News of a Kidnapping Study Guide

News of a Kidnapping by Gabriel García Márquez

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites".

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers".

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

Gabriel Garcia Marquez was approached by his friends Maruja Pachón de Villamizar and Alberto Villamizar in 1993 to write a book about the ordeal surrounding Maruja's abduction. García Márquez recalls that he was working on the first draft when he realized "it was impossible to separate her kidnapping from nine other abductions that occurred at the same time in Colombia." García Márquez decided to broaden his work to include the stories of all these captives, which lengthened the project to almost three years. The result is *News of a Kidnapping,* which was first published in Spanish in 1996 and in English the following year. In this work, García Márquez takes on the gargantuan task of describing the kidnappings and captivity of ten people. He depicts their families' reactions to these events as well as their efforts to free the hostages, but also attempts to place the entire incident in the context of Colombia's long-standing war on drugs and terrorism in general.

The fame of Garcia Marquez□a Nobel Laureate□guaranteed that the American press would pay immediate and close attention to the work. Moreover, the drug problems of Colombia and the United States were□and remain so today□intertwined. The threat of extradition to the United States drove Pablo Escobar, head of the Medellín cartel, to order the kidnappings. However, it is to García Márquez's credit that he roots *News of a Kidnapping* firmly within Colombian soil, for the violence that the drug industry has wrought upon Colombian society is astronomical, indeed, hardly comprehensible to Americans. *News of a Kidnapping* depicts a world almost as surreal as any of García Márquez' s novels, one that may shock American readers but one all too well-known to Colombians.

Author Biography

García Márquez was born on March 6, 1928, in Aracataca, Colombia, a small town near the Atlantic coast. He was raised by his grandparents, who stimulated his imagination with stories of supernatural beings and Colombian history. García Márquez was sent to school near Bogotá, and he enrolled at the National University of Colombia in 1947 to study law. Also that year, he published his first short story in a Colombian newspaper.

By the following year, García Márquez had transferred to school at Caratagena and was also working as a journalist. His discovery of William Faulkner's work at this time inspired him to become a writer. After he moved to Barranquilla in 1950, he continued working as ajournalist while also becoming involved with a group of young writers and intellectuals. García Márquez's reading of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* made him realize that serious literature could be based on fantastical ideas such as his own. He soon abandoned his law studies and decided to pursue a career as a writer.

In 1954, he moved to Bogotá and became a reporter. In 1955, he won an award for the story "One Day After Saturday" and published *Leaf Storm,* his first novella. His newspaper also sent him to Europe but soon thereafter was shut down by the Colombian government. García Márquez spent the next three years in Paris, France, devoting himself to writing fiction. He also toured Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

In 1958, when he returned to Colombia, he published another novella, *No One Writes to the Colonel,* in a magazine, and it was published in book form three years later. In 1962, he published the short story collection *Big Mama's Funeral* and his first full-length novel, *In Evil Hour.* He also went to work for the Bogotá branch of a Cuban news agency, which led to extended stays in Havana and New York. He also lived in Mexico for a handful of years.

In 1965, he began to work full-time on the book that would be published to immediate acclaim in1967, *One Hundred Years of Solitude.* This novel, replete with Colombian history and the magical realism for which García Márquez is known, led to his international literary celebrity.

García Márquez continued to write, producing several novels and novellas, and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982. He undertook the journalistic project *News of a Kidnapping* at the behest of his friends, Maruja Pachón de Villamizar, a kidnapping victim, and her husband Alberto Villamizar. Just after producing this book, in 1996, a group called Dignity for Colombia kidnapped the brother of former president César Gaviria and demanded that, as condition for the release of the hostage, García Márquez be installed as head of state.

In the late 1990s, politics and journalism took up much of García Márquez's time. He contributed to the peace talks between the Colombian government and guerrilla groups by introducing President Andrés Pastrana to Fidel Castro, who facilitated talk with the guerrillas. He also helped restore relations between the United States and Colombia,

which had been severely damaged after a major bribery scandal involving President Ernesto Samper. He has also been involved in negotiations to end the civil wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua. In 1999, he became the majority owner of the weekly news magazine *Cambio:* he still maintains close contact with his staff. Today, García Márquez is seen as much more than a literary figure in his country□he is also a symbol of Colombian pride.

Plot Summary

The Kidnappings

News of a Kidnapping opens in Bogotá, Colombia, in November 1990 with the kidnapping of Maruja Pachón de Villamizar and her sister-in law, Beatriz Villamizar de Guerrero. Their abduction is part of a series of high-profile abductions launched by the Pablo Escobar drug cartel, which began the past August. The drug cartel is attempting to change a new governmental policy that could lead to their extradition to the United States should they surrender to Colombian authorities. These drug traffickers are collectively known as the Extraditables.

Eight men and women, all journalists except one, have already been taken and are being held captive. Diana Turbay, accompanied by a news team, was lured into a trap on August 30 when shewas offered the opportunity to meet with a guerrilla leader. Marina Montoya was kidnapped on September 18 outside of her restaurant. Four hours later, Francisco "Pacho" Santos was taken from his car.

Maruja and Beatriz are taken to a house in Bogotá, where they share a small room with Marina. For the most part, they are treated harshly during their captivity; for example, they are forced to speak in whispers. Pacho is held in another house in Bogotá, but he faces more amenable conditions with friendly guards and regular access to books and newspapers. Diana's group, held captive in and around Medellín, are split up; throughout their captivity, they are forced to move numerous times.

The Extraditables

The first eight kidnappings are not publicly acknowledged by the Extraditables until October 30. However, Pablo Escobar acknowledges his responsibility in Maruja and Beatriz's kidnapping within days. The Extraditables declare that they will release the hostages and surrender if non-extradition is guaranteed, security for themselves in prison and their families is ensured, and police abuses in Medellín cease. However, President César Gaviria and his administration already approved a decree in September for the capitulation of the traffickers, and while it said that they could have the right not to be extradited, this would be determined on a case-by-case basis. Escobar rejects the decree because it does not state that he and the other Extraditables would definitely not be extradited.

By the time of Maruja and Beatriz's kidnapping, the government and the victim's families have had numerous contacts with the Extraditables. Former President Turbay and Hernando Santos, Pacho's father, attempt to negotiate with Escobar, but President Gaviria refuses to amend the decree at all. The government maintains that its sole position with regard to the narcoterrorists is that they surrender. By November 7, when Gaviria's administration issues the official decree stating the government's capitulation

policy, which did not specifically state that the Extraditables would not be extradited, no progress has been made toward releasing the hostages. After Maruja's kidnapping, her husband, Alberto Villamizar, also becomes involved, but he has no more success in getting Gaviria to negotiate.

Death and Release

On December 14, a capitulation decree that modifies September's decree is issued, but the two greatest obstacles to surrender are still in place: the uncertain conditions for non-extradition and a fixed time limit on pardonable crimes, meaning that crimes had to have been committed before September 5, 1990. Escobar objects to the decree, but three Medellín leaders□the Ochoa brothers□who had determined to surrender back in September to begin the process of turning themselves in.

Following this decree, several hostages□Hero Buss, Azucena Liévano, and Orlando Acevedo□ are released, but in January, when two drug leaders are killed, Escobar begins to order the execution of the hostages. On January 23, a guard comes for Marina. Her body is found the next day in an empty lot. After an autopsy, her as-yet-unidentified body is buried in a mass grave. The identity of her body is not established until the following week, after the Extraditables announce her murder.

On January 25, the police raid the house in Medellín where Diana Turbay and Richard Becerra are being held on a tip that Escobar is there. Forced by the guards to flee, Diana is accidentally shot by gunfire. She is taken to a hospital where she dies from her wounds. Some Colombians believe that this action was actually a rescue raid□an action which the captors previously had promised to respond to by killing the hostages. President Gaviriaorders an investigation to look into the matter. Its findings, released in April, maintain that the decision to raid was based on the chance of catching Escobar. The investigation was unable to determine if Diana was shot by the police or by the captors.

On January 29, a third version of the capitulation decree is issued, which no longer includes a time limit for pardonable crimes and guarantees non-extradition. Although this final version was already in the works, many Colombians believe it is a response to Diana's death. The Extraditables announce that they will cancel the forthcoming executions as well as release one of the hostages.

Pacho has access to television and newspapers, so he knows about Diana and Marina. Maruja and Beatriz, however, are left to wonder what happened to Marina, although one of their guards reveals news of Diana's death. Toward the end of January, they begin to hear rumors that two hostages would be freed; on February 9, Beatriz is released. Once home, she is careful not to reveal clues that would lead to Maruja's whereabouts and a police raid. She also learns of Marina's death.

Negotiating with Escobar

When Maruja is not released, Villamizar decides that he must go to Medellín and meet Escobar face-to-face. His efforts to locate Escobar begin with a visit to the jail where the Ochoas are incarcerated, and they promise to give Villamizar's message to Escobar. Villamizar and Escobar correspond numerous times. Villamizar explains that, in exchange for releasing the hostages, the guarantees for his surrender were in place, his life would be protected, and he would not be extradited. Escobar, however, refuses to surrender because now he wants a guarantee that Colombia's Constituent Assembly will consider the subject of extradition. In April, negotiations improve when Father Rafael García Herreros offers himself as a mediator. Escobar agrees to meet the priest in Medellín, and the two men work out conditions for the drug leader's surrender, which focus primarily on security in his prison. Escobar orders the release of Pacho and Maruja to take place in a few days, on May 20. That morning, Father García Herreros meets with President Gaviria and gives him the details of his talk with Escobar. Maruja is released at 7 o'clock that evening, 193 days after her abduction. Pacho hears the news of her release on the radio, but minutes later, he, too, is released.

Epilogue

On June 19, 1991, in the presence of Villamizar, Father García Herreros and others, Escobar surrenders to the Colombian authorities. He is held captive in a prison in Medellín, which he quickly turns into a "five-star hacienda." He also continues to oversee his business affairs. When the government learns of this situation, Escobar is transferred to another prison, but he escapes in the process. A massive manhunt takes place, which ends with Escobar's death on December 2, 1993.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

A fictional re-telling of a decidedly real story, *News of a Kidnapping* recounts the ordeal of ten abductees, their families' struggle to secure their release, and the events that, ultimately, altered the destiny of the entire Colombian nation.

Beginning in late August 1990, at the behest of Pablo Escobar, a series of systematic kidnappings were carried out. A number of high-profile Colombians – many of whom held significant and influential ties within both the media and government – were plucked from their daily lives for use as bargaining chips against a government policy that would have seen Colombian drug traffickers extradited to the United States.

The book opens with the seizure of the last two of the ten abductees: Maruja Pachón de Villamizar and Beatriz Villamizar de Guerrero, wife and sister, respectively, to Alberto Villamizar, a well-known Colombian politician at the time. Moreover, Maruja was the sister of Gloria Pachón, widow of Luis Carlos Galan, the young journalist who founded the New Liberalism in 1979, a group who, for their part, staunchly opposed drug trafficking and vehemently supported the extradition of Colombian nationals.

It is early evening on November 7, 1990, when, not two-hundred meters from Maruja's home, the car in which they are traveling is suddenly hemmed in, the driver killed and the women whisked away by armed gunmen in separate vehicles. Upon arrival at their destination, the kidnappers admit to having mistakenly taken Beatriz and tell her that she will be freed. Bravely, she refuses to leave Maruja. Having decided that their current location had been compromised, the kidnappers then place both women in the trunk of a car in which they are transported to a second location. It is here they meet Marina Montoya, one of the previous eight abductees taken some three months before.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Set in Colombia in an era defined by the drug trade, the novel opens with a breathless first chapter depicting the kidnapping of Maruja Pachón de Villamizar and Beatriz Villamizar de Guerrero. This was the last in a specific series of high-profile abductions, but the most significant because of the vital role that Alberto Villamizar will come to play in the months that follow.

