

A Separate Reality: Further Conversations with Don Juan Study Guide

**A Separate Reality: Further Conversations with Don
Juan by Carlos Castaneda**

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Plot Summary

Carlos Castaneda (December 25, 1925 - April 27, 1998) recounts how he had met don Juan in 1961, ten years before the writing of this book. Don Juan is a Yaqui Native American from northwestern Mexico who is also a shaman or sorcerer, as Castaneda describes him, and also a very old man who is in excellent physical shape.

On April 2, 1968, Castaneda visits don Juan in central Mexico. Castaneda presents his first book to don Juan, telling him that he is the subject. The book draws a bit of curiosity but not much. The two wait on a park bench for one of don Juan's friends, and during this time Castaneda tells a story about poor street children who had offered to shine shoes and had eaten leftover food at a restaurant with outside tables. The author expresses sorrow for the street children, but don Juan objects. He maintains that Castaneda cannot possibly know if one life is better than another because the author has yet to learn how to properly see the world as a sorcerer, or man of knowledge.

Don Juan instructs Castaneda that when one sees like a sorcerer, people appear to be luminous eggs. He brings the author to a mitote—a meeting in which people ingest peyote—and reassures Castaneda that he should not fear the peyote. Castaneda does not in fact fear the experience but is reluctant to give up what he considers clarity, or his usual perception of the world.

During an earlier visit to Mexico, Castaneda visits Vicente, a friend of don Juan's, and Vicente gives the author herbs to plant in the desert. This leads to a dangerous encounter with the allies of Vicente, but Castaneda escapes by driving away quickly. Don Juan tells the author, after Castaneda relates the story to him, how dangerous such an encounter is when one is not prepared. The next logical thing to do is to prepare to meet an ally, which becomes Juan's next effort with his apprentice, Castaneda.

On the way to the mitote, don Juan talks about death and how it always approaches a person in life. At the mitote, even though don Juan does not insist that Castaneda ingest peyote, the peyote spirit known as Mescalito hovers over Castaneda during the ceremony, but he only perceives this event as a buzzing in his ears and a pink light that casts upon the faces of the mitote participants. Don Juan later explains the visitation and how gently

Mescalito treats Castaneda. In a later mitote, Castaneda witnesses Mescalito taking over a young man named Eligio and teaching him his peyote song. The author is now ready for the next phase of learning to see like a sorcerer.

Don Juan insists that Castaneda smoke psychoactive mushrooms for the next phase. Before smoking, the author witnesses another sorcerer named Genaro doing impossible acrobatics at a waterfall. Don Juan explains that Genaro uses his luminous filaments that emanate from his navel region. These filaments are highly developed into long tentacles, and with these Genaro jumps from rock to rock and maintains his balance.

Upon first smoking the mushrooms, Castaneda encounters the guardian, a being that appears to the author as a monster. Since Castaneda fails to overcome the guardian, don Juan tries another approach. He tells Castaneda that the author must live like a warrior, which involves the development of will and patience. By will the sorcerer means to always be in control of situations, and by patience he means knowing when and when to not take action.

The next smoking experience reveals to Castaneda don Juan's face as being made of luminous filaments. Don Juan then takes Castaneda to meet a water spirit, which goes well enough. This opens the way to Castaneda's seeing of water with the oversight of don Juan. The sorcerer uses his spirit catcher—a string with which he produces sounds of varying pitch—in order to help the process along. Castaneda sees the water in the way of a sorcerer and actually travels along a stream, but don Juan has to pull him away. The water nearly traps Castaneda forever.

After urging Castaneda to live more like a warrior, don Juan attempts to introduce him to his ally through smoking the mushrooms. Castaneda sees the ally but must look away quickly. The author is not ready yet to control the power of the ally, and the ally has the potential of killing Castaneda.

The author does see the ally again and learns something about where he will find his power. He spends a night alone with the ally, which is very frightening. Don Juan and Genaro demonstrate some of their powers to the author before Castaneda leaves for Los Angeles, where he compiles his field notes into the book.

Introduction

Introduction Summary and Analysis

Carlos Castaneda (December 25, 1925 - April 27, 1998) recounts how he had met don Juan in 1961, ten years before the writing of this book. Don Juan is a Yaqui Native American from northwestern Mexico who is also a shaman or sorcerer, as Castaneda describes him, and also a very old man who is in excellent physical shape.

Don Juan begins to teach Castaneda how to see reality from a very different perspective through the use of psychoactive drugs, specifically peyote, jimson weed, and psilocybin mushrooms. Castaneda stops his apprenticeship with don Juan after a frightening experience that makes the apprentice think that he is losing his contact with reality. After writing a book about this time, Castaneda presents don Juan with an early copy before release and thereby reestablishes his connection with the sorcerer. "'The reason you got scared and quit is because you felt too damn important,' he said, explaining my previous withdrawal. 'Feeling important makes one heavy, clumsy, and vain. To be a man of knowledge one needs to be light and fluid'" (pp. 7-8).

Thus begins the next set of learning sessions with don Juan. During the first set, Castaneda learns to enter an unusual reality through the use of drugs. During this set of lessons he is to learn how to see in the way of a sorcerer; that is, beyond the surface appearance of things and deeply into their essence. To accelerate the process, don Juan has Castaneda smoke a mixture of dried psilocybin mushrooms and other herbs regularly.

Don Juan tells Castaneda that seeing is just one way to be a man of knowledge. Another sorcerer named Sacateca dances to gain predilections, or the true understanding of things. Castaneda goes to visit Sacateca with the intention of conducting an anthropological field interview, during which time the man of knowledge does his dance. The dance consists of crossing the feet, tapping a foot, holding out a hand and somehow stopping Castaneda's mind from working. Don Juan later tells Castaneda that Sacateca had decided that he did not like all the questions and shut up Castaneda through the dance. The dance had been Sacateca's way of exercising his will over Castaneda.

The author claims that he writes this second book to explain the world that don Juan reveals to him in terms that others can understand. "Obviously that event or any event that occurred within this alien system of sensible interpretation could be explained or understood only in terms of the units of meaning proper to that system. This work is, therefore, a reportage and should be read as a reportage. The system I recorded was incomprehensible to me, thus the pretense to anything other than reporting about it would be misleading and impertinent. In this respect I have adopted the phenomenological method and have striven to deal with sorcery solely as phenomena

that were presented to me. I, as the perceiver, recorded what I perceived, and at the moment of recording I endeavored to suspend judgment" (p. 15).

Serious questions have arisen in the academic community about the objective worth of Castaneda's books about don Juan. Some have accused him of contriving everything and inventing the character of don Juan. However, this book is considered nonfiction and as Castaneda admits himself, is quite subjective in its approach to experience. The author does not observe the sorcerer, the man of knowledge, but strives to become one himself. If not fiction, then this book is surely subjective memoir, and if the author is to be trusted, a memoir that has been condensed from anthropological field notes.

Castaneda does use literary techniques common to fiction in this book. His first book ends in a cliff-hanging manner, and this, his second book, begins with a brief summary of the first. Either by design or by accident, Castaneda presents the story of don Juan as if fiction, and it is up to the reader to determine both the validity and value of the story.

Part 1: Chapter 1 - 2

Part 1: Chapter 1 - 2 Summary and Analysis

On April 2, 1968, Castaneda visits don Juan in central Mexico. Castaneda presents his first book to don Juan, telling him that he is the subject. The book draws a bit of curiosity but not much. The two wait on a park bench for one of don Juan's friends, and during this time Castaneda tells a story about poor street children who had offered to shine shoes and had eaten leftover food at a restaurant with outside tables. The author expresses sorrow for the street children, but don Juan objects. He maintains that Castaneda cannot possibly know if one life is better than another because the author has yet to learn how to properly see the world as a sorcerer, or man of knowledge.

Don Juan goes on and explains to the arguing Castaneda that what people look like to a sorcerer is very different from what they appear to be on the surface. People look like luminous eggs, according to don Juan, once a person learns to really see them. The luminous egg consists of many fibers, and people maintain contact with the world through these fibers. The sorcerer's primary idea is that from this perspective, Castaneda is neither better nor worse off than the street children. The author only thinks he is better off because he has money.

Castaneda visits don Juan out of curiosity regarding the peyote meetings in which the author had participated while researching his first book. He is convinced that during these meetings the people who were ingesting peyote buttons had used some kind of subtle communication method. Castaneda wants to discover how this communication method works.

