

# ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE

“You must mean,” the officer corrected with a friendly smile, “that you are the mother of *Mister Aureliano Buendía*.” Úrsula recognized in his affected way of speaking the languid cadence of the stuck-up people from the highlands.

“As you say, *mister*,” she accepted, “just as long as I can see him.”

There were superior orders that prohibited visits to prisoners condemned to death, but the officer assumed the responsibility of letting her have a fifteen-minute stay. Úrsula showed him what she had in the bundle: a change of clean clothing, the short boots that her son had worn at his wedding, and the sweet milk candy that she had kept for him since the day she had sensed his return. She found Colonel Aureliano Buendía in the room that was used as a cell, lying on a cot with his arms spread out because his armpits were paved with sores. They had allowed him to shave. The thick mustache with twisted ends accentuated the sharp angles of his cheekbones. He looked paler to Úrsula than when he had left, a little taller, and more solitary than ever. He knew all about the details of the house: Pietro Crespi’s suicide, Arcadio’s arbitrary acts and execution, the dauntlessness of José Arcadio Buendía underneath the chestnut tree. He knew that Amaranta had consecrated her virginal widowhood to the rearing of Aureliano José and that the latter was beginning to show signs of quite good judgment and that he had learned to read and write at the same time he had learned to speak. From the moment in which she entered the room Úrsula felt inhibited by the maturity of her son, by his aura of command, by the glow of authority that radiated from his skin. She was surprised that he was so well-informed. “You knew all along that I was a wizard,” he joked. And he added in a serious tone, “This morning, when they brought me here, I had the impression that I had already been through all that before.” In fact, while the crowd was roaring alongside him, he had been concentrating his thoughts, startled at how the town had aged. The leaves of the almond trees were broken. The houses, painted blue, then painted red, had ended up with an indefinable coloration.

“What did you expect?” Úrsula sighed. “Time passes.”

“That’s how it goes,” Aureliano admitted, “but not so much.” (page 65)



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ÚRSULA HAD to make a great effort to fulfill her promise to die when it cleared. The waves of lucidity that were so scarce during the rains became more frequent after August, when an and wind began to blow and suffocated the rose bushes and petrified the piles of mud, and ended up scattering over Macondo the burning dust that covered the rusted zinc roofs and the age-old almond trees forever. Úrsula cried in lamentation when she discovered that for more than three years she had been a plaything for the children. She washed her painted face, took off the strips of brightly colored cloth, the dried lizards and frogs, and the rosaries and old Arab necklaces that they had hung all over her body, and for the first time since the death of Amaranta she got up out of bed without anybody's help to join in the family life once more. The spirit of her invincible heart guided her through the shadows. Those who noticed her stumbling and who bumped into the archangelic arm she kept raised at head level thought that she was having trouble with her body, but they still did not think she was blind. She did not need to see to realize that the flower beds, cultivated with such care since the first rebuilding, had been destroyed by the rain and ruined by Aureliano Segundo's excavations, and that the walls and the cement of the floors were cracked, the furniture mushy and discolored, the doors off their hinges, and the family menaced by a spirit of resignation and despair that was inconceivable in her time. Feeling her way along through the empty bedrooms she perceived the continuous rumble of the termites as they carved the wood, the snipping of the moths in the clothes closets, and the devastating noise of the enormous red ants that had prospered during the deluge and were undermining the foundations of the house. One day she opened the trunk with the saints and had to ask Santa Sofía de la Piedad to get off her body the cockroaches that jumped out and that had already turned the clothing to dust. "A person can't live in neglect like this," she said. "If we go on like this we'll be devoured by animals." From then on she did not have a moment of repose. Up before dawn, she would use anybody available, even the children. She put the few articles of clothing that were still usable out into the sun, she drove the cockroaches off with powerful insecticide attacks, she scratched out the veins that



the termites had made on doors and windows and asphyxiated the ants in their anthills with quicklime. The fever of restoration finally brought her to the forgotten rooms. She cleared out the rubble and cobwebs in the room where José Arcadio Buendía had lost his wits looking for the Philosopher's stone, she put the silver shop which had been upset by the soldiers in order, and lastly she asked for the keys to Melquíades' room to see what state it was in. Faithful to the wishes of José Arcadio Segundo, who had forbidden anyone to come in unless there was a clear indication that he had died, Santa Sofía de la Piedad tried all kinds of subterfuges to throw Úrsula off the track. But so inflexible was her determination not to surrender even the most remote corner of the house to the insects that she knocked down every obstacle in her path, and after three days of insistence she succeeded in getting them to open the door for her. She had to hold on to the doorjamb so that the stench would not knock her over, but she needed only two seconds to remember that the schoolgirls' seventy-two chamberpots were in there and that on one of the rainy nights a patrol of soldiers had searched the house looking for José Arcadio Segundo and had been unable to find him.

"Lord save us!" she exclaimed, as if she could see everything. "So much trouble teaching you good manners and you end up living like a pig."

José Arcadio Segundo was still reading over the parchments. The only thing visible in the intricate tangle of hair was the teeth striped with green dime and his motionless eyes. When he recognized his great-grandmother's voice he turned his head toward the door, tried to smile, and without knowing it repeated an old phrase of Úrsula's.

"What did you expect?" he murmured. "Time passes."

"That's how it goes," Úrsula said, "but not so much."

When she said it she realized that she was giving the same reply that Colonel Aureliano Buendía had given in his death cell, and once again she shuddered with the evidence that time was not passing, as she had just admitted, but that it was turning in a circle. But even then she did not give resignation a chance. (page 164)

Gabriel García Márquez

[One Hundred Years of Solitude](#)



(Word Count: 1227 words)

Márquez, Gabriel García. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.  
Translated by Gregory Rabassa, Harper Perennial, 1991.

## WEEK SEVEN - QUOTES & LINES FROM LITERATURE

1. "The more closely the author thinks of why he wrote, the more he comes to regard his imagination as a kind of self-generating cement which glued his facts together, and his emotions as a kind of dark and obscure designer of those facts. Reluctantly, he comes to the conclusion that to account for his book is to account for his life." – Richard Wright
2. "Tell the readers a story! Because without a story, you are merely using words to prove you can string them together in logical sentences." – Anne McCaffrey
3. "Everybody walks past a thousand story ideas every day. The good writers are the ones who see five or six of them. Most people don't see any." – Orson Scott Card
4. "Nowadays I know the true reason I read is to feel less alone, to make a connection with a consciousness other than my own." – Zadie Smith
5. "Ana Iris once asked me if I loved him and I told her about the lights in my old home in the capital, how they flickered and you never knew if they would go out or not." – Junot Díaz
6. "It sounds plausible enough tonight, but wait until tomorrow. Wait for the common sense of the morning." H.G. Wells
7. "We cast a shadow on something wherever we stand, and it is no good moving from place to place to save things; because the shadow always follows. Choose a place where you won't do harm - yes, choose a place where you won't do very much harm, and stand in it for all you are worth, facing the sunshine." - E. M. Forster



8. "Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change." - Mary Shelley
9. It is sometimes an appropriate response to reality to go insane." - Philip K. Dick
10. "And meanwhile time goes about its immemorial work of making everyone look and feel like shit." - Martin Amis

