablanche**

Villablanche is the name of the small village where Marcelo buys his castle and where he goes to defend his antiques against the German military, instead living through the battle of the Marne.

## Social Sensitivity

Written at the start of World War I, this novel artfully combines the author's admiration for France and its revolutionary and democratic tradition with the history of an Argentine family that has close ties with both Germany and France. The Germans, who are depicted in full Teutonic stereotype, claim half the family. They behave true to their national "origins." They are arrogant, greedy, and aggressive, and entirely to blame for the outbreak of war. Here the reader recognizes a strong element of propaganda. Blasco Ibanez was invited to the front by the President of France in the hope that the Spanish writer could use his descriptive powers to create a work that would serve the war effort. The book is also about the contrast between the old and the new worlds, about the abnormal and anxious character of Europe, with its divisive national boundaries, its constant competition for scarce land and resources, as compared to the free, fertile, and open spaces of the Argentine pampas, idealized here as a land without conflict and without war. The book is, most of all, an eloquent statement against War, one of the Biblical four horsemen from Revelations, and his three traveling companions: Plague, Hunger, and Death.

## Techniques

The story develops along fairly straightforward chronological lines. On occasion, readers learn of an omitted detail or a concealed revelation through flashback — as with the details of Marcelo Desnoyers' life — or through the recollection of one of the characters. Karl von Hartrott, for example, had to leave Germany and start a new life in Argentina because he had been involved in a minor financial scandal that put an end to his military career. Readers hear this from his brother-in-law Desnoyers, many years after the event. The book also contains the figure of the wise and mysterious Russian, Tchernoff, who adds depth and a degree of omniscience to the otherwise not very introspective figures in the plot.

In selecting the themes and characters for this book, Blasco Ibanez sought to create personalities and situations that could fit into and serve to exemplify very specific historical events. It is no accident, for example, that Marcelo Desnoyers should be granted an opportunity to redeem himself in the field of battle, albeit figuratively, and thus make up for the lack of valor of his youth. Julio, irresponsible, pampered, and spoiled assumes almost heroic proportions when he distinguishes himself at the front and dies for the cause. Historical events are, likewise, the medium through which the von Hartrotts fulfill their destiny of ruin and disgrace. The plot is constructed so that the characters can act out of the author's vision of history.





# Themes

## Themes

One of the themes of the book is the contrast between Teutonic, northern European values and the culture of the peoples of the Latin Mediterranean.

The worship of false idols to which the Germans subscribe will, almost by necessity, bring sorrow and ruin to the German side of the family. German racism is mentioned in this book, although the theme of the superiority and purity of the Aryan race does not dominate the long list of indictments of German culture contained in the narrative. The reader is supposed to be persuaded that Latin culture is superior because it possesses — and relishes — strong humanistic values and a more highly developed aesthetic sense. These virtues, the book suggests, are worth fighting and dying for, even for young Julio Madariaga, an irresponsible and frivolous Argentine national inspired to fight on behalf of the French by a sense of the justness of their cause.

In *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, distorted and perverted notions of nationalism are allowed to triumph over common sense and family relations. This would never happen in the New World, the author implies, where open frontiers allow those of many nations to live and prosper together.

The antiwar theme dominates the second part of the book. It is clear, on the one hand, that the author abhors war and its consequences and attributes it to selfish and narrow motives such as a desire for power and territorial aggrandizement. On the other hand, he is not a pacifist; Blasco clearly believes that serving as a soldier in the war — when fighting on the side the French and their allies — is a noble and exemplary deed and a true measure of heroism.

## Relationships and Family

Relationships are an important theme in this novel. It is the relationships between the members of the Desnoyers family, the relationship between Julio and Marguerite, between Julio and Argensola, and the relationships between Marguerite and her husband and Chichi and her fiancy that motivate the main characters of the story and drive the plot.