Brief glimpses of each women's character are offered, that, through the course of their captivity will manifest and even be altered irrevocably by the experience. During the kidnapping, Maruja is panicked, Beatriz, brazenly defiant. Moreover, she demonstrates an enviable loyalty by refusing to leave Maruja when the kidnappers admit to having taken her by mistake.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The fallout from the kidnapping is equally devastating. Dr. Pedro Guerrero, Beatriz's husband, is the first to be told of the incident and subsequently, the first family member to arrive at the scene. Unbelievably, Alberto Villamizar was home at the time, asleep, not two hundred meters from where the abduction had taken place. On hearing the news, or at least a confused account thereof, Alberto rushes outside where a police officer recounts the scant details uncovered thus far. There he encounters Dr. Guerrero, who appears to be in a state of stunned disbelief.

Returning home, Alberto, who maintained a good political and personal relationship with then president, César Gaviria, calls the presidential palace to relate the incident. Villamizar, having survived an attempt on his life four years earlier – an attack no doubt as a result (at least in part) of his work on the National Narcotics Statute passed in 1985 – is convinced that this is a personal attack directed at him. These most recent abductions and the motivations behind them are then placed into context as the details of each of the previous three abductions are revealed:

The first, on August 30 1990, is that of Diana Turbay, daughter of former president and leader of the Liberal party, Julio César Turbay. She, along with four members of her news team and a German journalist – Azucena Liévano, Juan Vitta, Richard Becerra, Orlando Acevedo and Hero Buss – are lured into captivity with the promise of an interview with Manual Perez, leader of the guerilla group calling themselves the Army of National Liberation (ELN).

Nineteen days later, Marina Montoya, sister to don Germán Montoya, who had been secretary general to the presidency and a powerful figure in the Virgilio Barco government, is kidnapped while closing her restaurant for the evening. Fours hours later, Francisco "Pacho" Santos, editor-in-chief of *El Tiempo* is seized from his vehicle in the middle of busy Tuesday traffic.

The chapter ends much the same way as it began, with Dr. Guerrero and Alberto Villamizar, both of whom are struggling to come to terms with the news. Pedro has closed his psychiatric practice believing himself to be unfit to treat patients, while Villamizar, a social drinker of some regard, withdraws from social gatherings, choosing instead to drink alone. This is not an act of contrition, but instead, a security measure designed to prevent him from accidentally saying or doing anything inappropriate which could endanger the lives of the hostages.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Here, the scope of the incident becomes all too readily apparent, and is succinctly illustrated in the gamut of emotions experienced by both Dr. Guerrero and Alberto

Villamizar: shock, anger, despair, and acceptance. Although brief, this initial insight, like that of their wives, demonstrates the characteristics that define each of these men. They too will emerge from this ordeal as changed men.

By no means the only people to be affected by the tragedy, the rollercoaster of emotions endured by these two men is similar to that experienced by the other families, and through them, we attain an insight into the heartache and suffering endured by all those involved.

Though certainly an international problem, the drug trade had, at the time of these events all but suffused Colombia. The corruption of its government officials, the perversion of its youth to a life of crime and violence; and the countless innocents, not the least of whom are the abductees themselves, caught in the middle are symptomatic of this infestation, and a vehement demonstration of the traffickers' influence. These facts, along with the revelation that this abduction is not an isolated incident, paint a bleak picture for the future of the hostages.

Only days after the kidnapping, its effect on the families is already evident. Dr. Guerrero has closed his practice and Villamizar withdrawn from social obligations.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Ten days have passed since their abduction, and slowly both, Maruja and Beatriz accustom themselves with the routine of their captivity. The room is small, with only a single bed (occupied by Marina), a mattress shared by the two women and a bathroom to be shared by the three women and four guards. The room has a radio and television set, but the women are forced to speak in a whisper, are not allowed to move from the mattress, and have to seek permission from the guards to sit, stretch smoke and even speak.

Initially, Maruja fares poorly, refusing to speak or eat and sleeping for a mere thirty minutes at a time. She finds herself irritated not only by the guards but also by the attitude and behaviour of her fellow captives as well. Beatriz, meanwhile, busies herself by recording the details of her imprisonment until the guards, while listening to a radio broadcast that reveals her occupation as a physical therapist, mistake her for a psychotherapist and forbid her to write for fear that she is developing a means to make them lose their minds. Marina, having already been held captive for two months continues to deteriorate both mentally and physically; suffering hallucinations and constructing wild fantasies that terrify the women.

Alexandra, Maruja's daughter from her first marriage, commissions an eight-program series, the first of which is a series of instructions designed to help captives maintain high-spirits in confined spaces. Maruja and Beatriz, recognizing the intent of the broadcast take careful note.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the city, Francisco Santos endures his captivity in less harsh conditions with guards that are inexplicably, yet decidedly, less formal and more accommodating than those who are tasked with the supervision of the women. He is given newspapers every day; watches TV alone or with the guards, plays cards or chess and though chained to it, sleeps on a comfortable bed.

Due, in part, to the size of their party, Diana and her crew are held in different conditions to those of the other hostages. Divided into two groups, they are moved continuously and kept in houses of varying size, quality and condition. Diana, for her part, establishes some semblance of order, and even manages to oblige the guards to stop walking around in their underwear and to lower the music that keeps the hostages awake at night. Some time later, the captives are divided into three groups in three houses: Richard and Orlando; Hero and Juan; and Diana and Azucena.

Chapter 3 Analysis

If it was nothing more than an incomprehensible nightmare before, the stark reality of their predicament is now all too evident. The mental and physical aberrations inflicted

on the abductees manifest themselves in a myriad ways. Maruja draws inward, suffering from a depression that will haunt her throughout the ordeal. So too, their coping mechanisms differ wildly, some choosing to be totally complacent, while others seethe with rage, and others still face their predicament with a sense of forced indifference.

Through the evocative depiction of the abysmal living conditions, Márquez establishes an addictive sense of empathy and curiosity within the reader. The juxtaposition of the disparate conditions in which the hostages are held is testimony to the lack of organization that pervades the terrorists' regime and this in turn speaks to their desultory, unpredictable behaviour, something which, perhaps even moreso than the living conditions, the abductees found almost unbearable. Knowing that, despite their best efforts at compliance, they could be killed on the drunken, enraged whim of any particular guard fills the abductees with dread.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

In the months preceding the abduction of Maruja and Beatriz, the political ramifications of the existing hostages' plight comes once more to the fore. President César Gaviria and the man whom he placed in charge of security and public order, Rafael Pardo, a hermetic, yet intelligent and organized scholar grapple with the problem of formulating a judicial solution to the drug-trafficking problem. Ultimately, their aim is to use extradition, something which the traffickers and terrorists fear above all else, as a means to have them surrender, offering non-extradition as the final incentive in a series of such for those who turn themselves in.

On September 5, 1990, Decree 2047 is approved. It states that those who turn themselves in and admit their crimes could receive the right not to be extradited and those who confess and cooperate with the authorities could have their sentences reduced to a third and even up to a sixth. An authentic shadow power – whom everyone knew to be run by Pablo Escobar – known as the 'Extraditables' rejects the decree citing a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it does not state in an intransigent manner that the criminals would not be extradited.

A letter to Former President Turbay and Hernando Santos, father of Francisco Santos, from the Extraditables opens a dialogue between the two parties. Within a week of their having formulated a reply, Guido Parra Montoya, a lawyer working for the Extraditables delivers a second letter after which Turbay and Santos decided to confide in the president. Through this communiqué, two of the most important conditions for Escobar's surrender become known: security at a special prison and protection for his family and followers. Through all this, the ordeal of the families of the lesser hostages, those without any political connections, is heightened by the undeniable fact that their loved ones will likely be the first hostages to be killed.

A recorded cassette, as evidence that Diana and her crew are alive, is sent to Former President Turbay who in turn decides to show the message to the president. Although initial signs are promising, the president states that, effectively, his hands are tied. Additionally, at this point, Nydia Quintero, Diana's mother, comes to the forefront as she begins a campaign of her own. She establishes a relationship with the sisters of the Ochoa brothers, Martha Nieves and Angelina Ochoa, hoping, through them, to contact Escobar.

With official channels having proven fruitless, the two men seek out the Notables, a group composed of two former presidents, a parliamentarian and an archbishop. Declaring themselves the spokesmen for the families of the hostages they meet with Guido Parra. Though this too shows initial promise, this dialogue, under the strain of continuous offers and counter-offers, breaks down. It is at this point, on November 7, that the two women are kidnapped.

With the abduction of his wife and sister, Alberto Villamizar is pulled inextricably into the fray, and he picks up from where a dejected Turbay and discouraged Santos failed. In spite of their disillusionment, Villamizar forges ahead, but by late November, he too has exhausted every avenue available to him. Reluctantly, he meets with Guido Parra.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The behind-the-scenes political wrangling takes center stage in this chapter and the

Quagmire that is Colombian politics, if not global politics, made all too evident. The terrorists will not surrender without guarantees for their safety and that of their families, and yet should they be captured, the state has no evidence with which to convict them. So too, the government could not be seen to be weak or offer contradictory stances, and so when Decree 2047 is put in place and subsequently rejected by the Extraditables the president can do little to aid the concerted efforts of people such as Hernando Santos and Julio César Turbay.

In addition to the labyrinthine judicial policies, Márquez illustrates the complexities of the individual players in this piece, and how their specific personalities and traits influence the negotiations. Villamizar is taking an increasingly significant role, achieving successes where his predecessors had failed (though he too, experiences his share of failures) and yet it is his patience and determination and that he is seen by others to be a man of his word, which will serve him well in the upcoming negotiations.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

In the month since the abduction, the rules regarding the captivity of Maruja and Beatriz have been relaxed somewhat, offering them a modicum of humanity in what is otherwise an exceptionally inhumane existence. Though small, these concessions mean that they can now move, pour coffee or change television channels at will without first asking for permission.

At one time, it appears that they may even be released before December 9, the date of the election for the Constituent Assembly. It is a date that holds personal significance for Maruja, as it is her birthday. A week later, though, they are informed that, in fact, they will not be freed. Not long after, Maruja suffers from phlebitis, causing severe pain in her legs, while Beatriz has an attack of asphyxia and her gastric ulcer starts to bleed.

In early-December, the four guards with whom they had thus far endured their days in captivity are rotated out with another set of four and though Maruja tries to keep it a secret, a television program dedicated to her by her children on December 8 informs the guards of her birth date. Clearly touched, they offer sympathetic comments and reassurances and the next morning, the head of the household (the *majordomo*) and his wife bring the group a bottle of champagne and a birthday cake before they and the guards sing "Happy Birthday."

Two weeks prior, on November 26, Juan Vitta is freed due to his continued ill health. Hero Buss, the German journalist and the man with whom Juan Vitta had been paired, is moved once more and on December 11 he too, is freed. He is dropped just half a block away from the *El Colombiano* newspaper. By the end of his time in captivity, he has lost thirty-five pounds.

Two days later, Azucena is released, and she takes with her a letter from Diana, addressed to her mother, Nydia Quintero; Azucena and her husband are together on December 16, the date of their fourth wedding anniversary. The last of the spate of hostage releases occurs on December 17 and sees Orlando dropped at a traffic circle with 5000 pesos for a cab.

Despite reluctance on the part of Maruja and Beatriz, New Year's Eve is celebrated by a party that consists of the hostages, the four guards and the *majordomo* and his wife. By this time, with news of the hostages' release, Marina is decidedly more optimistic. She tries to convince the others to get dressed and put on make-up for the party and later that evening even jokes and drinks with the guards.

Early into the new year, having held steadfastly onto the hope that she would be released before the end of the previous year, Beatriz is devastated. Her ill mood culminates in an inevitable argument: Beatriz, having thus far suppressed her true

feelings, screams at Maruja, "It's your damn fault I'm here!" A guard threatens to separate them, a thought that dismays both women, as the specter of a sexual assault looms readily, at least together, they believe, such a horror may not occur.

A doctor visits the hostages on January 12, and diagnoses both women with severe stress and malnutrition. Maruja has circulatory problems and a bladder infection. In addition to a treatment of tranquilizers, the doctor recommends that each woman walk for an hour each day. Therefore, beginning at one o'clock that morning, the women are allowed to take walks in an enclosed courtyard.

