

The Sisterhood Study Guide

The Sisterhood by Helen Bryan

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Plot Summary

"The Sisterhood" by Helen Bryan is an interesting novel that contains dual timelines, alternating between the female oppression of the sixteenth century and Menina's attempts to learn about her heritage in the twenty-first century. While Menina's studies lead her to Las Golondrinas Convent in Andalusia where she learns about her heritage through religious relics which originated in the convent, she simultaneously translates the Chronicle which makes up the second timeline. In the sixteenth century, the nuns of Las Golondrinas send a mission convent to settle in South America in order to escape the Church's persecution during the Inquisition. "The Sisterhood" offers an intriguing concept of the past and its relationship with the present.

In the sixteenth century narrative, Sor Beatriz prepares to send the Foundress's medal and the Chronicle with a mission group going to Spanish America to escape persecution from the Inquisition in 1552. Returning to 1504, she explains how she, Isabella, fell in love with the Muslim Alejandro Abenzucar. Their romance was discovered when they tried to run away, so he was imprisoned and died. Secretly pregnant, Isabella convinces her father to send her to Las Golondrinas since it is near the Abenzucars' home, but she gives birth to her daughter Salome and decides to take her vows. Entrusted with recording the convent's Gospel and history in the Chronicle, Sor Beatriz writes about visions of the Foundress in which they are warned to send their relics away to prevent accusations of heresy from the Inquisition. Twelve nuns, including Salome, are sent to establish a mission in Gran Canaria, but they are never heard from again. Meanwhile, Las Golondrinas shelters many endangered girls, their primary mission, including Esperanza, Luz, Sanchia, Marisol and Pia, all of whom are guilty of heresy by the Inquisition's standards. Upon learning that the Inquisition plans to visit the convent, these girls are sent to Spanish America to find Las Golondrinas de Los Andes where they believe their first mission may have settled. Esperanza records the Chronicle at this point. In Spanish America, the girls locate the convent and find that it was settled by the first mission. Marisol is kidnapped, but her captor marries her immediately. Esperanza finds Salome who married an Incan warrior and had many children. One of the children, Don Miguel, marries Esperanza. Esperanza's daughter, Isabelita, is sickly, but Pia saves her by giving her the Foundress's medal shortly before Pia dies. In 1597, Isabelita writes of her mother's death and the decision to send the Chronicle to Las Golondrinas de Los Andes where it belongs.

In 1983, a terrible hurricane strikes South America, and a three-year-old girl is found on the beach and taken to Las Golondrinas de Los Andes because she wears their medal around her neck. Soon after, the nuns relocate the Chronicle, which has been hidden for fifty years. Knowing the girl is in danger, Mother Superior allows an American couple to adopt the girl, whom they name Menina, sending the medal and Chronicle with her. Menina is an excellent child and student. In 2000, she is engaged to Theo Bonner III. However, after he rapes her, she leaves him and travels to Spain to research her thesis on Tristan Mendoza, a sixteenth century painter who intrigues her because his signature contains an image of the same swallow depicted on her medal. Due to a series of mishaps, Menina gets stranded by herself in Spain. When she seeks police assistance

from Captain Alejandro Fernandez Galan, she is taken to Las Golondrinas in Andalusia for her protection. While there, Menina learns that there are six paintings by Mendoza in the convent. she explores the convent to find these paintings in hopes of finding something of value that the nuns can sell to support themselves. She also gets involved in a criminal ring abducting women to sell into sex slavery after learning of Alejandro's assignment to shut down the ring. After the criminal enterprise is taken down, Menina's translations of the Chronicle result in the discovery that the convent's animosity with the Catholic Church stems from their Gospel in which Salome, their Foundress, is claimed to be the sister of Jesus, negating the necessity for the Virgin Mary. By 2013, Menina and Alejandro are married and have established a museum at the convent to honor the Gospel and Mendoza's work. Menina is pregnant with her sixth daughter. Her six children are named Esperanza, Marisol, Luz, Pia, Sanchia and Salome in honor of their ancestors whom she promises to teach them about once they are older.

Section 1: Prologue & Chapter 1

Summary

The Prologue

From the Chronicle of Las Sors Santas de Jesus, Las Golondrinas Convent, Andalusia, Spain, June, 1552

The narrative begins as Sor Beatriz makes the last entry in the Chronicle she has kept for 40 years because the convent, expecting a visit from the Inquisition, has decided to send the Chronicle and their Foundress's medal to Spanish America in order to keep their spiritual legacy alive; this order of nuns bears witness to a female tradition of spirituality which is often suppressed by men. Though Las Golondrinas has been protected by the Queen's patronage, they are now endangered by the five older girls hidden at the convent, Esperanza, Pia, Sanchia, Marisol and Luz; however, four of the girls will be sent to refuge in Spanish America tonight to avoid being interrogated by the Inquisition and deemed heretics.

Chapter 1

In Chapter 1, on the Pacific Coast of South America, in the spring of 1983, the worst hurricane in 100 years strikes, and Mano del Diablo leaves a path of destruction and carnage in its wake; however, one single item of good news emerges on the ninth day when a three-year-old girl is found on the coast wearing a medal around her neck. She disappears into a local orphanage. A year later, an American couple, Virgil and Sarah-Lynn Walker take a taxi to El Convento de las Golondrinas, the oldest convent in Latin America to adopt a child. While waiting for the Americans, Mother Superior recalls her reasons for giving Isabelita up for adoption; before the storm, Sor Rosario had a vision of their Foundress who predicted a gift would appear from the sea, and the Foundress also mentioned the Chronicle and the medal, both of which disappeared long ago. When the young girl appeared at the orphanage, the nuns accepted her because she wore the Foundress's medal, and soon after her arrival, they found the Chronicle, convincing them that the child is related to these relics; however, they also know that she is in danger from the Church, so when an American couple expresses interest in adopting her, the nuns agree. When the Walkers arrive, Mother Superior exhorts a promise that they will give her the medal and Chronicle on her sixteenth birthday. They name her Menina Ann Walker, a name that Mother Superior approves of since it will protect her from the Church; she prays that she has made the right decision.

Analysis

The Prologue opens in June, 1552, in Andalusia, Spain at Los Golondrinas Convent as Sor Beatriz makes her last entry into the Chronicle of Las Sors Santas de Jesus. Because their Foundress appeared to the Abbess to warn of the Inquisition's pending



persecution, the nuns have decided to send their Chronicle, the Abbess's medal and five endangered girls to Spanish America for protection. Since Fr. Ramon Sanchez claims the Virgin appeared to him and profaned Las Golondrinas, the Inquisition plans to investigate his accusation, so they ask the Abbess for a list of possible heretics, but death is preferable to such a betrayal of their order's first duty to protect females from the violence of men. They have been protected from the Inquisition because they host an orphanage and they obtained the patronage of Queen Isabella, but the presence of five girls who will be charged with heresy endangers the entire convent, so they have decided to send them to Spanish America to thwart the Inquisition, along with the Chronicle and the medal which are no longer safe at Las Golondrinas. Sor Emmanuela, the Abbess's sister, will serve as their chaperone, and she will wear the medal, while Esperanza, the oldest girl and Sor Beatriz's assistant, will be charged with protecting the Chronicle. Even as the nuns pray for deliverance, mercy and God's blessing, Sor Beatriz bids farewell to the Chronicle and the medal.

Chapter 1 changes location and time period as the second timeline and narrative begins in the spring of 1983 when a horrible hurricane strikes the coast of South America. After the storm, a young girl is found on the coast with a medal around her neck, so she is housed in the orphanage at the convent de Las Goldondrinas de Los Andes, foreshadowing the connection between the two narratives. A year after she is found, an American couple travel to the orphanage to adopt her. Sarah-Lynn believes "God's sent us to this little girl. I know she's special" (page 6). Meanwhile, inside the convent, Mother Superior worries about giving Isabelita up for adoption, but in addition to the civil war brewing, she recalls Sor Rosario's vision before the hurricane. Sor Rosario saw the Foundress who spoke of a warning, a promise and a reminder, stating that a terrible storm was coming but a gift would appear from the sea which must be saved. The vision spoke of the Chronicle which has not been seen in over 50 years, creating many questions for the nuns. Then, Mano del Diablo struck, and two sailors delivered a toddler wearing the Foundress's medal which disappeared long ago, so the nuns took the child in and named her Isabella Salome. While praying to be guided to the Chronicle, Mother Superior notices a loose panel on the lectern, which she pushes aside to find the Chronicle. Obviously, the child is connected to the restoration of the Order's relics, but Mother Superior knows there will be danger if the church authorities learn of this. Her concern increases when a journalist publishes an article about Isabelita, complete with a picture of the medal, which causes the bishop to inquire about the orphan. Luckily, an American missionary organization takes interest in the convent's orphanage, and before long, Mother Superior receives word that an American couple wants to adopt Isabelita. Since it is not safe for her at the convent, this seems like the answer to her prayers. When the Walkers finally arrive, they show Mother Superior pictures of their home, assuring her that they are respectable Christians who will raise the girl well. Mother Superior presents them with the medal and the Chronicle, requiring a promise that they will present them to the orphan on her sixteenth birthday. The promise readily given, Isabelita is fetched and presented to the Walkers who decide to name her Menina Ann Walker, a name that Mother Superior heartily approves of since it sounds so American that it will prevent the church from finding her. She signs the final adoption paperwork and prays that God will guide and protect Menina, though she is convinced she has made the right decision.



Discussion Question 1

Why is Sor Beatriz writing in the Chronicle for the last time in the Prologue?

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of the vision Sor Rosario sees before Mano del Diablo?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Mother Superior decide to give Isabelita up for adoption?

Vocabulary

Tribunal, intervene, profaning, pilgrimage, refuge, betrothal, diminished, novice, extracted, discernible.

Section 2: Chapters 2 & 3

Summary

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 is set in Laurel Run, Georgia, in March, 2000, Menina is an excellent student and a good girl who never gives her parents any problems. When she begins volunteering at the local Hispanic Community Center, she meets and begins dating the son of the center's benefactor, Theo Bonner III, and they are soon engaged. Still, Menina plans to finish college, despite the fact that the Bonners obviously have other plans for her future as the wife of a politician. While working on her thesis, Menina comes across paintings by Tristan Mendoza which spark her curiosity since his signature contain the image of the bird which matches her medal. She plans to visit the Prado in Spain since it houses the only known collection of Mendoza's work.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, Menina plans to discuss visiting Madrid for their honeymoon with Theo after his parents' dinner party, but when things go badly because his family insists she can put her education on hold, Theo and Menina pull over by a lake to discuss their plans. Unfortunately, Theo forces himself on Menina sexually, stealing her virginity and causing her to cancel their wedding. Menina does not tell anyone about the rape, but her best friend, Becky, can tell that something is wrong, so she insists that Menina visit Spain with a college group. Arrangements are quickly made, but Menina's flight lands in Malaga due to inclement weather.

Analysis

Chapter 2 takes place years later in Laurel Run, Georgia, where Menina Ann Walker is raised. Mother Superior's instructions for Menina to be a good girl stay with her long after she forgets the convent. She is an excellent student who never gives her parents any problems, and she receives a scholarship to Holly Hills college for girls. Though she is never disparaged for her Latin heritage, racism at school leads her to volunteer at the Hispanic Community Center where she catches the attention of the rich Theo Bonner III, whose parents are the Center's benefactors. He proposes within a year. Though Menina's best friend, Becky Taliaferro, is not thrilled by the engagement, she comes home to pick out a maid of honor dress. Menina explains that she and Theo will survive on his trust fund until she graduates from college. She plans on working and maybe even attending graduate school; however, her lunch with his mother Pauline alerts her that the Bonners have different expectations. Menina does not have much time to plan her wedding as she is busy working on her thesis.

She found a topic for the thesis in a privately printed book from 1900 under the name of the artist Tristan Mendoza who sparks her curiosity because he signs his paintings with



an image of a swallow which matches the bird on her medal. Since her research yields few results, Menina intends to visit Prado in Spain which houses the only known collection of his work. Still, she is excited that she will finally be able to sleep with Theo after their wedding since she is afraid she will lose him if she relinquishes her virginity before the ceremony. This foreshadows the dissolution of their relationship after he rapes her.

In Chapter 3, Menina hopes that she and Theo can visit Madrid on their honeymoon so she can research Mendoza's paintings. She plans to discuss it with him at a dinner party with the Bonners. Unfortunately, Theo informs her that they are on display because his political aspirations are happening faster than expected. Menina is infuriated as the Bonners claim she can put her plans on hold. On the way home, she and Theo get into an argument about her finishing college because he insists it is time to grow up and start a family. Menina insists on discussing their wedding, so Theo pulls over by a lake and suggests they should consummate their relationship now since she will have to marry him then. Menina refuses, but Theo forces himself on her, claiming it is no big deal since they are engaged. Menina considers whether the assault is her fault. But once home, she throws her ring at him and cancels the wedding. The next morning, Menina is distraught as she realizes she cannot tell anyone about the rape lest they blame her. So, she keeps it a secret, though her parents are not satisfied with her explanations of their breakup. She refuses to confide in Becky either, but Becky informs her that Professor Serafina Lennox is taking a class to Madrid next Saturday, insisting that Menina join them. Before long, arrangements are made, and Menina is on a flight to Madrid. She drinks herself unconscious, waking as they land in Malaga where they have been diverted due to inclement weather.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Menina's childhood in Laurel Run, Georgia.