The most important relationship dynamic in this novel is the one of the Desnoyers family with each other and their German relations. Marcel Desnoyers adores his wife and children although it is not in his nature to show this love with great shows of affection. Desnoyers shows his love through his generosity, not unlike his father in law, Julio Madariaga. As his children grow, Marcel moves further out of the circle of their lives, especially his daughter whom he leaves to the care of his wife. When Julio begins to make a reputation for himself in Paris, Marcel is not impressed with the things he hears about his son despite the favorable opinions of his friends and acquaintances. This



animosity increases when it becomes public knowledge that Julio is having an affair with a married woman. Marcel sees his son as selfish and self centered and cuts him out of his life. This opinion changes, however, when Julio joins the French military and proves himself to be very heroic.

The Desnoyers have relatives who are German due to the fact that Dona Luisa's sister married the German accountant who worked for their father. This relationship is strained from the time Elena marries Karl, because Madariaga does not like Karl. This stain continues after Madariaga dies and Karl chooses to take his inheritance and return to Germany. Karl does well in Germany, causing Marcelo's family to want to relocate to Europe as well. Then, before the war begins the oldest cousin visits France and explains Germany's opinion of the rest of the world, which is not very flattering. His mother, Elena is also visiting the area and finds herself stuck in France after the declaration of war. Her presence in the house is an irritant to Marcelo who is forced to listen each night to her opinions regarding the war. Finally, while Marcelo is at his castle before the battle of the Marne he runs into one of the other cousins and is not impressed with the boy's lack of help while his comrades steal all of Marcelo's antiques. However, when two of Elena's sons are killed and one wounded. Marcelo and his family cannot help but feel sympathy for her losses.

Julio's relationship with Marguerite is the first time Julio has felt the depth of real love and he believes that he cannot be happy without her. Marguerite feels the same despite her marriage to another man. Marguerite does not love her husband, but feels sympathy and affection for the man. When Marguerite's husband goes off to fight in the war, she feels sorry that he has no loved ones to cry for him at home. After he is wounded, Marguerite feels it is her duty to be at his side. Marguerite, who has studied to become a nurse, quickly goes to her husband's side and nurses him personally. When Julio learns this, he offers to join the military in order to impress Marguerite as her husband has. However, Marguerite does not want this. Although she still loves Julio, she chooses to remain with her husband and end all contact with Julio. Julio, in response to his heartbreak, joins the war effort and proves himself to be a hero. Finally, it is the love between Chichi and her fiancy, soon husband, which gives the reader hope at the end of the novel as all the sons have died and Chichi and Rene are the only ones left to create a future for the Desnoyers family.

## War

At the beginning of the novel war is nothing but a nuisance for Julio, posing as a possible threat to his happiness. The German cousins think that war is the best thing that could happen for the world. The oldest cousin believes the war will last a short time and when it is over all of Europe will be under German control, an idea that is preferable due to the fact that the German's are the superior race. Even Marcelo seems to agree with the cousins thoughts, thinking that war is a good business plan for all the countries of Europe. However, these opinions are quick to change.



When the war begins there is much celebration in the streets as the men are called to duty. Julio and Argensola watch it with a small amount of envy and a lot of relief. They do not have to serve, because they are not French citizens. Argensola sees the whole thing as some sort of game, following the movements of the armies on a map and through the newspaper. However, Julio begins to feel shame as people in the streets ask him why he does not go to war. Argensola even dreams up a military comprised of Latin's such as himself and Julio. However, when Argensola finds himself in competition for the captain's role, he loses interest.

Soon Belgium falls under the Germans and rumors that the war will be in Paris within a few weeks begins to wake these people up to the realities of war. Marcelo sends his women away and goes himself toward the front in order to protect his property there. In the process, Marcelo finds himself in the middle of one of the biggest battles of the early part of the war. Julio also discovers that war is not all fun and games when his lover's husband becomes injured and she makes the decision to return to his side. Julio joins the military soon after, a decision that helps him grow as a man and makes his father proud. However, war is not fun and games. Julio is killed in battle, leaving his family wishing they had never returned to Paris.

