

Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw Study Guide

**Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest
Outlaw by Mark Bowden**

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Plot Summary

Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria was a Colombian national who rose to infamy through his exploits as the leader of the notorious Medellin Drug Cartel, a seemingly unstoppable force in the underworld into the 1990s. It took more than \$700 million dollars and over 7 years to stop Escobar, with countless numbers of lives ruined or lost.

"Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw" by Mark Bowden details the life of Pablo Escobar as well as the political climate of Colombia and how it allowed Escobar to become a legendary criminal and philanthropist.

Escobar was born in 1949 to Abel de Jesus Escobar, a successful cattle farmer, and Hermilda Gaviria, a well educated and capable school teacher. Pablo was the third of seven children for the Escobars. The family lived in Rionegro, a town in which violence and death were common.

Bowden discusses the politics of Colombia as they were an integral part in the making of Escobar. The country was wildly unstable and its government was shaky at best. For a time there was a hope that the small, poor country would be a part of something bigger, more democratic and powerful.

Colombia's political future seemed to rest in the hands of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. Gaitán was a lawyer and socialist that soon became so well loved that he won the Liberal Party's nomination for the presidency.

As Gaitán continued to fight for the unheard voices of Colombia, he also made some very powerful enemies. When Gaitán was assassinated in 1948, the death of a beloved leader set off Bogotazo, a bloody massacre that would lead to La Violencia, an era of civil unrest and violence that would last for a decade.

Pablo Escobar grew up in this climate, which clearly affected his personality and ambitions. Escobar idolized criminals like Jesse James and Bonnie and Clyde along with Colombian outlaws such as Sangrenegra and Desquite.

Escobar was young when he began his criminal career. Escobar began with car theft and quickly moved into the drug arena. As the years went on, Escobar's exploits encouraged swift and deadly violence which escalated as years went by. No one was safe from Escobar's wrath if the person stood in the way of the man's plans. While Escobar built his massive empire he also exercised a social conscience. On one hand, Escobar was a ruthless murderer. On the other, the man was devoted to protecting the poor of the country, determined that no child would ever starve and that the people of Colombia would have every advantage possible. Escobar's philanthropy and generosity made him incredibly popular and powerful.

Escobar eventually became the seventh richest man in the world and as a criminal, virtually untouchable.



Bowden examines in detail the massive manhunt designed to take down Escobar and the Medellin drug cartel. The number of people and organizations involved in the manhunt was massive and included guerillas, vigilantes, drug traffickers, law enforcement officials, and politicians from Colombia and the United States. The author relays the insight of key players like Colonel Hugo Martinez, the man put in charge of Search Bloc, the organization that would eventually put an end to Escobar's reign.

Pablo Escobar was shot and killed by US DEA agents in 1993.



Prologue, Chapter 1

Prologue, Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

Prologue: December 2, 1993

The prologue addresses the day Pablo Escobar was murdered. Hermilda Gaviria Escobar, Pablo's mother, went to the site on foot with Pablo's sister. Hermilda had been ill and was visiting a medical clinic when she heard the news that Pablo had been shot. Hermilda made her way to Los Olivos, a neighborhood located in the south central part of Medellin. There was confusion on the street and no one knew for sure if "Don Pablo" had indeed been killed by the DEA agents that lined the street.

There were many onlookers that wanted Pablo to be dead while many others secretly hoped that Don Pablo had escaped once again. Although Escobar was a hardened and violent criminal, he had also poured millions, perhaps billions, of dollars into the city, making much needed improvements for the poor.

Pablo Escobar had managed to elude authorities for 16 months. December 2 was the day the search finally ended.

When Hermilda saw a man sprawled on the ground covered in blood from multiple gun shot wounds, the old woman laughed. "You fools!" Hermilda shouted, as she began to laugh loudly at the police. "You fools! This is not my son! This is not Pablo Escobar! You have killed the wrong man!" (Page 4)

Hermilda was right. The man was not her son. Pablo was still on the roof of one of the buildings but he was dead. When Hermilda saw Pablo, she was filled with relief and dread. Relief that Pablo was finally at peace; dread because the murder of Don Pablo would only encourage more bloodshed.

Chapter One: The Rise of El Doctor 1948-1989

According to Bowden, "There was no more exciting place in South America to be in April 1948 than Bogotá, Colombia." (Page 7)

Politics in Colombia were often shaky at best. For a time there was a hope that the small, poor country would be a part of something bigger, more democratic and powerful. In 1948, Colombia joined the Ninth Inter-American Conference along with Foreign Ministers of the most powerful countries in the world, including the U.S. The purpose of the summit was to sign a charter forming the Organization of American States, a coalition designed to give voice to the largely unheard nations in Central and South America.

Colombia's political future seemed to rest in the hands of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. Gaitán was a lawyer and socialist that soon became the people's beloved leader. The CIA



would later describe Gaitán as "A staunch antagonist of oligarchical rule and a spellbinding orator."

Gaitán had been involved in politics for several years before receiving his law degree. Gaitán's support of the workers and low-income Colombians made him a favorite for President and as a result, Gaitán won the Liberal Party's nomination in 1930.

As Gaitán continued to fight for the unheard voices of Colombia, he also made some very powerful enemies. When Gaitán was assassinated in 1948, the death of the beloved leader set off Bogotazo, a bloody massacre that would lead to La Violencia, an era of civil unrest and violence that would last for a decade.

The author also describes Colombia's formerly democratic society, beginning with the legendary Simón Bolívar.

Also mentioned in the text is a young upstart by the name of Fidel Castro, who ended up fleeing Colombia shortly after Gaitán's assassination. Castro took refuge in the Cuban Embassy and the experience is believed to have influenced Castro's guerrilla strategy in the 1950s.

Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria was born to Abel de Jesus Escobar, a successful cattle farmer, and Hermilda Gaviria, a well educated and capable school teacher. Pablo was the third of seven children for the Escobars. The family lived in Rionegro, a town in which violence and death were common. In 1948 La Violencia had been unleashed, resulting in hordes of vigilantes and criminals, as well as the siege of the government by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, a military dictator whose platform was to curb the violence.