Discussion Question 2

Why is Menina so intrigued by Tristan Mendoza?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Menina want to go to Madrid, and what happens to hasten her trip?

Vocabulary

Admonition, anachronisms, speculated, mortification, prominent, penitentiary, conjured, circulated, conspicuously.

Section 3: Chapters 4 & 5

Summary

Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, the story is set in Spain during Holy Week in April, 2000. Menina loses Professor Lennox in the airport, so she decides to take a bus. First, she calls her parents who inform her that a nice Catholic couple came looking for her because they want to see her medal. On the bus, Menina reads her guidebook. When the bus stops for an hour, she disembarks to eat, but her purse is stolen, so she goes to the police station to report the theft. However, Captain Alejandro Fernandez Galan is skeptical after learning she was born in South America. At first, he believes she is a prostitute. After Menina indignantly explains that she is writing a thesis, he begins to believe her. Still, there are no phones or hotels in the village, and he cannot leave until Easter celebrations have concluded, so he takes her to an old convent, Las Golondrinas. Menina objects to staying at the convent, but Alejandro tells her that there are many old paintings there, suggesting she may be able to find something of value that the nuns can sell to support themselves. Alejandro convinces Sor Teresa to admit Menina who is shown to a small room. She reads her guidebook and takes a nap. Bored, she decides to search for the paintings that Alejandro mentioned.

Chapter 5

In Chapter 5, Menina enters a room where she finds old, dust-covered statues and paintings. She examines the items, but when she decides to return to her room, she realizes she is lost. Finding herself in a dark room, she lights a candle and sees a dirty portrait with bread she had pocketed earlier. She is surprised that the painting depicts a young woman in fine clothing, but Sor Teresa appears and yells at her for wandering, accusing her of theft. Menina defends herself, claiming Alejandro suggested she look at the paintings, and when Sor Teresa rants about the captain and his whores, Menina objects that she is not a whore! Repentant, Sor Teresa informs Menina that the room was once used as a scriptorium where the convent's records were kept, and in regards to the portrait, she explains that many girls came to the convent long ago for help because the world was dangerous for girls on their own. She laments that the old stories of Las Golondrinas will soon be forgotten, so Menina tries to placate her by offering to retell their stories, even as she wonders what kind of stories the convent might have.

Analysis

In Chapter 4, Menina gets separated from the college group with which she is traveling so she decides to take a bus to Madrid. Her phone call to her parents reveals that the Church is looking for her, foreshadowing her danger. Menina's bad luck continues when



she disembarks from the bus to eat and her purse is stolen. She turns to the local police who is convinced she is a prostitute, but Menina is able to convince him of the truth of her identity. Still, he is unable to leave the town, so he escorts her to the local convent, Las Golondrinas, where she will be safe. This foreshadows the connection between Menina's narrative and that of the sixteenth century nuns in the first timeline. Though Menina objects to staying in the convent, her curiosity is piqued by the mention of old paintings, so she allows Alejandro to secure her a room at the convent.

In Chapter 5, Menina begins searching for the paintings at the convent, and she is quickly intrigued by a portrait of a young girl. When Sor Teresa catches her, she accuses Menina of trying to steal from the convent, explaining Captain Alejandro's affiliation with prostitutes, an accusation Menina vehemently refutes. Apologetically, Sor Teresa answers Menina's questions about the scriptorium and how the convent used to help girls in danger long ago, foreshadowing the contents of the Chronicle. Menina's offer to retell the stories of Las Golondrinas foreshadows the integral role she will play in the preservation of the ancient order's history.

Discussion Question 1

How does Alejandro react to Menina at first? How does he help her?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Alejandro insist that Menina stay at the convent?

Discussion Question 3

How does Sor Teresa react to Menina's study of the convent's paintings, and why?

Vocabulary

Swarthy, flourished, hypnotic, hyperventilating, latticed, faltered, pungent, tarnished, indignant, enticing.

Section 4: Chapters 6-8

Summary

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 is set in Madrid during the winter of 1504. The household of the Defensor del Santo Sepulchro family mourns for the countess as fifteen-year-old Isabella, the only daughter of the family, kneels at her mother's bier. Though Isabella was born lame, she is a vessel of the *limpieza de sangre*, a pure Catholic bloodline, so her father and the priest argue about her future. The priest wants her to join a convent, but her father hesitates because his wife encouraged Isabella's marriage as a safeguard for the family name. Feeling faint, Isabella can feel Alejandro watching, but they will be gone tomorrow. It is odd for her to link her fate to the household tutor which is why they were able to secretly fall in love.

Seminary student Fr. Alejandro Abenzucar joined the family as a tutor when Isabella was fourteen, and they soon developed an attraction for one another which led to discussions of love as they studied "The Divine Comedy." Finally, Alejandro confessed his love for Isabella, admitting "I am no Christian with celibacy in his heart but a Moor with blood in his veins" (page 92). He confided that his Muslim family was forced to convert after the Reconquista, else they would lose their titles and lives. However, their baptisms were just a formality, so Alejandro entered the church to allay suspicion. Though Isabella knows he is the enemy, she loves him and promises to keep his secret. They begin meeting at night. When Isabella's maid notices a lack of her monthly blood, Isabella bribes her to keep the secret for fear of what the Inquisition will do to her. Alejandro is excited when Isabella informs him of her pregnancy. They plot to run away to his cousins in Portugal, and the death of Isabella's mother provides the perfect opportunity. Unfortunately, Isabella runs into the priest's arms by mistake, and the priest has Alejandro arrested, accusing the infidel of seducing the count's daughter. Isabella is locked into her room where she manages to hide her enlarging belly. When her maid informs her that Alejandro is alive but working in an infirmary for the poor, Isabella bribes the maid to carry correspondence between her and Alejandro. Alejandro advises Isabella to flee to his parents with their child, and she pursues this plan even after learning that Alejandro has died of pestilence. Isabella is fearful. When the priest convinces her father to send her to a convent where her infamy will die with her, she persuades her father to let her choose the convent, deciding on Las Golondrinas because it is near the Valley of the Shadows where the Abenzucars live. As her journey begins, Isabella prays that they will get there before the baby arrives.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 is set in Las Golondrinas Convent, during the summer of 1505. Isabella is relieved when she finally reaches her destination, but as her labor pains begin, she tries to suppress the pain since she knows her child's life depends on her father's ignorance

of its existence. The nuns pull her inside the gate as her water breaks, and she slips to her knees, in pain and because she is trapped and will never reach the Abenzucars now.

Chapter 8

In Chapter 8, the nuns coach Isabella through her labor. Certain that she is dying, she begs them to have mercy on her infant. She wakes later to find a nun holding her child. The Abbess visits, and when Isabella fearfully protests the baby's innocence, the Abbess informs her that her daughter's name is Salome. She praises Isabella for hiding her condition from her father. But, after Isabella confesses the entire affair, the Abbess warns her that there could be terrible consequences for Isabella, Salome, and the Abenzucars if anyone learns of Salome's birth. So, she advises her to take her vows. As the nuns leave her alone with her daughter, Isabella is relieved that the ordeal is over. Hugging Salome, she assures her that Alejandro led them to safety.

Analysis

Chapter 6 reverts back in time to 1504 and takes place in Madrid. Fifteen-year-old Isabella mourns her mother's death even as she plans to run away with the father of her unborn child. This chapter focuses on their romance and why it is forbidden; Alejandro is a Muslim, a known enemy of the Christian Isabella. The argument between Isabella's father and the priest about whether she should join a convent or marry foreshadows her confinement in a convent after the discovery of her illicit romance. Alejandro pursues Isabella, and soon, they become intimately involved. When Isabella learns that she is pregnant, they decide to run away together, but their plans are thwarted when the priest uncovers their intention and has Alejandro arrested. Isabella and Alejandro secretly correspond, and he urges her to flee to his family. After Alejandro dies, Isabella is determined to save her unborn child, the only thing left of her beloved, so when her father agrees to send her to a convent, she convinces him to let her choose her future home, researching convents until she finds one near Alejandro's family home, Las Golondrinas. She plans to seek refuge with the Abenzucars, but she hopes that her father will not discover her pregnancy before she gets to the convent.

In Chapter 7, Isabella barely makes it to the convent before her water breaks and she goes into labor. As the gates shut at Las Golondrinas, she mourns her inability to reach the Abenzucars, foreshadowing that Isabella will spend the rest of her life at the convent.

In Chapter 8, Isabella wakes several days later to find that she has given birth to a daughter whom the nuns name Salome. She is fearful for her daughter, but the nuns assure her of Salome's safety. Furthermore, the Abbess praises her for hiding her pregnancy from her father, confirming Isabella's fear that her father would harm the infant since it was fathered by a Moor. The kindness of the nuns indicates that Isabella and Salome will both be safe at Las Golondrinas. The Abbess's advice that Isabella take her final vows foreshadows her decision to become a nun to secure the safety of herself

and her daughter. Furthermore, the Abbess assures Isabella that many great nuns were mothers and encourages her to confess as the Abbess can take confession by a special dispensation from Bishop St. Valerius.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Isabella's relationship with Alejandro so taboo in 1504?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Isabella hide her pregnancy?

Discussion Question 3

How does the Abbess protect Isabella?

Vocabulary

Elaborate, requiem, melancholy, pedigree, prominence, negotiations, machinations, prevailed, fiefdom, decomposition.

Section 5: Chapter 9

Summary

Chapter 9

In January 1509, Sor Beatriz begins keeping the Chronicle at the Abbess's command, beginning by recording her own consecration into the order. Three years after Salome's birth, Isabella takes her final vows and becomes Sor Beatriz. The Abbess permits Salome to stay with her mother who works with Sor Angela in the scriptorium, taking over after the older nun's death. When the Abbess realizes many of their scrolls are disintegrated from age, she charges Sor Beatriz with copying their Gospel and scrolls into a book gifted to the convent from the Abenzucars so it will not be lost. She worries because when the Foundress last appeared in 1470, she warned of the Inquisition's interest in Las Golondrinas, advising them to protect the Gospel and the Abbess's medal. The Abbess plans to do this by establishing a mission in Gran Canaria. Las Golondrinas endures several years of hardship, but when the Abbess receives word that the Inquisition suspects them of heresy, she starts planning to send a mission to Gran Canaria. Meanwhile, Sor Beatriz is relieved that she gets to spend so much time with Salome who trains as her assistant in the scriptorium and is eager to receive her novice's habit. In 1523, the Foundress again warns the Abbess of the Inquisition's pending visit, so she plans to send twelve nuns to Gran Canaria, including Salome who will act as scribe. The medal and Chronicle will be sent later after the mission is established. Unfortunately, Las Golondrinas never hears from the twelve nuns who leave, so they are certain they were taken by pirates or shipwreck.

Analysis

In Chapter 9, Sor Beatriz records her own consecration into the order, noting that she was Isabella who gave birth to Salome and thus foreshadowing the important of her lineage in this narrative. Since many of the convent's records are disintegrating from age, the Abbess charges Sor Beatriz with copying them into the Chronicle, an important duty that she is well equipped for since, unlike most ladies at the time, Isabella was well-educated. Because the Foundress warned Las Golondrinas that they must protect the medal and the Gospel from the Inquisition, the Abbess begins planning to send a mission to Gran Canaria after receiving word that the Inquisition plans to visit the convent; this foreshadows the mission that leaves Las Golondrinas. That summer, the convent receives two new innocents whose names are unknown, making Sor Beatriz sorry for their mothers and grateful that she is not separated from Salome. The winter of 1510 is difficult, and food is sparse. The famine extends into the spring of 1512, with the nuns fasting often. In the spring of 1514, Las Golondrinas receives a letter from the Holy Office that they are suspected of sheltering heretics. In September, 1520, two princesses visit the convent and renew their grandmother's promise of patronage. Salome spends half of her days with her mother, helping with small tasks. At age 15,



she wants to become a nun, and though her mother does not agree, she cannot imagine sending her away alone, so she decides "Salome's life will be as God wills" (page 126). Salome acquires her novice's habit in the summer of 1521.

In April, 1523, the Foundress appears to the Abbess to warn that the Inquisition is coming so she must send the Gospel and medal away for safekeeping. The Abbess plans to send twelve nuns to establish a mission convent in Gran Canaria, but others will follow later with the medal and the Chronicle. Two months later, Sor Beatriz is distraught when the Abbess suggests that Salome should accompany the mission as scribe, but Salome is eager to go and fulfill her duties, so her mother prays that they will be reunited. By the next year, Las Golondrinas still has not heard from the missionaries, but Sor Beatriz is grateful Salome has gone away when the Inquisition accuses Las Golondrinas of harboring a Moorish bastard. By September, 1524, illness spreads through the convent, and the Inquisition claims it is punishment for their sins. As time passes, the nuns at Las Golondrinas still receive no news from their mission convent, so they become certain they were taken by pirates or shipwreck. Sor Beatriz ages and feels certain she will die soon, but she still she cares for the ailing Abbess. Sor Emmanuela, the Abbess's sister, joins them in spring of 1540.