## Duty

A sense of duty is a strong motivator and it is what motivates several of the main characters. Marcelo Desnoyers ran away from military service in 1870 and now that war has come once again to France, he feels remorse for his cowardice at the time. Marcelo would like to join the military himself in order to show his patriotism, but he is in his seventies now, too old to be of service. Marcelo would like to send his boy into service, but Julio is not of French birth. Marcelo feels helpless and this is part of the reason he chooses to go to his country estate where the battle front is quickly closing in. Marcelo does all he can to aid the soldiers who are retreating past his castle, but still does not feel it is enough. When Julio decides to join the military, Marcelo is proud, until his son dies in battle. It is then that Marcelo no longer feels a sense of duty but regrets ever returning to his native country.

Julio does not join the military for a sense of duty, but because of another man's duty. Julio joins the military, because the husband of his lover did his duty and was injured because of it. This injury ruins all of Julio's future plans, stealing his lover away once more. Julio joins the military to prove to his lover that he can be just as brave as her husband. However, once in the military, Julio discovers what it means to be a man and it is then that his sense of duty is developed and he willingly puts himself in a position in which he is killed in battle.

Chichi's fiancy is the son of a senator and as such has escaped duty on the front and is instead assigned to an office in Paris. Chichi is happy to have him close to her, but everyday people's opinions of those not serving on the front dips and Chichi is embarrassed to be seen with her fiancy in his uniform. Soon the fiancy senses this displeasure and joins the regular military despite his father. Rene's sense of duty is

wrapped up in his love for his fiancée; therefore it is not a duty to his country that finds him fighting in the war, but his duty to his lover. When Rene is injured, Chichi is at his side day and night. Soon after they are married.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person omniscient. The narrator shifts from Julio to Marcel with occasional dips into the minds of the female lead characters, especially Dona Luisa and Chichi. This point of view is clear and easy to read, illuminating for the reader the emotions of each of the main characters at different points in the development of the plot and showing events that only one of the characters might have knowledge of.

Marcelo and Julio share the main duties of narrator. Marcelo shows the story through the point of view of a father and a patriot, torn between his love for his son and his love for his country. Marcelo knows how horrible war can be and he has experienced the cruelty of the Germans first hand, therefore he is thrilled to see his son join the fight. Marcelo also walked away from an opportunity to serve his country many years before, so his ability to offer his country his son also satisfies his sense of duty to his country. Julio joins the military because of a broken heart, not a sense of duty to his country, a country that is not really his. Julio soon becomes a model soldier, however, becoming a man quicker than he might have if he had stayed out of the military. Julio is proud of his service, proud that he has made his father happy, and proud to be a soldier.

Dona Luisa shares the duty of narrator to show the reader the more difficult side of parenting a soldier. Dona Luisa has always been a religious woman, but when her son goes to war she prays as often as she can for his safety. Dona Luisa's sister, Elena, prays at her side, not for France and victory, but for Germany and her own sons. This contradiction adds flavor to the story and is seen in a way that could not have been shown from the narration of either male narrator, although Marcelo does offer his opinion on his sister-in-law often and loudly.

## Setting

The novel takes place in several locations, including the ranch in Argentina, in Berlin, Germany, the countryside outside of Paris, and in Paris itself. The most important settings to this novel tend to center around Paris. The novel begins in Argentina as the narrator takes the reader into the past in order to share how the Desnoyers family came to be and how they came to live in Paris. The ranch in Argentina is a large affair that is occupied by people of several different backgrounds, including the Spaniard who owns it, his sons-in-law who are French and German, and the scattering of illegitimate children who come from many different backgrounds. Madariaga looks at his ranch as a sort of utopia of different cultures until he has a falling out with the German, mimicking on a small level the war that will someday tear this family apart.