Now alone, Diana busies herself by watching television, listening to the radio and reading the papers. Distracted by promises of an interview with Pablo Escobar, she practices her tone, attitude and arguments. One day, while watching TV she sees a Christmas show; it is the Christmas Eve party she requested of her mother in the letter sent with Azuecena. This raises her spirits.

The death of the Priscos results in the order to have Pacho Santos killed. On hearing the news, Martha Nieves Ochoa, certain that such an act would have far-reaching consequences, drafts a letter to Escobar. She never knew if it had been received, but the order was rescinded and instead, one issued against Marina Montoya. On January 23, she is taken away and the television and radio are removed, ostensibly to prevent the women from discovering Marina's fate.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Despite the release of a number of hostages, the overall tone of this chapter is somber. The perverse experience of having to celebrate Christmas and then New Year with their captors takes its toll on the women, culminating in Beatriz letting it be known for the first time that she blames Maruja for her predicament. Ironically, it is during this time that Marina regains her zest for life, approaching the celebrations with child-like enthusiasm and vigor just weeks before her execution.

The emotional distress coupled with the poor living conditions manifest as various health problems for the women. They are exhausted, forlorn and drained of hope. Maruja's hallucination, in which she sees the guard known as Monk, his mask-covered face replaced by a skull is indicative of their fragile mental state.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

At dawn on Thursday, January 24, the body of Marina Montoya is discovered in a vacant lot north of Bogotá. Six bullets had been fired into her skull. Unbelievably, her identity is concealed and she is buried in a mass grave dug three weeks prior for two hundred corpses.

December 14, 1990 sees the issuance of Decree 3030, which, in addition to modifying 2047 and nullifying all previous decrees, introduces the judicial accumulation of sentences. The gist thereof is that a person tried for several crimes, whether in the same trial or subsequent ones, would serve only the longest sentence and not the accumulated time of all the sentences combined. That it did not address the terrorists' greatest concerns, namely, the vague conditions for non-extradition and the fixed time limit on pardonable crimes doomed it to failure. The decree seemed almost harsher than the first and Pablo Escobar objected to as much in an angry message.

The Three Ochoa brothers, traffickers and known collaborators with Escobar: Fabio, Jorge Luis and Juan David, however, took immediate refuge in it. They capitulated, doing so after considerable pressure from the women in the family who were determined to see the brothers placed within the relative safety of the fortified prison in Itagüí, Medellín. Hastened by a premonition of impending doom, Dona Nydia Quintero visits Fabio Ochoa and his father, don Fabio Ochoa in prison; meets with the defense minister, General Oscar Botero; and speaks with the president in person.

Later, in a letter to the president, Nydia voices once more her concerns that any rescue attempt would end in tragedy: "The country knows, and all of you know, that if they happen to find the kidnappers during one of those searches, a terrible tragedy might ensue." Her prescience proves correct. On January 21, Diana is shot in the back and killed (she would die hours later despite medical intervention) as she and Richard, as ordered by their captors, flee the house in which they were being held now the Elite Corps troops assaulted the compound. Richard was rescued, and returned unharmed.

Amidst the furor, surrounding Diana's death, a communiqué from the Extraditables, because of public uncertainty, confirmed that they had given the order for Marina Montoya to be executed. Therefore, seven days after she was murdered, the search for her corpse began. On learning the news, Pedro Morales, a pathologist who remembered the up-market clothes and groomed nails of a cadaver on which he worked and believing that she was, in fact, Marina Montoya, notified the authorities. Her body was correctly identified at last.

On January 29, Decree 303 is issued, and with it the remaining obstacles for the surrender of the traffickers removed. Another communiqué from the Extraditables is

interpreted as their acceptance thereof: "We will respect the lives of the remaining hostages."

Chapter 6 Analysis

Idle threats only convey so much authority and it was inevitable that eventually, one of the hostages would be killed. That another, and one as prized as Diana, would be accidentally killed at about the same time, forced both parties to re-evaluate their positions and so, at last, after months of negotiation, headway was made toward the surrender of the traffickers.

The death of Marina and Diana having paved the way for an agreement between the government and the Extraditables was tragic. The aftermath of Diana's death: the funeral and the inquiry into the raid on the compound in which she had been held culminated in Decree 303. In addition, despite denials of as much by the Colombian government, the widespread belief was that it had been an act of contrition for her death.

It is said that truth is stranger than fiction, and in this chapter, Márquez gives credence to that edict in that he simply allows the facts, unbelievable as they are, tell the story.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

With the television and radio confiscated, Maruja and Beatriz remain unaware of the deaths of Diana and Marina. Sensing their uneasiness, the *majordomo* calls for his bosses to make an effort to improve the living conditions of the hostages. Novels and entertainment publications are brought and the blue light bulb replaced with a white one, however, it proves too bright for the pair whose eyes are by now accustomed to the semi-darkness of the room. Maruja falls once more into despair. She pretends to sleep, avoids conversation and eats little. Beatriz now occupies the empty bed. At the end of January a guard named Jonás, having come to the end of his vigil, tells the women, under the condition of anonymity, that Diana Turbay is dead.

Similarly, by now, having witnessed Diana's funeral and the exhumation of Marina's body, Pacho Santos has become convinced that escape is the only option left to him. Having established a tenuous bond with his captors, Pacho had managed to pass the time playing chess (a guard had taught him to play); watching soap operas with yet another; still another brought him books to read; and gambled with them all. After the New Year, however, his spirits and those of his captors had dampened. By this time, Pacho had gleaned considerable information about his surroundings and with the death of the two women he resolved to attempt to escape when no other alternative remained.

At last, on February 7, after days of promises that felt despairingly like the empty ones of December, Beatriz is finally released. Although the prevailing atmosphere reminds them of the events that led to Marina's disappearance, a handful of notable differences hearten the women. For instance, Damaris, the *majordomo's* wife, brings them drinks and cake for an impromptu farewell party. The promises that the television and radio would be returned after Beatriz's departure – Maruja believed this act was to show her that Beatriz was indeed safe and sound, and that the opposite had been true for Marina – is not honored.

Much like those that had come before, Beatriz's release sees her dropped off with money for a cab. Taking a cab, she returns home to the family apartment where she is greeted by her younger son and fifteen-year-old daughter. It would take her several days to unlearn the habit of speaking in a whisper. That same night of her release, Beatriz learns Marina has been killed, and she bursts into tears.

Days pass and despite the supposed acceptance of Decree 303, Maruja still has not been released. Overcome with remorse, bereft by his failure to have his wife released and with all other avenues seemingly closed to him, Villamizar resolves to meet Pablo Escobar face-to-face to discuss the conditions of the hostages' freedom.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The rollercoaster of emotions endured by the hostages and their families continues in this chapter. For Villamizar, the joy of Beatriz's release is tempered by his inability to secure the freedom of his wife. With the disappearance of Guido Parra, Villamizar, not for the first time, feels as though he has no options left to him. In the midst of his grief, he decides on a change of plan. Instead of attempting to secure the release of the hostages, he devotes his efforts to having Escobar surrender himself to the authorities, relying on the belief that his wife's freedom would be a natural consequence of such an act.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Though Villamizar has now resolved to meet Escobar, finding him is another matter entirely. Medellín is a city categorized by senseless, brutal violence – twelve hundred murders, the equivalent of twenty a day, in 1991 alone. A great many of its citizens are on Escobar's payroll, and among their number, countless adolescents. Here, Escobar is a legend, practically a god.

Having decided on this course of action, Villamizar begins by visiting Nydia Quintero to learn of her dealings with the Ochoas. She gives him a letter addressed to Escobar. From there, he travels to Itagüí where the entire Ochoa family – children et al – have been incarcerated. Their meeting lasts for three hours, during which time a rapport is established between Villamizar and Jorge Luis, the eldest Ochoa brother. On his advice, Villamizar then pays a visit to the patriarch of the Ochoa family, don Fabio in La Loma.

On his return to Bogotá, having succeeded in initiating a dialogue that all hoped would result in Pablo Escobar's surrender, Villamizar is met with the news that Fortunato Gaviria Botero, the president's first cousin and dear childhood friend, has been killed. With the Ochoas' aid, Villamizar drafts a letter to Escobar, which would serve as the first in a series of such exchanges.

Shortly afterward, an inquiry into Diana's death concludes, among other things, that no high-ranking official had any knowledge of the raid and that the members of the unit involved in the invasion were to be held accountable. Because of this report, Villamizar feels there is sufficient justification for a second letter to Escobar, which he sends, along with a letter he had written to Maruja. Escobar, however, stoically refuses to meet with Villamizar, in part because of a paranoid fear that Villamizar might be carrying an electronic tracking device implanted under his skin.

Then, in early March, Escobar threatens to detonate fifty tons of dynamite in the Cartagena district in reprisal for the killing of boys by the police in the slums of Medellín. With the government refusing to cede to blackmail, Villamizar, once again with the help of the Ochoas, succeeds in, at the final hour, dissuading Escobar from his chosen course of action.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Having found an unlikely ally in the Ochoas, Villamizar renews his efforts to secure Maruja's release, only by now he is approaching it in an indirect manner. At these latter stages of the crisis, it becomes clear that the government has become all but a bystander, through its refusal or inability to help. It his through his interactions with the Ochoas, and their help, that Villamizar manages to contact Escobar.

Moreover, it is these two groups, Villamizar and the Ochoas, and not the government who avert a catastrophic disaster when Escobar threatens to devastate the historical Cartagena district. Despite these incidents, the tone of the chapter is positive. Villamizar has forged a bond of trust with the Ochoa family and through their combined efforts, a resolution appears as though it is finally on the cards.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Their promise to return the television and radio as yet unfulfilled, Maruja's supplication turns into fervent, angry demands until finally, gambling on the fact that her captors are under strict orders not to mistreat her, she threatens to stop eating. Then, in the early morning three days after Beatriz's release, the *majordomo* returns the appliances, while also announcing to Maruja that Marina Montoya is dead.

Later that same day, she sees Beatriz alive and well in an apartment she recognizes as her own, though, almost humorously so, she is dismayed at the manner in which it has been re-decorated. Suffused with a maelstrom of emotions her days and nights in captivity become intolerable. She suffers from hallucinations and imagines she can hear Marina whispering to her. On one occasion she is convinced that Marina grasped her arm and in her natural voice called out Maruja's name. She stops walking, and eats and drinks only enough to keep from dying. The pain and cramps from which she had previously suffered return, but she doesn't even complain. The *majordomo*, his wife, and the guards, embroiled in their own petty conflicts seem not to take any notice.

In February, however, four new boys are sent to replace the current crew. They are well mannered, disciplined and quickly a bond forms between themselves and Maruja. They encourage her to walk, follow the doctor's orders and to keep healthy for her family. The rules are relaxed considerably and Maruja is allowed to move around the room, speak normally and go to the bathroom when she desires. Her morale returns and she once again begins to look after her self.

Things take a turn for the worse once more when, in what Maruja would later call her black March, the previous guards return and her life is made unbearable yet again. The fights between the *majordomo* and his wife intensify and after one particular incident in which Damaris is pushed through a window, she, along with her young daughters, leave. Food becomes scarce; the *majordomo* will often stay away until nightfall and then return with only yogurt, potato chips and the occasional chicken. The guards shout, sing, dance, smoke marijuana that makes the air in the room 'unbreathable' and play the radio at deafening volume. Maruja's hair even begins to fall out.

Another women is brought in to help run the house, but she only exacerbates the situation; she drinks with the *majordomo*, meals are served irregularly and often both will leave for an entire Sunday, returning with food for Maruja and the guards only the next day. Then suddenly, inexplicably, the situation changes. Damaris returns, as do the four young guards. People are brought in to carpet the room, a gesture Maruja meets with vehement rage as she takes it to mean her stay will be prolonged indefinitely.