Discussion Question 1

Why does the Abbess charge Sor Beatriz with keeping the Chronicle?

Discussion Question 2

Describe Salome's youth.

Discussion Question 3

Why does Las Golondrinas send twelve nuns to Gran Canaria, and what happens to the mission?

Vocabulary

Consecration, venture, indulgence, infirmaries, haphazard, patronage, attributed, doctrines, scriptorium, succession.

Section 6: Chapters 10 & 11

Summary

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 is set in the Las Golondrinas Convent in Spain during 2000. Sor Teresa tells Menina about how they used to host many pilgrims. She also talks of how Alejandro studied to become a police officer in America but returned to Spain after his father's death. She disapproves of his many girlfriends but is finally convinced that Menina is not a bad girl. After discussing Alejandro's suggestion about the paintings, Sor Teresa introduces Menina to Sor Clara, agreeing they need money because they do not bother Rome due to disagreements during the Inquisition. Sor Clara is stunned when she notices Menina's medal. During her explanation of her time in the orphanage, Menina mentions Tristan Mendoza and is shocked when Sor Clara says she took inventory of the paintings when she was younger and remembers that Mendoza's name was listed six times! Menina is excited though the claim seems unlikely.

Chapter 11

In Chapter 11, Sor Clara escorts Menina to the Abbess's rooms to see the paintings. Menina is anxious to return to the girl's portrait. While cleaning it, she learns that the girl's name was Maria Salome Beltran. Sor Teresa joins them to tell Menina that Alejandro is at the gate and wants to talk to her. When Menina joins him, she expresses surprise that the convent was not looted during the Spanish Civil War, but she hopes to find valuable paintings to help the nuns support themselves. Alejandro explains that Sor Teresa is his mother's aunt, and he lives locally because he promised his father that he would help her. Later, Menina wanders through the corridors where she is intrigued by a portrait of Fr. Ramon Jimenez of the Tribunal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisition. Back in her room, she dreams of a girl being burnt as a heretic, and waking in terror, she is unable to return to sleep.

Analysis

Chapter 10 returns to Menina at Las Golondrinas in 2000 as Sor Teresa tells her about Alejandro's past, foreshadowing his own confession of his reasons for staying in Spain instead of living in America. Since Sor Teresa is finally convinced that Menina is not a bad girl, she agrees to let Menina look at the paintings. She introduces her to Sor Clara who catalogued the convent's paintings in her youth. Sor Clara is the first to notice Menina's medal, but all Menina can share is that she spent her youth in the orphanage in South America. Menina is excited when Sor Clara tells her that there are six paintings by Mendoza at the convent, and this discovery foreshadows her search for the paintings as well as her discovery of how the paintings are related to the Chronicle, the medal and her own heritage.



In Chapter 11, Menina's anxious perusal of the paintings is interrupted by Alejandro who is excited at her hopes of finding valuable paintings to help the nuns support themselves. He also explains that the reason he is so concerned with Las Golondrinas is because Sor Teresa is his aunt and he promised his father to watch after her. Later, Menina is disturbed by a portrait of Inquisitor Fr. Ramon Jimenez, the same man who searched Las Golondrinas for heretics in the sixteenth century, and her dream of a girl being burnt as a heretic indicates that Menina has some sort of supernatural power.

Discussion Question 1

What does Sor Teresa tell Menina about Alejandro in Chapter 10?

Discussion Question 2

How does Sor Clara react to the sight of Menina's medal?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Menina examine the paintings in the convent so diligently?

Vocabulary

Dignitaries, refectory, penances, claustrophobic, collapsed, modernize, vigorously, commissioned, glaucoma, colonnaded.

Section 7: Chapters 12-13

Summary

Chapter 12

In Chapter 12, Sor Beatriz finally gets a new assistant in autumn, 1548 when Esperanza collapses at their gate. The only child of the King's advisor, Esperanza grew sick as a child after seeing another girl burn at the stake as a heretic, so her nurse is dismissed and she becomes her father's companion. He reveals his possession of many forbidden books which Esperanza studies at length, but after her father's death, her guardian accuses her of heresy, claiming he cannot marry her off because her mother was a Muslim. Esperanza visits Don Jaime, her father's friend, who admits that her mother was a Muslim nun who ran away to marry her father with the plan of fleeing Spain and returning to the Muslim faith. Unfortunately, she died in childbirth, but first, she exhorted her husband to promise to raise their child as a Christian. Don Jaime assures Esperanza that her guardian is too greedy to relinquish her to the Inquisition, but he soon sends a new servant, Maria, to aid her. When Esperanza's guardian announces her betrothal to the evil Don Guzman, Maria and Esperanza dress as boys and sneak away, managing a difficult journey before they finally arrive at the convent. Esperanza worries that she will be killed if she is found, but her health improves and she assists Sor Beatriz with the Chronicle. When a new child arrives in rags, the Abbess sends for Sor Beatriz and Esperanza.

Chapter 13

In Chapter 13, Sor Beatriz notes that Luz is a quiet, dwarf child whose dying grandmother sent her to the convent. Luz was born to her grandmother's only daughter after an affair with a dwarf, and her mother's husband killed both of her parents. Luz's grandmother heard that Las Golondrinas would shelter her, so they do, and the Abbess orders Esperanza to add Luz's story to the Chronicle "to bear witness to the inhumanity and cruelty that women suffer" (page 182). Esperanza cares for Luz who proficiently assists the sewing mistress, and the Abbess charges Luz with sewing an altar cloth to be sent to the Queen with a respectful letter because it is good to remind the Queen that she is the protectress of Las Golondrinas.

Analysis

As the narrative returns to Sor Beatriz in 1548, Esperanza is introduced, and her story is told. Because Esperanza's father was a heretic who housed many forbidden books, Esperanza was better educated than most women in her time; however, when her father dies, her new guardian insists on marrying her to a cruel man. Luckily, Don Jaime, another of her father's friends, sends a servant to help Esperanza escape and to lead her to Los Golondrinas where she is taken in and assured of her safety. Esperanza's



education makes her a prime candidate to become Sor Beatriz's assistant, foreshadowing her eventual vocation as the new scribe of the Chronicle. In Chapter 13, Luz finds shelter at Las Golondrinas after her mother is killed for her infidelity with Luz's father, a dwarf. Esperanza takes Luz under her wing, and Luz becomes quite proficient at seamstress work, so the Abbess assigns her the duty of sewing an altar cloth for the Queen to remind her that they need her protection.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Esperanza come to Las Golondrinas?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Luz come to Las Golondrinas?

Discussion Question 3

Why does the Abbess order Esperanza to record Luz's story in the Chronicle?

Vocabulary

Menial, exquisite, tapestries, penitents, anathema, Inquisition, celibacy, heresy, poultices, apothecaries.

Section 8: Chapters 14-16

Summary

Chapter 14

In Chapter 14, in Spain in April, 2000, Sor Clara shows Menina to another room where she believes the Mendoza paintings are stored, and while she sleeps, Menina looks through the paintings, some of which she finds disturbing. In the afternoon, she finds a painting depicting Jesus casting out demons which is housed in a black Venetian frame. Menina cleans the painting until she uncovers Mendoza's name, but her excitement is short-lived as Alejandro soon arrives with the message that some people are looking for her and do not want the police to know. Menina suspects Theo, but Alejandro's friend recognized them as members of an old brotherhood who are powerful in the Vatican and will do anything to protect the church. It is obvious that Menina is more than she admits, and when Alejandro asks why, she shows him her medal. When he questions her about Theo, she confesses that she was raped but grows angry when Alejandro assures her it is not her fault. Menina leaves him, distraught because her life is in ruins.

Chapter 15

In Chapter 15, Alejandro sends chocolate to Menina the next day, but she is sick of him and everything else. She continues looking at the paintings, finding five works by Mendoza which she considers a major discovery, yet Sor Clara insists there is a sixth work. Alejandro visits again, but this time, he insists he needs Menina's help; he wants her to open the gate tonight to admit an Albanian girl who is in trouble. Since Menina objects to sheltering one of his whores, Alejandro admits that his promise to his father is his cover. He is on a surveillance assignment for the Spanish authorities and Interpol to monitor a criminal ring that specializes in smuggling women. His supposed girlfriends are actually undercover policewomen who help him monitor the men involved. The girl he wants Menina to help is named Almira, and she needs to be hidden because she overheard the men talking about importing more girls for Semana Santa. Menina knows this is dangerous, but she has to help, though she is shaken by the thoughts of trafficking girls.

Chapter 16

In Chapter 16, in the summer of 1549, Sor Beatriz notes that it would be Salome's forty-fifth birthday, but God sends Esperanza, Luz and now Pia to fill the hole in her heart. At age 14, Pia is self-possessed. Her grandmother was captured in her youth and became a courtesan, but her mother was raised Protestant and married a man at age 17 who did not want children. When his wife became pregnant, he was furious and directed his anger at Pia. Pia's mother dies when she is ten, so her father tries to sell her into prostitution, but when she fights her captor, the carriage wrecks and a woman pulls her out. Sor Sophia is sleeping in her carriage and wakes to news of an accident and Pia

being thrust inside, but the door is closed before she could demand answers so she brings Pia to Los Golondrinas.

Analysis

Chapters 14 and 15 take place during the second timeline which focuses on Menina. Menina continues to search through the paintings stored in the convent, and she is very excited when she finds one signed by Mendoza. Alejandro's visit alerts Menina to the fact that a couple is looking for her, mimicking her parents' earlier announcement of the same, but her danger is further foreshadowed because Alejandro's friend recognizes them as dangerous zealots of the Church. He also questions her about Theo since she first believes Theo is searching for her, and though Alejandro assures Menina that the rape was not her fault after she confesses that Theo took advantage of her, she is still furious and storms back into the convent. In the next chapter, Menina finds four more works by Mendoza, but Sor Clara's insistence that there are six paintings foreshadows the eventual discovery of the final Mendoza painting stored at Las Golondrinas. When Alejandro visits Menina to ask her to admit Almira into the convent, earlier foreshadowing is fulfilled as he explains the true purpose behind his residence in this antiquated little town; he is on an assignment to stop a criminal enterprise of smugglers who abduct women to sell into sex slavery. Menina finally begins to trust Alejandro now that she realizes the truth behind his more covert dealings, so she agrees to help Almira. Menina's new view of Alejandro also foreshadows their romantic relationship.

Returning to 1549 in Chapter 16, Sor Beatriz still mourns for Salome, but a third girl arrives at Los Golondrinas to fill the hole left in her heart by her daughter's absence. Sor Beatriz explains Pia's past and the reason for her arrival at Los Golondrinas; her father did not want children, so after his wife dies, he tries to sell Pia into prostitution. Luckily, Sor Sophia happens to come upon the accident Pia causes when she tries to escape, so she is concealed at Las Golondrinas for her safety.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the Mendoza paintings that Menina finds in Chapter 14.

Discussion Question 2

What does Alejandro ask Menina to do in Chapter 15? Why?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Pia come to Las Golondrinas?

Vocabulary

Ornate, permeated, gingerly, disintegrated, disoriented, communion, methodical, illuminated, syphilitic, insipid.

Section 9: Chapters 17-19

Summary

Chapter 17

In Chapter 17, the next summer, the Abbess receives a curious message for the urgent removal of a hidden girl, so Marisol is retrieved, but she is defiant and does not want to become a nun. Marisol is in danger because of the rumor that she is connected to Tristan Mendoza. Marisol's mother was orphaned young and raised in a convent, but when she came of age, she went to court and caught the attention of Don Diego who married her and commissioned a painting by Mendoza. Don Balthazar, the crown prince, was also intrigued and raped her while her husband was away at sea. She was called to court for her lying in since her husband vanished, and as she lay dying, her cousin who raised her, Josefa, sends Marisol to the nuns. Marisol insists she will never forgive her mother or Josefa for sending her away.

Chapter 18

In Chapter 18, in autumn of 1551, Marisol is joined by nine-year-old Sanchia whose family was arrested on suspicion of being Jews, but as they were being burned, her mother ordered her to run away to a nun who conveyed her to Las Golondrinas. Meanwhile, the Abbess receives a letter from the Inquisition announcing their imminent visit. In November, the Abbess has a vision of their Foundress who tells her to send their brides to Spanish America. At the beginning of 1552, newly initiated nun Sor Serafina tells the others about her brothers' adventures in Spanish America, but Sor Beatriz does not believe her claims that they found nuns of their order. She does not dare hope, yet it would be miraculous if their mission made it to Spanish America.