The Desnoyers move to Paris after the old man has died and Marcelo retires from ranch life. While here, they visit their cousins in Berlin. Marcelo finds Berlin stuffy and conceited, happy to return to a world he knows. The Desnoyers also buy a castle in the countryside of France. It is located in a small village and sits beside a river. While Marcelo is visiting this property, hoping to protect it from the German invaders, he experiences a battle that forever colors his opinion of Germans. Marcelo's castle is destroyed, his precious antiques stolen, and his life nearly lost. The countryside no longer holds the magic it once did for Marcelo. When he visits his son on the battlefield some months later, the area where his son lives in extensive trenches is not unlike the battlefield that his castle had become. Marcelo is proud and worried at the same time, happy and distressed, content and angered.

Paris is where the Desnoyers family spends the majority of their time in their large apartment. Julio also has a studio in Paris that his family bought for him when he decided he wanted to be an artist. It is here that his parents visit often after Julio goes to war. The studio is large and designed perfectly for a painter. However, Julio and his roommate, Argensola, rarely ever paint. After Julio's departure, Argensola brings women to live with him in the studio, often forced to hide them when Julio's parents come to visit. The settings in this novel, therefore, are more background than character. They hold emotions for the characters, especially the studio in which Julio lived, and the castle where Marcelo nearly loses his life at the hands of the Germans.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is in English, but the novel was originally written in Spanish. The phrases within the novel are often confusing or missing key words due to this translation. However, it is easy to read despite this effect. The novel was written in 1916; therefore many of the phrases and the passages of flowery description are unusual to modern writing and can confuse a reader not accustomed to this type of writing. Despite the simple language, the writing style is complicated and can serve to be an impediment to the readers understanding of certain sections within the novel. This impediment can be overcome if the reader simply reads slowly and rereads the sections that are difficult to understand on first reading.

The novel is told mostly in exposition with very little dialogue. The writer often tells of things that have taken place in a past tense order or he tells them in a summary style that does not offer much in the way of actual scenes. There are long passages of dialogue at some points in which the writer is showing a character telling the other characters about the war, but again this is often told in such a way that the dialogue is in a summary type of passage that does not include the actual dialogue, word for word. Although this limits scenes, it moves the novel at a rapid pace, some chapters covering years within the stretch of just a few pages.

## Structure

The novel is divided into three parts, each part containing between five and six chapters. Each chapter is named for an event, a phrase, or a person that takes place or is described within the chapter. The first part of the novel takes place before the war, describing how the Desnoyers family came to be and how they came to live in Paris, as well as introducing the main characters and Julio's relationship with Marguerite Laurier. The second part of the novel covers the beginning of the war and Marcelo's experiences during the battle of the Marne. The third and final part of the novel deals with Julio's service in the military and his death.

The novel begins in the present, taking a short detour into the past during the next two chapters. The rest of the novel takes place in the present tense. The main plot of the novel follows the Denoyers family, especially Julio and Marcelo, as the war unfolds and begins to make an impact on their lives. Two subplots revolve around the relationship Julio has with Marguerite as well as his relationship with his roommate Argensola, and his sister Chichi's relationship with her fiancé Rene. Except for a detour into the past at the beginning of the novel, the main plot is linear and follows a logical time line.



## Quotes

"They were to have met in the garden of the Chapelle Expiatoire a five o'clock in the afternoon, but Julio Desnoyers with the impatience of a lover who hopes to advance the moment of meeting by presenting himself before the appointed time, arrived an half hour earlier."

Part 1, Chapter 1, The Tryst (In the Garden of Chapelle Expiatoire), pg. 3

"If its mine, put it with the others." Part 1, Chapter 2, Madariaga, the Centaur, pg. 47

"He was used to thinking in Spanish, and translating his ideas into the speech of his ancestors, spattered his French will all kinds of Creole dialect."