Pacho Santos, meanwhile, entertains thoughts of escape. He knows, or at least believes he knows, as much about the layout of the house and the surrounding

neighborhood as possible given his situation. At last, on March 6 he is presented with a gilt-edged opportunity to escape:

Before putting the chain on Pacho, the guard passes out drunk. Barefoot, and in nothing but his underwear, Pacho makes his way past the guardroom in which all the guards are fast asleep. He goes into the bathroom and closes the door but before he can do anything, a guard, still half asleep, pushes the door open and shines a light in his face. Pacho can do nothing but pretend he's relieving himself.

Overcome with depression because of his failure, Pacho considers committing suicide. Miraculously, Father Alfonso Llanos Escoba's weekly column is published in *El Tiempo*. In it, he orders Pacho not to even consider suicide. Hernando Santos had the article three weeks previous and for a reason he was unable to explain, decided to use it that day.

Chapter 9 Analysis

The hostages' familiar pattern of depression and anxiety and ephemeral relief are once again portrayed here. However, things take a turn for the worse as the mental and physical aberrations take their toll on the remaining captives. Pacho is driven to contemplate suicide while Maruja barely grasps to life if for no other reason than it being habit, as she endures harsh, barbaric living conditions.

When things appear to be at their darkest, a positive aspect presents itself, giving each of the abducted a modicum of hope. For Maruja, it is the return of the four young boys and for Pacho it is the publication of an article, addressed specifically to him telling him not to consider suicide.

The insinuation that divine intervention is at work is fortified by the sermon of Father García Herreros, whose cryptic, perplexing "God's Minute" broadcast prior to the nightly news opens the door that will ultimately see this terrible ordeal through to its end.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The confused, seemingly incoherent rambling of Father García Herreros offers hope when, by the end of March, the exchange of letters between Escobar and Villamizar had become almost meaningless. Escobar's letters had degenerated into nothing more than a list of complaints and threats against the government, the security forces and the civilian population.

Stranger than the inspiration for this message, was the manner in which the idea was conceived. On April 12, 1991, Father García Herreros visited Dr. Manuel Elkin Patarroyo – the man responsible for the malaria vaccine – who, with no apparent preconception asked the father if he could not do something to help Pablo Escobar turn himself in. Less than a week later, the father broadcast the message that would irrevocably alter what remained of his life. Just a day after the broadcast, he meets with the Ochoa brothers and asks if he may be of some help.

Not long afterwards, he returns to the Ochoas' cell where he dictates a letter to Escobar, an answer to which is received three days later, written in Escobar's own hand. On May 13, Villamizar receives a message from Escobar requesting that he bring the father to La Loma. Having spent little more than a day with the Ochoa sisters, and with no word from Escobar, the father is determined to leave, believing this to be another Escobar ruse. However, he is persuaded to stay and later that afternoon a car arrives to transport him, alone, to meet Pablo Escobar. They change cars three times en route to Escobar's compound; a lavish house surrounded by Olympic-size swimming pool and various sports facilities.

After six hours, and with a list of Escobar's essential conditions, the father returns to La Loma. They reach Bogotá at eleven o' clock in the morning of May 16. That night, Villamizar attends a party, elated, even in the face of yet another vague promise, not unlike others before it, from Escobar. Later, after a communiqué announcing the release of Francisco Santos and Maruja Pachón, Villamizar receives a message from Escobar saying that both hostages would be released on Monday, May 20. Villamizar, however, would have to return to Medellín on Tuesday morning to oversee Escobar's surrender.

Chapter 10 Analysis

After a seemingly interminable struggle, the resolution is decidedly swift. Father García Herreros's standing and the belief held by many, including Escobar and his men, that he is a saint hasbrought about, in a matter of days, a decisive conclusion to the standoff. His presence as a mediator is considered miraculous, as the inherent distrust on both sides had previously prevented any sort of agreement being reached.

The father, however, despite his age and his numerous eccentricities successfully brokers the deal that in the months that follow will see Escobar remanded into the custody of the government. The sliver of hope that first revealed itself at the end of the previous chapter carries over into this one, while at the same time gaining momentum until the only probable, and certainly, the only positive outcome is reached.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

On Sunday, May 19, at seven o'clock, in the evening, Maruja hears the communiqué. Past disappointments still fresh in her mind, she refuses to celebrate with the *majordomo* and his wife, instead taking a dose of sleeping pills, and she does not wake until the next day. Villamizar, however, though he has every right to, has no such doubts.

Meanwhile, having heard the good news from Father García Herreros, who inexplicably relayed the news seventy-two hours before the Extraditables' first message, Francisco's wife, María Victoria had a picture of herself, Hernando and the children published in *El Tiempo*. Francisco understands the implicit message therein, and then waits anxiously throughout Saturday and most of Sunday until the news of his impending release is announced on the newscast "Criptón."

Maruja, it is established, will be released in time for the seven o'clock news. At her request, Damaris purchases mascara, lipstick, eyebrow pencil and a pair of stockings for Maruja who then dresses in the same outfit she had worn on the day of the kidnapping. In preparation for his release, Pacho, too puts on the clothes he had been wearing on the day of his capture. Unbelievably, he has put on weight, and these clothes are too tight. Additionally, he tears up the many notes he had written throughout the 244 days of his captivity, leaving only three and the rough drafts of messages to his family and the president, as well as his will.

At around six o'clock on the evening of her release, as she is let out her room, Maruja asks for her ring – which had been taken on the day of her capture – back. She does not get it. However, she does receive a bag of other personal effects and various gifts from the guards, including a 9mm shell from one of the bosses who had visited from time to time to oversee her incarceration. He hands it to her, saying, "The bullet we didn't shoot you with." Then, with her head covered by a hood like that worn by Marina she is led to a car.

The routine, now well established, sees Maruja pushed from the car with a warning not to take the hood off immediately. A passing car stops. The driver, overwhelmed by the fact that he has picked up Maruja, takes Maruja to a nearby house to call her family. Villamizar followed by his son, Andrés and a cavalcade of reporters races to the house, where he finds Maruja in a child's room. They embrace and then leave amongst a throng of reporters.

Pacho Santos is released with 2,000 pesos for a cab. The young driver who picks him up refuses to charge him, however and takes him home amidst blaring car horns and shouts of joy.

Chapter 11 Analysis

At last, after having trekked across an emotional landscape peppered with disappointment, anguish and disbelief, the conclusion – the only one that would make for a satisfying end – is reached. The pervading mood is one of unbridled joy, not only for the immediate family, but for the entire nation. A fact demonstrated by the flags hung by neighbors, and the party-like atmosphere that greets Maruja, her husband and their son, Andrés, as they make their way back to the apartment amidst a roaring ovation.

Similarly, Pacho returns home with the cab driver hooting and shouting, and such is the jubilant mood that one family member, at seeing Pacho's increased girth, comments that he needed another six months. The sense of relief felt by the nation, the family and even the government is palpable. It is an ordeal that has tested the resolve of all those involved.

Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

Having spent the innumerable months delaying, avoiding and dodging any form of resolution, it is now Escobar, without the guarantee the hostages provided him, that is in a hurry. That morning, as agreed, Villamizar arrives in Medellín. At Escobar's request, Villamizar and The Monkey, a representative of Escobar's, visit the prison in which Escobar would be maintained. Surrounding the compound is a double-row of 2.8 meter high fencing, trimmed with fifteen rows of five-thousand-volt electrified barbed wire; seven watch towers, nine including the two that guard the entrance. All of this is designed as much to keep Escobar in, as it is to keep those who would prefer him dead, out.

In the weeks that followed, Villamizar was traveling to Medellín and subsequently, La Loma, several times a week. Escobar's surrender was not without its complications, however. When Father García Herreros accused Escobar of being an unrepentant pornographer during a broadcast of "God's Minute," Escobar made his surrender conditional on a public explanation of the father's comments. An editing error had apparently made it appear as though the father had said things he had, in actuality, not. Other niggling details included the government's insistence on using army and national guard patrols on the exterior of the prison and the eradication of the woods surrounding the prison, terms to which Escobar refused to concede.

On June 19, Villamizar, the father and a committee comprising four other people board a plane for Medellín. Later that day, two helicopters leave from the roof of the capitol building and, following Monkey's instructions, make their way to Pablo Escobar's compound. He is picked up, amidst of a battalion of thirty armed men, and taken to the prison – a trip of no more than fifteen minutes from his home – where Escobar is met by, among others, Luis Jorge Pataquiva, the director of the prison. Taking Villamizar aside, Escobar expresses, among other things, his regret for what he had done to Villamizar and his family.

Two-hundred and ninety-nine days after his incarceration, the government learns of the manner in which Escobar had transformed the prison into a 'five-star hacienda' and the decision is made to transfer him. He escapes. On December 2, 1993, a day after his forty-fourth birthday, Escobar telephones his son, Juan Pablo. The call is traced, and Escobar's last words are: "I'm hanging up because something funny's going on here."

Back home, the day after Escobar's surrender, a small package wrapped in gift paper and tied with a gold ribbon is delivered to the Villamizar residence. It is a case made of imitation leather. Inside the case is Maruja's ring, the one taken from her on the night of the kidnapping.

Epilogue Analysis

All that remains, though certainly significant, is to tie up the few loose ends. After the emotional high of the previous chapter, the conclusion seems almost pedestrian as the entire ordeal peters out among a flurry of petty demands and counter-demands made by each side. Oddly enough, with the hostages' lives no longer in the balance, what remains to be done seems almost trivial, even though it is anything but.

So too, despite the immense gravity and historical importance of the situation, humor punctuates the text. Villamizar is proven a man of his word, and Escobar tells him as much, and unbelievably, promises to do anything he can for Villamizar. He need only ask. Escobar's death is ignominious, a pathetic end to a man portrayed as unflappable, cunning and erudite. That the story ends with Maruja receiving her ring back, a sentimental keepsake, is heart-warming.

Characters

Orlando Acevedo

Orlando Acevedo is one of Diana Turbay's cameramen. The kidnappers free him on December 17.

Richard Becerra

Richard Becerra is one of Diana's cameramen. He gains his freedom after the police raid that takes Diana's life.

Hero Buss

Hero Buss is a German journalist who travels with Diana Turbay's crew. The kidnappers free him on December 11.

Pablo Escobar

Pablo Escobar is the head of the Medellín drug cartel. At the time of the abductions, Escobar's fugitive, shadowy identity has led some people to doubt his very existence. Escobar has risen from petty thiefdom to heading a multibillion-dollar, international drug industry. In his hometown of Medellín, Escobar provides jobs and charitable services to slumdwellers. After he is imprisoned, Escobar continues to run his drug business. He is shot and killed by Colombian authorities on December 2, 1993, a few months after his escape from prison.

Father Rafael García Herreros

Father Rafael García Herreros is the eighty-two-year-old priest whose efforts are instrumental in bringing about the release of the final two hostages and Escobar's surrender. Father Herreros'swell-known television sermonette program "God's Minute," has been running close to forty years before the nightly news. Father Herreros takes it upon himself to volunteer to mediate between Escobar and the government. Escobar accepts this offer and soon after a meeting takes place between the men, the long ordeal□of the hostages and the government's battle with Escobar□ends.

President César Gaviria

President Gaviria took office a mere three weeks before the first kidnapping. Since his campaign, Gaviria worked to create a judicial policy that would bring about an end to

narcoterrorism, and this policy became his first priority in office. Gaviria considered extradition an emergency measure that would pressure the criminals into surrendering. With the kidnapping of Diana Turbay and her news team, his resolve is put to the test. Throughout the months of the hostage ordeal, Gaviria refuses to accede to any demands of the drug traffickers that would tarnish the Colombian judicial system, which he is trying to strengthen. Gaviria is also personally touched by the narcoterrorists during this ordeal; shortly before Escobar's surrender, Gaviria's cousin and old friend is abducted and murdered.

Dr. Pedro Guerrero

Pedro is Beatriz's husband.

Azucena Liévano

Azucena Liévano is a young editor on Diana Turbay's new team. She takes notes during her captivity and later uses them to write a book about the experience. She is held with Diana, but on December 13 the kidnappers free her alone.