Chapter 19

In Chapter 19, in the spring of 1553, a disheveled man arrives at Los Golondrinas looking for a girl, and the Abbess suspects he is the father of one of their girls, come to reclaim her. Introducing himself as Tristan Mendoza, the visitor talks of Don Balthazar's heir, warning she is in danger from the authorities so he has come to ask forgiveness and warn her of the danger because he is her father. Marisol is silent after hearing his story, and she is upset to learn her mother is dead. However, she hates her mother and Mendoza. Mendoza wants to make amends by painting a portrait of Marisol, so the Abbess agrees to let him paint her with other girls to make reparation and to take the girls' minds off the impending visit from the Inquisition. Upon learning that the Inquisition will visit the convent in a week, the Abbess plans to send her brides to Spanish America to find husbands.

Analysis

Chapter 17 serves to introduce Marisol, another girl who receives shelter from Los Golondrinas. The mention of Mendoza suggests that Marisol may be his child, foreshadowing this revelation as well as connecting Mendoza's work to Los Golondrinas and, ultimately, Menina. Like the other girls, Marisol has a sad past, but Marisol's vivacity foreshadows her future actions as does her anger at her mother and her refusal to become a nun. Sanchia joins the rescued girls at Los Golondrinas in late 1551 after her parents are killed for being Jewish. The Abbess begins to scheme to send another mission after receiving a letter from the Inquisition announcing their intention to visit the convent, especially since she has a vision of the Foundress ordering her to send their brides to Spanish America. The cryptic vision seems to make more sense after Sor Serafina informs the others that her brothers found another Los Golondrinas convent in Spanish America, suggesting that their mission from several decades earlier survived. Sor Beatriz is excited at the news, but she does not dare hope that Salome is still alive. All of this foreshadows the imminent departure of Esperanza, Marisol, Sanchia and Pia.

In Chapter 19, Mendoza arrives to find his daughter, fulfilling earlier foreshadowing that he is Marisol's father. Mendoza offers to paint her, but the Abbess insists he paint her and the other girls as a means of distracting them from the upcoming visit from the Inquisition. Mendoza paints the girls for a week, and he wants to paint the chapel, but he dies before he can. The mention of this painting foreshadows Menina finding it in the twenty-first century. When the Abbess receives a letter from the Inquisition that Fr. Ramon Jimenez, foreshadowing his importance, will visit in a week to seek heretics, she prepares to send Esperanza, Marisol, Pia and Sanchia to find husbands in the new world, foreshadowing their journey to Spanish America, as the narrative returns to the Prologue where Sor Beatriz prepares for their departure.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Marisol come to Las Golondrinas, and how does she feel about the convent?

Discussion Question 2

How does Sor Serafina give Sor Beatriz hope in Chapter 18?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Tristan Mendoza visit Las Golondrinas in Spring 1553?

Vocabulary

Radiates, defiance, connoisseur, hovering, domestic, acclaim, embrasure, countenance, coaxed, writhed.

Section 10: Chapters 20-23

Summary

Chapter 20

From the Chronicle of Las Sors Santas de Jesus, by the pen of Esperanza, July, 1552, At Sea, Esperanza and the other girls are on a boat headed to Spanish America where they are sent to determine if the convent there is the mission that left Los Golondrinas years ago. Beginning to record their journey, Esperanza explains that they were sent to find Los Golondrinas de Los Andres and to find husbands to avoid the Inquisition's visit. Esperanza is burdened by the knowledge contained in the Chronicle which "considered logically, undoes any justification for Christian persecution of Jews and Muslims, and testifies to what we believe in common" (page 259). Sor Emmanuela chaperones the girls, but she dies on the ship over to Spanish America; luckily, as the girls fear for their life in the storm, the Foundress visits them and assures them of the importance of their mission.

Chapter 21

In Chapter 21, the Inquisition visits Los Golondrinas upon evidence from Isabella's father that they are harboring a Moorish bastard, but the Inquisition finds no evidence of heresy at the convent.

Chapter 22

In Chapter 22, a couple of gentlemen direct the novices toward the convent in the mountains, but Esperanza is distraught when Marisol is kidnapped by bandits on their way.

Chapter 23

The girls finally arrive at Los Golondrinas de Los Andes in Chapter 23, and during a conversation with Mother Superior, Esperanza learns that the founders of the convent match the names of the missionaries that left Spain; she also learns that Salome married and had children, one of whom is Don Miguel, the man who directed them to the convent. Esperanza is relieved to deliver the medal to its rightful destination, but she hangs onto the Chronicle for the time being.

Analysis

Fulfilling earlier foreshadowing, Esperanza, Pia, Sanchia and Marisol leaves Los Golondrinas for Spanish America in July 1552, and also foreshadowed earlier, Esperanza serves as the scribe of the group, recording their journey. Since she is supposed to determine if the convent is from Los Golondrinas of Andalusia, she is given



questions to ascertain the nuns' identities before relinquishing the medal and the Chronicle, but the girls' other mission is to find husbands. Since Sor Beatriz and the Abbess also charged her with recording the journey, Esperanza begins by explaining they were summoned and informed that the Inquisition is coming so they are sent to search for Los Golondrinas de Los Andes and to find husband. She is sad to leave the convent but has little time for reflection. Mendoza's painting of the girls will stay in Spain, so they leave a part of themselves behind. Bidding goodbye to the nuns, Esperanza and the other girls, chaperoned by Sor Emmanuela, are escorted to Seville where they hastily board their ship. Sor Emmanuela gets sea sick, and when they get caught in a storm, she worsens and dies. As the girls fear they will all die, they feel the Foundress in the room as she assures them that all will be well but they must trust in God. Furthermore, she informs Esperanza that the medal was a gift from her brother, and along with the Chronicle, it will play a role in bringing peace another time that Christians, Jews and Muslims are at war. The girls are relieved when they finally reach land, but Esperanza warns that she will not be able to write again until they are settled somewhere. In Chapter 21: Of the Matter of the Holy Sisters of Jesus and of the Matter of an Examination of the Convent of Las Golondrinas for the Discovery of Heresy and Enemies of the True Faith Among Them, the Inquisition undertakes an investigation in 1552 upon evidence from Count Jaime Defendor del Santo Sepulchre that the convent secretly shields Jews and Muslims, but they find little evidence, leaving them inclined to believe that the Count was mistaken in his suspicions against this pious order of nuns. Additionally, the Queen was moved by an altar cloth gifted to her from the convent, so she defends the purity of their faith. No evidence of heresy is found at Los Golondrinas.

In Chapter 22, as Esperanza resumes the Chronicle from the New World in October 1552, she is so grieved that she would abandon the Chronicle if not for her promise to Sor Beatriz and the Abbess. After arriving in Spanish America, they ask about the convent, only to learn that it is located a week's journey into the mountains, so the gentleman who provides this information escorts them to the convent of La Concepcion where they stay for a few days until their journey is arranged. On the fifth day of their journey toward Las Golondrinas de Los Andes, Marisol is kidnapped by a group of bandits, and though the other girls reach their destination, they pray for their lost companion. In Chapter 23, Esperanza presents the Abbess's letter of introduction, and she and the girls are admitted to the convent. She tells Mother Superior about Sor Emmanuela and Marisol, but she does not have time to speak to her privately until the next day when she discovers that the names of the founders match what she was told, except there was no Salome! Upon further inquiry, Esperanza discovers that Salome married and had children; in fact, Don Miguel, the man who directed them to the convent, is Salome's son, and Esperanza's interest in Don Miguel foreshadows their eventual marriage. As Esperanza gives the medal to Mother Superior, she is relieved to deliver it to its destination, but she keeps the Chronicle for the time being as her last link to Spain and Sor Beatriz. She decides against writing to Spain for fear of what may have happened since her departure.



Discussion Question 1

Describe the nuns' journey to Spanish America in 1552.

Discussion Question 2

What is the result of the Inquisition visit to Las Golondrinas?

Discussion Question 3

Upon finding Las Golondrinas de Los Andes, what does Esperanza learn about Salome?

Vocabulary

Vices, dormitory, testifies, protruding, commended, ferociously, illegitimacy, sequestered, inimical, restored.

Section 11: Chapters 24-27

Summary

Chapters 24-25

While Esperanza misses Marisol in Chapter 24 and 25, Sanchia cannot wait to marry and leave the convent. Pia makes a new friend, Zarita, who is a young woman residing at the convent while she awaits her divorce. The girls are all stunned when a commotion announces the arrival of Marisol who was kidnapped by Don Tomas because he wanted to choose his own wife. Since her husband is rich, Marisol tells the girls to split her dowry among themselves, promising to have them visit her once she gives birth to the baby in her belly.

Chapter 26

In Chapter 26, Esperanza writes from the Beltran Hacienda two months later as she and the others visit Marisol. It has already been two weeks, and while there are many single men among the Beltrons' acquaintances, Esperanza does not like how they look at her and the other girls like livestock, especially the way they circle the indifferent Pia. The girls stay for a month to attend the regional governor's ball where Esperanza is pleasantly surprised to encounter Don Miguel who expresses delight at receiving her when she mentions that she wants to visit his mother to convey messages from Spain. Pia grows alarmed when Sanchia disappears, and after finding her with the musicians and dancing girls, Pia and Esperanza keep a close eye on Sanchia for the rest of the evening. Though it is already September, Marisol will not allow her friends to return to the convent because of a smallpox outbreak. Marisol's time comes, and as she screams for two days, Esperanza hates him and all men for causing such agony. Marisol gives birth to a son and daughter who are tended to by a wet nurse while Esperanza, Pia and Sanchia tend to Marisol. A month later, Marisol is well enough to leave her bed, so it is time to return to the convent.

Chapter 27

In October, 1553, in Chapter 27, the girls were told that the smallpox had abated, but when they arrive, they come upon Zarita's funeral. Pia is devastated, and her grief leads her to shear her hair, claiming God has revealed her vocation. Pia is carried to the infirmary, but first, she snatches the medal from Mother Superior and no one can find it. Esperanza visits Pia daily, forgetting Salome in her concern for her friend. When an invitation for Esperanza and Sanchia arrives, Mother Superior insists that they accept.

Analysis

In Chapter 24, Esperanza notes that Christmas is celebrated differently in Spanish America, and though the other girls enjoy themselves, she misses Marisol. In May 1553



in Chapter 25, Salome has yet to respond to Mother Superior's letter. Sanchia is eager to find a husband and leave the convent, but Pia is content as she has made a new friend, Zarita, who stays at the convent while awaiting her divorce. Mother Superior insists Esperanza must marry first since she is the oldest, but she has not found a suitable man yet; this foreshadows Mother Superior's continued attempts to find an appropriate husband for Esperanza. The arrival of a well-dressed married woman causes a commotion in the courtyard, and Esperanza is overjoyed to find Marisol who was kidnapped by Don Tomas because he wanted to marry a wife of his own choosing before his mother chose for him. Dona Luisa, his mother, was not happy about his marriage, but since Marisol came from Los Golondrinas, Dona Luis finds pleasure in the fact that her son will have a legitimate heir. Marisol is now pregnant, so she plans to have her friends visit her soon, foreshadowing this trip, but since the Beltrans are rich and have no need of her dowry, she instructs the others to split it amongst themselves. In Chapter 26, Esperanza, Pia and Sanchia visit Marisol before she has her children. The Beltrans' male acquaintances examine the girls like cattle, disgusting Esperanza and Pia, but Sanchia still wants a husband immediately. Jealous of the attention the men give Pia, Sanchia flirts with them, growing angry when Don Tomas insists she is too young to marry. At the governor's ball, Esperanza is excited to see Don Miguel, foreshadowing their romantic relationship and eventual marriage. Meanwhile, Sanchia's obsession with men, musicians and dancing girls foreshadows her future as a famous seductress. Their return to the convent is delayed by an outbreak of smallpox, foreshadowing the death of Zarita whom Pia is concerned for. While Marisol is in labor, Esperanza hates all men for causing such agony, but as soon as Marisol's health is restored, Esperanza, Sanchia and Pia return to the convent. In Chapter 27, foreshadowing is fulfilled as the girls return to the convent in time to see Zarita's funeral. The loss of her friend causes Pia to lose her mind, and the fact that she hides the Foundress's medal foreshadows its reappearance later in the narrative. Salome's invitation for Esperanza and Sanchia to visit her home foreshadows the visit. It is a relief to leave the sad convent as a beautiful carriage arrives to convey them to the Aguilar estate.

Discussion Question 1

What happens to Marisol after she is kidnapped?

Discussion Question 2

Describe Sanchia's wild tendencies in Spanish America.

Discussion Question 3

Why does Pia go crazy? How does she act?



Vocabulary

Concubines, inquiries, betrothed, hierarchy, destitute, impertinent, compensations, ecclesiastical, formidable.