Furthering the mystery around the special way that sorcerers see the world, don Juan comments that Castaneda has not yet learned how to use the darkness of night. The author feels more comfortable in the dark after learning to accept it more from don Juan's instructions, but he still cannot see as a sorcerer. Therefore, Castaneda cannot use the night to its full potential.

Castaneda attempts to explain his theory of how people communicate in a peyote meeting, called a mitote. Don Juan listens during the lengthy explanation, thinks a little about it, and bursts out laughing. He tells the author that he is crazy to think that anyone would concern themselves with this silliness when Mescalito, a kind of spiritual force or being, visits and instructs people who are under the effects of peyote. The sorcerer maintains that the participants agree because they see the same things happening. Since Castaneda cannot see these things as yet, he creates an elaborate explanation that is obviously wrong to those who can see. This is what don Juan finds so funny.

The conversation moves into Castaneda's fear of taking peyote again. Don Juan does not think that it is fear so much as reluctance to move back onto the path of learning how to be a sorcerer. That path is difficult and can be deadly if not handled correctly,



and don Juan does not hold it against anyone who refuses to go that way. Only a crazy person would take it on voluntarily. Some outside force needs to trick people onto the path, and in Castaneda's case, the trickster had been don Juan. He assures the author that should he want to see like a sorcerer, the situations will be different and so will the tricksters.

Castaneda tell don Juan about meeting his friend, Vicente, during another trip to Mexico. Don Juan had recommended that the author visit. Vicente gives Castaneda a sack of plants and instructions on how to plant them. The author is to take the plants far out into the countryside, find a secluded place and plant one of them. Castaneda does this as instructed, and to his surprise he comes across three people near his parked car. He had been certain that nobody was around before he did the planting.

The three people, a young man and what appears to be an older couple, want a ride in the car. Castaneda refuses, and feeling threatened by the people, drives away quickly. Don Juan scolds the author for having missed a great lesson that Vicente, an accomplished sorcerer, had provided. The people had not been people at all, but something called "allies". An ally is not a ghost or spirit, although the dictionary definition of "spirit" comes the closest. An ally can take many different forms, and for Castaneda's missed lesson, they happened to have appeared as people. However, if the author could have seen like a sorcerer, he would have been able to detect immediately that the allies were not people. They do not have luminous threads that look like an egg.

Don Juan emphasizes the danger that Castaneda had been in. The author is at great risk of stumbling into trouble because other sorcerers can see his threads, and by their appearance, Vicente had erroneously assumed that Castaneda can see in the special way. This led to the assumption that the author can handle powerful lessons, which he cannot because he cannot really see anything. Castaneda had been lucky to have escaped with his life.

Allies can do nasty things to a person during lessons, even if the sorcerer can see. They can shape-shift into any number of forms—animals, birds, plants, and people. Don Juan tells of his teacher having been severely burned from an ally. One of Don Juan's allies had pushed him into a fire, but his burns were not as serious. He and the ally eventually became as one.

Vicente had tried to share his allies with Castaneda, don Juan speculates. Because Castaneda has no idea of what was really happening, he had lost the chance to increase his power tremendously, and that chance can never be regained.

This part of the narrative sets up the reason why don Juan needs to teach Castaneda to see as a sorcerer. Without this skill, the author continually risks his life unwittingly. He also goes through the world in a manner that invites the risk—Castaneda is too curious for his own good. He is like a child playing with matches who cannot see the flames; therefore, he cannot learn that fire burns and can be deadly. He also cannot learn how to control the fire and use it to his advantage. Castaneda is a threat to himself and

everyone around him due to this ignorance. Don Juan must rectify the situation before someone, including himself, is hurt or killed.

Part 1: Chapter 3 - 4

Part 1: Chapter 3 - 4 Summary and Analysis

On June 10 Castaneda and don Juan prepare to attend a mitote. Castaneda expresses his fear of taking peyote again, which don Juan dismisses because it all has to do with seeing in the right way, not discovering some subtle and nonexistent communication scheme. The author thinks the sorcerer is simply being evasive.

Along the way they stop to eat at a town named Los Vidrios, which is Spanish for glass. Castaneda thinks the name comes from the surrounding mountains that are made of largely volcanic glass, but don Juan says the name comes from a hill of broken window glass that had resulted from a truck accident. The sorcerer then explains that Castaneda is in Mexico because he wants to be there, and a warrior would never have any fear about what is about to happen. Don Juan advises Castaneda to think about his death if he ever feels doubt. Castaneda does not understand. He usually avoids thinking about his death.

That night while driving toward their destination, Castaneda sees headlamps in his rear view mirror. The lights seem to be gaining on him steadily, so he accelerates. The lights keep getting closer. Don Juan says that death is following them, and it always keeps getting closer no matter how fast one drives. Castaneda sees that the headlamps are gone and assumes the vehicle has stopped or turned off the road. Don Juan says that sometimes death turns out the lights but is always there, getting closer.

Three days after their departure, they arrive at their destination in northeastern Mexico. They take a ride to a shack on an old flatbed truck with a group of Native Americans. From there they walk along a dirt road by the light of a kerosene lamp to the site of the mitote. Castaneda's duty is to provide water for the participants.

Men place themselves near a fire and one produces a basket of peyote buttons. Each man sings his peyote song and chews on two buttons at a time, then passes the basket to the next man in a counter-clockwise motion. The cycle repeats several times during the night. Castaneda looks closely for any sign of communication among the men but detects nothing. All he does is provide the water until morning, at which time the mitote participants walk off in different directions. They come back at noon and eat dried meat. This ritual repeats for three nights.

On the forth night Castaneda experiences something different. He hears a buzzing in his ears and detects a pink glow. He starts to remember something about his mother, which he feels is distracting him from his observations of the mitote. The memory seems to take over Castaneda's mind, a disturbing feeling for him. Then suddenly he is back to normal. The buzzing and light are gone.



Don Juan looks at Castaneda steadily, which disturbs the author. He closes his eyes only to see the vision of his mother again. The author becomes more agitated with this unwelcome vision until he finally realizes that he had never liked his mother. Her love had been a crushing burden for him. The vision goes away like the buzzing and light.

Relating this story to don Juan later, Castaneda learns that the peyote spirit Mescalito had hovered over him during the ceremony. Everyone at the ceremony had seen this. Don Juan says that this is an important omen for Castaneda, and that the gentle treatment that Mescalito gave the author is a very rare thing.

Castaneda goes to visit don Juan on September 4. Along the way he buys four bottles of tequila made in the mountains of Chihuahua, which don Juan has requested. Upon reaching the sorcerer, Castaneda learns that the tequila is for Lucio, don Juan's grandson. They deliver the tequila to Lucio, and that evening people gather for a party at Lucio's house.

During the party don Juan announces that he is teaching Castaneda about Mescalito. The other men think this is old fashioned and a stupid thing to do. One named Genaro says that peyote makes people sick and crazy. Don Juan argues that the sickness is often just part of the experience but that nobody goes crazy who is not already crazy. He uses himself as an example of the good things that can come from learning about Mescalito. Mescalito teaches men the right way to live, according to don Juan. Mescalito also protects those who come to know the peyote spirit. As the group becomes more drunk on the tequila, don Juan points out that alcohol is really what makes people crazy.

Castaneda admits to having ingested peyote. Another man named Eligio also says that he had taken peyote and shows great interest in Castaneda's experience. The story confirms the attitude of the others that peyote makes people insane, but the presence of don Juan, who is undeniably sane, refutes their allegation.

A few days later Castaneda goes hunting with Lucio, Eligio, and another man who had been at the party, Benigno. Lucio says that he would like to try peyote. Benigno claims to have tried peyote, but he hated the taste of it and the cactus button had torn up his mouth. Lucio offers to take peyote if Castaneda buys him a motorcycle. They shoot three rabbits and go to Lucio's house, where his wife prepares rabbit stew. Don Juan comes by, and Eligio asks how peyote can change his life. The sorcerer sings a song in the Yaqui language. Castaneda asks for the translation, but don Juan tells him that the song is only for the Yaqui.

On the 15th, don Juan brings peyote for Eligio to Lucio's house. Castaneda watches as the young man takes the peyote under the sorcerer's supervision. Eligio goes through several body gyrations while don Juan chants, and finishes with a big leap. He then appears to be flying in his imagination and approaches Castaneda. Eligio begins singing a repetitive song. After the song he lies down and is very rigid. Don Juan covers Eligio while he sleeps.