General Miguel Maza Márquez

General Maza Márquez, responsible for the investigation into the abduction, is the head of the Administration Department for Security. He has held this position for an unprecedented seven years, under numerous administrations, and he considers the war against the drug dealers to be his personal struggle to the death with Pablo Escobar.

Marina Montoya

Kidnapped three months before Maruja and Beatriz, the sixty-four-year-old Marina Montoya owns a restaurant but her political connections make her a target; her brother was the secretary general to President Barco, whose administration had begun the extradition policy and, at the time of the abductions, he serves as Colombia's ambassador to Canada. It is widely believed that Marina was kidnapped in retaliation for the government's refusal to comply with agreements made with narcoterrorists to bring about the release of her nephew, who previously had been abducted and freed. Many Colombians, including Marina, also believe that she has been abducted so that the captors had a significant hostage whom they could kill without thwarting the negotiations for their surrender. Marina develops a close relationship with her guards before the arrival of Maruja and Beatriz to the room where she is kept, and she has a difficult time adjusting to their presence. In the days before her death, Marina seems to foresee what will happen, and she is executed on January 23, 1991, her body tossed in an empty lot.

Fabio Ochoa

Fabio, the youngest Ochoa brother, is a top member of the Medellín cartel. He surrenders in December.

Jorge Luis Ochoa

Jorge Luis, a top member of the Medellín cartel, surrenders under the new decree in January. Of the three brothers, he is of particular help to Villamizar in his efforts to meet Escobar. He also tries to convince Escobar to surrender.

Juan David Ochoa

Juan David is a top member of the Medellín cartel. He surrenders under the new decree in February.

Gloria Pachón

Maruja's sister Gloria is Colombia's representative to UNESCO and the widow of Luis Galán, the former presidential candidate who made a lasting enemy of Escobar by trying to prevent the drug dealer from obtaining a role in Colombia's government as well as by supporting the extradition treaty. He was assassinated by drug traffickers in 1989.

Maruja Pachón de Villamizar

Maruja Pachón de Villamizar is a journalist and the director of FOCINE, the state-run enterprise for the promotion of the film industry, when she is abducted. Like the captives before her, she is kidnapped for political connections; her husband, Alberto Villamizar, is a well-known politician and her sister, Gloria Pachón, is the widow of Luis Galán. The drug traffickers hope that Maruja's kidnapping will put pressure on the government, through Gloria, to accede to their wishes. Maruja remains strong throughout her captivity, refusing to be intimidated by her captors. After Beatriz is released and she remains alone, however, she becomes disheartened, unsure that her husband is doing all he can to win her release and convinced that she will remain hostage for a long time to come. Maruja is released on May 20, after more than six months in captivity.

Rafael Pardo Rueda

Rafael Pardo Rueda is President Gaviria' s advisor on security. Under the previous administration, he was in charge of negotiations with the guerrillas and the rehabilitation programs in war zones, and he achieved the peace accords with the M-19 guerrillas. He acts as the mediator between the Colombian government and Maruja and Beatriz's family.

Guido Parra Montoya

Guido Parra Montoya is Escobar's attorney. He was arrested on suspicion of abetting terrorism the year before. He is involved in negotiating the release of the hostages, but he vanishes in February 1990 after overstepping his authority. He is found dead in Medellín three years later.

Nydia Quintero

Nydia Quintero is Diana's mother. She lobbies President Gaviria to change his decree and thus secure the release of the hostages.

Francisco Santos

See Pacho Santos

Dr. Hernando Santos

Hernando Santos is Pacho's father. Along with his close friend Dr. Turbay, he makes early efforts to negotiate with Pablo Escobar and free the hostages.

Pacho Santos

Francisco Santo, nicknamed Pacho, is the editor in chief of the newspaper *El Tiempo.* Pacho is abducted from his car and taken to a house in Bogotá. Unknown to Pacho, he narrowly escapes death in January, when Marina Montoya is killed instead of him. Toward the end of his captivity, Pacho plans a prison breakout, and his failure to do so leads to thoughts of suicide. Pacho is released a few hours after Maruja, on May 20.

Dr. Julio César Turbay

As president of Colombia, Dr. Turbay allowed the extradition to the United States of Colombian nationals for the first time. Along with his close friend Hernando Santos, he makes early efforts to negotiate with Pablo Escobar and free the hostages.

Diana Turbay Quintero

At forty years old, Diana Turbay is a well-known journalist who directs a popular television news show as well as a magazine, both of which she founded. She is also the daughter of former president Julio César Turbay. Diana always held as a central concern the desire to bring peace to her devastated country.

The kidnappers lure Diana with the promise of a meeting with Manuel Pérez, the priest who commands a major guerrilla group. Diana ignored the advice of others and accepted the invitation, most likely because she hoped to open a dialogue on peace between the guerillas and the government. The journal that Diana keeps during her captivity becomes the primary record of this experience; Diana is shot during a police raid on the house in Medellín where she is being held, and she dies soon thereafter.

Alberto Villamizar

Alberto Villamizar, Maruja's husband, is a well-known politician, who counts among his friends President César Gaviria. In 1985, as a representative in the legislature, Villamizar helped pass the first national law against drug trafficking. He also stopped passage of a bill introduced by politicians friendly to Escobar that would have removed legislative support for the extradition treaty. As a result of this action, an assassination attempt was made on him in 1986.

Villamizar aggressively pursues the release of his wife and sister. He urges President Gaviria to alter the decree so that Escobar need not fear extradition. As a last resort, he decides to meet with Escobar himself. Although he is unsuccessful in this effort, Father Herrerros is able to serve as hisemissary, and eventually, the men secure the hostages' release and Escobar's surrender.

Beatriz Villamizar de Guerrero

Beatriz Villamizar de Guerrero is Maruja's sister-in-law and press assistant at FOCINE. She is abducted solely because she is with Maruja at the time. She is released on February 8, 1991.

Juan Vitta

Juan Vitta is a writer on Diana Turbay's news team. He sinks into a deep depression during the kidnapping, which leads to a deterioration of his overall health, already compromised because of a prior heart ailment. Because of this, the kidnappers release him on November 26.

Themes

Violence

The violence inherent to Colombian society, made so apparent by *News of a Kidnapping,* has been a long-standing characteristic of the country. A political assassination in 1948 set off a wave of killings between vying parties; it became known simply as "La Violencia." Just as some peace was returning to Colombia, guerrilla groups began to launch their own offensives.

By the 1980s, the drug traffickers were imbuing the country with their own brand of terrorism and violence. In the hands of the drug traffickers, Medellín became one of the most dangerous cities in the world. In the city's first two months of 1991, a massacre took place every four days and about 1,200 murders were committed; of these, almost 500 police officers, upon whom Escobar placed a bounty, were the victims. However, the police also made their contribution to the escalation and randomness of violence. Believing that most of the young men and boys who lived in the Medellín slums were working in the drug industry□there were few other economic options available□police officers engaged in indiscriminate killing. In his attempts to negotiate with the government, Escobar demanded that these actions be brought to an end. National and international human rights organizations protested these human rights abuses as well.

Violence is so commonplace in Colombian society that, in many instances, a violent act draws little attention or reaction. As just one example among many, when Marina's son goes to Medellín in an unsuccessful attempt to negotiate with Escobar, he notices a girl lying dead by the side of the road. When he points this out to his driver, the man replies without even looking, "One of the dolls who parties with don Pablo's friends.'

Terrorism

Colombia of recent decades is rife with terrorism. The guerrilla groups initiated actions, such as the M-19's assault on the Supreme Court, and the drug cartels quickly embrace such strategies as their most effective means for achieving their goals. By 1991, Medellín has become the center of urban terrorism. Journalists, law enforcement officers, politicians□anyone who attempts to thwart the drug traffickers, or even speak against them□can become a ready victim. Oftentimes, the acts of terrorism committed against these targets affect many ordinary Colombians. García Márquez notes that a car bomb set off in February, which killed three low-ranking officers and eight police agents, also killed another nine passers-by and injured 143 others.

The goal of the narcotraffickers in launching the kidnappings is primarily to gain leverage in negotiating with the government and thus avoid extradition. This strategy places a great deal of pressure on the government; García Márquez explains that "after the first bombs, public opinion demanded prison for the terrorists, after the next few

bombings the demand was for extradition, but as the bombs continued to explode, public opinion began to demand amnesty.'

As President Gaviria continues to withstand the pressure to bargain with Escobar and his cartel leaders, the acts of terrorism escalate. Marina is executed, and more hostages are threatened. When Gaviria eventually agrees to take extradition off the table, García Márquez writes that the president "did not propose negotiations with terrorism in order to conjure away a human tragedy," but rather, "to make extradition a more useful judicial weapon in the fight against narcotraffic by making non-extradition the grand prize in a package of incentives and guarantees for those who surrendered to the law." It is noteworthy that in the narcotrafficker's drive to pursue this goal, as well as to protect their families and workers, nothing is scared. In March, Escobar threatens to blow up fifty tons of dynamite in one of the country's most historic cities. Dissuaded from doing so, he still maintains, "If police operations in Medellín continued past April, no stone would be left standing in the very ancient and noble city of Cartagena de Indias.'

The United States

Although in other media, García Márquez has made public his objections to the extradition policy, in *News of a Kidnapping* he makes few references to the role the United States plays in Colombia's drug wars. However, the northern neighbor's pervasive presence is seen throughout the book□and throughout Colombian society as it is enveloped in the narcoviolence. García Márquez notes the horror that the prospect of being sent to the United States to stand trial and inevitable incarceration evokes in the Extraditables, who are so "terrified by the long, worldwide reach of the United States" that "they went underground, fugitives in their own country." Fear of extradition leads Escobar to order the kidnappings because he hopes they will provide him with bargaining chips. It also contributes to his death. About to be transferred to another prison, Escobar thinks that the government is actually going to kill him or even turn him over to the United States, so he escapes, leading to the exhaustive manhunt that claims his life.

Style

Narration

García Márquez undertook the project that became *News of a Kidnapping* at the behest of Maruja Pachon de Villamizar, one of the captives, and her husband, the politician Alberto Villamizar, who was instrumental in winning the release of his wife and the surrender of Pablo Escobar. The book originally focused on Maruja's ordeal, but eventually García Márquez decided to include more of the personal remembrances of the other victims as well. Most likely because of this initial focus, García Márquez chooses to open the book with thekidnapping of Maruja and Beatriz, even though these women are the final captives taken by the Extraditables. After exploring their capture, their families' reaction to the news, and their impressions, the narrative delves back several months to chronicle the eight kidnappings that came before it, eventually catching up again to the present, November 1990.

The narration focuses on the victims, describing the conditions the different hostage groups face and their responses to their captivity. It also focuses on their families, showing their efforts to keep up the spirits of the captives. As the captivity lengthens, negotiations become more complex and involve more people□President Gaviria, members of his administration, high-ranking leaders in the Medellín drug cartel, a priest□and the narration carefully explores the relationships between these people and details the actions they take. The narration also includes background about Colombia's drug wars over the past few decades, which is necessary to understanding the significance of the events that García Márquez recounts. The Colombian government faces considerable difficulty and pressure, particularly from the families of the captives, as it attempts to create a workable drug policy that will lead to the capitulation of the drug kingpins.

García Márquez's skill as a writer allows him to mesh all of these complex elements into one cohesive narrative. As Bonnie Smothers writes in *Booklist,* "[H]e tracks the story like a detective, weaving in the voices of all the players, [and] ferreting out the nuances in their relationships.'

Audience

News of a Kidnapping was written in García Márquez's native Spanish and then translated into other languages. García Márquez knew that his work would attract foreign readers, most of whom would have little knowledge of the machinations of the Colombian drug wars and the relations between the government and the narcotraffickers. Because his work is directed at this foreign readership, as well as at readers in his own country, who already had a familiarity with the kidnappings, he gives background about the perils of late twentieth-century Colombia. Despite this background information, many readers may have difficulty putting all of the events that

García Márquez reports in perspective. In *Commonweal,* Joseph A. Page chastises the American publisher's "failure ... to provide back-ground information, a simple chronology, or even an index" as "inexcusable."