Section 12: Chapters 28-29

Summary

Chapter 28

In Chapter 28, Esperanza writes from Salome's home, the Hacienda of the Sun and the Moon, in January, 1554, noting that Salome is nothing like the fashionable colonial ladies; in fact, she resembles Sor Beatriz in looks and manners as she welcomes Esperanza and Sanchia into her home. Salome wrote her mother many times without receiving a response, but Esperanza assures her that her letters were not received. Esperanza wishes that Don Miguel would visit, yet Salome's hesitance to discuss his absence convinces her that he must live with his mistress and children as is the fashion here. It takes a week for Salome to share her story. She and the others left Spain 30 years ago for Gran Canaria, but a storm swept them off course, and they were shipwrecked on land where they were surrounded by warriors with painted faces. The sailors protected the nuns by indicating prayer and pointing to the sky, and that evening, native women led the nuns to their city in the woods where God sends them a sign. They hear swallows chirping, and Sor Maria Manuela believes they are his way of telling the nuns "we cannot do God's work if we give way to luxury and comfort. God must have led us here instead of Gran Canaria to establish our mission. We must return to a lifestyle proper for nuns, learn the natives' language, and make ourselves useful in this place" (page 317). Thus, the nuns begin working with and learning from the Incan women. They also discover that the Incans are very violent, but the sailors' gestures were taken to indicate that the women are Virgins of the Sun. When they learn of the natives' practice of human sacrifice, they are convinced God sent them to end this practice, so they set up a chapel and consecrate Sor Maria Manuela as Mother Superior. They use two rooms for an infirmary and one for a school, but their intent for their novices to take final vows is delayed by sickness and famine. The city decides to sacrifice the Commander's two daughters, but before the girls can be led to their doom, an earthquake ravages the village, so the nuns house the girls. A week later, the Commander visits and claims that the gods did not will his daughters' deaths, but his wife died in the earthquake so it is his right as the earthly embodiment of the Sun God to take a virgin as his concubine, indicating Salome. Salome explains to Mother Superior that he is bargaining his daughters' lives for one of the nuns. She convinces him that she must become his wife. A month later, they are married, and he takes her to the Hacienda of the Sun and the Moon. Salome loves the Commander, and they yield five children.

Chapter 29

In Chapter 29, back at the convent, Mother Superior informs Esperanza that Don Hector Santiago wants to marry her, so she agrees to consider his proposal. Sanchia grows wild, frequently slipping away to join parties. She speaks of her family, insisting that she must remember them or they die again. She obtains a copy of the Old Testament,



determined to become a Jew again, though she knows it is dangerous as evidenced by the scars on her legs, but "these remind me that I must find a way to be my parents' daughter. That is why the Almighty has allowed me to live" (page 335). Esperanza agrees to Don Hector's proposal on the condition that Sanchia can live with them, and he agrees. Sanchia objects, but Esperanza has no choice since her dowry is nearly gone. She tries not to think about Don Miguel as her wedding approaches too quickly. Sanchia disappears again, and Esperanza prays for her return because she needs a friend beside her. Still, she must fulfill her promise to her father, and she and Sanchia cannot become nuns because it "would involve too much pretense and betrayal of what we are" (page 337).

Analysis

In Chapter 28, Esperanza and Sanchia visit Salome's home where they learn about the time she has passed since leaving Spain. During their visit, Esperanza wishes Don Miguel would stop by, foreshadowing her romantic interest in Salome's son, but her belief that he must live with his mistress indicates that she is trying to distance herself from him. Salome explains that their ship headed for Gran Canaria was blown off course and landed in South America, explaining the reason that the original mission was never heard from again. When she and the other nuns were confronted by Incan warriors, they were saved by gestures indicating their status as nuns which the natives interpreted to mean that the nuns were Virgins of the Sun. As they are led into a native city, the nuns find swallows and are convinced that this is a sign from God that they should establish their convent in this location. Because of this sign, the nuns focus their energy on learning about the natives, and this knowledge further convinces them that God has sent them here to end the practice of human sacrifice. The nuns establish an infirmary and a school where they teach the Commander's two daughters. When famine leads to the decision to sacrifice the two daughters, an earthquake shakes the town as the girls say goodbye to the nuns, and this seems to be a message from God or the gods, depending on the viewpoint. A week later, the Commander visits and offers to let his daughters live if he can take a nun as his wife; since Salome has not yet taken her final orders, she agrees to the arrangement, and they spend a happy life together. Meanwhile, the Incans begin sacrificing their girls by leaving them at the convent gate. When the Spanish arrive and slaughter the Incans, Salome convinces her husband to be baptized, so he is appointed governor of the region. After three weeks, Salome is tired, but Esperanza believes her eagerness for her guests to depart is connected to her expectation of Don Miguel's arrival. She tries to ignore her disappointment at not seeing him, again foreshadowing her romantic interest in Don Miguel. In Chapter 29, Mother Superior finally finds a husband for Esperanza. Though Esperanza is not thrilled by the choice, she agrees since she feels she has no other option. Meanwhile, Sanchia's wildness is increasing which foreshadows her future lifestyle. She begins studying the Jewish religion again because she is determined to be her parents' daughter. Sanchia does not agree with Esperanza's decision to marry Don Hector Santiago, and her disappearance foreshadows her scheme. Additionally, Esperanza's attempts to avoid thinking of Don Miguel further foreshadow her romantic interest in Salome's son.



Regardless of all of her doubts, Esperanza knows that she must marry because becoming a nun would mean denying and betraying her family and who she really is.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Salome's life since leaving Las Golondrinas in Andalusia.

Discussion Question 2

Why do the nuns choose the specific location for Las Golondrinas de Los Andes?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Esperanza decide to marry instead of becoming a nun?

Vocabulary

Colonial, reflective, tranquil, stoically, infuriated, obliged, hostility, acquainted, meditate, reverence.



Section 13: Chapters 30-34

Summary

Chapter 30

In Chapter 30, in late October, 1554, Esperanza passes a sleepless night before her marriage, but as she packs the Chronicle in her trunk, there is a commotion at the gate when the Aguilar carriage arrives. Salome convinces Esperanza to accompany since she does not want to marry Don Hector, and Esperanza is stunned to find Sanchia in the carriage since she ran to Salome to save Esperanza from her planned wedding. At the Hacienda, Esperanza learns that Don Miguel was desperately wounded when he fought the Spanish, so she tends to him for several days, and when he wakes and kisses her hand, she knows her fate as surely as Salome did when she saw the Commander. Salome is pleased that Don Miguel marries Esperanza, and Esperanza praises God's greatness.

Chapter 31

In Chapter 31, in March, 1555, Esperanza has a daughter, Maria Caterina, and two years later, she explains she has little time to write in the Chronicle because she assumes Salome's role as patroness of the orphanage. Sanchia disappears into the city, and Esperanza worries for her friend. By October 1560, she still has not received news from Sanchia, and Esperanza is pregnant with her third child, Isabelita, who is born early and sickly in April 1561; however, Esperanza takes her to visit the dying Pia because she fears leaving her child behind.

Chapter 32

When Esperanza and Isabelita visit Pia in Chapter 32, Pia bestows the Abbess's medal on the infant, assuring her friend that the child will be well before she dies. Isabelita's health improves, and she comforts Esperanza and Don Miguel when Salome dies in 1563.

Chapter 33

In Chapter 33, Dona Isabelita Beltran de Aguilar writes in the Chronicle in 1597, hoping it is fitting that the final entry is made by the same woman whose life was saved by the Foundress's medal. She must explain why the Chronicle is leaving the Hacienda. Six months ago, Esperanza received a letter from Sanchia, now known as La Flor, a famous temptress, who wants to visit because she owes Isabelita's parents an apology, plus she asks about the Chronicle. Esperanza agrees to receive Sanchia, but first, she shows her daughter the Chronicle, explaining the history of it and the medal for which she exhorts a promise that the Chronicle will be delivered to the convent. Esperanza dies a month before Sanchia's arrival which proves a welcome diversion. Sanchia carries many portraits, including one of Isabelita's youngest children, Maria Salome, to



Las Golondrinas in Spain. Isabelita closes the Chronicle forever so she can send it to Las Golondrinas de Los Andes where it belongs, but she dedicates the last entry to her mother's memory, closing with "God is great" (page 354), a prayer her mother often said.

Chapter 34

In Chapter 34, in April 2000, Menina worries for Almira. Sor Teresa is furious they cannot open the convent gates on Good Friday, but she agrees because Alejandro is a good man, though she suggests that he likes Menina. Trying to distract herself from fear, Menina looks at the paintings, finding an intriguing one of Dona Maria Isabella Beltran. Later, she gets lost in the stories in the Chronicle about Esperanza, Sanchia, Pia, Luz and Marisol, but she cannot find the portrait of them. As she translates the stories, she hears gunfire, and soon, Alejandro brings a group of injured women to the gate. The nuns care for the wounded, and when Alejandro returns later, he asks Menina to accompany him to the village, reminding her that her bus leaves tomorrow. Menina assures herself that this is not a date, plus she needs to tell Alejandro about the paintings, but she still needs to freshen up before she can leave.

Analysis

The final chapters of the sixteenth century timeline summarize a significant portion of time, from 1554 to 1597 as Esperanza's family life limits her ability to record events in the Chronicle.

In Chapter 30, foreshadowing is fulfilled as Sanchia arrives with Salome the night before Esperanza's marriage to rescue her from marry someone she does not want. Furthermore, she is taken to Salome's home where her medical skills are needed to save Don Miguel's life, further foreshadowing their romantic relationship, and this foreshadowing is quickly fulfilled when he wakes and they are soon married. Esperanza compares her feeling of certainty about her fate with Don Miguel to how Salome felt about the Commander.

In Chapter 31, Esperanza describes her married life which consists of raising her children. Sanchia disappears again, foreshadowing the direction of her future lifestyle. Isabelita, Esperanza's third child, is born sick, but Esperanza still takes her daughter with her to visit Pia's deathbed, and fulfilling earlier foreshadowing, Pia bestows the Foundress's medal on the child; miraculously, Isabelita's health improves, indicating the power of Salome's medal. Salome also dies before long.

In Chapter 33, Isabelita makes the final entry in the Chronicle. Her story of La Flor, Sanchia's alias as a famous temptress, fulfills foreshadowing about Sanchia's future lifestyle, and her intent to visit Andalusia with portraits also explains the reason that Menina finds a portrait of Isabelita's youngest daughter in Las Golondrinas in 2000. Esperanza is dead at this point, thus concluding the sixteenth century narrative as the Chronicle is restored to its intended destination at Las Golondrinas de Los Andes where



it will sit idly until 1983 when it is sent to Georgia with a young orphan, thus connecting the two timelines.

Chapter 34 returns to the modern timeline as Menina assists Alejandro with Almira. Meanwhile, she still looks at the paintings in the convent, finding a portrait of Isabelita's youngest child, as indicated in the preceding chapter. Alejandro's battle with the criminal enterprise of women abductors culminates in a gunfight where many women are wounded. Luckily, Alejandro is not injured, but his invitation for Menina to accompany him to the village foreshadows their romantic relationship, as does her reminder to herself that this is not a date, though she still insists on making herself more presentable before she will leave with Alejandro.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Salome visit Esperanza in Chapter 30?

Discussion Question 2

Who is Isabelita Beltran, and how does she acquire the Chronicle?

Discussion Question 3

What happens after Menina hears gunfire in Chapter 34?

Vocabulary

Trousseau, confidante, hacienda, putrefaction, dignified, precipice, premonition, consoling, interceded, tirade.

Section 14: Chapter 35

Summary

Chapter 35

Alejandro escorts Menina to the village where they eat, and she listens to the people talks about the civil war and how Jews, Christians and Muslims once lived together peacefully in Andalusia. As night falls, Alejandro admits he is glad that Menina missed her bus, and since her plane for America leaves in two weeks, he suggests she stay until then. Though Menina was eager to leave a few days ago, she is intrigued by the paintings and the Chronicle, so she agrees on the condition that she call her parents first. Alejandro promises to take her to a phone in the morning. The next morning, Menina calls her parents from a roadside cafe. They were very worried, but when Sarah-Lynn offers to inform Theo that Menina is safe, Menina asks her mother not to tell anyone where she is; when Sarah-Lynn objects to what Menina is throwing away, Menina insists that she wants to live her life, not Theo's, plus they do not love each other. After the call ends, Alejandro praises Menina's bravery in helping others after the terrible thing that happened to her. He also apologizes for his initial rudeness. Alejandro's friend, Ernesto, joins them, and Menina tells the men about the medal and the Chronicle. According to the Gospel, Jesus had a sister, Salome, who started Las Golondrinas, and this means that Mary was not a virgin as the Catholic Church claims. Ernesto notes that this is dangerous information, and the couple looking for Menina obviously wants to ensure that it does not become public. Deciding it is best to publicize the story, Menina calls Becky who agrees to come to Spain. Menina spends the next two days translating stories from the Gospel. In the first story, Salome dies, and after bringing her back to life, Jesus creates swallows for her amusement. In the second story, the women who follow Salome are persecuted, and they flee to the mountains. In the third story, soldiers attack the women, but swallows attack the soldiers just before the earth shakes and Salome disappears into a crevice, leaving her medal behind. Flavia, one of her faithful followers, picks it up and declares they will stay here with Salome; thus, Las Golondrinas convent is established. Menina tells Alejandro about the medal and how, at the beginning of the Chronicle, the nuns hoped that someone would restore it and the medal to the convent. He notes that she has made an important discovery about the Chronicle, and Menina adds that she has also made discoveries about her family history. She has a strange feeling that she was meant to put all of this together, and she also feels that it is just beginning.