The sorcerer explains that Eligio had received his peyote song from Mescalito, which was a successful step in becoming a man of knowledge. Lucio had announced during the ceremony that he would take peyote for a motorcycle. Don Juan says that had he permitted this, Mescalito would have killed Lucio due to taking the wrong approach. He also brings up the idea of a sorcerer's controlled folly: "'It's possible to insist, to properly insist, even though we know that what we're doing is useless,' he said, smiling. 'But we must know first that our acts are useless and yet we must proceed as if we didn't know it. That's a sorcerer's controlled folly'" (p. 77).

Part 1: Chapter 5 - 6

Part 1: Chapter 5 - 6 Summary and Analysis

In early October Castaneda visits don Juan with a list of questions regarding what happened the night that Eligio met Mescalito and learned his peyote song. The author's first question is whether he had seen that night as a sorcerer. Don Juan answers that he had to some degree. Castaneda had seen Eligio move about in striking ways, but had the author seen only a man sitting still, he would have not been seeing as a sorcerer. Don Juan points out that Mescalito had been kind to Castaneda to allow him to see almost the whole lesson, yet Castaneda continues to turn his back on the generosity of Mescalito.

The next question has to do with a sorcerer's controlled folly. Don Juan explains that he chooses to act, but it is still an act of an actor. He has control over his actions, but one action has no more importance than another. Castaneda laughs with don Juan over this absurdity, although the author still does not fully understand what the sorcerer means.

Continuing along this line, Castaneda asks whether anything or anybody means anything to don Juan. The sorcerer answers that nobody and nothing mean anything any longer to him, which hurts the author's feelings. When Castaneda expresses this to don Juan, the sorcerer says that although people might mean something to the author, they do not mean anything to the sorcerer. However, he keeps on living through his will, and if he seems to care about someone or something, it is through his will to perform his controlled folly. Don Juan then tells Castaneda that the author only thinks that life is important because he has learned to think that way. Once one sees like a sorcerer, that thinking becomes meaningless.

Still confused, Castaneda presses the issue later on in the day. He wants to bring his thoughts in line with don Juan's meaning, but this is simply impossible. If seeing like a sorcerer means not thinking about things any longer, and thereby they lose importance—including one's own life—then trying to think about the situation is a futile attempt at understanding something that can only be experienced.

The author explores the implications of don Juan's seeing like a sorcerer. He asks that if all things are the same, then nothing has any worth. Don Juan answers that he had not said that everything was worthless, just unimportant. Nothing has more importance than anything else, therefore everything is equal. Unsaid at this point but brought out later, is the true implication that everything is of equal value and that value is immense for everything when a person sees like a sorcerer. Don Juan lives a life in which all his cups are not only full but brimming over with fullness. He uses his regular sight to see the funny edges in the world, but when something like the death of his son brings in sadness, he sees as a sorcerer that the death has no more or less value than anything else. Don Juan dislikes feeling sad, and in this way he avoids the mourning process.



The obvious next question is whether don Juan is avoiding bad feelings through his sorcerer's seeing and his sorcerer's controlled folly philosophy. Castaneda puts this across by asking whether the sorcerer considers laughing superior to crying. Don Juan replies that his choice is laughter over tears because laughing makes his body feel better. It is his simple choice of action in his controlled folly. Neither action is superior nor inferior to the other. Nevertheless, Castaneda points out the logical problem that if don Juan has a preference, then he perceives a superiority. If all things are equal, why not chose death over life?

The answer from don Juan is that some sorcerers make this conscious choice to die because they know that it makes no difference. He goes on to explain that when one sees as a sorcerer, the states of life and death are equal. Nobody is going anywhere. That don Juan choses to live is his act of will, and his controlled folly involves humor along with interacting with other human beings such as Castaneda. This in turn results from don Juan's nature. Part of the act in his controlled folly is to act as if he cared. The basic idea is that don Juan wants to act ethically and laugh, but he is under no obligation to do so. Because he can see as a sorcerer, he understands that he has complete freedom of choice through his will to make his life whatever he wants it to be, even though one choice is not superior to another, and none of the choices makes any difference.

Upset with the idea that don Juan does not really care about him, Castaneda confronts the sorcerer with his anxieties. The author has trusted don Juan with his life several times. To bring the point home, Castaneda tells a story about a man who lives a political life but dies in defeat. Don Juan simply says that defeat and victory are the same. The man had died lonely and defeated because that is what he thought. Thinking has nothing to do with seeing as a sorcerer, and upon seeing in this way it becomes obvious and unimportant that defeat and victory are equal, and both are fulfilling to a man of knowledge.

Don Juan points out that Castaneda is too concerned with people liking him. A sorcerer choses to like or dislike people, or remain neutral. It is the conscious act of a strong person. The message hits Castaneda hard, and seeing his emotional upset, don Juan gives him a kind gesture while they eat soup together.

Later on Castaneda asks whether the only parts of a sorcerer's life that are not controlled folly involve the sorcerer's ally and Mescalito. Don Juan affirms this because he can see people as a sorcerer but he cannot see through the ally or Mescalito. They are incomprehensible to him. Don Juan does understand that Mescalito cares about the author due to treating him so gently, whereas everyone else has received very rough handling from the peyote spirit.

Don Juan and the author go to visit Genaro, another sorcerer. They all go out to pick herbs, after which don Juan tells Castaneda that he must talk to the plants before picking them. Castaneda admits to knowing this from a previous lesson, but also that he feels foolish talking to plants. Don Juan says that one must talk to the plants in order to see them in the sorcerer's way, which in turn gives the sorcerer power.

While the author takes notes, Genaro does a trick of standing on his head without the benefit of using his hands for balance. He then mocks Castaneda about writing so much. The author later understands this mocking as Genaro's attempt to show how useless writing is when someone is trying to learn how to see as a sorcerer.

They go with two other young men to watch Genaro perform acrobatics over a waterfall. Castaneda watches as the man climbs to the top of the falls, sometimes appearing to slip. Genaro leaps from rock to rock, does somersaults, and stands on very small surfaces. He ends his performance by somersaulting to a rock at the side of the falls, then drops out of sight.

Everybody leaves. Castaneda is concerned about the safety of Genaro, but don Juan dismisses the concern. The sorcerer then explains how Genaro had accomplished the seemingly impossible stunts through the use of his major luminous threads which emanate from the navel of every human being. Genaro's threads are highly developed and strong. He did not leap but instead wrapped some his threads around his target and used others to keep balance. His action then was to simply follow his threads to the target. Castaneda could not see all this because he cannot see as a sorcerer. Everybody else had witnessed what don Juan describes.

Castaneda is now primed to see as a sorcerer. He understands that this is no joking matter and has an idea of how his habit of thinking too much and writing during the process interferes with the task of seeing. The philosophy behind the whole sorcery process is clearer, but he still has to experience the seeing before fully understanding it. He has witnessed the seemingly impossible leaps and somersaults that Genaro performed, and now he knows something about the secret behind the magic. It is not magic at all. For those who can see as a sorcerer, Genaro was simply exercising his tentacle-like threads. The real show was of thread strength and control over the threads, not what people usually think of as balance and athletics.

Part 2: Chapter 7 - 8

Part 2: Chapter 7 - 8 Summary and Analysis

When Castaneda next visits, don Juan tells him that he must smoke the hallucinogenic mushrooms to gain the next level of seeing like a sorcerer, even though the author almost saw in this way when Genaro performed at the waterfall. The smoke will allow Castaneda to perform quickly enough, don Juan says, and this accelerated state will spare much wear and tear on the physical body. Reluctant at first, Castaneda agrees to smoke. Just before doing so, he asks if this situation will be dangerous. Don Juan replies that everything is dangerous.

With the guidance of don Juan, Castaneda smokes and sees the guardian of another world. To the author the guardian appears as a large ugly monster with wings that moves around in circles, goes far away, and then returns to strike Castaneda, which causes great pain. Don Juan takes the author to an irrigation ditch and washes him in the water, after which Castaneda can sleep.

Don Juan explains later that seeing the guardian is no special accomplishment. Overcoming the guardian is the point and a necessary step toward seeing as a sorcerer. Castaneda wants more details. Don Juan provides as much explanation as he can. The guardian is really just a gnat but appears to be a monster while under the influence of the smoke. Castaneda tries to overcome the guardian after smoking a second time. He fails this but does succeed in taking himself away before the guardian can strike again.

On this second meeting the guardian shows Castaneda a color that repulses him. Don Juan interprets this as a warning not to attempt to overcome the guardian. Whatever world the guardian protects is not right for Castaneda's temperament.