Pablo Escobar grew up in this climate, which clearly affected his personality and ambitions. Escobar idolized criminals like Jesse James and Bonnie and Clyde along with Colombian outlaws such as Sangrenegra and Desquite.

Despite later reports, the Escobars were not poor. When Pablo was born, Abel and Hermilda Escobar owned 6 cows, 12 hectares, and a house. Although the house did not have electricity, it had running water. In the 1948, this qualified the Escobars as upper middle class. Their conditions improved when they moved from Rionegro to Envigado, a town on the outskirts of Medellín.

La Violencia reigned from 1948-1958, bringing an air of violence to Medellín and the rest of Colombia. Pablo was a normal child who loved to play soccer, listen to music, go to movies, and eat fast food. In Pablo's teenage years, he joined in a local youth movement founded in Envigado by Fernando González, who had published a manifesto titled, "The Right to Disobey." Any control the Escobars had over Pablo soon dissipated.

In addition to "tuning in, turning on, and dropping out," Pablo and his friends also embraced another trend of the 60s; they smoked marijuana.



Even then Colombia was considered to be the worldwide gold standard for marijuana. Pablo became a heavy user and continued that practice for the rest of his life.

Pablo Escobar and his cousin, Gustavo Gaviria, began to hang out in tough neighborhoods. Escobar informed Hermilda that he was not cut out to go to school or hold a regular job. Escobar quit school three years before graduation at age 17. Since Hermilda was a schoolteacher, Pablo never completely abandoned the idea of higher education. Escobar and Gaviria even attempted to return to the Lyceum two years later but were too accustomed to their freewheeling ways to succeed.

Escobar's desire to be "big" created the impetus for his criminal career. Medellin was the perfect place for Escobar to begin his life as a gangster. The city was well known for housing organized crime syndicates. The region also had a centuries-long tradition of harboring smugglers. The original booty was emeralds and gold, but in Escobar's time the booty was drugs, namely cocaine and marijuana.

Escobar's first exploits are somewhat murky. There are records that show Escobar became an established car thief before he turned 20. Escobar and his gang would pinch cars, chop them up, and sell off the parts within a few hours. The most money could be made by selling the parts, which also left no evidence of the stolen vehicle.

As Escobar's operation grew, it became common for Escobar's men to take the cars off the street in broad daylight, whether or not the driver was inside. The operation grew so large that the cars no longer needed to be chopped to be sold. Escobar had someone on the inside to issue clean titles to the cars.

From car theft, Escobar moved into the drug trade. 80% of the cocaine in the world at the time came from the abundant poppy fields of Colombia. When Escobar attempted to make his mark in the drug trade, he was all but laughed at by future competitors. Still, Escobar refused to give up. The short, chubby Colombian was finally taken seriously when those competitors, many of which were big time drug lords, began to fall. Escobar became known for his brutal methods by which the drug lords ended up dead en masse.

Escobar was unstoppable.

Escobar was arrested twice and had spent several months in prison. In 1976, shortly after Escobar married 15-year-old Maria Victoria Henao Vellejo, the rising crime boss was arrested again. This time the episode was very serious as law enforcement officers had discovered 39 kg of cocaine in the gang's truck.

In order to stay out of prison, Escobar attempted to bribe the judge but was turned down flat. Escobar worked around the situation and found a judge willing to take the bribe. It became a pattern that if Escobar could not buy off a city official, he invented other ways to achieve his lofty goals. This pattern became known as "plata o plomo" or silver or lead. In essence, those who would not take bribes would pay the consequences—most often with their lives.



Escobar oversaw every aspect of the drug trafficking operation. The syndicate was crude and old-fashioned in its ways, but it seemed to work. Escobar even factored in shipments that would be intercepted by law enforcement so that he could still make the millions of dollars he craved.

Escobar began to travel to expand the syndicate throughout Colombia, Bolivia, Panama and Peru. At the same time the Medellín drug cartel was expanding, Escobar's main competitor, the Cali cocaine cartel, was growing rapidly.

By 1976, the operation was in full swing and hundreds of kilos of cocaine were being sent out of the country every year.

Escobar continued to indulge his "adolescent appetites." Oftentimes, Escobar hired young beauty queens to participate in erotic games. During soccer games, the other players made sure Escobar looked good, even though he was a worthy competitor.

In 1979, Escobar built a luxurious country house, which he named Hacienda Los Nápoles. The house was located approximately 80 miles outside Medellín on land that cost \$63 million. Escobar went crazy and built his own roadway system, airport, heliport, 6 swimming pools, lakes, and flew in exotic animals including buffalo, elephants, lions, gazelles, hippos, ostriches, rhinoceroses, and camels. Los Nápoles was Escobar's ultimate fantasy playground.

At this time Escobar was the richest man in Colombia. As such, Escobar thought it was important to pay attention to his public persona. It was important for Escobar to appear as a great supporter of the people, which would allow Escobar to play upon the resentments of the establishment and align himself with revolutionary groups such as FARC, M-19, and ELN.

In Escobar's eyes, funneling of such vast shipments of cocaine to the United States served two purposes. First, selling the drugs would increase Escobar's already immense wealth. Second, delivering drugs to the north also meant that the country's youth would be poisoning their minds and their bloodstreams, thereby weakening the culture. In Escobar's eyes, he was a kind of drug-trafficking Robin Hood.

Escobar never turned to the law to help settle disputes. The law and Escobar were on opposite sides and for the most part, rarely interacted in any way. When someone interfered with Escobar's business, the drug lord would take it upon himself to exact vengeance, often in a public setting.

Escobar continued to elevate his public profile and was elected to serve as a substitute on Medellín's City Council. Escobar also began to back various politicians and political causes. Eventually, Escobar was elected as a substitute to Congress. This served several purposes, including probably the two most important: as a congressman Escobar received automatic judicial immunity so that he could not be prosecuted for any crime under Colombian law; and he would also receive a diplomatic visa, which would protect Escobar and his family on an international front.