Analysis

When Menina accompanies Alejandro to the village in the penultimate chapter, she hears the locals discussing how the Jews, Christians and Muslims used to live together peacefully, foreshadowing her project in the final chapter, as does her renewed interest in the convent's paintings and the Chronicle. Alejandro's desire for Menina to stay in the



village until she leaves for America in two weeks further foreshadows their future romantic relationship. Menina shows her filial devotion by assuring her parents of her safety, but she still does not tell them about Theo raping her. Alejandro's friend, Ernesto, is introduced in this chapter, and Menina tells Ernesto and Alejandro what she has learned from the Chronicle. Her translation of the Chronicle allows her to discover the connection between the history of Las Golondrinas and her own past. Since Menina's knowledge of these secrets endanger her life, Menina opts to make them as public as possible, calling Becky who she convinces to write a story on it. While waiting for Becky to join her in Spain, Menina focuses on translating the rest of the Gospel which is then summarized; basically, the Foundress of Las Golondrinas was Salome, the sister of Jesus, and her existence disproves the necessity for the Virgin Mary, thus invalidating the beliefs of the Catholic Church which explains their accusations of heresy. These stories from the Gospel also explain the significance of the swallow and why Las Golondrinas was established in its secluded location. The Gospel also chronicles more examples of female oppression, thus serving as the feminine alternative to Christianity. It is ironic how, from the beginning of the Chronicle, the nuns hoped that the medal and the Chronicle would be restored to their rightful home at Las Golondrinas, and Menina's incidents lead her to Las Golondrinas, suggesting that Theo's rape, the bad weather, and Menina's stolen purse all serve as facilities of fate. Menina's feeling that things are just getting started is reiterated many times in the final chapter and serves as foreshadowing of the events in the final chapter.

Discussion Question 1

What great secret does Menina discover while translating the Chronicle?

Discussion Question 2

Who is the Foundress of Las Golondrinas, according to the Gospel?

Discussion Question 3

Why was Salome persecuted, according to the Gospel?

Vocabulary

Flamenco, hovered, assertive, trafficked, jeopardize, prodigy, centurions, retribution, deliberate, harlot.

Section 15: Chapter 36

Summary

Chapter 36

In Los Golondrinas Convent, UNESCO World Heritage Site, Tristan Mendoza Foundation and Museum, Directors Menina Walker de Fernandez and Alejandro Fernandez Galan, June, 2013, Becky excitedly agreed that things were just getting started, and she sold the series to the New York Times within a day. The idea that things are just getting started becomes a mantra for Menina and Alejandro as they open the museum, get married and have children and even when Alejandro runs for parliament. Menina is surprised by how well they adapt to their chaotic life. She names her daughters Pia, Esperanza, Marisol, Luz and Sanchia. It has been years since she has seen Becky, and Becky visits now, looking horrible because of her work in war zones. Menina hopes that this trip will help her, plus she wants to set her up with Hendrik, the UNESCO architect who is recently divorced. After so many stories about war, Becky is eager to write a story about someone trying to start peace, so she interviews Menina about her work. As Alejandro arrives, an explosion shakes the ground, and though they quickly realize that it is just Hendrik pulling down a wall in the old pilgrims' quarters, Becky is badly shaken. Hendrik comforts her, so Alejandro and Menina leave them alone. Marisol rushes up to her parents and tells them she saw a lady in the garden who told her Becky will get married soon, but Menina's mother insists there was no lady. So, Menina and Alejandro know that their daughter saw Salome. Hendrik emerges with Becky and informs them that he found something interesting behind the wall. They all enter the building to see a painting of five girls, one of which looks like Menina. Menina's daughters recognize their names, and Menina promises to tell them about the women in the picture, their ancestors, when they are older. For now, her labor pains increase, so she must go to the hospital, but first she announces the name of the baby she is about to give birth to; "It's Salome, of course. Salome is finally coming home" (page 402).

Analysis

The final chapter fulfills much foreshadowing as the narrator reveals that thirteen years later, in 2013, Menina and Alejandro are married with five daughters and one on the way. Additionally, their project's foreshadowing is fulfilled as they work hard to establish the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Las Golondrinas to commemorate the nuns who fought against oppression to preserve their heritage. Throughout this chapter, Menina and Alejandro adopt "it's just getting started" as a mantra since every step in their life seems like beginning again as their efforts improve the world. Becky's visit and Menina's determination to help her best friend shows that Menina has not given up her philanthropic tendencies, and Becky is very interested in Menina's project since Menina and Alejandro are trying to establish a peace, pursuant to the desires of Las Golondrinas and the Gospel which shows no reason for the animosity between

Christians, Jews and Muslims. The sanctity of their project is seen by the appearance of the Foundress, Salome, in the garden, showing that she approves of their efforts. The discovery of the painting of Esperanza, Pia, Luz, Sanchia and Marisol fulfills earlier foreshadowing as Menina finally uncovers the sixth Mendoza painting stashed at the convent, and her own resemblance to Esperanza further proves the truth of her ancestry. Menina honors her ancestors and their struggles by naming her daughters after the five girls who fled the Inquisition. Her sixth child will be named after Salome.

Discussion Question 1

What is the UNESCO World Heritage Site, who starts it? Why?

Discussion Question 2

What does Menina name her daughters? Why?

Discussion Question 3

What is the purpose of Menina and Alejandro's project in the final chapter?

Vocabulary

Reluctantly, macho, preceded, conservationists, provoked, renovations, credentials, detonated, indestructible.

Characters

Menina Ann Walker

Menina Ann Walker, known as Isabella Salome during her short stay at Las Golondrinas de Los Andes as a toddler, is the protagonist of the twenty-first century timeline in this novel. In 1983, a terrible hurricane strikes South America, and a three-year-old girl is found on the beach and taken to Las Golondrinas de Los Andes because she wears their medal around her neck. Soon after, the nuns relocate the Chronicle which has been hidden for fifty years. Knowing the girl is in danger, Mother Superior allows an American couple to adopt the girl, whom they name Menina, sending the medal and Chronicle with her. Menina is an excellent child and student. In 2000, she is engaged to Theo Bonner III. But, after he rapes her, she leaves him and travels to Spain to research her thesis on Tristan Mendoza, a sixteenth century painter. The painter intrigues her because his signature contains an image of the same swallow depicted on her medal.

Due to a series of mishaps, Menina gets stranded by herself in Spain, and when she seeks police assistance from Captain Alejandro Fernandez Galan, she is taken to Las Golondrinas in Andalusia for her protection. While there, Menina learns that there are six paintings by Mendoza in the convent, and she explores the convent to find these paintings in hopes of finding something of value that the nuns can sell to support themselves. She also gets involved in a criminal ring abducting women to sell into sex slavery after learning of Alejandro's assignment to shut down the ring. After the criminal enterprise is taken down, Menina's translations of the Chronicle result in the discovery that the convent's animosity with the Catholic Church stems from their Gospel in which Salome, their Foundress, is claimed to be the sister of Jesus, negating the necessity for the Virgin Mary. By 2013, Menina and Alejandro are married and have established a museum at the convent to honor the Gospel and Mendoza's work. Menina is pregnant with her sixth daughter, and her six children are named Esperanza, Marisol, Luz, Pia, Sanchia and Salome in honor of their ancestors whom she promises to teach them about once they are older.

Sor Beatriz

As the scribe of Las Golondrinas and the keeper of the Chronicle, Sor Beatriz began life as Isabella, born to the Defensor del Santo Sepulchro family. She is the main character and one of the protagonists of the sixteenth century timeline. In the sixteenth century narrative, Sor Beatriz prepares to send the Foundress's medal and the Chronicle with a mission group going to Spanish America to escape persecution from the Inquisition in 1552. Returning to 1504, she explains how she, Isabella, fell in love with the Muslim Alejandro Abenzucar, but their romance was discovered when they try to run away, so he is imprisoned and dies. Secretly pregnant, Isabella convinces her father to send her to Las Golondrinas since it is near the Abenzucars' home. She gives birth to her daughter Salome and decides to take her vows.



Entrusted with recording the convent's Gospel and history in the Chronicle, Sor Beatriz writes about visions of the Foundress in which they are warned to send their relics away to prevent accusations of heresy from the Inquisition. Twelve nuns, including Salome, are sent to establish a mission in Gran Canaria, but they are never heard from again. Meanwhile, Las Golondrinas shelters many endangered girls, their primary mission, including Esperanza, Luz, Sanchia, Marisol and Pia, all of whom are guilty of heresy by the Inquisition's standards. Sor Beatriz mourns the loss of Salome to the end of her days, and sadly, she is never reunited with Salome nor does she even learn of her daughter's happy married life in Spanish America.

Esperanza

Esperanza is one of the girls who turns to Las Golondrinas for shelter from the cruel world. The only child of the King's advisor, Esperanza grew sick as a child after seeing another girl burn at the stake as a heretic, so her nurse is dismissed and she becomes her father's companion. He reveals his possession of many forbidden books which Esperanza studies at length, but after her father's death, her guardian accuses her of heresy, claiming he cannot marry her off because her mother was a Muslim. Esperanza visits Don Jaime, her father's friend, who admits that her mother was a Muslim nun who ran away to marry her father with the plan of fleeing Spain and returning to the Muslim faith. Unfortunately, she died in childbirth, but first, she exhorted her husband to promise to raise their child as a Christian. Don Jaime assures Esperanza that her guardian is too greedy to relinquish her to the Inquisition, but he soon sends a new servant, Maria, to aid her. When Esperanza's guardian announces her betrothal to the evil Don Guzman, Maria and Esperanza dress as boys and sneak away, managing a difficult journey before they finally arrive at the convent. Esperanza worries that she will be killed if she is found, but her health improves and she assists Sor Beatriz with the Chronicle.

Upon learning that the Inquisition plans to visit the convent, Esperanza, Marisol, Pia and Sanchia are sent to Spanish America to find Las Golondrinas de Los Andes where they believe their first mission may have settled. Esperanza records the Chronicle at this point. In Spanish America, the girls locate the convent and find that it was settled by the first mission. Marisol is kidnapped, but her captor marries her immediately. Esperanza finds Salome who married an Incan warrior and had many children. Don Miguel, one of the children, marries Esperanza. Esperanza's daughter Isabelita is sickly, but Pia saves her by giving her the Foundress's medal shortly before Pia dies. Esperanza dies before 1597 when her daughter records the last entry into the Chronicle.

Salome

Salome is the daughter of Isabella, later known as Sor Beatriz, and Fr. Alejandro Abenzucar. She is born shortly after her mother finds refuge at Las Golondrinas, and she spends her youth at the convent. In 1523, she is part of the mission convent sent to Gran Canaria, but she disappears for thirty years until Esperanza locates her in South America. She and the others left Spain thirty years ago for Gran Canaria, but a storm



swept them off course. They were shipwrecked on land where they were surrounded by warriors with painted faces. The sailors protected the nuns by indicating prayer and pointing to the sky. That evening, native women led the nuns to their city in the woods where God sends them a sign. They hear swallows chirping, and Sor Maria Manuela believes they are his way of telling the nuns "we cannot do God's work if we give way to luxury and comfort. God must have led us here instead of Gran Canaria to establish our mission. We must return to a lifestyle proper for nuns, learn the natives' language, and make ourselves useful in this place" (page 317).

Thus, the nuns begin working with and learning from the Incan women. They also discover that the Incans are very violent, but the sailors' gestures were taken to indicate that the women are Virgins of the Sun. When they learn of the natives' practice of human sacrifice, they are convinced God sent them to end this practice, so they set up a chapel and consecrate Sor Maria Manuela as Mother Superior. They use two rooms for an infirmary and one for a school, but their intent for their novices to take final vows is delayed by sickness and famine. The city decides to sacrifice the Commander's two daughters, but before the girls can be led to their doom, an earthquake ravages the village, so the nuns house the girls. A week later, the Commander visits and claims that the gods did not will his daughters' deaths, but his wife died in the earthquake so it is his right as the earthly embodiment of the Sun God to take a virgin as his concubine, indicating Salome. Salome explains to Mother Superior that he is bargaining his daughters' lives for one of the nuns. So, she convinces him that she must become his wife. A month later, they are married, and he takes her to the Hacienda of the Sun and the Moon. Salome loves the Commander. They have five children.