Part 2: Chapter 9 - 10

Part 2: Chapter 9 - 10 Summary and Analysis

Three months later Castaneda asks don Juan why he no longer talks about seeing, and don Juan answers that the author needs to wait and develop strength. Castaneda needs to live like a warrior. Don Juan goes on to say that thoughts keep directing Castaneda's actions, and that this is the wrong way to go about gaining power. Additionally, and perhaps key to the lack of progress, is that Castaneda had once made a promise that holds him back.

They talk about their childhoods. Castaneda's had been difficult but not nearly as hard as don Juan's. The Mexicans had killed his mother, wounded his father, and put him and his father into a railroad car. Don Juan's father had died in the car. This leads to Castaneda's memory of injuring a boy younger than himself while they were still in grade school. Castaneda had then made a promise never to be victorious again. Don Juan suggests that the author not try to force away the promise, but just wait for it to dissipate now that Castaneda understands the problem. The sorcerer also reveals a promise that he had once made: "I promised my father that I would live to destroy his assassins. I carried that promise with me for years. Now the promise is changed. I'm no longer interested in destroying anybody. I don't hate the Mexicans. I don't hate anyone. I have learned that the countless paths one traverses in one's life are all equal. Oppressors and oppressed meet at the end, and the only thing that prevails is that life was altogether too short for both. Today I feel sad not because my mother and father died the way they did; I feel sad because they were Indians. They lived like Indians and died like Indians and never knew that they were, before anything else, men" (p. 143).

On a subsequent visit don Juan urges Castaneda to live more like a warrior. Castaneda asks how this can be done and the answer is that he needs to work on his will and patience. The author needs to wait for his will, and upon further questioning he learns that this has nothing to do with self-denial. The will that don Juan refers to is the ability to control and tune power.

Castaneda has a major problem that he needs to control. According to don Juan, Castaneda leaves a gap open in his luminous egg located at his navel, which makes the author vulnerable to all kinds of attacks. Something must be done because once Castaneda has chosen the path to see like a sorcerer, there is no turning back, and the path involves danger at every turn.

A part of the sorcerer's defense is to be very aware of his own death. Another is to have no desires, but not to live in poverty as a hermit. Having things and acquiring things is fine, but the sorcerer does not care one way or another about material things. Awareness of death leads to the detachment from things, which leaves being the master of the choices the sorcerer makes in life. The decisions must be strategically

correct at all times. When someone can do this, don Juan considers the person to be a warrior.

Developing the will takes patience. Will comes to a warrior. It cannot be forced. Don Juan tells of controlling a mountain lion, which was his first real act from will. He also says that pain can be a part of the process, but because this leads to living as a warrior, the goal of seeing like a sorcerer draws closer.

Part 2: Chapter 11 - 12

Part 2: Chapter 11 - 12 Summary and Analysis

Don Juan next has Castaneda smoke and practice walking while under the influence of the drug. He has a great deal of trouble with this at first, and then he notices something very strange about don Juan's face. It has turned luminescent, with many shining fibers giving off the light. His normal face comes back, and then Castaneda again sees the shining face. Don Juan orders him not to stare but to look anywhere else. They walk to the irrigation ditch where Castaneda looks at the water. The next day don Juan answers Castaneda's question as to whether the author had seen in the special way: "When you see there are no longer familiar features in the world. Everything is new. Everything has never happened before. The world is incredible!" (p. 159).

They go for a walk to a place in a canyon. Don Juan tells Castaneda to sit in a certain spot while the sorcerer summons a water spirit. He uses a string made out of a wild boar to make sounds at various pitches. Castaneda becomes very apprehensive listening to the weird sounds reverberating in the canyon. After a while they take a different route out of the canyon and return to don Juan's house. He later explains that he had tapped a water spirit for Castaneda.

The next afternoon Castaneda smokes and gazes at the irrigation ditch with don Juan's directions. The author sees a green fog and becomes comfortable within it, then don Juan jerks him out of the water. They go back to the canyon where don Juan has Castaneda lie across a round boulder on his back. The sorcerer places leaves and small branches on the author's navel area. He then summons the water spirit with the string, which he calls a spirit catcher. After the spirit visits, don Juan and Castaneda burn the leaves and twigs that had been on the author's belly.

Don Juan differentiates between manipulating the power of an ally, which effects other people and is a sorcerer's method, and the technique of seeing like a sorcerer, which has no effect on other people or the world. However, once one masters the technique of seeing, controlling the power of an ally becomes very easy.

The next time that Castaneda smokes, he attempts to see water in a stream in the special way. The green fog must be overcome and after this the author should be able to use the water to move. Connected to this is that the water spirit that had visited Castaneda in the canyon likes the author, according to don Juan.

Castaneda sees the fog and then the fog turns into something like bubbles. Upon don Juan's urging, Castaneda mounts one of the bubbles and moves with the water. He sees a concrete wall in great detail. Don Juan tells Castaneda to look at the banks of the stream. Then after a time don Juan orders Castaneda out of the stream because the water is about to entrap the author.

Of great importance is how the water moved. Don Juan wants to know if the movement was mostly to the left or right, but Castaneda cannot clearly remember. The water seemed to be moving straight ahead. The author asks how far he had ridden the water downstream, and don Juan tells him quite a ways. Castaneda searches the stream up and down for over a mile each way and does not find the concrete wall he had seen.

Don Juan explains more about how a warrior behaves in the world. A warrior must be ever vigilant for danger in order to move quickly out of the way or take some other action. Castaneda argues that some situations can never be avoided, but don Juan does not agree. He maintains that all situations can either be avoided or used to advantage.

Part 2: Chapter 13

Part 2: Chapter 13 Summary and Analysis

Castaneda's next experience with smoking the mushrooms happens on September 3, 1969. He sees don Juan's glowing face as before but detects more detail. He then sees a plowed field with large rocks in it and trees along the sides. Mountains rise up in the distance. Don Juan asks if he can see a man in the field. At first Castaneda cannot, but then he sees the man, and the man starts walking toward him. Don Juan moves a few yards away and sits down facing Castaneda. The vision of the field and man goes away for a short period, then returns. Castaneda sees the man walk to the edge of the field and point down to a gully.

Somehow Castaneda and don Juan return to the house. The author cannot recall this happening. He becomes sick to the stomach, vomits in the bushes, and with the help of don Juan, walks about until he feels better.

The next day Castaneda has another vision of the field and man that startles him. The man is very close and looks strangely familiar, although the author cannot identify who he is. Don Juan explains that the man is an ally, a being that can endow great power, but if Castaneda is alone and with his defenses down, the ally can also kill him. Don Juan goes on to say that when the ally pointed to a gully by the field, the meaning is that Castaneda will receive most of his power in water canyons and gullies.

Castaneda initiates a discussion about death because he wants to know what don Juan thinks. As a reference, the author brings up the Tibetan Book of the Dead. Don Juan does not care what the Tibetans think about the subject and does not fully understand death, but he does know that death is not like life. He can describe what he saw when his son died. Whatever is left over at death expands. Death has two stages, according to don Juan. The first stage is blackness. The second stage is becoming self again but only to be smashed apart by death. Don Juan draws these ideas from encounters with his ally, who has shown the sorcerer his own death. Thereby, don Juan can only talk in terms of this specific death. Others may be different.

Don Juan then performs an act of a sorcerer. He prevents Castaneda's car from starting by intervening at a critical joint in the machine, which the sorcerer decides are the spark plugs. Castaneda tries repeatedly to start the car and is unsuccessful. Then don Juan releases the car and it starts right away.

Part 2: Chapter 14 - 15

Part 2: Chapter 14 - 15 Summary and Analysis

Castaneda remembers encountering a sorceress named la Catalina in 1961, setting up the background for what follows. At that time in the past, Don Juan claims that la Catalina can turn into a blackbird and is out to kill him. He tells Castaneda to obtain a shotgun by either buying or borrowing it. The plan is to shoot the blackbird the next time it appears on the roof of don Juan's house. He believes that la Catalina will not recognize Castaneda and will therefore ignore his presence.

Castaneda borrows a double-barreled shotgun. Don Juan rubs the gun and the shotgun shells with special herbs, then sets up Castaneda outside the house among bushes. That night some kind of bird flies to the top of the roof, and Castaneda lets go with both barrels. He and don Juan search for the dead bird but cannot find it.

Don Juan tells Castaneda that this attempt failed, but la Catalina can be stopped in another way. Castaneda is to run up to her and stick a dried wild boar's leg into her navel. This will not kill her, don Juan asserts, just open up a big hole in her defenses and keep her busy for a while closing it back up.