Part of Escobar's mistake is that he was not satisfied with his role in Congress and pushed to be in the limelight, to be known as "Don Pablo." Escobar began to raise funds for charity and donated millions of dollars to establish low income housing and industry in Medellín.

In 1979 Colombia signed a treaty with the US that identified the shipment of illegal drugs from Colombia to the US as a crime. Therefore drug traffickers could be extradited and tried in US courts. This became a major issue for Escobar, and the drug lord began to speak out against extradition, often making the topic his platform.

By 1983, Escobar had become a legend. The drug lord was known worldwide for cocaine trafficking. Although Escobar had everything he could possibly want, he continued to strive for political power and social status. When those things were denied to Escobar, Colombia entered into one of its bloodiest decades in history.

In 1983, Rodrigo Lara was appointed as Colombia's justice minister. Lara was devoted to going after political "hot money," a controversial move based on the failed presidential campaign of Luis Galán. The 35-year-old Lara represented The Liberal Renovation Front, a dissident faction of Colombia's Liberal Party. The group referred to themselves as the "New Liberals" and was under the auspices of Galán. Galán was often referred to as the heir to Gaitán and progressive reform.

Although Galán had been defeated in the presidential race in 1982, President Belisario Betancur was required to appoint members of the opposition's staff to Cabinet posts. This is how Lara became justice minister. Lara very quickly began his crusade to go after the hot money. One of the reasons that Galán's presidential campaign failed was that going after hot money would mean going up against Pablo Escobar. Most of the Colombian government had taken money from Escobar and other members of the drug trade. While Lara ventured forth with his plan, Betancur and other officials simply watched.

Bowden details some of Escobar's interactions with Lara and the Colombian House of Representatives.

Lara continued on with his quest and in 1984 permitted the US State Department to test herbicides on Colombia's coca fields. Additionally, a cocaine processing facility was raided by La Policia Nacional de Colombia (PNC), the preeminent law enforcement agency and the country. During the raid the PNC managed to confiscate 14 metric tons of cocaine, the largest seizure in history. This followed an equally devastating blow to the drug trade when Betancur's forces, accompanied by US military, located and destroyed an astonishing amount of the Medellin cartel's property including 7 aircraft, 7 airstrips, 12,000 chemical drums, and cocaine estimated to be worth over \$1 billion. In less than one month Lara was dead.

Lara's death would result in open warfare. No longer was cocaine just an industry. Lara's death forced Betancur to take up the cause and to work with the United States government to stop Escobar and like-minded individuals and organizations. Betancur



effectively placed Colombia under siege and authorized the PNC to confiscate assets belonging to the drug lords.

Escobar's first reaction to the overwhelming publicity was to write a letter to US Ambassador Tambs, who had accused Escobar of owning the facility that had been raided in Tranquilandia. Escobar accused Tambs of using the raid to support extradition. Escobar, who was still officially a member of Congress, wrote: "I want to express my most energetic and patriotic protest over the improper interference of North American boats and authorities in Colombian territory, in a way that entails the most flagrant violation of the sovereignty of our motherland."

It was becoming clear that Escobar would most likely lose his immunity. Escobar considered an offer made it to him by Panamanian army commander Manuel Noriega. Noriega promised safe haven in exchange for \$4 million. Noriega had no idea what kind of situation he landed himself in with Escobar. Escobar fled Panamá. When he was double crossed by Noriega's army, Escobar fled to Nicaragua.

Escobar's troubles heightened when he hired Barry Seal, a US-based cocaine trafficker and pilot. Unbeknownst to Escobar, Seal was working as an informant for the DEA to avoid a 57 year prison sentence. Seal supplied the DEA with photos of Escobar and Rodriguez Gacha as they supervised the loading of 750 kg of cocaine into Seal's airplane. The DEA wanted to keep the pictures secret to help build a sting against Escobar and other drug trafficking cartels but it was impossible. Seal foolishly declined a place in the witness protection program and was killed by Escobar's men two years later.

Escobar continued his lifelong fight against extradition. There was nothing Escobar feared more. Escobar stated: "Better a tomb in Colombia than a prison cell in the United States." (Page 51)

More than once Escobar offered to surrender to the government if the authorities would promise that he would not be extradited. The government refused.

Escobar's group, "The Extraditables," continued to fight against the Americans' efforts. Escobar managed to bribe Colombia's attorney general and, resorting to his standard method, plata o plomo, Escobar threatened one of the judges expected to vote in favor of extradition. A letter, most likely written by Escobar, was sent to the judge.

The letter reads in part: "We, The Extraditables, are writing to you because... we know that you have said publicly and cynically that the extradition treaty is constitutional... we are not going to ask or beg or seek compassion, because we do not need it. VILE WRETCH. We are going to DEMAND a favorable decision..." (Page 52)

It was clear that any opposition to Escobar's wishes would result in death as was proven when four other judges were murdered. In total 30 judges had been murdered since Lara's assassination.



Escobar never ceased attempting to evade extradition and US courts. In 1987, Escobar betrayed one of his longtime associates, Carlos Lehder. Escobar, convinced that the US was more interested in fighting the communist guerrillas than the narcos, tipped off police to Lehder's whereabouts. Lehder was extradited to Miami. Although the US was happy to have sentenced Lehder to 135 years in prison, they were not interested in making any deals with Escobar. Meanwhile, the violence in Colombia escalated. No one was safe from Escobar's wrath.

Things became worse when Luis Galán was nominated as the Liberal Party's candidate for the presidency. Galán had been the one to back Lara and was a major source of grief for Escobar. Lara, who was certain to be elected for the presidency and Colombia's darling, was assassinated by one of Escobar's men in 1989. This action made Escobar an enemy of the citizens of Colombia.

Escobar went one step further and attempted to assassinate Galán's successor, César Gaviria. Escobar's men planted a bomb on a commercial airline in order to kill Gaviria. 110 people died in the explosion, including two American citizens. This would be Escobar's second fatal mistake as the bombing was considered to be an act of international terrorism.