Luz

Luz is one of the girls that is sent to Las Golondrinas for protection. Luz was born to her grandmother's only daughter after an affair with a dwarf, and her mother's husband killed both of her parents. Luz's grandmother heard that Las Golondrinas would shelter her, so they do. The Abbess orders Esperanza to add Luz's story to the Chronicle "to bear witness to the inhumanity and cruelty that women suffer" (page 182). Esperanza cares for Luz who proficiently assists the sewing mistress, and the Abbess charges Luz with sewing an altar cloth to be sent to the Queen with a respectful letter because it is good to remind the Queen that she is the protectress of Las Golondrinas.

Pia

Pia is one of the girls sent to Las Golondrinas for protection, and later, she is sent to Spanish America to evade the Inquisition. At age fourteen, Pia is self-possessed. Her grandmother was captured in her youth and became a courtesan, but her mother was raised Protestant and married a man at age seventeen who did not want children. When his wife became pregnant, he was furious and directed his anger at Pia. Pia's mother dies when she is ten, so her father tries to sell her into prostitution. When she fights her captor, the carriage wrecks and a woman pulls her out. Sophia is sleeping in her



carriage and wakes to news of an accident and Pia being thrust inside, but the door is closed before she could demand answers so she brings Pia to Los Golondrinas. At Las Golondrinas de Los Andes, Pia goes insane when her close friend Zarita dies from smallpox. Before her death, she presents the Foundress's medal, which she stole and hid after Zarita's death, to Esperanza's sickly infant, Isabella. Miraculously, Isabella's health improves even as Pia dies.

Marisol

Marisol is one of the girls sent to Las Golondrinas for protection. Later, she is sent to Spanish America to evade the Inquisition. In 1550, the Abbess receives a curious message for the urgent removal of a hidden girl, so Marisol is retrieved. However, she is defiant and does not want to become a nun. Marisol is in danger because of the rumor that she is connected to Tristan Mendoza. Marisol's mother was orphaned young and raised in a convent. When she came of age, she went to court and caught the attention of Don Diego who married her and commissioned a painting by Mendoza. Don Balthazar, the crown prince, was also intrigued and raped her while her husband was away at sea. She was called to court since her husband vanished, and as she lay dying, her cousin who raised her, Josefa, sends Marisol to the nuns. Marisol insists she will never forgive her mother or Josefa for sending her away. In Spanish America, Marisol is kidnapped by bandits before reaching the convent, but she visits the convent several weeks later to let her friends know that she is married and pregnant.

Sanchia

Sanchia is one of the girls sent to Las Golondrinas for protection. Later, she is sent to Spanish America to evade the Inquisition. In autumn, 1551, Marisol is joined by nine-year-old Sanchia whose family was arrested on the suspicion of being Jews. However, as they were being burned, her mother ordered her to run away to a nun who took her to Las Golondrinas. Sanchia is a huge flirt who chases the men in Spanish America. Eventually, she runs away from her home with Esperanza and Don Miguel and ultimately becomes a famous temptress named La Flor.

Virgil and Sarah-Lynn Walker

Virgil and Sarah-Lynn Walker are Menina's adoptive parents from Laurel Run, Georgia, who love and care for her throughout her life.

Theo Bonner III

Theo Bonner III is Menina's fiancé at the beginning of her adventures in 2000, but their relationship begins to suffer when she realizes that he has different expectations for her life than she does. Things completely deteriorate after he rapes her and tries to convince her that it is not a big deal. Menina breaks up with him and travels to Spain.



Fr. Alejandro Abenzucar

Fr. Alejandro Abenzucar is Isabella's tutor in her youth, and after they fall in love, he confesses that he is secretly a Muslim who, along with the rest of his family, faked his conversion to avoid execution. Alejandro and Isabella plot to run away after learning that she is pregnant, but they are caught, and he is sent to work in a poverty-stricken infirmary where he succumbs to the plague and dies. Salome never knows the identity of her father.

Don Miguel

Don Miguel is the son of Salome and one of the gentlemen who direct Esperanza and the others to Las Golondrinas de Los Andes. Eventually, he becomes Esperanza's husband and the father of their children.

Alejandro Fernandez Galan

Alejandro Fernandez Galan is the captain of police in the village near Las Golondrinas in Andalusia. After her purse is stolen, Menina files a report with him, and after she convinces him that she is not a prostitute, he takes her to safety at the convent. Alejandro visits Menina several times, encouraging her to study the paintings and asking for her help in protecting Almira. Eventually, Alejandro and Menina marry, open a museum at the convent and have six daughters named after Esperanza, Marisol, Sanchia, Luz, Pia and Salome.

Salome (Foundress)

Salome, the Foundress of Las Golondrinas, was the sister of Jesus, thus disproving the necessity for the Virgin Mary. She preaches the Gospel that is later copied into the Chronicle. She also appears to the Abbess and other nuns throughout the narrative, and her last appearance is in the final chapter when she appears to Menina's daughter Marisol to tell her that Becky will soon be married.

Becky Taliaferio

Becky Taliaferio is a journalist and Menina's best friend who suggests she visit Spain after her break up with Theo. Later, Becky visits Spain to write stories about the Gospel that Menina translates. In 2013, she returns to Spain to write about the peace that Menina and Alejandro are trying to start.

Symbols and Symbolism

Gran Canaria

Gran Canaria is the intended destination of the mission convent, but the nuns' ship is lost in a storm and shipwrecked in South America, symbolizing the strength of God's will.

Swallows

Jesus sculpts swallows from clay after bringing Salome back to life. Later, swallows protect Salome. Swallows are also found in South America in the location that Las Golondrinas de Los Andes is built, and they serve as a symbol from God.

Chronicle

The Chronicle contains the Gospel of Salome (the reason for the Catholic Church's persecution of Las Golondrinas) as well as the convent's history and stories of the girls they help. It is a symbol of the convent's history and their alternate version of male-dominated Christianity.

Foundress's Medal

Given to Salome by her brother Jesus, the Foundress's medal is a sacred relic to Las Golondrinas. It works a miracle for Esperanza's sick daughter, Isabella, and it later resurfaces when Menina appears after Mano del Diablo. It serves as a symbol of the convent's history and beliefs.

Inquisition

The Inquisition symbolizes the Catholic Church's persecution of heretics, including Jews and Muslims. It is a sign of oppression and fear.

Herbal Remedy

The fact that the Incans ask the nuns of Las Golondrinas to attempt to heal their sick with herbal remedies symbolizes the natives' trust in the nuns.

Tristan Mendoza Paintings

Mendoza's paintings intrigue Menina because his signature contains an image of a swallow matching her medal. Her thesis research on the artist leads her to Las Golondrinas. Mendoza's paintings also act as a catalyst of fate and God's will.

UNESCO World Heritage Site

Established at Las Golondrinas by Menina and Alejandro to honor the past, the UNESCO World Heritage Site symbolizes their attempt to start peace.

Valley of the Shadows

The Valley of the Shadows, the home of the Abenzucars, is responsible for Isabella's agreement to go to Las Golondrinas. It serves as a symbol of her love for Alejandro.

Mano del Diablo

When it strikes in 1983, Mano del Diablo is the worst hurricane in 100 years. After it hits, Menina is found on the shore and taken to the orphanage at Las Golondrinas de Los Andes. One of the nuns had recently had a vision that they must protect the gift from the sea, so the hurricane serves to deliver this gift, Menina.

Las Sors Santas de Jesus

Las Sors Santas de Jesus is the order of nuns to which Las Golondrinas belong. Established by Salome, the sister of Jesus, the order symbolizes a rich heritage of female religion contrary to the Catholic Church and persecuted as heresy during the Inquisition.

Settings

Las Golondrinas Covent, Andalusia, Spain

Las Golondrinas Convent in Andalusia, Spain, is the main setting of the novel. This is where Isabella seeks refuge and ultimately becomes Sor Beatriz, and many other endangered girls are also sheltered by the nuns. In 2000, Menina stays at Las Golondrinas when she gets separated from her traveling companions.

El Covento de Las Golondrinas de Los Andes

El Covento de Las Golondrinas de Los Andes is a mission convent established in South America by twelve nuns from Spain. Esperanza, Pia, Sanchia, and Marisol are sent to join them thirty years later. In 1983, three-year-old Menina is sent to the convent's orphanage.

Laurel Run, Georgia

Laurel Run, Georgia is where the Walkers live and where Menina is raised after her adoption.

Hacienda of the Sun and the Moon

Hacienda of the Sun and the Moon is Salome's home in South America after she marries the Commander. It later becomes Esperanza's home after she becomes the wife of Don Miguel.

Madrid

Madrid is Menina's destination when she visits Spain with the intent of studying Tristan Mendoza's paintings.

South America

The nuns are sent to establish a convent in Gran Canaria, but they get shipwrecked in South America. They are embraced by the native Incans. They establish Las Golondrinas de Los Andes.

Spain

Spain, the main setting of "The Sisterhood," is where Las Golondrinas is located and where Menina travels to perform research on Mendoza for her thesis.

Themes and Motifs

Religion

Religion plays a large role in “The Sisterhood” as the primary theme behind the novel. In addition to the majority of the novel being set in convents, the majority of the characters are nuns. In 1552, Sor Beatriz makes the last entry in the Chronicle she has kept for 40 years because the convent, expecting a visit from the Inquisition, has decided to send the Chronicle and their Foundress's medal to Spanish America in order to keep their spiritual legacy alive; this order of nuns bears witness to a female tradition of spirituality which is often suppressed by men. They have been protected from the Inquisition because they host an orphanage and they obtained the patronage of Queen Isabella, but they are now endangered by the five older girls hidden at the convent, Esperanza, Pia, Sanchia, Marisol and Luz; however, four of the girls will be sent to refuge in Spanish America tonight to avoid being interrogated by the Inquisition and deemed heretics. The remainder of this sixteenth century timeline focuses on the girls that are sent to Las Golondrinas for protection because they are being persecuted for various reasons, mostly the religious beliefs of their family.

Religion also appears in the twenty-first century timeline as Menina, as a toddler, is taken to the orphanage at Las Golondrinas de Los Andes where she is adopted by a Christian American family and raised in Georgia. Later adventures lead her to Spain where she is forced to seek refuge at Las Golondrinas. The paintings she examines while staying at the convent are all related to religion. Meanwhile, people from the Catholic Church search for Menina because they are determined to suppress the secret information contained in the Chronicle of Las Golondrinas. Menina interprets the Gospel and has it published in America. In the first story, Salome dies, and after bringing her back to life, Jesus creates swallows for her amusement. In the second story, the women who follow Salome are persecuted, and they flee to the mountains. In the third story, soldiers attack the women, but swallows attack the soldiers just before the earth shakes and Salome disappears into a crevice, leaving her medal behind. Flavia, one of her faithful followers, picks it up and declares they will stay here with Salome; thus, Las Golondrinas convent is established.

Violence Against Women

Violence against women is a theme that runs rampant throughout this novel. To begin with, the Inquisition plans to investigate accusations against Las Golondrinas, so they ask the Abbess for a list of possible heretics, but death is preferable to such a betrayal of their order's first duty to protect females from the violence of men. Instead, the Abbess decides to send the endangered girls to South America. Throughout the narrative, she has Sor Beatriz record the stories of the endangered girls in the Chronicle. Sor Beatriz was born as Isabella, but she fled to the convent after her beloved, a Muslim, was sent away because of their relationship and ultimately died. She



flees to preserve the life of their unborn child who is later named Salome. Esperanza is persecuted because her father was deemed a heretic for owning books not approved by the Catholic Church. Luz is sought for death because her mother cheated on her husband with a dwarf, and Pia escapes her father's attempt to sell her into prostitution after her mother's death because he does not want children. Marisol is rescued because her life is in danger due to a suspected connection between her mother and the famous court painter Tristan Mendoza. Sanchia is rescued from being burnt with her family for their Jewish beliefs.

In 2000, Menina is stuck in the convent because Alejandro insists she is in danger; he later explains that there is a criminal ring located nearby who kidnap women to sell them into sex slavery. Alejandro battles with these criminals, and Menina even helps by admitting Almira into the convent. Another example of violence against women is seen in the beginning of the modern timeline when Theo Bonner rapes Menina, insisting that it is not a big deal since they are engaged to be married. Salome, the Foundress of Las Golondrinas, also suffered violence at the hands of men for preaching what Jesus, her brother, taught her. This theme is important because, while the violence perpetrated against women in the sixteenth century is more prevalent, the fact that violence against women still exists half a millennium later serves as evidence of the inefficiency of so-called feminist movements.

Fate/God's Will

Many events in this novel take place according to fate or because of God's will, comprising another major theme in this narrative which is extremely appropriate given the religious tones pervading the plot. Some of the events that are considered the will of God are foreshadowed by visits by Salome, the Foundress of Las Golondrinas, such as Menina's arrival at the orphanage of Las Golondrinas de Los Andes after Mano del Diablo ravages South America. In 2000, her discovery of Mendoza's signature which includes a swallow matching the bird on her medal can also be seen as fate since it leads to her thesis research which takes her across the ocean to Spain where God's will plays a role yet again when her plane lands in Malaga due to inclement weather. After being separated from her traveling party, Menina's purse is stolen during her bus ride. The theft leads her to the convent at Las Golondrinas where she discovers six Mendoza paintings, translates the Chronicle, and learns about her ancestry.