Reportage

News of a Kidnapping, a piece of reportage, is based on real events and populated with real people. García Márquez draws on interviews, media broadcasts, newspapers, and diaries kept by several of the hostages to produce this account. While his text is imbued with illuminating details about 1990 Colombia as well as about the mindset of the captives, García Márquez maintains the requisite objective tone of the journalist. He makes no judgements about any of the people that figure in the narrative. Instead, he lets the bare facts speak for themselves, as when he writes about Marina being taken from the room she shares with Maruja and Beatriz (and two guards) to her execution, "The fact was brutal and painful, but it was the fact: there was more room with four people instead of five, fewer tensions, more air to breathe."

As an eminent, well-respected Colombian who has played an important role in the country's recent diplomatic and political life, García Márquez also speaks for the Colombian citizenry in *News of a Kidnapping.* He uses the word "we" in relating how Colombians react to the kidnappings, to Escobar, and to the drug war in general. He calls the drug wars "the biblical holocaust that has been consuming Colombia for more than twenty years"; the details that he provides throughout the book seem to prove his assertion.

As with many works of reportage, readers may question whether García Márquez sticks completely to the facts. In an interview with *World Press Review,* García Márquez stated that the book "does not contain a single line of fiction or a single fact that has not been corroborated as far as humanly possible." However, in creating this work, García Márquez, in part, draws upon individual memories of an extremely harrowing period.

Historical Context

The Rise of Drug Trafficking

Narcotics emerged as a major national problem in the late 1970s when Colombia began exporting agreat deal of marijuana to the United States. With the profits from marijuana, drug leaders diversified their operations to include cocaine trafficking. Two major drug cartels□Mafia-like organizations□ evolved, one in Medellín and the second in Cali. The Medellín cartel was led by Pablo Escobar, Carlos Lehder, and a few other men. Escobar bribed and threatened government officials to ensure their cooperation. He also attempted to get involved in the government himself and was elected to the Congress as a member of the Liberal party.

The Drug War

Violence grew along with the drug trafficking. In 1984, Medellín traffickers assassinated President Belisario Betancur's minister of justice, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, who had taken an aggressive policy against drug dealers. Betancur invoked his state of siege powers, and extradited thirteen drug dealers to the United States. The Medellín cartel, calling themselves the Extraditables, immediately began a campaign against extradition, which included targeting the treaty's prominent supporters. Drug kingpin Lehder was extradited to the United States in 1987, where he stood trial and received a life sentence plus 135 years. (He was released in 1996.) The Medellín cartel launched an unsuccessful hit on the minister of justice, assassinated the attorney general, kidnapped a candidate for mayor of Bogotá, and bombed a newspaper office, a commercial airliner, and the national police agency.

This narcoterrorism led to an enormous rise in Colombia's murder rate; in 1989, homicide was the leading cause of death in the country. The destructive effects of this violence were perhaps most readily apparent in the 1990 presidential campaign, as three candidates were assassinated, including the poll-leading Luis Carlos Galán. This action led President Virgilio Barco Vargas to declare a War on Drugs, which involved concerted repression of drug dealers. While several leading drug traffickers were arrested or killed, Escobar responded with his own wave of terrorist attacks. Barco also used the weapon of extradition, promising to enforce the new treaty with the United States that would send drug dealers to America to face prosecution and punishment. Barco believed that extradition was an effective resource against drug-related criminal activities.

The End of the Medellín Cartel

César Gaviria Trujillo, elected in 1990, also held a hard-line anti-drug policy, but he believed that extradition should be only one way to fight the war on drugs. Instead, he favored strengthening the Colombian justice and penal system to deal with traffickers

nationally. He implemented a policy of plea bargaining, often combined with a reduction of sentences, to win the surrender of drug traffickers. The rewritten constitution of 1991 declared extradition to be unconstitutional, removing the issue from both Colombian politics and the War on Drugs. These efforts led to the surrender of most members of the Medellín cartel, notably Pablo Escobar in 1992. After escaping thirteen months later, in July 1993, Escobar immediately began to carry out internal purges of his organization and launch another terrorist campaign. A special unit tracked down Escobar in December, and shot and killed him, which also brought the end of the Medellín cartel.

The Colombian Economy

One of the reasons that drugs became such big business in Colombia was the troubled economy. Colombia had long been wracked by economic woes. While the discovery in 1985 of a large petroleum reserve was a major boost to the declining economy, the drug trade also provided enormous benefits. The drug industry made annual trade balances positive whereas they were negative for legal goods. Drug dealers put a great deal of money into the construction and the cocaine refining businesses, invested in other businesses, and were a major source of employment. Drug dealers also provided charitable contributions to poor neighborhoods.

During the early 1990s, Colombia entered a new economic order. Gaviria's government lowered tariffs on imports, provided fewer subsidies for the poor, and lessened the government's role in the economy. However, in 1996, inflation rose, gross domestic product declined, and unemployment hit a new high. By 1998, Colombia was in its worst recession since the Great Depression.

Critical Overview

News of a Kidnapping□like any new work by García Márquez□received a great deal of attention when it was first published in Spanish in 1996, and the following year, in English. A welter of reviewers focused their attention on the myriad aspects of the book: its style, the events it depicted, the state ofaffairs in Colombia, the drug wars. While this book was a marked departure from the magical realism that characterizes García Márquez's fiction, few reviewers found this to be cause for complaint. The dramatic events that García Márquez has to work with easily provided what John Bemrose called in *Maclean's,* "thrillerlike momentum." Indeed, as Michiko Kakutani pointed out in *The Houston Chronicle,* García Márquez "uses his novelist's instinct for emotional drama to give the reader a wonderfully immediate sense of his subjects' ordeal: their spiraling hopes and fears, their fantasies of escape, their desperation and despair." She was not alone in comparing this book to García Márquez's "most powerful fiction." R. Z. Sheppard's commentary in *Time* that *News of a Kidnapping* "brings together the world's two best-known Colombians, symbolically locked in a struggle for their nation's soul"□García Márquez and Pablo Escobar□ illustrates the inherent narrative power of this non-fiction story.

García Márquez started out his career as a journalist, winning important prizes in that field, and reviewers noted that his skill had not lapsed. Wrote Sheppard, "One can almost hear García Márquez asking, Who? What? Where? When? and Why? on every minutely detailed page." Page also pointed out that the "terse" style of the book "reflects a conscious choice to let the hostages tell their own stories without impressing upon them the stamp of García Márquez's imagination."

Reviewers, however, also noted that the fantastic elements of the crime, and the drug wars in general, brought the book closer to García Márquez's magical realism. Colombia presents a world hardly imaginable for most American readers, a world where law enforcement officers, Congressional representatives, and journalists are gunned down at the will of criminals. As Robert Stone challenged readers of the *New York Times Book Review,* "[L]et us imagine that we have a President who carries five bullets in his body as the result of an assassination attempt by drug traffickers. Let us imagine that Lady Bird Johnson and Amy Carter have both spent time in the hands of kidnappers." As Kakutani pointed out, books like *News of a Kidnapping* remind the reader that the "magical realism employed by García Márquez and other Latin American novelists is in part a narrative strategy for grappling with a social reality so hallucinatory, so irrational, that it defies ordinary naturalistic description.'

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Korb has a master's degree in English literature and creative writing and has written for a wide variety of educational publishers. In the following essay, she explores the surrealistic aspects of Colombia in 1990.

To many North American readers, the world described so starkly in García Márquez's *News of a Kidnapping* is a world hardly fathomable. Upon its publication, numerous reviewers pointed out that the fantastical story could have been drawn from the pages of one of García Márquez's magical realist novels. However, as García Márquez has stated on several occasions, every event in the book represents the truth as best the former journalist could uncover it□testament to the sad fact that in 1990, what North America found to be surreal and shocking, Colombia perceived as quite ordinary. To García Márquez, and to countless of his fellow countrypeople, the assault on the journalists is merely "one episode in the biblical holocaust that has been consuming Colombia for more than 20 years." His statement should really come as little surprise toreaders who have any knowledge of modern Colombia, for the country itself, as Olga Lorenzo puts it in *Quadrant,* is "a place where ... all civil institutions and even civility itself have largely failed.'

The perverse history of contemporary Colombia is made manifest in the book's opening pages. After her abduction, Maruja tries to find out exactly which group has taken her; the ensuing exchange between captive and captors succinctly reveals the perverse nature of Colombian society. To her query, '"Who are you people?"' one of the men replies that they are from the M-19, which she instantly recognizes as a "nonsensical reply" since this former guerrilla group has been rehabilitated. Only five years previous, a commando unit from the M-19 had taken the Supreme Court building hostage, leading to a bloody ten-day battle between the guerrillas and the Colombian army, a battle which claimed the lives of some one hundred people, including half of the Supreme Court Judges. Yet, as a result of peace accords, by the time of Maruja's kidnapping, the M-19 has been legalized and takes an active part in Colombia's political life, even "campaigning for seats in the Constituent Assembly." The group that once was one of the Colombian government's most fierce enemies now is potentially responsible for rewriting the country's constitution.

Maruja's response to the man's reply is equally telling: '"Seriously.... Are you dealers or guerrillas?' " In her casual reference to these groups, both of whom have plunged Colombia into serious violence and waves of terrorism that continue to claim the lives of thousands, Maruja demonstrates the sangfroid that Colombians have been forced to adopt. This is the same variety of composure that is seen in Hernando Santos as his nephew tells him that he has to relate some "very bad news." When Hernando discovers that Pacho has been kidnappedhe "breathed a sigh of relief," declaring, '"Thank God."' These two reactions to news of a kidnapping aptly demonstrate, as Lorenzo points out, how Colombians "live with a constant, primitive fear on the one hand, yet on the other an almost complacent acceptance of violence.'

Pacho's kidnapping is equally revealing, beginning with his abduction from his car, which looks like an "ordinary red Jeep" but actually has been bulletproofed, subtly reinforcing the fact that in Colombia, nothing is what it seems to be. García Márquez' s narrative also makes it clear how unreal is Colombia's present situation. As soon as Pacho is deposited in an empty room in the safehouse, he "realized that his abductors had been in a hurry not only for reasons of security but in order to get back in time for the soccer game between Santafé and Caldas." However, the abductors want "to keep everybody happy"; they give Pacho a bottle of liquor and leave him with a radio so he, too, can follow the game.

Unfortunately, their plan does not succeed, for Pacho, a devoted Santafé fan, gets so angry with the tie score that he cannot even enjoy the liquor. This paragraph is a surreal masterpiece. Each sentence presents an utterly ludicrous proposition, but the one that builds upon it is even more so. The paragraph' s culminating lines, however, bring the narrative back down to earth and remind Pacho, along with the reader, of the danger inherent to the situation: "When it [the game] was over, he saw himself on the nine-thirty news on file footage, wearing a dinner jacket and surrounded by beauty queens. That was when he learned his driver was dead.'

Throughout *News of a Kidnapping,* the media plays a powerful role, contributing to the overall absurdism that sometimes overtakes the menacing situation. For example, it provides fodder for even more bizarre incidents at the different safehouses. The newspaper reports on Pacho's kidnapping are "so inaccurate and fanciful they made his captors double over with laughter." Meanwhile, Maruja's guards' reactions to a family television program celebrating her birthday are even more astonishing; they express their hope that "Maruja would introduce them to her daughters so they could take them out.'

The media's dissemination of information between the captives and their families also verges on the surreal. After a frantic call from one of Maruja's captors about the medicine she needs to take for her circulation problems, a "mysterious announcement appeared at the bottom of the screen during the sports segment of a television newscast: 'Take Basotón.'" In keeping with the lack of reality, "the spelling was changed"□the medicine is really Vasotón□"to keep an uninformed laboratory from protesting the use of its product for mysterious purposes." Overall, however, the media fails to fulfill its supposed role of broadcasting truthful information, and this may stem from the fact that the media blitz about the kidnappings resembles entertainment rather than reportage. This inadequacy is perhaps nowhere so succinctly expressed as in a special correspondent's question to a sports editor upon learning that the last two hostages will be released: " 'What do you think of the news?'"