They drive out to a crossroad where they spot la Catalina walking along the road. Castaneda takes the boar's leg and runs toward her, the leg hidden beneath his coat. He attempts to jab the leg into her navel, but she is no longer on his side of the road. Somehow she had crossed the road in an instant. Castaneda runs back to the car and drives away quickly.

Don Juan later tells Castaneda that the whole affair was a trick to trap him into learning. The efforts that Castaneda had done to stab the sorceress were just don Juan's method of displaying Castaneda's potential to her. However, la Catalina will be coming for Castaneda for revenge, so he has no choice but to learn how to defend himself.

These memories come to Castaneda because he feels something is stalking him. Don Juan explains that it is the water spirit, and just as he needed to learn how to defend himself from la Catalina, he must also defend himself from the water spirit. It is not enough to be a good sorcerer. Castaneda must also become a good warrior.

A good warrior knows how to use his shields, don Juan says. Using shields is what people usually do. Many non-warriors have strong shields against anything out of the ordinary world. They work, do hobbies, read and write like Castaneda, and do any number of other activities that serve to keep at bay the strange powers that don Juan and other warriors routinely control.

Don Juan directs Castaneda to concentrate on hearing instead of seeing. They go to a valley that don Juan warns should be kept secret as to its location. He has Castaneda smoke the mushrooms and instructs him to seek out the holes in the sounds that he



hears. The author concentrates on the sounds of nature. He can detect a regularity of the sounds that birds, insects, and the wind make. The birds might stop singing, but something else fills up the void. Castaneda cannot find any holes in the sound. Concentrating more on the individual components of the whole sound experience, he begins to understand the patterns and can finally pick out small gaps in the sound. Then don Juan plays his spirit catcher—the string made out of wild boar—and Castaneda detects huge gaps in the sound after each twang of the string.

His attention goes to his eyes, and Castaneda once again sees his ally. The ally approaches, which causes the author to panic. He knows that he must look away from the ally, and while trying this the sounds become very loud and shrill. He jumps up and presses his hands against his ears. Don Juan takes him to a stream and washes him in water, a technique to make Castaneda solid again. After the author has regained his strength and poise, don Juan explains that he is not yet strong enough to handle the ally, but that he is progressing. Castaneda will need a spirit catcher like don Juan's, and the ally has indicated that it will provide the author with one at some future meeting.

Part 2: Chapter 16 - 17

Part 2: Chapter 16 - 17 Summary and Analysis

Don Juan gives Castaneda detailed instruction on finding his correct direction and what to do once he finds the proper spot on a hill. They build a fire into which Castaneda looks but not gazes into, as directed by don Juan's instruction. Castaneda sees the sparks of the fire as much larger than normal. Don Juan sees something that causes him to rapidly put out the fire. He and Castaneda leave quickly. Don Juan will not say a word about the incident or what he saw.

A few days later don Juan takes Castaneda to the bottom of a hill and then leaves him to encounter his ally during the night. Castaneda is to keep his eyes shut and use only his ears to perceive this encounter.

The author hears twigs snapping, then branches cracking. The sounds surround him, and he wonders if don Juan is playing another trick on him. Castaneda marvels at the ingenuity of the old man, but then realizes that don Juan could not possibly be moving fast enough to produce the many sounds that surround him. Castaneda becomes terrified and he tries to run to a safe spot that don Juan had previously pointed out. He cannot find the safe spot and must endure the sounds until morning, when they go away.

Don Juan tells him that his encounter with his ally was mild. The trouble is that Castaneda needs time to heal the gap he has in his defenses. Don Juan tells him to go away until he is again strong enough to try meeting his ally.

Castaneda works on his field notes for months before returning to Mexico in October of 1970. He finds Genaro at don Juan's house visiting with the sorcerer. The two men kid around with Castaneda, and Genaro places a hand lightly on his shoulder. Some kind of power pushes Castaneda to the ground, but not by the natural strength of Genaro's arm. Don Juan then encourages Castaneda to tell Genaro about his encounter with the ally. Castaneda asks what can be done about the fear, to which Genaro answers that nothing can be done. Everybody who encounters an ally goes through the fear somehow, but everyone feels it.

Genaro next creates huge rumbling sounds to try to help Castaneda to see in the special way. Castaneda does see like this, and the perception of a gigantic boulder rolling behind don Juan's house is the vision. He has the distinct impression that he is seeing the noise, not an actual boulder. The vision quickly goes away.

That evening Genaro shows Castaneda a way of hiding. All three go walking into the brush, and it seems to Castaneda that Genaro walks a few yards in front of him and don Juan. Then Castaneda looks behind and sees another man several yards to the back near a large rock. This turns out to be Genaro who had seemed to be walking ahead.

Don Juan later explains that the hiding trick depends upon where a person is among eight possibilities. Castaneda does not understand, so don Juan demonstrates how a leaf can fall several times over. Somehow don Juan and Genaro can rewind time and replay it, or at least create that illusion.

Genaro shows Castaneda another trick. Genaro stands and swishes both his arms at his sides, and in a flash Castaneda sees him on mountains ten miles away. The vision lasts only a few seconds, and when it fades away Genaro is nowhere to be found. This leaves Castaneda upset and disoriented. Don Juan tells him that he must change directions to get rid of his chains. Castaneda realizes that it is his dedication to reason that holds him back from seeing in the special way, living like a warrior and controlling the power of his ally.

Characters

Carlos Castaneda

Carlos Castaneda is an anthropologist who studies the ways of a Yaqui Native American named don Juan. Castaneda's main interest is to learn to see the world like a sorcerer does, and don Juan is a sorcerer, also known as a man of knowledge. Part of this study involves hands-on use of two powerful psychoactive plants, peyote buttons and psilocybin mushrooms. The peyote buttons are chewed and ingested, while the mushrooms are dried and smoked with other herbs.

One of Castaneda's principle duties as a field anthropologist is to take copious notes from which to draw his conclusions. This habit annoys don Juan because it keeps Castaneda from gaining the ability to see like a sorcerer. In order to do this, Castaneda needs to stop thinking in his habitual scientific reasoning manner. Certain paradoxes, such as discovering that all things are equally unimportant, cause Castaneda to continually raise unanswerable questions. He also becomes emotional about all things being equal, because if this is so, then nothing and nobody matters to anyone else.

Regardless of his blocks, the author does achieve a level of sight that blends with hearing. Seeing as a sorcerer opens the world to Castaneda, but this is not a gentle world. He must live as a warrior, always in control and ever perceptive of what goes on around him. Certain things, such as allies, guardians, and spirits, can harm, entrap, and even kill. Castaneda clearly needs don Juan to guide him through this learning process.

A key part of this process involves trickery. Don Juan freely admits that he at times must trick Castaneda into doing things that he would not normally do, such as demonstrate his abilities to impress a sorceress. Along with the paradoxes of the world, the element of trickery also confuses Castaneda. In the end he does succeed in seeing the world as a sorcerer, muddling through as best he can. This turns out to be the way don Juan and the other sorcerers have also learned. The process cannot be made any easier.

Don Juan

Don Juan is an old Yaqui Native American sorcerer who takes on Carlos Castaneda as an apprentice. His decision to do this occurs in a previous book after the peyote spirit known as Mescalito indicates that Castaneda is a chosen one. The problem for don Juan is that his apprentice simply thinks too much. He continually asks unanswerable questions that stretch don Juan's patience. The apprentice also asks about things that he should already know. Completing the teacher's vexation, Castaneda appears to don Juan and other sorcerers as if he can see like a sorcerer already. This sometimes puts the author into situations for which Castaneda is unaware of the peril and ignorant of ways to defend himself.



The teaching methodology of don Juan is relatively gentle. He patiently tries to explain the unexplainable, pushes his apprentice with humor and challenges, and generally tries to keep the powers from killing Castaneda. He also uses trickery to help bring the author to another level of knowledge and commitment. Once started down the path to knowledge, the choice narrows to one possibility—either master the powers or allow them to take one's life. Don Juan tells Castaneda that the up side to this is experiencing the absolute fullness of life. Everything is equally unimportant, but everything is also brimming full in a fantastically beautiful and fascinating world.

Don Juan, like all sorcerers, has more choices than the average person. He chooses life over death and humor over sadness. He could just as well make the opposite choices and it would make no difference. Don Juan simply prefers to live and laugh, and fortunately for Castaneda, he chooses to protect his apprentice, but not overly so.