Bowden writes: "No longer just a law enforcement target, he was now a military target. To the men of America's secret counter-terrorism community, the ruthless dooper from Medellín had become a clear and present danger." (Page 59)



Chapters 2-3

Chapters 2-3 Summary and Analysis

Chapter Two: The First War 1989-1991

Assigned to the task of taking down Escobar, Colonel Hugo Martinez ate, slept and drank every activity that involved Escobar. Martinez, a member of the PNC, knew everything there was to know about the powerful drug lord. Like most people, Escobar had different personas for different situations. While most people only saw one side of Escobar, Martinez saw them all.

On the same day Galán was assassinated, Escobar's men killed Waldemar Franklin, a friend and colleague of Martinez's at the PNC. Franklin died because he could not be bought or bullied. It was Franklin that came the closest to capturing Escobar.

Galán's death prompted President Barco to declare war on the cartel. Escobar and many other drug lords had already been indicted by the US Justice Department, some more than once. Barco declared a suspension of habeas corpus, allowing the criminals to be arrested and held without being officially charged with any crime. It also became a crime to shadow own any properties, which made it harder for the kingpins to hide assets.

The author details a failed attempt to capture Escobar in Panama. Shortly after, Martinez was appointed to lead the Bloque de Basqueda, or the Search Bloc. Martinez neither sought nor wanted the job. Going up against Escobar was a job that nobody wanted.

Several local and federal agencies stepped in to take down the infamous drug lord. Police officers were brought in from outside Medellin since it was obvious that the majority of the police force in the city was in Escobar's pocket.

After a raid on Escobar, a man approached Martinez with a bribe. Escobar would offer \$6 million for Martinez to continue the search but to cause no harm to Escobar or his business. Escobar also wanted a list of informants within his organization.

Martinez was tempted. It was already clear that the job was little more than a suicide mission. Escobar had made it a point to let Martinez know that he could easily get to the Colonel's family. The thing that deterred Martinez was the man who had approached him with the bribe. He was a friend who had taken a bribe from Escobar and was now owned by the kingpin. Martinez told the friend to tell Escobar he could not be found. Martinez would not be bought. The move showed Martinez that Escobar was feeling the pressure.

Bowden lists the number of kidnappings and murders between March 3 and August 17. Many were high level officials, including judges and military personnel. Within the first



15 days of Martinez's leadership of the Search Bloc, 15 of the 200 men involved were murdered.

The author goes on to describe the collaboration between various government agencies and the plans to take down Escobar.

Activities of the army's small central group involved in the operation were also detailed. The group, dubbed Centra Spike, was always on the move and so deep undercover that only a handful of people knew they existed.

Even as late as 1989, the US Embassy was not convinced that Escobar was in charge of the Medellin drug cartel. The Embassy had been informed of such by the Colombian government but remained skeptical. Many were convinced that it was Gacha in charge. As a result, Gacha became the first target for Centra Spike.

Eavesdropping became an effective method and was instrumental in capturing Gacha.

Meanwhile the cartel made several failed attempts to assassinate President Cesar Gaviria.

Bowden also discusses details of US Executive Order 12333, an order put forth by Gerald Ford in 1974. The Order dealt with the prohibition of assassination of foreign nationals by federal and/or related individuals, either directly or indirectly.

Gacha continued to elude police for a time but was eventually tracked down to a cabin in Choco. Gacha died in a shoot out with agents from Centra Spike. Escobar was infuriated by the death and began to be more vocal about his situation. Escobar saw himself as a victim and declared all out war on the government.

Escobar was baffled by the obvious leak in his organization. After the assassination of yet another presidential candidate, which could never be linked to Escobar, the drug lord figured out that his cell phone was tapped. From that point on, all communications between Pablo and the cartel were guarded.

The body count continued to rise. Gustavo Gaviria, Escobar's cousin, friend, and trusted companion was murdered by agents. Escobar retaliated. President Cesar Gaviria was also slain.

In 1991, Escobar surrendered. Escobar continued to deny responsibility for President Gaviria's murder. Escobar told officials that he was a revolutionary, not a criminal, and as such should receive special and significant concessions. Escobar also denied being involved in the drug raid that killed Gustavo.

Escobar negotiated a deal by which he would be imprisoned at La Catedral, a prison built by Escobar on his own land. The balance of the concessions basically meant that Escobar would be in prison in name only and would have a protected place from which to conduct business.



The concessions were made and only after the fact did Martinez discover the depth and breadth of Escobar's reach into the Colombian government.

Chapter Three: Imprisonment and Escape September 1991- June 1992

Escobar's imprisonment was a joke. The book shows a photo of Escobar's living room which could be compared to a palatial suite. All prisoners at La Catedral lived that way. Every luxury imaginable was at Escobar's fingertips. The guards of the prison were little more than Escobar's employees and no one dared cross the kingpin. The term prison should also be used lightly considering that Escobar left the prison often, to attend soccer games and other social functions. On the first anniversary of Escobar's imprisonment at La Catedral, he was out celebrating at a Medellin nightclub.

Eduardo Mendoza, the Vice Minister of Justice, was given the task of transferring Escobar to a proper prison operated by the government. It was decided that the Bureau of Prisons should simply build a maximum security prison around La Catedral. That way, Escobar would not be able to escape or seek outside help during a potential transfer. Mendoza soon found that it was nearly impossible to find a contractor willing to do the work. As one man said, "We are not going to build a cage with the lion already inside." (Page 113)

Mendoza ventured forward but was consistently blocked by everyone, even the military. Eventually, Mendoza met Escobar. Escobar declared that Mendoza and President Gaviria had betrayed him. Escobar said that he might die but a lot of people would die before him. Mendoza was captured and taken hostage in the prison.

President Gaviria was notified of Mendoza's dire situation and ordered General Pardo to fire upon the prison. To Gaviria's complete astonishment, Pardo refused. After a burst of gunfire and chaos, it was discovered that Escobar had escaped.

Despite all of Martinez and Centra Spike's efforts, Escobar continued to elude capture. Escobar had people everywhere and managed to get away every time. Despite extensive intervention from the US and rewards for Escobar's capture or death, Martinez was ready to give up the hopeless battle. Martinez once again resigned. Once again, the resignation was refused.