In the sixteenth century, God's will leads many of the girls to Las Golondrinas for protection. His Will also plays a role in the nuns being detoured from Gran Canaria by their shipwreck in South America. It is in South America where they establish Las Golondrinas de Los Andes. Salome believes it is fate for her to marry the Commander, just as Esperanza believes she is fated to marry Don Miguel. Many events throughout this novel are attributed to fate or God's will, emphasizing the role that God's will plays in life throughout the centuries.

Styles

Point of View

"The Sisterhood" consists of dual narratives on two separate timelines, one set in the sixteenth century and the other in modern times; therefore, the point of view in this novel also varies. The contemporary timeline features a third-person limited perspective, while the sixteenth century narrative is told from a limited first-person point of view. The viewpoint of the modern narrative focuses on Menina Ann Walker, and while this perspective is fairly reliable, it is limited mostly to Menina's thoughts and emotions, though there are occasional detours into the perspectives of other characters, such as her parents. The other timeline is narrated by multiple nuns, and their writings are limited to their own observations and what they are told. The narrators for the sixteenth century timeline are Sor Beatriz, Esperanza and, finally, Isabelita, Esperanza's daughter.

The perspectives used in this novel are important as the viewpoint changes from woman to woman, yet the tone and theme of female oppression is reiterated throughout each. The distribution of exposition and dialogue is fairly equal, and this serves as an effective means of revealing the individual characters' personalities through the dialogue while the exposition creates a complete image of the novel's settings, both in the past and present. Additionally, the alternation between timelines allows the reader to see the connection between Menina and Las Golondrinas long before she discovers it herself.

Language and Meaning

While the grammar and sentence construction remains proper throughout this entire novel, the sixteenth century narrative uses stiff, formal language that is more appropriate for the era, while the modern timeline contains more casual language. The consistent grammar creates a fairly smooth transition between timelines, but the sentimental tone of the sixteenth century contrasts sharply with the violence and chaos of the twenty-first century timeline. The language used aids comprehension by creating a clear distinction between the two timelines without causing too much confusion.

The language used serves to characterize the individual as well as the time periods and views of female oppression and religion. The distribution of exposition and dialogue is fairly equal, and this serves as an effective means of revealing the individual characters' personalities through the dialogue while the exposition creates a complete image of the novel's settings, both in the past and present. Additionally, the alternation between timelines allows the reader to see the connection between Menina and Las Golondrinas long before she discovers it herself. The older timeline creates a gospel-like narrative focused on the secluded lives of the nuns at Las Golondrinas; meanwhile, the modern timeline contrasts with the gospel, showing the difference in time periods as well as

Menina's upbringing outside the convent. Overall, the language is easy to read and aids reader comprehension by creating an interesting contrast between the two timelines.

Structure

This novel consists of 402 pages, divided into a Prologue and 36 chapters. Ranging from 2 to 27 pages in length, the chapters average around 12 pages each. The chapters are numbered, rather than titled. However, each contains a subtitle which specifies the date and location in which the chapter is set. The chapters are very detailed, and though most of them are fairly long, several are quite short. The chapters set during the sixteenth century timeline varies in the amount of time which passes in each. Some focus on short periods, while others summarize years. This narrative takes place over 60 years or so. The first and last chapters in the modern timeline summarize long periods of time, while the other chapters in this narrative focus on much shorter periods of hours or days at most.

"The Sisterhood" by Helen Bryan is an interesting novel that contains dual timelines, alternating between the female oppression of the sixteenth century and Menina's attempts to learn about her heritage in the twenty-first century. While Menina's studies lead her to Las Golondrinas Convent in Andalusia where she learns about her heritage through religious relics which originated in the convent, she simultaneously translates the Chronicle which makes up the second timeline. In the sixteenth century, the nuns of Las Golondrinas send a mission convent to settle in South America in order to escape the Church's persecution during the Inquisition. "The Sisterhood" offers an intriguing concept of the past and its relationship with the present. The novel's pace is slow, and the dual timelines create some difficulty in reading since the reader must divide their focus between both narratives. Both timelines are fairly chronological, but the sixteenth century narrative begins *en media res* before returning to an earlier date and working forward. Overall, this novel is an interesting, entertaining alternate version to the male-dominated story of Christianity.

Quotes

A woman is dust beneath men's feet, there is no justice for my daughter.
-- Luz's Grandmother (Chapter 13 paragraph 10)

Importance: This quote from Luz's grandmother's letter shows how women were treated in the sixteenth century; her daughter was killed by her husband without penalty because he suspected her of infidelity. Luz is sent to the convent for protection so that her mother's husband does not kill her also.

God's sent us to this little girl. I know she's special.
-- Sarah-Lynn Walker (Chapter 1 paragraph 22)

Importance: This quote foreshadows Menina's importance to the themes and plot of the novel, as well as to the history of Las Golondrinas.

Is many girls come to Las Golondrinas long time ago. People do not remember now, but once so many girls come, we help them, save their lives sometimes. The world was a dangerous place for girls if they are alone. But it is a long story. Everything at Las Golondrinas is a long story. And old. Too old. Soon all our stories, about the nuns, about our order, about the girls, are forgotten. Unless is a miracle, no one will know what happened here. You are the last girl, I think. Ha! Maybe you can tell our stories, no?
-- Sor Teresa (Chapter 5 paragraph 38)

Importance: Though spoken as a joke, this quote foreshadows Menina's importance to Las Golondrinas and the preservation of their history.

Menina! Come on, what's the big deal, really? It doesn't matter, we're getting married! In a couple of months we'll laugh about this. Who knows, we may even have started that first baby.
-- Theo Bonner III (Chapter 3 paragraph 42)

Importance: This quote in which Theo tries to convince Menina that it was acceptable for him to rape her serves as evidence of the crimes against women which pervade this narrative.

I would not like her to be obliged to take the veil like the orphanage children, yet I do not see how she is to experience life outside the convent, or marry. And of course I would not send her away alone. When I ponder what is best for Salome, I imagine Alejandro and I had managed our escape to Portugal. We would now be discussing the future of Salome and our other children by the fire of a long winter's night. But it is ungrateful to repine. Salome's life will be as God wills.
-- Sor Beatriz (Chapter 9 paragraph 42)

Importance: This quote shows that Sor Beatriz disapproves of Salome becoming a nun which foreshadows Salome's future as a married woman. Though she also shows



her continued love for Alejandro as she thinks of what their life would be, she shows her faith by leaving things in God's hands.

Men see only what they wish. The portress could tell what the situation was at once, and took care to close the gate in a hurry. You did well to conceal your condition until the last minute. It probably saved both your lives.

-- Abbess of Las Golondrinas in 16th century (Chapter 8 paragraph 17)

Importance: This quote shows the Abbess praising Isabella for protecting her unborn child, and it is indicative of the dangers that girls faced at the time. It also foreshadows Isabella's induction into the order and her safety as she and her daughter, Salome, are protected by the convent.

Since the earliest days of Christianity our order has born witness to a female tradition of spirituality that men of the church have suppressed and replaced with doctrines that refashioned God and religion in their own image.

-- Sor Beatriz (Prologue paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote explains that Las Golondrinas has a female tradition of spirituality, which is obviously the reason for their conflict with the Catholic Church during the Inquisition.

I must tell you or die! You are my angel and truly, the flower, the glorious lady of my heart. I will place my life, my soul, in your power and no longer conceal the truth from you. I am no Christian with celibacy in his heart but a Moor with blood in his veins. And I am not Dante, to live forever without Beatrice. I would prefer death to parting from you.

-- Fr. Alejandro Abenzucar (Chapter 6 paragraph 23)

Importance: This quote shows Alejandro's confession that he is a Muslim, and, as such, he is a heretic. This quote shows his faith in Isabella since she is supposed to be his enemy because she is a Christian. It also foreshadows the death of Alejandro after he is separated from his beloved.

Men not so good today as before. Not so good then either, is why so many have to come here and repent. But they repent. These days people very bad, don't repent. Don't worry about sins. Don't think about God, they think God is not watching them. They forget their religion. They forget their duty. Their families. Get big ideas. Then who knows what they do.

-- Sor Teresa (Chapter 10 paragraph 7)

Importance: This quote laments the immorality of mankind.

You will leave tonight for Seville, and from there sail for Spanish America. One of the village men has gone ahead to arrange your passage on the first available ship, and two more are waiting to take you to Seville. You must be gone as soon as you are ready, and Sor Emmanuela will go as your chaperone. A convent in Spanish America was founded by missionaries from our order years ago. Las Golondrinas de Los Andes will



give you shelter until you marry and I am sure will help find you husbands. The colonists are in great need of Spanish wives, and therefore less likely to look deeply into your families than men in Spain. We are providing dowries for each of you.

-- Abbess of Las Golondrinas in 16th Century (Chapter 20 paragraph 8)

Importance: This quote foreshadows the girls' journey to Spanish America, their acceptance into the convent there, and their eventual marriages.

I took the Chronicle from its wrapping of oiled wool and read the Latin Gospel. Now I have a new burden of dangerous knowledge that, considered logically, undoes any justification for Christian persecution of Jews and Muslims, and testifies to what we believe in common. And I cannot unknow it. It burns into my brain like the fire the Inquisition would throw me into, the fire I watched consume those poor people long ago.

-- Esperanza (Chapter 20 paragraph 31)

Importance: While explaining the danger of the Chronicle, this quote also hints at why Las Golondrinas is plagued by the Catholic Church. It claims that the Inquisition is not a holy cause.

All flesh decays, all beauty, even Zarita. Only the spirit remains and things of the spirit. God has opened my eyes and my vocation has been revealed to me. I must go to Mother at once and tell her.

-- Pia (Chapter 27 paragraph 7)

Importance: This quote shows that Pia is deranged from grief, causing her to dedicate her life to God.

I don't suppose my mother ever spoke to you of my father? No? She would never speak of him to me either. I believe she had her reasons for keeping that secret.

-- Salome (Chapter 28 paragraph 8)

Importance: This quote shows that Salome has no knowledge of her Muslim father which is obviously Sor Beatriz's way of protecting her daughter.

And here I think God teaches us a lesson, sisters- if these birds cannot subsist on gold and jewels, we cannot do God's work if we give way to luxury and comfort. God must have led us here instead of Gran Canaria to establish our mission. We must return to a lifestyle proper for nuns, learn the natives' language, and make ourselves useful in this place.

-- Sor Maria Manuela (Chapter 28 paragraph 39)

Importance: This quote shows how the location and purpose of Las Golondrinas de Los Andes was determined.

I have delayed writing to the Abbess and Sor Beatriz. It is impossible to know if letters reach their destinations, or whether letters from me will pose a danger to the convent, or whether they will be able to write back.



-- Esperanza (Chapter 29 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote demonstrates Esperanza's fear that writing to Spain will put the others in danger, suggesting that Sor Beatriz dies without ever obtaining knowledge of her daughter's happy life.

We looked deep into each other's eyes and I knew my fate as surely as Salome had known hers when she saw the commander.

-- Esperanza (Chapter 30 paragraph 19)

Importance: This quote foreshadows Esperanza's happy life with Don Miguel, simultaneously suggesting that they were fated to be together.

Isabelita, you were Pia's miracle. And when Salome died, I lost track of many things. I had been so busy nursing her and caring for all you children, helping the convent... so much was happening that at one time I feared the medal had been lost. After a frantic search I found it again and put it away with the Chronicle for safekeeping.

-- Esperanza (Chapter 33 paragraph 6)

Importance: This quote shows Esperanza teaching her daughter, Isabelita, about her heritage which foreshadows Menina's discovery of her heritage centuries later.

No, I only shaped the clay; it is a bird by Jehovah's will. All things that happen, happen by Jehovah's will, Salome.

-- Jesus (Chapter 35 paragraph 73)

Importance: This quote, from the Gospel of Salome, demonstrates the reason that Las Golondrinas poses such a threat to the Catholic Church.

For Menina and Alejandro the phrase 'things are just getting started' became a mantra. Over the years it preceded statements like, 'maybe this is a crazy idea, but what if we could turn the convent into a museum' to 'how can we ever raise that much money?' to 'let's try it' to 'Dear God, what were we thinking!'

-- Narrator (Chapter 36 paragraph 5)

Importance: This quote demonstrates Menina and Alejandro's dedication to preserving Salome's Gospel and the history of Las Golondrinas.

Before I go, we've decided what to name her. Or actually, I think the name chose us a little while ago, when Marisol was in the garden... It's Salome, of course. Salome is finally coming home.

-- Menina (Chapter 36 paragraph 72 & 74)

Importance: This quote shows Menina's decision to honor Salome, the Foundress of Las Golondrinas, by naming her sixth daughter after Salome, just as she has named her first five daughters after Esperanza, Pia, Sanchia, Luz and Marisol. This demonstrates the importance of Menina's ancestry and heritage in her daily life.