Genaro

Genaro is another Yaqui sorcerer who tries to help Castaneda to see as a sorcerer. Lacking the patience of don Juan, Genaro tends to show or demonstrate rather than explain. He does impossible acrobatics at a waterfall and creates huge rumbling noises in the desert. Genaro's style is both humorous and threatening at the same time. Don Juan must occasionally warn Castaneda that Genaro's help could kill the author.

Mescalito

Mescalito is the spirit of peyote that for some reason favors Castaneda. The spirit appears during a peyote session as a pink light and hovers over Castaneda's head. Everyone else in the group notices, and this is special and gentle treatment, according to don Juan. During a later session, Mescalito takes over a young man named Eligio, and Castaneda is able to see the movements of Eligio's body. In all his other experiences with peyote, the author has only been able to see people sitting around doing nothing.

Sacateca

Sacateca is a Yaqui sorcerer who does his magic by dancing. The dance consists of placing one foot behind the other and tapping the ground. Sacateca does this while Castaneda attempts to interview him. Don Juan later explains that the encounter could have turned deadly for the author. Other sorcerers tend to see Castaneda as much further developed than he actually is, and this is especially dangerous.

Vicente

Vicente is a Yaqui sorcerer who Castaneda visits upon don Juan's suggestion. Vicente also thinks that the author is highly developed, and so tries to share allies with him.



Vicente instructs Castaneda to drive out to a remote part of the desert and plant an herb. The author follows the instructions, after which he encounters three allies, but the author is unaware of what is happening. In a panic Castaneda drives away, which is probably the safest thing to do under the circumstances.

Lucio

Lucio is don Juan's grandson. He has no inclination to become a man of knowledge like his grandfather, preferring to live as an average human being. He likes to drink tequila with his friends, and while drunk he offers to take peyote if Castaneda buys him a motorcycle. Don Juan tells the author that Mescalito would probably kill anyone approaching the spirit under this wrong condition.

Eligio

Eligio is a young man who expresses an interest in peyote while drinking tequila with Lucio. Don Juan knows that Eligio has the correct intentions, and so supervises the peyote session. Castaneda for the first time witnesses the effects of Mescalito on a person. Eligio jumps and does many movements, some of which are beautiful to watch.

La Catalina

La Catalina is a sorceress who don Juan uses during a trick on Castaneda. The author is to shoot the sorceress when she takes the form of a blackbird. This failed attempt at killing her leads to the author's attempt to stick a dried boar's leg into her navel. Don Juan tells him that the boar's leg cannot kill the sorceress, just distract her for a while. When Castaneda attempts this, la Catalina somehow moves across the road instantly. Don Juan explains that now Castaneda has made an enemy and must therefore continue on the path to knowledge, which is a lesson from the first of Castaneda's books.

Guardian

The guardian is a being that Castaneda attempts to move past while smoking the psychoactive mushrooms. He sees the guardian twice, both times as a strange monster. Don Juan pulls him away on the first attempt. On the second, Castaneda manages to get away quickly enough, but don Juan realizes that this is not the right path for his apprentice. Castaneda's temperament does not fit the guardian.

Ally

Every sorcerer must learn to control allies because that is a major source of power. Castaneda meets his ally while smoking the mushrooms. It is a man in a plowed field,

and when close enough, Castaneda feels that the face is familiar, but he cannot identify it. Don Juan suggests that the ally is his death. In a later session, Castaneda attempts to meet his ally alone. The meeting is very frightening but seemingly successful because Castaneda lives to tell about it.

Objects/Places

Peyote

Peyote is a type of psychoactive cactus plant used to open people to a spirit called Mescalito. Ingesting peyote is the first step along the path of becoming a man of knowledge.

Psilocybin Mushrooms

Don Juan uses psilocybin mushrooms to help Castaneda see like a sorcerer and meet his ally. The psychoactive mushrooms are dried and mixed with other dried herbs, then smoked through a pipe.

Luminous Egg

People look like luminous eggs when a person can see like a sorcerer. The eggs are made up of luminous fibers, and very powerful luminous tentacles emanate from the navels of sorcerers like Genaro.

Castaneda's Notes

Most of the book is written from Castaneda's notes. His continual writing annoys don Juan, as this distracts from the tasks involved in becoming a man of knowledge. The notes also symbolize Castaneda's attachment to reason, which is also a barrier.

Waterfall

Genaro demonstrates his powers at a waterfall. He climbs to the top, seemingly to slip at times, then jumps from rock to rock. He can only make this demonstration by using his powerful luminous tentacles.

Irrigation Ditch

Don Juan uses the irrigation ditch to help Castaneda see water in the way of a sorcerer. He also dunks the author in the ditch to make him whole after particularly stretching lessons on how to see as a sorcerer.



Stream

The stream is like the irrigation ditch—Castaneda practices seeing as a sorcerer there. He sees the water in the special manner and actually travels on it. Don Juan has to pull him back because the water nearly entraps Castaneda forever.

Don Juan's Face

Castaneda sees don Juan's face in the way of a sorcerer. His face consists of many luminous fibers that always move. One eye shoots light out of it while another is like a pool of shining water.

Spirit Catcher

Don Juan uses a spirit catcher to summon a water spirit and Castaneda's ally. The spirit catcher consists of a string made out of wild boar. Don Juan plucks the string to make sounds of varying pitches.

Castaneda's Car

Don Juan demonstrates one of the powers of a sorcerer through Castaneda's car. He focuses his power on a necessary joint in the engine—the spark plugs. Castaneda tries to start the car, but try as he might, the engine does not fire off. After don Juan releases the car, it starts on the first try.

Dried Boar's Leg

The dried boar's leg is a prop that don Juan gives Castaneda. The author is to stick the boar's leg into the navel of a sorceress named la Catalina. This is all part of a trick to make Castaneda take his lessons on being a man of knowledge very seriously.

Shields

Average people use shields regularly, and they consist of their daily routines of work and other activities. Sorcerers use shields to protect themselves from powers that nobody understands. However, sorcerers learn to control the powers, and this is what gives them the ability to do apparently impossible things.

Themes

Reality Perception

Central to Castaneda's experiences with don Juan is the idea that what we normally perceive as reality is not how the world actually is. The use of psychoactive plants bends this perception into what don Juan maintains is the true nature of reality. Yet what Castaneda first sees is not the true perception but merely a step toward the true perception of reality.

Don Juan says that once a person sees as a sorcerer, then three things happen. First off, nothing is any more or less important than anything else. Second, the world provides sources of power that can be tapped into and put to use. Finally, the world has eight points in time and space, only two of which are normally used. A sorcerer can switch among all eight, and so change relative positions.

If all things are equal in the world, then what people normally think of as important becomes meaningless. Power is not money or wealth, although power exists. Love is not to be sought or won, but only a state of indifference in which love does not exist. Death is not to be feared, since it is just a different way to be. On this subject don Juan seems to contradict, as death to him also involves the disincorporated of the spirit or self.

An underlying motivation for seeking this different perception of reality may be the difficult life of the Yaqui Native Americans. If normal reality becomes too harsh, seeking out something better through drugs could become attractive. Don Juan's parents are killed while he is still quite young. He witnesses the death of his son. The sorcerer lives in abject poverty. If none of this really matters, then life is easier to take. If one can gain control over the true powers in the world, then wealth and politics become irrelevant.

Relative Ethics

Don Juan lives an ethical life, but he does so by his free will. He could become an evil sorcerer, but chooses not to because he can use more of the world by maintaining his ethics. Genaro agrees that some sorcerers are very limited and use their powers the wrong way. This wrong way seems to be using the powers to do simple tricks in order to make money, which indicates that the evil sorcerers do not really see the world the way don Juan and Genaro see it.

However, don Juan's ethics do not compel him to help Castaneda to move along the sorcerer's path. The peyote spirit called Mescalito has indicated that Castaneda is a good candidate for the path, and so don Juan helps, perhaps out of curiosity. Whether Castaneda succeeds is not a matter of concern, or so don Juan maintains. His actions demonstrate that he does care enough to keep Castaneda alive.



Don Juan would likely never consider killing someone else. Whether someone else lives or dies is of no consequence because all things are equal, including life and death. The one time that he asks Castaneda to hurt someone else, the action is part of an elaborate trick to move the author down the path of knowledge. The target is la Catalina, a sorceress who can take care of herself. As for his own death, don Juan is indifferent. He could will it at any time but chooses not to. He also makes this choice regarding the feelings of sadness versus laughing.