The chapter ends with an interview in which Escobar continues to deny taking part in certain activities, talks about life at La Catedral and his family.



Chapters 4-6

Chapters 4-6 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 4: Los Pepes - October 1992 - October 1993

Bogotá had seen more than its share of death and violence. Even the residents of the city became shocked when a bomb exploded on the street, killing a large group of children and other residents. The bomb contained 220 pounds of dynamite and was one of the worst explosions the city and the PNC had seen to date.

Escobar's people continued to die and the kingpin seemed to be keeping score. Bombs continued to explode and people—police and civilians alike—continued to die. Escobar even offered a \$2,000 bounty for the life of each police officer in Medellín.

Martinez continued to be frustrated and disheartened. So far, hundreds of lives had been lost and hundreds of millions had been spent. Although the noose was becoming tighter, Escobar was no closer to being captured.

The day after the bomb exploded at the Bogota bookstore, bombs went off in various parts of the city related to Escobar's immediate family. Hermilda's hacienda was burned to the ground and two large car bombs went off in front of the Escobar family's apartment building. This was soon followed by one of Escobar's country homes being burned down.

It was not long before the responsible party stepped forward. The people that had orchestrated the attacks against Escobar belonged to a group named Los Pepes. The name Pepes stood for *Persguidos por Pablo Escobar* translated as *People Persecuted by Pablo Escobar*. Even now it is not completely clear who the members of Los Pepes were and it was surmised that the group was comprised of everyone from leftist guerillas (of whom Escobar was afraid), members of the Cali cartel, business competitors, and Colombian and US intelligence. Regardless of the murky identity, the group's motives were clear.

It can be surmised that the US and Colombian officials, at least not the ones directly involved in the manhunt, were not involved. However, the group, way past the point of exhaustion and frustration, were not opposed to receiving any help from a group not legally bound to uphold two constitutions. There was some skepticism though. As Bowden points out, "Los Pepes were so perfect they were...well, too perfect." (Page 176)

Escobar's people began showing up dead faster than ever before. Some were targets of the Search Bloc, others were hunted by Los Pepes. In October, Escobar's brother, Roberto, turned himself in along with another high level of the cartel, "Popeye" Jhon Velasquez.



Escobar's lawyers began to die. Every time there was a hit against properties or persons tied to Escobar, larger and more violent crimes were exacted in return. Meanwhile, the Clinton administration was coming into office and for the most part, it was unknown what was happening in Colombia. Escobar decided to inform them. One of the things made clear that Los Pepes was being housed by a major competitor, Fidel Castaño. In essence, Escobar pointed out that there was a huge manhunt on for the leaders of the Medellin drug cartel, while the operators of paramilitary groups like Los Pepes and the Cali Cartel were not being sought out. Once again, Escobar also offered to surrender if given immunity.

The political scene continued to become more difficult. Attorney General de Greiff was constantly at odds with Gaviria and eventually accused the police of sharing information and helping Escobar.

Some of Gaviria's staff was also suspected as being involved in Los Pepes. Not long after official inquiries were being made, Los Pepes announced that they were going to disband.

There was alleged proof that the Search Bloc had found Escobar in January but had accepted a \$666,000 bribe to allow him to escape. The news of the bribe immediately cast doubt on the Search Bloc. Martinez was one of the high level officers charged. Gaviria intervened. Ambassador Busby told Gaviria that he should go after Martinez if there was proof of corruption. The DEA was telling de Greiff something entirely different. Shortly after Busby's cable, DEA agent Joe Toft urged De Greiff to leave Martinez alone.

Martinez would never be arrested or convicted of any crime.

Chapter 5: The Kill - October 1993 - December 2, 1993

The Medellin cartel was in shambles. Many of Escobar's men were dead, much of his property destroyed or confiscated. The beloved Nápoles had been turned into police headquarters.

Martinez had given up hope that he would ever be able to leave Colombia. Rumors had come and gone that Martinez might be replaced. The ante went up considerably when Martinez's son, Hugo, became involved in the fight. Martinez tried hard to keep Hugo out of Medellin and had succeeded twice before. Hugo was like his father, however, and wanted to be involved. If Hugo's unit was going to go to Colombia, so was Hugo.

It became obvious that the best way to get to Escobar was through his son, Juan Pablo. The 16 year old boy had assumed the role of man of the house and seemed to make the decisions, regardless of the presence of his mother. Authorities determined when Pablo would call Juan and attempted to intercept those calls. The Escobars did not make it easy, however. Father and son often switched radio frequencies and used many confusing coded words and phrases.

There were many valiant attempts to capture Escobar, most of which revolved around his involvement with the family.



Escobar also continued to relay messages to the media through Juan Pablo. Maria Victoria was falling apart. Denied at nearly every turn, the Escobars hoped the news of their plight would gain them immunity in some foreign country, although there had many times when the family had been prevented from traveling abroad.

It was a lengthy phone conversation with Juan Pablo that gave the Search Bloc exactly what they needed—Escobar's location.

It was Hugo Martinez who actually spotted Escobar in the window of one of the buildings. It was a shock to see the man after so many years, so many acts of violence. Hugo immediately radioed his father, the colonel. From that point on, the entire scene took only about ten minutes. Escobar and his driver both went out the window and onto the roof. Shots were fired from every direction. It was not long before one of the most feared men in the world was dead.

Chapter 6: Aftermath

Pablo Escobar had been hit three times. The third bullet entered his head and pierced the man's brain. Emotions were high among the officers. There was a sense of relief that Escobar was dead, as capturing the drug lord would have proved fruitless.

The manhunt of Pablo Escobar took a heavy toll on Colonel Martinez. Martinez was eventually made a general but the price of such accolades was great familial sacrifice. Bowden states that Martinez still feels haunted by Escobar.



Characters

Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria

Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria (1949-1993)

Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria was a Colombian national who rose to infamy through his exploits as the leader of the notorious Medellín Drug Cartel, a seemingly unstoppable force in the underworld into the 1990s.

"Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw" by Mark Bowden details the life of Pablo Escobar as well as the political climate of Colombia and how it allowed Escobar to become a legendary criminal and philanthropist.