Part 1, Chapter 3, The Desnoyers Family, pg. 86

"'God is asleep, forgetting the world,' continued the Russian. 'It will be a long time before he awakes, and while he sleeps the four feudal horsemen of the Beast will course through the land as its only lords.'" Part 1, Chapter 5, In Which Appear Four Horsemen, pg. 175

"And Don Marcelo envied this wrath!" Part 2, Chapter 1, What Don Marcelo Envied, pg. 199

"This did not please his amorous egoism--to be placed apart from the rest as a delicate and fragile being only fit for feminine adoration." Part 2, Chapter 2, New Life, pg. 209

"After this rude shock which had brought them surprise and death, the band disappeared, instantly swallowed up by the trees." Part 2, Chapter 3, The Retreat, pg. 263

"To Paris!...A new impetus was going to fill the vacuum of his objectless existence."

Part 2, Chapter 4, Near the Sacred Grotto, pg. 292

"Soon he was seated as a stranger at his own table, eating from the same dishes that his family were accustomed to use, served by men with shaved heads, wearing coarse, striped aprons over their uniforms. That which he was eating was his, the wine was from his vaults; all that adorned the room he had bought: the trees whose boughs were waving outside the window also belonged to him...And yet he felt as though he were in this place for the first time, with all the discomfort and diffidence of a total stranger." Part 2, Chapter 5, The Invasion, pg. 319

"At the end of October, the Desnoyers family returned to Paris. Dona Luisa could no longer live in Biarritz, so far from her husband." Part 3, Chapter 1, After the Marne, pg. 387





"Now he had obligations that were taxing all his powers; he was collaborating in the formation of the future. He was a man at last!" Part 3, Chapter 3, War, pg. 445

"All was gloomy, all was black. The world was going to its ruin...He was going to rest."

Part 3, Chapter 5, The Burial Fields, pg. 482

# Adaptations

Please see the biographical entry on Blasco Ibanez.



## Topics for Discussion

What is the significance of Julio's relationship with Marguerite? Do you think Julio would have joined the war if not for Marguerite's decision to return to her husband? Why does Julio go to Argentina? What is important about his voyage back to France?

What is your opinion of the German cousin's speech regarding the superiority of the German race? Do you believe he was correct? Does this have anything to do with the attitude of the Germans during the war? Why did the German papers say that the French had revolted? What do you think this symbolized?

Why did Marcelo go into the country, when he knew the French and German forces were coming that way? Do you think he made the right choice? Why did he remain after the Germans invaded his castle? Compare and contrast Marcelo's loss of his antiques, and the violation the German's perpetrated on his Keeper's daughter. What makes these things the same? How are they different?

Why did Marcelo and the senator visit their sons at the front? Do you think this was a good idea? What significance did it have on the plot development of the novel?

Discuss the theme of relationships. Is it possible to write a novel that does not contain this theme? How does this theme impact a novel? What is the impact of this theme on the novel? What is the impact of the German relatives of the Desnoyers on the novel? Do you think this relationship influenced Marcelo or Julio's decisions in regards to their participation in the war?

Discuss the war. Are the descriptions within this novel accurate to the known history of World War I? Why do you think the war began? What was the impact of the assassination of Jaures on the war? Would there have been a war, if the assassination had not occurred? Why or why not?

What is the symbolism of the Biblical reference to the four horsemen of the Apocalypse? Do you think this was accurate to the text of the novel? How important is symbolism in a novel such as this one?

## Literary Precedents

Blasco Ibanez has stated, more than once, that his greatest role model was Miguel de Cervantes, author of the immortal *Don Quixote* (1605 and 1615).

Among more contemporary influences he has acknowledged Victor Hugo as an important source of inspiration as both writer and activist. Several critics have remarked on the similarities of technique between Hugo's battle of Waterloo scenes in *Les Miserables* (1862) and Blasco's graphic description of the battle of the Marne. More recent studies tend to see a relationship between the works of Blasco and the novels of his Spanish contemporary Benito Perez Galdos, although neither author would have willingly accepted the comparison.



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