Power

Along with learning how to see like a sorcerer, Castaneda also learns about the power of a sorcerer. This power comes from beings known as allies, who are not human because they lack the luminous fibers. They can take human form and many other forms as well. Castaneda meets his ally but has not yet learned to control the power. Genaro demonstrates how this power can be used in several manners, but these attempted lessons are far too advanced for Castaneda to grasp. The author does manage to see the big boulder through which Genaro makes the rumbling noises in the desert.

Power also develops in the luminous fibers that make up a human being. Genaro has developed his navel fibers until they are long and thick tentacles. Don Juan says that many normal people have very small navel fibers, weak from neglect. Genaro can use his luminous tentacles to perform amazing acrobatic stunts that seem impossible.

In order for Castaneda to do similar things, he must first work on living like a warrior, which means developing his will and patience. The development of will is not so much controlling one's desires but controlling all situations, which ties into all things being equal and making continual choices. But will is not power either. It is a necessary skill in order to use power. The patience part of warrior involves knowing when and when not to act.

Apprenticeship

Highly implied in the account is that no person should try to become a sorcerer alone. Without don Juan's guidance and oversight, Castaneda would have no idea how to survive his encounters with the power sources of the world. The water would have trapped him forever. The ally would have killed him straight off if Castaneda had survived the guardian.

The world as it really is consists of a reality with which most people would rather not deal, thus the idea of shields. Usually people build up their shields from childhood and consider their shields to be reality. Don Juan wants Castaneda to also build up shields, but not the normal kind. As an apprentice, the author benefits from don Juan's protection, but this can only go so far. At some point the apprentice must break away from the master in order to develop into another master.

Don Juan eases Castaneda into this position. After keeping the apprentice whole through the use of water and herbs, don Juan encourages Castaneda to try an encounter with his ally alone. Castaneda takes his first step away from the master at this point. The experience is extremely frightening, but the apprentice succeeds in surviving. Genaro's behavior toward Castaneda reconfirms that the author is still an apprentice with much to learn. Genaro shows off some of his power by pushing Castaneda to the ground with a light touch on the arm. Don Juan tells Castaneda that the apprentice has come quite a long way along the path of knowledge, but whether he returns for more is not important. Castaneda give no further explanation, but the reader can assume that the apprentice will not quit until achieving mastery as a man of knowledge.

Style

Perspective

Carlos Castaneda writes from a strong academic background in anthropology. He both studies the ways of the sorcerer according to don Juan, and participates in the process of becoming a man of knowledge through the use of psychoactive plants, such as peyote and psilocybin mushrooms. As such, his credibility lies in the verifiability of his sources, but this introduces a major conflict. Don Juan warns Castaneda to never reveal the location of any sorcerer, so the sources must remain secret. This leaves the reader no choice but to trust the author at his word. For this reason, some critics dismiss Castaneda's books on this subject as merely works of fiction intended for an audience interested in psychoactive plants.

Another part of Castaneda's audience consists of those who take him at his word and accept the accounts as being subjective but actual experiences. The premise that psychoactive plants can change one's perception of reality holds true in human experience. Many studies have been made in this area, but Castaneda takes the idea a step beyond. He proposes that the experiences normally thought of as hallucinations are actually other ways of perceiving reality which are more accurate than the usual ways of perception.

This extension of the premise carries with it astounding ramifications. The entire basis of science, philosophy, mathematics, and many religions may crumble if such an extension is true. Yet other principles embraced by some religions hold up, such as recognizing the illusion that we call normal reality. Castaneda leaves the uncommitted reader with these looming questions—is Castaneda serious or playing a kind of joke? Might he be manipulating people in order to build a following and start a cult? Or is this all true, and if so, what does that mean?

Intended or not, the book shakes up the reader's thinking on many levels. Evidence that this may be an intended purpose and possibly a fictional account lies in the fiction-like structuring of the plot. Mysteries pull the reader forward and drama increases the reader's concern for Castaneda. Philosophical contradictions arise which don Juan explains later in the story through monologues, and the ending of the story strongly hints at a sequel. These are all good techniques in fiction, yet the book is still classified as nonfiction, and this reflects the ongoing confusion as to whether don Juan or others mentioned ever actually existed. They very well could be simply inventions of the imagination.

Tone

Castaneda writes as an impassioned seeker of truth who more often than not deals with people and situations far beyond his understanding. Yet he somehow muddles through



very dangerous conflicts. This also points to a technique in fiction, where the protagonist falls from one impossible predicament into another, cascading toward a grand climax. When done well, the reader follows breathlessly along. The big question in this book is whether or not the author will ever see the world as a sorcerer sees it. In the end, Castaneda does accomplish this goal, at least to a certain point.

At times the tone turns toward the melodramatic. The author casts himself as a sensitive person with don Juan looking on and seeing a fool who cannot stop beating himself up over past transgressions. The author thinks too much, talks too much, asks too many questions, and indulges himself to the point of endangering his life, according to don Juan. In a very simplified characterization, don Juan is the strict schoolmaster and Castaneda is the well-intentioned but difficult, almost dense student.

Stripped of its ornaments, the story becomes a classic morality tale. The seeker of truth finds the provider of truth, and together they work towards the truth, which can be just about anything depending on context. Don Juan, although a highly accomplished man of knowledge, is still trying to figure out how the world works. Castaneda's questions stimulate the teacher to reexamine his assumptions and come up with some kind of explanation, even though a full exposition of the world is impossible.

Melodrama always works well with classic morality tales. People enjoy going on an emotional ride, and in this case the author injects enough intellectual challenge that the ride involves the possibility that the world that we think of as familiar is not the world as it truly is. Castaneda is astounded, the reader is astounded, and don Juan agrees that the world is truly an astounding place, thing, state of being, or something that no human can ever fully understand. The tone of don Juan's voice serves to calm both Castaneda and the reader. The world might be a dangerous place, but with the right knowledge people can deal with it. Alternatively, with strong shields people can live their lives without the danger. Not everybody is cut out to be the chosen one, as is Carlos Castaneda.

Structure

The book consists of two parts, each chunked out into numbered chapters. A lengthy introduction summarizes Castaneda's first book, in which he meets don Juan and starts ingesting psychoactive plants. The first part deals with the preliminary exercises that Castaneda must do before seeing like a sorcerer. The second part describes how the author finally achieves this sight with the guidance and protection of don Juan.

The chapters flow logically from one to another in chronological sequence. Only one flashback is used to explain who la Catalina is and why her role is important. Castaneda uses quite a bit of dialog with directives that may help some readers to envision the characters but may also distract others. The current trend is to avoid too many directives, dropping it down to simple "he said" or "she said" while depending upon dialog content to stimulate the reader's imagination. Just which technique works better is primarily a question of preferred style.

Castaneda's descriptive narratives of his experiences while under the influence of peyote or mushrooms clearly reveal the strangeness of the situations. However, the narratives tend toward length and detail that some readers may find to be overdone, similar to how some of the dialog may come off as melodramatic. The general structure does work to move the story ahead—first an experience in descriptive narrative, then a conversation about the experience in dialog, and repeat this construct throughout the story.

Quotes

"We were talking about my interests in knowledge; but, as usual, we were on two different tracks. I was referring to academic knowledge that transcends experience, while he was talking about direct knowledge of the world." p. 4

"Don Juan's argument gave me an uncomfortable sensation. I had not felt sorry for those underprivileged children because they did not have enough to eat, but because in my terms their world had already condemned them to be intellectually inadequate. And yet in don Juan's terms any of them could achieve what I believed to be the epitome of man's intellectual accomplishment, the goal of becoming a man of knowledge. My reason for pitying them was incongruous. Don Juan had nailed me neatly." p. 22

"I told him that perhaps it was inertia which kept me from learning. He wanted to know the meaning of the word 'inertia.' I read to him from my dictionary: 'The tendency of matter to remain at rest if at rest, or, if moving, to keep moving in the same direction, unless affected by some outside force.'