Escobar was born to Abel de Jesus Escobar, a successful cattle farmer, and Hermilda Gaviria, a well educated and capable school teacher. Pablo was the third of seven children for the Escobars. The family lived in Rionegro, a town in which violence and death were common. In the early 1950s, La Violencia had been unleashed, resulting in hordes of vigilantes and criminals as well as the siege of the government by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, a military dictator whose platform was to curb the violence.

Pablo Escobar grew up in this climate, which clearly affected his personality and ambitions. Escobar idolized criminals like Jesse James and Bonnie and Clyde along with Colombian outlaws such as Sangrenegra and Desquite.

Escobar was young when he began his criminal career. As the years went on, Escobar's exploits encouraged swift and deadly violence which escalated as years went by. No one was safe from Escobar's wrath if the person stood in the way of the man's plans.

Escobar eventually became the seventh richest man in the world and as a criminal, virtually untouchable. It was inevitable that the only way Escobar's reign of terror and drugs would end was by the man's assassination. Pablo Escobar was shot and killed by US DEA agents in 1993.

Jorge Eliécer Gaitán

Jorge Eliécer Gaitán (1903-1948) was a lawyer, socialist, and leader of the Liberal Party in Colombia in the 1940s. Gaitán was assassinated during his second presidential campaign by Juan Roa Sierra, whom many believe was a scapegoat. Although it was never proven, many thought Roa Sierra worked for the CIA. Shortly after the shooting, a gathering mob literally tore Roa Sierra to pieces.

Gaitán started out his political career as the Mayor of Bogotá in 1936. Gaitán attained a law degree in 1924. In 1926, Gaitán received a doctorate in jurisprudence in Italy. Gaitán became a professor at the National University of Colombia.



Gaitán had been involved in politics for several years before receiving his law degree and it has been said that at least some of Gaitán's success in rallying supporters was owed to Benito Mussolini, a great motivator. However, Gaitán's first big achievement in politics was when he stepped forward to support the workers wronged in the Santa Marta Massacre. Gaitán's support of the workers and low-income Colombians made him a favorite for President and as a result, Gaitán won the Liberal Party's nomination in 1930.

As Gaitán continued to fight for the unheard voices of Colombia, he also made some very powerful enemies. When Gaitán was assassinated in 1948, the death of a beloved leader set off Bogotazo, a massacre that would lead to La Violencia, an era of civil unrest and violence that would last for a decade.

Joe Toft

Joe Toft was a special agent with the DEA, responsible for heading up the manhunt for Pablo Escobar.

José Rodríguez-Gacha

José Rodríguez-Gacha, aka "The Mexican" was thought to be the most powerful leader in the Medellín cartel until officials uncovered that Rodríguez-Gacha worked for Pablo Escobar.

Colonel Hugo Martínez

Colonel Hugo Martínez was a Colombian military officer in charge of the hunt for Escobar. Martínez lived in extremely dangerous times after he refused to take bribes from Escobar.

Hermilda Gaviria Escobar

Hermilda Gaviria Escobar is Pablo Escobar's mother.

Luis Galán

Luis Galán was a frontrunner for the President of Colombia when he was assassinated by Escobar's men. The assassination would lead to Escobar's demise.

César Gaviria

César Gaviria was the Colombian President that replaced Luis Galán. Gaviria negotiated Escobar's 1991 surrender.



Eduardo Mendoza

Eduardo Mendoza was the Vice Minister of Justice for Colombia. Mendoza was one of the people taken hostage by Escobar. Mendoza was later falsely accused of working for Escobar.

Steve Murphy

Steve Murphy was a DEA special agent assigned to the Escobar case in Medellin.

Morris Busby

Morris Busby was the US ambassador to Colombia who headed the secret US task force to find and assassinate Escobar.

George H.W. Bush

George H.W. Bush was the American President during Escobar's demise.



Objects/Places

Colombia

Colombia is the country that gave the world Pablo Escobar. Colombia, officially a constitutional republic, is located in the northwestern portion of South America. The location of Colombia provides the opportunity to have many routes by which to traffic drugs. The country is bordered by Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. Colombia is unusual that its maritime borders are adjacent with those of Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Peru.

Geographically, Colombia boasts the third-highest city in the world in Bogotá. The country is a juxtaposition of low-lying plains, coastal land, and mountains. As a result of the high altitude and climates, Colombia's agricultural industry thrives. Colombia is the world's largest supplier of poppies and cannabis. All of these things play a major role in Pablo Escobar's reign of terror.

Politics in Colombia were often shaky at best. The country's two main parties, the liberal and conservative parties, have been in place ever since there was an organized government.

The author describes Colombia's formerly democratic society, beginning with the legendary Simón Bolívar.

In 1948, Colombia joined in the Ninth Inter-American Conference along with Foreign Ministers of the most powerful countries in the world, including the U.S. The purpose of the summit was to sign a charter forming the Organization of American States, a coalition designed to give voice to the largely unheard nations in Central and South America.

Colombia's political future seemed to rest in the hands of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. Gaitán was a lawyer and socialist that soon became the people's beloved leader. The CIA would later describe Gaitán as "A staunch antagonist of oligarchical rule and a spellbinding orator."

Gaitán was elected president in 1950 but faced an uphill battle with a bipartisan government. La Violencia ensued as a result of mounting tensions between the political parties and Gaitán died at the hands of an assassin, thought to be a scapegoat for the government and other international political forces.

Although Colombia ratified a new constitution in 1991, the country continues to be plagued with paramilitary groups, guerrillas and terrorism.



The United States Drug Enforcement Agency

The United States Drug Enforcement Agency is a division of the US Department of Justice based in Washington, DC. It is responsible in for enforcing laws and regulations regarding controlled substances throughout the United States. The agency's mission is to enforce these laws and bring to justice any individuals or organizations in violation of the Controlled Substances Act. Criminal acts include growing, manufacturing, and or distributing/dispensing controlled substances throughout the United States and amenable territories referred to as "competent jurisdictions."