Of all the hostages, Pacho, the journalist, maintains the closest relationship to the media and follows current news sources. However, his ties to the media take on an uncanny aura. His family uses the editorial pages of *El Tiempo* to publish personal notes to communicate with him. Toward the end of his captivity, depressed at his failure to escape, Pacho determines to take his own life. The next day, he reads a newspaper editorial in *El Tiempo,* ordering Pacho "in the name of God not to even consider

suicide." Later, Hernando Santos tells his son that the editorial had actually been on his desk for three weeks, but "without really knowing why he had been unable to decide if he should publish it, and on the previous day□again without knowing why□he resolved at the last minute to use it." Ironically, the guard who had the job of bringing Pacho the newspaper each day had a "visceral hatred of journalists"; in a sense, his anger represents the abductors' failed attempts to isolate their hostage.

Escobar himself is the most potent symbol of the surrealism of Colombian society. One of Escobar's haciendas near Medellín is something of a private playground with a zoo populated by ' 'giraffes and hippos brought over from Africa." At its entrance, Escobar displays, "as if it were a small monument, the small plane used to export the first shipment of cocaine." More tellingly, however, is the way the Colombian citizenry reacts to the kingpins, particularly Escobar. As García Márquez writes, "Years earlier the drug traffickers had been popular because of their mythic aura.... If anyone had wanted them arrested, he could have told the policeman on the corner where to find them." In his hometown, Escobar is seen as a modern-day Robin Hood for his charitable works in the barrios. "At the height of his splendor, people put up altars with his pictures and lit candles to him in the slums of Medellín," García Márquez tells readers. "It was believed he could perform miracles." More privileged Colombians, such as the politicians, businesspeople, and journalists, are similarly taken in by the Escobar charisma and power. After meeting the drug kingpin, even Father García Herreros declares, "Escobar is a good man."

Further, the methods that Escobar, a "legend who controlled everything from the shadows," employs to throw the police off his tracks mirror the utter lack of reality and openness in Colombia; "He had employees who spent the day engaging in lunatic conversations on his telephones so that the people monitoring his lines would become entangled in mangrove forests of non sequiturs and not be able to distinguish them from the real messages." While García Márquez is simply reporting the facts, he also is making important narrative choices. By using words such as *lunatic* and *non sequiturs* and emphasizing that "real messages" are actually being conveyed, García Márquez heightens the ab-surdism inherent to Escobar and his society. Escobar delivers one such "real message" to Villamizar in person: "If any of you feels unsafe, if anybody tries to give you a hard time, you let me know and that'll be the end of it." In this world, the bizarre becomes commonplace, the absurd becomes real, and one of the deadliest men alive can also be a man of honor.

Toward the end of the book, Villamizar visits the Ochoa brothers in prison; their entire families are present and the wives "acted as hostesses with the exemplary hospitality of the Medellinese." Villamizar and the three brothers work together in order to devise a plan to get Escobar to agree to a meeting. This collaboration between the politician who prevented the extradition treaty from being blocked by law and three leaders of the Medellín cartel lends a final note to the surrealist atmosphere of Colombia in 1990.

Source: Rena Korb, Critical Essay on *News of a Kidnapping,* in *Nonfiction Classics for Students,* The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

Remy is a freelance writer who has written extensively on Latin American art and literature. In the following essay, he examines García Márquez's use of fictional narrative techniques.

Like *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* (1986), a piece of journalism that was later adapted into book form, *News of a Kidnapping* (1997) chronicles actual events that, at first glance, may read as fiction. The book examines a turbulent period in Colombia's history, one that presaged an even more violent time to come. According to García Márquez, he wrote this book so that the "gruesome drama" of the kidnappings would not "sink into oblivion." One of the reasons why *News of a Kidnapping* succeeds as both reportage and literature is García Márquez's use of fictional devices and techniques to reveal, in poignant and memorable detail, the lives of ten individuals held hostage.

In 1990, barely three weeks after César Gaviria took office as Colombia's president, a series of kidnappings occurred that directly challenged his authority and focused the attention of a nation already divided by civil war. The Extraditables, a group of narcotraffickers led by Pablo Escobar, head of the Medellín cartel, abducted various members of the media to guarantee that they would not, as their name indicates, be extradited to the United States, where an effective and unyielding judicial system awaited them. "We prefer a grave in Colombia to a cell in the United States," was their rallying cry. As García Márquez points out with irony, the only choice the drug traffickers had to save themselves was to place themselves in the custody of the state. Before Escobar and the Extraditables are willing to capitulate, however, they engage in "indiscriminate, merciless terrorism" to force the government's position.

To tell the story of such a campaign and the effect it had upon Colombian politics and society required a narrative framework that would accommodate many points of view. García Márquez describes how he solved this problem in the book's Acknowledgments. Upon realizing that the kidnappings "were not, in fact, ten distinct abductions□as it had seemed at first□but a collective abduction of ten carefully chosen individuals, which had been carried out by the same group and for only one purpose," he revised the book's structure. Had García Márquez written solely about the abduction of Maruja Pachón and the attempts of her husband, Alberto Villamizar, to negotiate her release, the narrative would have become, in the author's words, "confused and interminable." The book's narrative structure would have been insufficient for a story of such wide scope.

By narrating events from the perspectives of several characters, a technique he has used often in his fictional writings, García Márquez offers a panoramic view of the crisis and the people it involved. The author also imbues *News of a Kidnapping* with a sense of humanity that makes it easy for the reader to identify with the plight of the hostages. This narrative approach renders the ambiguity and the complexity of their ordeal with a degree of verisimilitude greater than mere journalism could afford.

García Márquez opens the book *in medias res* (in the middle of things) by describing the abduction of Maruja and her sister-in-law, Beatriz. This creates a sense of immediacy that serves to make the abduction more indelible in the reader's mind. Knowing that Maruja and Beatriz were the last of the journalists to be abducted, the reader begins to wonder about the eight previous kidnappings and how they were orchestrated. García Márquez sows the seeds of speculation in the reader's mind and thus brings into play an essential ingredient in the act of storytelling: the reader's imagination. Had he told the story of Maruja and Beatriz's abduction in the past tense, the event would not have been rendered as vividly and, consequently, the narration of the other eight kidnappings would not have unfolded with as profound a sense of anticipation on the part of the reader.

García Márquez then describes the abduction of Diana Turbay, the director of the television news program *Criptón,* and her film crew. The reader is now aware of how the first and last kidnappings occurred. There is a unifying thread to these abductions, and it is through the use of flashback that García Márquez is best able to reveal Escobar's motive. Furthermore, the use of flashback adds more depth to Maruja's story, which is told in present-time and serves as the central focus of the book. By narrating events out of chronological order, García Márquez establishes a dramatic tension within the book that fosters the reader's understanding of Colombian society and politics. Every abduction since the first, that of Diana Turbay and her crew, builds upon the one preceding it, intensifying the drama and suspense. Not until the reader comprehends the final kidnapping in the context of the previous ones can García Márquez begin to explore in depth the Extraditables' demands for amnesty.

Though *News of a Kidnapping* is written in an unadorned, journalistic style□the sentences tend to be declarative, and there is a marked absence of simile and metaphor otherwise found in García Márquez's novels and short stories□it is not without symbolic power. The author uses symbols sparingly but to great effect in recreating the hostages' experience of captivity. He also uses symbols to reveal traits that are essential for understanding character.

In describing the room in which the three women are held captive, García Márquez selects a few details to create an atmosphere of disorientation. Outside there is the sound of heavy automobile traffic. The women believe they are near a café, for they hear the sound of music very late at night. Occasionally, a loudspeaker announces religious meetings. They hear the sound of small planes landing and taking off, yet the women have no idea where they are. Marina Montoya, the older woman who shares a room with Maruja and Beatriz, espouses theories about what will happen next, arousing fear in her companions. Captivity has heightened the women's senses to the point where they have difficulty distinguishing between truth and fantasy. "At night the silence was total, interrupted only by a demented rooster with no sense of time who crowed whenever he felt like it," García Márquez informs the reader. The women's isolation is complete, for not even the laws of Nature can abide under these conditions.

As their period of captivity lengthens, the women cannot be sure if they are being held in the country or in the city. Once again, García Márquez introduces the rooster as a

symbol of disorientation. However, the rooster's crowing at all hours of the day and night also provides a clue about the women's location, "since roosters kept on high floors tend to lose their sense of time."

Another hostage, Francisco "Pacho" Santos, the editor-in-chief of *El Tiempo,* experiences a similar phenomenon.

A disorienting detail was the demented rooster that at first crowed at any hour, and as the months passed crowed at the same hour in different places: sometimes far away at three in the afternoon, other times next to his window at two in the morning.

The rooster is again described as "demented," thus emphasizing the absence of reason in a world riddled with doubt and fear, only now its crowing possesses a ubiquitous quality previously nonexistent. The rooster can be heard both near and far away. Pacho eventually compounds his despair by attempting to use the rooster's crowing to gauge his position in both time and space. "It would have been even more disorienting if he had known that Maruja and Beatriz also heard it in a distant section of the city," adds García Márquez.

Cock-crow, a symbol for the hour of judgment, is heard often and at various times throughout the day instead of only at dawn. The hostages speculate as to when they will be released□or, what is perhaps foremost in their thoughts: when they will be executed□and the symbolic crowing of a rooster emphasizes the uncertainty and anxiety they experience. The cock crows at random and, in light of Escobar's actions, the release or the deaths of the hostages seems equally as arbitrary. García Márquez sums up this experience by telling the reader that, prior to his release, Pacho spent a sleepless night tormented by the "mad rooster□madder and closer than ever□and not knowing for certain where reality lay.'

In addition to using symbol to create an atmosphere of disorientation among the hostages and to reflect their inner states of mind, García Márquez uses symbol to delineate specific character traits. Father García Herreros, a priest and the host of a television program entitled *God's Minute,* serves as an intermediary between Villamizar, who acts unofficially on behalf of the government, and Pablo Escobar so that negotiations for the release of the hostages may continue. His presence helps Escobar overcome his reluctance in dealing with Villamizar, and it also makes it easier for Escobar's men, many of whom are devoutly religious, to turn themselves in once an agreement has been reached.

Father Herreros is a man of many contrasts. García Márquez describes him as an ascetic who "ate little, though he liked good food and appreciated fine wines, but would not accept invitations to expensive restaurants for fear people would think he was paying." He is an honest, trustworthy man, if slightly misguided by his good intentions. García Márquez draws attention to the fact that Father Herreros wears contact lenses to improve his vision, and that he must have his assistant, Paulina, assist him with putting them in and taking them out, for he has never learned to do so himself.

Many obstacles must be overcome before the remaining hostages are set free, as Escobar's demands change constantly, but throughout the negotiations there is the fear on the part of Villamizar and others that Father Herreros, with his reputation for erratic behavior, will prove a liability and cause the negotiations to end abruptly. This fear proves unfounded, however, for he succeeds in meeting with Escobar and, together, the two men compose a document stating the conditions for the drug lord's surrender. As the priest prepares to leave Escobar's compound, complete with giraffes and hippos wandering about the grounds, one of his contacts falls out. He tries to put it back in but cannot. Escobar, ever the gracious host, offers to have Paulina brought to help him, but the priest refuses. Before he leaves the compound, Father Herreros, his lens not yet restored, says a blessing for Escobar's men.

García Márquez notes the priest's contact lenses in order to underscore his naïveté and lack of foresight in dealing with the narcotraffickers. At a press conference announcing the terms of Escobar's surrender, Father Herreros describes the drug lord as "the great architect of peace." He goes on to say that, despite circumstances, "Escobar is a good man." How could the priest have forgotten Escobar's violent past? Rather than condemn Father Herreros for his error in judgment, García Márquez focuses instead on Escobar: "No Colombian in history ever possessed or exercised a talent like his for shaping public opinion. And none had a greater power to corrupt.'