"'Unless affected by some outside force,' he repeated. 'That's about the best word you've found. I've told you already, only a crackpot would undertake the task of becoming a man of knowledge of his own accord. A sober-headed man has to be tricked into doing it.'" p. 28

"I related to don Juan the sequence of my astounding vision almost as soon as he got into my car. He laughed with great delight and said that my vision was a sign, an omen as important as my first experience with Mescalito. I remembered that don Juan had interpreted the reactions I had when I first ingested peyote as an all-important omen; in fact he decided to teach me his knowledge because of it." pp. 56-57

"Eligio's body crumpled into a contorted position. He lay on his right side with his front toward me and his hands between his legs. His body gave a powerful jump and he turned on his back with his legs slightly curved. His left hand waved out and up with an extremely free and elegant motion. His right hand repeated the same pattern, and then both arms alternated in a wavering, slow movement, resembling that of a harpist. The movement became more vigorous by degrees. His arms had a perceptible vibration and went up and down like pistons. At the same time his hands rotated onward at the wrist and his fingers quivered. It was a beautiful, harmonious, hypnotic sight. I thought his rhythm and muscular control were beyond comparison.

"Eligio then rose slowly, as if he were stretching against an enveloping force. His body shivered. He squatted and then pushed himself up to an erect position. His arms, trunk, and head trembled as if an intermittent electric current were going through them. It was as though a force outside his control was setting him or driving him up." pp. 73-74

"'Everything is filled to the brim,' he repeated, 'and everything is equal. I'm not like your friend who just grew old. When I tell you that nothing matters I don't mean it the way he does. For him, his struggle was not worth his while, because he was defeated; for me there is no victory, or defeat, or emptiness. Everything is filled to the brim and



everything is equal and my struggle was worth my while.

"In order to become a man of knowledge one must be a warrior, not a whimpering child. One must strive without giving up, without a complaint, without flinching, until one sees, only to realize then that nothing matters." p. 88

"Don Juan apologized to me and said that his friend was given to explosions of laughter. I glanced at don Genaro, who I thought was still rolling on the ground, and saw him performing a most unusual act. He was standing on his head without the aid of his arms or hands, and his legs were crossed as if he were sitting. The sight was so incongruous that it made me jump. When I realized he was doing something almost impossible, from the point of view of body mechanics, he had gone back again to a normal sitting position. Don Juan, however, seemed to be cognizant of what was involved and celebrated don Genaro's performance with roaring laughter." p. 95

"I sucked on the pipe and heard the chirping of the mixture catching on fire. I felt an instantaneous coat of ice inside my mouth and nose. I took another puff and the coating extended to my chest. When I had taken the last puff I felt that the entire inside of my body was coated with a peculiar sensation of warmth." pp. 115-116

"You were lucky that the color was on the guardian's back,' he said with a serious face. 'Had it been on the front part of its body, or worse yet, on its head, you would be dead by now. You must not try to see the guardian ever again. It's not your temperament to cross that plain; yet I was convinced that you could go through it. But let's not talk about it any more. This was only one of a variety of roads.'" p. 131

"We did not speak for a very long time. Perhaps an hour went by in complete silence. I had very confusing feelings. I was somewhat dejected and yet I could not tell why. I experienced a sense of remorse. A while before I had been willing to humor don Juan, but he had suddenly turned the tables with his direct account. It had been simple and concise and had produced a strange feeling in me. The idea of a child undergoing pain had always been a touchy subject for me. In an instant my feelings of empathy for don Juan gave way to a sensation of disgust with myself. I had actually taken notes, as if don Juan's life were merely a clinical case. I was on the verge of ripping up my notes when don Juan poked my calf with his toe to attract my attention. He said he was 'seeing' a light of violence around me and wondered whether I was going to start beating him. His laughter was a delightful break. He said that I was given to outbursts of violent behavior but that I was not really mean and that most of the time the violence was against myself." p. 137

"What a sorcerer calls will is a power within ourselves. It is not a thought, or an object, or a wish. To stop asking questions is not will because it needs thinking and wishing. Will is what can make you succeed when your thoughts tell you that you're defeated. Will is what makes you invulnerable. Will is what sends a sorcerer through a wall; through space; to the moon, if he wants." p. 147

"At that instant I became aware that something extraordinary was taking place right there. I had the feeling at first that I was only recollecting an event that had taken place



years before. At one time in the past I had seen don Juan's face at very close range; I had smoked his mixture and I had had the feeling then that don Juan's face was submerged in a tank of water. It was enormous and it was luminous and it moved. The image had been so brief that I did not have time to really take stock of it. This time, however, . . . I saw a large object in front of my eyes. . . What I was looking at was a round object which had a luminosity of its own. Every part of it moved. I perceived a contained, undulatory, rhythmical flow; it was as if the flowing was enclosed within itself, never moving beyond its limits, and yet the object in front of my eyes was oozing with movement at any place on its surface." p. 157

"I think you must be aware by now,' he said in a tone that was suddenly severe, 'that everything is mortally dangerous. The water is as deadly as the guardian. If you don't watch out the water will trap you. It nearly did that yesterday. But in order to be trapped a man has to be willing. There's your trouble. You're willing to abandon yourself.'" p. 179

"I kept my eyes shut as he went on submerging and pulling me out of the water for hours. The change I experienced was remarkable. Whatever was wrong with me before I entered the water was so subtle that I did not really notice it until I compared it with the feeling of well-being and alertness I had while don Juan kept me in the irrigation canal." p. 188

"The world is indeed full of frightening things and we are helpless creatures surrounded by forces that are inexplicable and unbending. The average man, in ignorance, believes that those forces can be explained or changed; he doesn't really know how to do that, but he expects that the actions of mankind will explain them or change them sooner or later. The sorcerer, on the other hand, does not think of explaining or changing them; instead, he learns to use such forces by redirecting himself and adapting to their direction. That's his trick. There is little to sorcery once you find out its trick. A sorcerer is only slightly better off than the average man. Sorcery does not help him to live a better life; in fact I should say that sorcery hinders him; it makes life cumbersome, precarious. By opening himself to knowledge a sorcerer becomes more vulnerable than the average man. On the one hand his fellow men hate him and fear him and will strive to end his life; on the other hand the inexplicable and unbending forces that surround every one of us, by right of our being alive, are for a sorcerer a source of even greater danger. To be pierced by a fellow man is indeed painful, but nothing in comparison to being touched by an ally. A sorcerer, by opening himself to knowledge, falls prey to his will; thus he must feel and act like a warrior. I will repeat this once more: Only as a warrior can one survive the path of knowledge. What helps a sorcerer live a better life is the strength of being a warrior.

"It is my commitment to teach you to see. Not because I personally want to do so but because you were chosen; you were pointed out to me by Mescalito. I am compelled by my personal desire, however, to teach you to feel and act like a warrior. I personally believe that to be a warrior is more suitable than anything else. Therefore I have endeavored to show you those forces as a sorcerer perceives them, because only under their terrifying impact can one become a warrior. To see without first being a warrior would make you weak; it would give you a false meekness, a desire to retreat;

your body would decay because you would become indifferent. It is my personal commitment to make you a warrior so you won't crumble." pp. 214-215

"Don Juan played his string once again; the sounds ceased as they had done before, creating a huge hole in the sound structure. This time, however, that big pause blended with the hole in the hills I was looking at; they became superimposed on each other. The effect of perceiving two holes lasted for such a long time that I was capable of seeing-hearing their contours as they fit one another. Then the other sounds began again and their structure of pauses became an extraordinary, almost visual perception. I began seeing the sounds as they created patterns and then all those patterns became superimposed on the environment in the same way I had perceived the two big holes becoming superimposed. I was not looking or hearing as I was accustomed to doing. I was doing something which was entirely different but combined features of both. For some reason my attention was focused on the large hole in the hills. I felt I was hearing it and at the same time looking at it. There was something of a lure about it. It dominated my field of perception and every single sound pattern which coincided with a feature of the environment was hinged on that hole." p. 224

"There was no doubt in my mind that through my blundering stupidity I had unleashed something terrible on myself. I clenched my teeth and took deep breaths and sang peyote songs." p. 243

"Don Juan looked at me and there was such sadness in his eyes that I began to weep. Tears fell freely. For the first time in my life I felt the encumbering weight of my reason. An indescribable anguish overtook me. I wailed involuntarily and embraced him. He gave me a quick blow with his knuckles on the top of my head. I felt it like a ripple down my spine. It had a sobering effect.

"'You indulge too much,' he said softly." p. 262

Topics for Discussion

Describe how don Juan teaches Castaneda.

What are the advantages to seeing like a sorcerer?

Why must Castaneda live like a warrior?

What amazing feats does Genaro show to Castaneda?

Make the case for or against this book being classified as nonfiction.

What do peyote and psychoactive mushrooms do for Castaneda?

How does don Juan approach life?

What are the implications of everything being equally unimportant in the world?

List and describe the major problems that prevent or slow Castaneda from becoming a man of knowledge.

According to don Juan, what is death?