The agency is responsible for gathering intelligence, compiling evidence for prosecution, apprehending and arresting violators of the law, engaging in search and seizure regarding drug shipments and related operations, cooperating with all law enforcement agencies both foreign and domestic, sharing information with other agencies regarding violation of controlled substances laws and regulations, and maintaining an intricate intelligence system.

In the case of Pablo Escobar, the DEA was called in to stop Escobar from exporting drugs from Colombia to the United States. Escobar had a long history of drug trafficking, and managed to elude the DEA for many years. Part of the issue for the DEA was Colombia's ongoing battle with extradition, an issue that is still prevalent in the country's government.

Bogotá

Bogotá is the capital city of Columbia. Its educational and cultural leanings have dubbed it "The Athens of South America."

Rionegro

Rionegro is the town where Escobar grew up.

Medellin

Medellin is the second-largest city in Columbia and the base for Pablo Escobar's operations.

Medellin Drug Cartel

Medellin Drug Cartel was a group of high-level drug traffickers organized by Pablo Escobar in the city of Medellin.



Washington, DC

Washington, DC is the capital city of the United States and home to the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).

Frontino

Frontino was one of the few secure villages in Colombia in the 1950s.

Colombian Congress

Colombian Congress was the body of government Escobar was first elected to serve as an alternate.

La Catedral

La Catedral was the prison where Escobar spent time for his involvement in a French drug deal that killed his cousin Gustavo.



Themes

Crime

Pablo Escobar started out as a young thug in Bogotá. The short, chubby, wannabe criminal was not taken seriously at first by others in the community, particularly those that had the power sought by Escobar. Still, Escobar was not to be deterred and set his sights on becoming a powerful figure in Colombia, both as a criminal mastermind as well as a well-loved and respected member of the community.

Escobar's first major foray into crime was car theft. Escobar and his cousin would steal cars, chop them up and resell them. As Escobar's operation grew, it became common for Escobar's men to take the cars off the street in broad daylight, whether or not the driver was inside. The operation grew so large that the cars no longer needed to be chopped to be sold. Rather, Escobar had someone on the inside issue clean titles to the cars.

From car theft, Escobar moved into the drug trade. 80% of the cocaine in the world at the time came from the abundant poppy fields of Colombia. When Escobar attempted to make his mark in the drug trade, he was all but laughed at by future competitors. Still, Escobar refused to give up. The short, chubby Colombian was taken seriously when those competitors, many of which were big time drug lords, began to fall. Escobar became known for his brutal methods by which the drug lords ended up dead en masse.

Escobar was unstoppable. Despite the efforts of the United States government, Escobar could not be touched. Even the arrests perpetrated were laughable. His downfall began when Escobar killed a former justice minister and took hostages. As a result, Escobar ended up in prison for a short while.

Eventually, there seemed to be no alternative to stopping the kingpin of the Medellin drug cartel than to assassinate him.

Politics

Politics in Colombia were often shaky at best. For a time there was a hope that the small, poor country would be a part of something bigger, more democratic and powerful. In 1948, Colombia joined in the Ninth Inter-American Conference along with Foreign Ministers of the most powerful countries in the world, including the U.S. The purpose of the summit was to sign a charter forming the Organization of American States, a coalition designed to give voice to the largely unheard nations in Central and South America.

Colombia's political future seemed to rest in the hands of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. Gaitán was a lawyer and socialist that soon became the people's beloved leader. The CIA



would later describe Gaitán as "A staunch antagonist of oligarchical rule and a spellbinding orator."

Gaitán was elected president in 1950 but faced an uphill battle with a bipartisan government.

The author describes Colombia's formerly democratic society, beginning with the legendary Simón Bolívar.

After the death of Gaitán, things became so violent that even the young upstart Fidel Castro fled the country for Cuba.

Unlike many of his countrymen, Escobar did not grow up poor. This image was only disseminated later to help the up and coming politician gain favor with his constituents.

Escobar took advantage of the unstable political climate to land a seat in the Congress. This was a particularly smart move since Congressional members were automatically guaranteed diplomatic immunity.

Whether or not Escobar was in politics, his presence was so pervasive that running Colombia, even the under the table, was not difficult. It got to the point that Escobar was virtually untouchable, hence the US, including the DEA and CIA, felt the only recourse was to assassinate the drug lord.

Drugs

Narcotics have always been a part of world culture, from the hallucinogenic drugs used in ancient Roman times to peyote used by native tribes to street and recreational drugs. In that vein, Colombia was not unusual. What did make Colombia unusual was that the country had an overabundance of cocoa and poppy fields and the climate was ideal for growing cannabis.

While the drug trade was always booming, it virtually exploded in the 1960s, with marijuana being the drug of choice for many hippies. Marijuana flowed freely from Colombia, soon making room for a much more powerful narcotic in the form of cocaine.

Cocaine became the drug of choice in the 1970s. By the 1980s, cocaine was not only the drug of choice; it was a symbol of status and wealth. It was used by nearly everyone from street junkies to executives of multi-national corporations. High end clubs were breeding grounds for burgeoning addicts and recreational users alike. The drug lords became increasingly rich and cunning, forever adopting new ways to elude the authorities. The exploits of the drug runners became fodder for entertainment and those in the trade were all but idolized.

The trend became even worse when cocaine began to be sold on the street in a cheap form—crack. No longer was it a status symbol but a highly addictive drug that could be



purchased by anyone. Cocaine only started to wane in popularity when people began to die, including those executives and celebrities.

Politically, the movement to eradicate the poppy fields in Colombia was a hot bed of controversy, particularly to those who made their fortunes on cocaine, people like Pablo Escobar.

Style

Perspective

Mark Bowden (1951-) is an American author and journalist. Bowden is best known for his book "Black Hawk Down," which was also adapted for film.

Bowden serves as an adjunct professor of journalism and creative writing at Loyola College and has also worked as a freelance writer for some of the top magazines in the US, including The Atlantic Monthly, Vanity Fair, and Rolling Stone.

Bowden first gained recognition for "Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War," and as a result was a finalist in the race for the 1999 National Book Award. "Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw" also received high praise and recognition. In 2001, Bowden received the Cornelius Ryan Award for Best Book from the Overseas Press Club.