García Márquez's use of fictional narrative techniques in *News of a Kidnapping* affords him greater freedom to tell the story of "one episode in the biblical holocaust that has been consuming Colombia for more than twenty years." By telling the story from the perspectives of several kidnapvictims, García Márquez unifies their experience at the same time he offers the reader a broad panorama of the complex personalities and events that make this drama not only an engaging work of journalism but a landmark of literature as well.

Source: David Remy, Critical Essay on *News of a Kidnapping,* in *Nonfiction Classics for Students,* The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #3

Ozersky is a critic and essayist. In this essay, he discusses García Márquez's literary art, and how it is hidden beneath the surface of his novel.

García Márquez is one of the most famous writers in the world, but not for books like *News of a Kidnapping.* García Márquez, who received the Nobel Prize in 1983 and whose novels are read in nearly every language, is associated with a surreal style called "magical realism." *News of a Kidnapping,* on the other hand, seems to be journalism of the starkest kind. Ten people are kidnapped by soldiers of Pablo Escobar's drug cartel. They are prominent people drawn from the very upper crust of Colombian society. One is the daughter of a former President; another is a famous former soap-opera actress with high political family connections; others are prominent journalists. They are kept under armed guard for six months, and there is every reason to think they will be killed. Eventually, all are released and survive, except for two. García Márquez describes their ordeal, and that of their friends and families, in a book that joins Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song* and Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* on the short shelf of masterpieces that define crime journalism and the novelist's art.

But *News of a Kidnapping* is not merely a journalistic account of some kidnappings; it is a novel (of sorts), and one not as far removed from the author's trademark "magic realism" as it might seem. Because García Márquez was originally a journalist, and has spent much of his adult life in the journalistic world, he knows a lot about how news is written. As a result, *News of a Kidnapping* is written with a very level, factual-sounding tone that suggests the most orderly and observant kind of reporting. Even the title suggests journalism.

In fact, the book is written with an artfulness that conceals as much as it tells. For example, García Márquez tells us in his introduction that the book's genesis came in 1993, when "Maruja Pachon and her husband, Alberto Villamizar, suggested I write a book about her abduction and six-month captivity, and his persistent efforts to win her release." García Márquez tells us that he realized immediately that the story could not be told without also telling the story of the other nine people who were kidnapped simultaneously by Escobar's forces, for the purpose of persuading the government not to extradite them to the United States. Pachon and Villamizar, though, would be "the central axis, the unifying thread, of this book."

What do we learn from reading this introduction? Because García Márquez is so skilled a writer, it behooves a reader to pay close attention to what he or she is being told. The book is gripping, and it's easy to get lost in the story. But consider that first sentence of the introduction: "In October 1993, Maruja Pachon and her husband, Alberto Villamizar, suggested I write a book." There are several facts, just below the surface, that readers would do well to bear in mind as they read. (There will be others later; and other facts readers won't be told.)

One fact readers can gather if they look closely lie in the couple's names. While it is fairly common in America for wives to keep their names, it is far less so in a Roman Catholic country like Columbia. And in fact, nearly all of the major characters in *News of a Kidnapping* are elite professionals, members of a wealthy class at the very topmost level of Colombian society. Readers hear of the "ghetto boys" who guard the hostages, and war against the police, but hear very little else about them, such as why they are so willing to die for Escobar, or why the police kill them indiscriminately in the Medellín ghettos.

This is not to say that *News of a Kidnapping* is somehow flawed because it is not a sociological treatise on all levels of Colombian society. On the contrary, as an artist, García Márquez isn't obliged to tell us anything he does not think will further his purposes. But insofar as *News of a Kidnapping* presents itself as more-or-less transparent journalism, readers are obliged to think about what they aren't reading. Beyond his choice of subjects, García Márquez displays supreme literary craftsmanship in his mastery of time and space. Many of his greatest novels, including his masterpiece *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* follow many characters over long periods of time. *News of a Kidnapping* would seem to be an exception, but actually the cross-cutting, multiple perspectives, and meticulous editing would do great credit to movie directors Stephen Spielberg or Martin Scorsese. Readers hardly notice at times as they move from one hostage cell to another, and thence to the office of President Gaviria, and from there to the shadowy settings in which Pablo Escobar moves.

García Márquez also has the novelist's gift for finding the perfect detail, and weaving it into his story. Marina Montoya, the former actress, even under the severest physical and psychological distress, takes care to keep her nails trimmed and painted. It's a poignant and revealing detail, and it makes this woman more real to us, rather than just a "damsel in distress" or faceless victim. When Marina is summoned to what she knows is her imminent murder, she takes special care to make up her face and do her nails. When her body is found, it is unrecognizable at first, because her killers have shot her through the face; but she is eventually identified by her beautiful nails. This is a heartrending detail, and it simultaneously gives readers an emotional purchase on Marina's death, as well as giving the story the ring of truth. And it is easy to overlook the groundwork that García Márquez has done earlier in the book, preparing us for this moment with his numerous references to Marina and her manicures. As García Márquez told a journalism seminar in 1996, "one must keep the reader hypnotized by tending to every detail, every word.... It is a continuous act where you poison the reader with credibility and with rhythm."

As a result of this kind of literary art, readers feel that by the time they are done reading the book they have gained a deep and varied understanding of the complexion of Colombia. They have been high and low, inside the minds of men and women, young people and old, and felt the tension of so many different desperate interests clashing over the fates of the hostages. The upshot is that readers walk away from *News of a Kidnapping* feeling that what they have read represents not just the truth about Colombia, but beyond that some kind of universal human truth. The author, after all, is a

great novelist, and has done his level best not to present the kidnappings as a melodrama. The book is dedicated to "all Colombians, guilty and innocent.'

It is here where readers would do well to bear in mind the technique of magic realism. With magic realism, supernatural events are thought of as normal□the appearance of an angel, say, or a man levitating off the ground□and treated in precisely the same detailed, matter-of-fact tone that is used in *News of a Kidnapping.* Magic realism isn't effective because amazing things happen; it's effective because those things are woven seamlessly into the texture of everyday life. When people read of two defenseless women being abducted, or of armed captors having a party for their hostages, and even becoming close to them, in one way it seems unimaginable, surreal; but García Márquez never lets any event become *too*amazing.

One side effect of this style, however, is a certain flattening. Because everything is described in such a concrete, detailed, and prosaic way, we tend to lose sight of everything beyond the frame of what readers are being shown and told. García Márquez means for this to happen; but that doesn't necessarily mean that readers need to be unaware of it. *News of a Kidnapping* is a masterpiece; but a masterpiece closer to fiction than to reportage.

Source: Josh Ozersky, Critical Essay on *News of a Kidnapping,* in *Nonfiction Classics for Students,* The Gale Group, 2002.

Topics for Further Study

Many reviewers have said that *News of a Kidnapping* is a piece of nonfiction that reads like a novel. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Find out about the current situation in Colombia. What is the status of the drug trade and what is its relationship to the United States?

García Márquez, as well as his reviewers, have pointed out economic benefits that the Colombian drug trade brought to the country. Find out more about these economic effects as well as the drug trade's effects on society in general. Analyze the cost benefit of the drug trade for Colombia.

In the 1980s, both Colombia and the United States declared a War on Drugs. Find out about the American "war" and compare the two.

García Márquez has played a significant role in the politics and policy of his country. Learn more about the author's sociopolitical activities, particularly those he is currently undertaking.

Imagine that you were writing a novelization of *News of a Kidnapping.* How would it differ from García Márquez's work? Which characters and events would you focus on? How would you introduce Colombia's history of drug trafficking? Write an outline of the novel.

Find out more about the extradition treaties that Colombia and the United States have signed in the past. How did most Colombians react to these treaties and why? How did most Americans react to them and why?

What Do I Read Next?

García Márquez's novella *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1981), originally begun as a piece of journalism, is based on a historical incident in which a group of brothers vow to murder the man who ruined their sister's honor. García Márquez won the Nobel Prize for Literature for this work.

Max Mermelstein married a Colombian and soon found himself enmeshed in the world's most powerful drug cartels. In *Inside the Cocaine Cartel: The Riveting Eyewitness Account of Life inside the Colombian Cartel* (1993), Mermelstein, a star witness against Pablo Escobar, recounts his involvement with the cocaine traffickers, including his eventual betrayal of them.

The Art of Fact: A Historical Anthology of Literary Journalism (1998), edited by Kevin Kerrane and Ben Yagoda, collects some sixty selections of literary journalism written by authors from different countries and in different time periods.

The Heart That Bleeds: Latin America Now (1995) is a collection of Alma Guillermoprieto's essays that originally appeared in *The New Yorker.* Her essays explore Latin America in the early 1990s, including the effects of the Medellín and Cali cartels on Colombia's economy and political culture.

García Márquez won international celebrity in 1967 with publication of *One Hundred Years of Solitude.* This novel, steeped in the magical realism tradition, is an epic tale of the Buendía family as well as the turbulence that characterizes Latin America, from the postcolonial 1820s to the 1920s.

Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915) tells the story of Gregor Samsa, who one day awakens to discover that he has turned into a gigantic insect. García Márquez claims this novel as one of his literary inspirations.

Further Study

Anderson, Jon Lee, "The Power of Gabriel García Márquez," in *New Yorker,* September 27, 1999.

This profile of García Márquez discusses the author's role in helping bring peace to Colombia.

Bergquist, Charles, Ricardo Peñaranda, and Gonzalo Sánchez, eds., *Violence in Colombia 1990-2000: Waging War and Negotiating Peace,* Scholarly Resources, 1992.

This book presents some of the best recent work by Colombian scholars on the continuing crisis of violence that has been plaguing the nation for the past decade. This collection also includes primary documents and testimony from such crucial eyewitnesses as government members, guerrillas, kidnap victims, and human rights lawyers.

Bowden, Mark, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw,* Atlantic Monthly Press, 2001.

Bowden chronicles the rise and fall of the world's first narcobillionaire, tracing the prevalence of violence in Colombian history, the manhunt for Escobar, and the role that the United States played in bringing down the drug kingpin.

Bushnell, David, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself,* University of California Press, 1993. In the first history of Colombia written in English, Bushnell traces the process of Colombia from its struggle for independence through the 1990s.

Leonard, John, "'News of a Kidnapping,'" in *Nation,* Vol. 264, No. 23, June 16, 1997, p. 23.

This book review provides a good overview of the issues that García Márquez's book raises.

Solanet, Mariana, *García Márquez for Beginners,* Writers & Readers, 1999.

Solanet introduces readers to the life and work of this acclaimed author.

Bibliography

Bemrose, John, Review, in *Maclean's,* Vol. 110, No. 35, September 1, 1997, p. 56.

Cato, Susana, "Mirroring Colombia's Drug Terror," in *World Press Review,* Vol. 43, No. 8, August 1996, p. 44.

Kakutani, Michiko, "Fantastic Voyage," in *Houston Chronicle,* June 26, 1997.

Lorenzo, Olga, Review, in *Quadrant,* Vol. 41, No. 11, November 1997, p. 82.

Page, Joseph A., Review, in *Commonweal,* Vol. 124, No. 16, September 26, 1997, p. 20.

Sheppard, R. Z., Review, in *Time,* Vol. 149, No. 22, June 2, 1997, p. 77.

Smothers, Bonnie, Review, in *Booklist,* Vol. 93, No. 17, May 1, 1997, p. 1458.

Stone, Robert, "The Autumn of the Drug Lord," in *New York Times Book Review,* June 15, 1997.

BOOKRAGS

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Nonfiction Classics for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Nonfiction Classics for Students (NCfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NCfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on

□classic□ novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NCfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NCfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NCfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NCfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NCfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Nonfiction Classics for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NCfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NCfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Nonfiction Classics for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Nonfiction Classics for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NCfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Nonfiction Classics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NCfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Nonfiction Classics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NCfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Nonfiction Classics for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NCfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Nonfiction Classics for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Nonfiction Classics for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535