Bowden is also known for the 2002 work "Guests of the Ayatollah: The First Battle in America's War with Militant Islam." Bowden's latest book, published in 2008, is "The Best Game Ever: Giants vs. Colts, 1958, and the Birth of the Modern NFL."

Bowden, who also works as a writer for the Philadelphia Inquirer, is known for his sharp journalistic instincts and unwavering eye for detail. To write "Killing Pablo," Bowden obtained top secret documents never seen by journalists before as well transcripts of Escobar's phone conversations which were recorded by the government taskforce. Bowden also had extraordinary and unprecedented conversations and interviews with various field agents, soldiers and military officials to gain insight on the hunt for Pablo Escobar.

Tone

The tone used in "Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw" by Mark Bowden is objective. This is an admirable accomplishment considering the material involved. Pablo Escobar, despite his philanthropic and humanitarian efforts, committed despicable and unspeakable crimes without hesitancy or remorse.

Instead, Bowden's tone reflects the facts. As a writer for the Philadelphia Inquirer, Bowden is able to focus on both the finest details as well as the big picture to give the reader a full view of Escobar's life and exploits along with the larger picture of the basic history and political climate of Colombia.

In order to write a complete and telling history of Pablo Escobar, Bowden obtained top secret documents never seen by journalists before as well transcripts of Escobar's phone conversations which were recorded by the government taskforce. Bowden also

had extraordinary and unprecedented conversations and interviews with various field agents, soldiers and military officials to gain insight on the hunt for Pablo Escobar.

Any partisan sections of the book can be attributed to documents and quotes from people involved in the massive manhunt, including comments from DEA Chief Joe Toft and fellow agent Steve Murphy.

Structure

"Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw" by Mark Bowden is a work of non-fiction. The book is comprised of 273 pages, broken down into 6 chapters plus a prologue. The shortest chapter is 4 pages in length; the longest chapter is 58 pages in length. The average length of the chapters is 37 pages.

The structure of the book is largely chronological, save for the Prologue which is basically the climax of the story. The Prologue begins on December 2, 1993. The Prologue details events of the day Pablo Escobar was killed, including the response of the criminal's mother.

Chapter 1, The Rise of El Doctor covers the years 1948-1989. The years include Pablo Escobar's birth, family situation, education, and beginnings as a criminal in Bogotá, Colombia. The general political atmosphere is also examined as it is an integral part of the story and Escobar's life as a public figure.

Chapter 2: The First War details events from 1989-1991, including Escobar's political assassinations of rivals and enemies.

Chapter 3: Imprisonment and Escape details events from June 1991-September 1992 when Escobar was imprisoned in La Catedral. The chapter ends with Escobar, having escaped, giving an interview to Radio Cadena Nacional.

Chapter 4: Los Pepes details events from October 1992-October 1993, particularly the long and grueling task of hunting down Pablo Escobar.

Chapter 5: The Kill details events from October 1993-December 1993, including the destruction of the Medellín drug cartel and the death of Pablo Escobar.

Chapter 6: Aftermath details events from December 1993 to the present.



Quotes

"There was no more exciting place in South America to be in April, 1948, than Bogotá, Colombia." (7)

"Ever since Bolivar's death in 1830, Colombia has been proudly Democratic, but it has never quite got the hang of peaceful political evolution." (12_

"Anyone can be a criminal, but to be an outlaw demands a following. The outlaw stands for something, usually through no effort of his own." (14)

"Unlike any other outlaw before, he understood the potency of legend. He crafted his and nurtured it. He was a vicious thug, but he had a social conscience." (15)

"Pablo was right about one thing. One of the strongest forces behind the move against him, and Colombia's other cocaine billionaires was the United States." (41)

"He was, if anything, an ugly caricature of his country, unthinkably rich and natural resources, but violent, stoned, defiant, and proud." (47)

"By the end of the summer of 1989, Pablo Escobar was forty years old. He was one of the richest men in the world, and perhaps its most infamous criminal." (59)

"By the end of 1990 Pablo's life was also a nightmare. Colonel Martinez had come close to catching him several times and had chipped away at the people around him." (95)

"Escobar denied knowing anything about cocaine, owning airplanes, clandestine airstrips, or boats, and explicitly denied being involved in narco trafficking." (103)

"The Colonel was delighted when he got the news, in Madrid, that Pablo had walked out of jail. No one knew better than he did what a charade that imprisonment was." (155)

"In the summer of 1993, despite their pledge to disband, Los Pepes continued their bloody work, sometimes with evil panache." (200)

"Within the special ops community in the United States, Pablo's death was regarded as a successful mission for Delta, and legend has it that its operators were in on the kill." (259)

"I don't know what the lesson of the story is," he says. "I hope it's not that the end justifies the means." (Joe Toft, p. 272)



Topics for Discussion

How do you think life in Colombia would have been different if Gaitán was not assassinated and became president? How would the election have affected Escobar?

Examine Escobar's relationship with his mother, Hermilda. Early on, Hermilda claims to be out of control of her family despite her status as a well educated and strong woman. Do you think Hermilda supported Pablo despite his crimes? Discuss Hermilda's reaction to Pablo's death.

What is your opinion of Escobar's methods in rising up the crime ladder? Were there other ways that Escobar could have achieved the same success without excessive violence? Explain.

Despite all of Escobar's power, the man wanted nothing more than to be respected by the people. Discuss what steps Escobar took to become respected and the reactions of citizens, politicians, and international leaders.

The Colombian government attempted the eradication of the poppy fields, even though the country's main source of income was from cocaine. How would you describe this platform? What would the political impact be if the platform were successful? How would it affect the country in an economic sense?

How might the structure of the Medellin cartel have changed if Escobar had lived? Would it still exist? How would the US and Colombian officials proceed to end Escobar's decades long reign?

At the end of the book, Bowden quotes DEA special agent Joe Toft. "I don't know what the lesson of the story is," he says. "I hope it's not that the end justifies the means." (272)

What is your opinion of Toft's quote?