**Love in the Time of Cholera Reading Guide**

**Title**: Love in the Time of Cholera

**Author**: Gabriel García Márquez

**Setting**: a fictional Caribbean seaport town, reminiscent of Cartagena, Colombia, spanning from the late 19th century into the early 20th century

**Plot Summary**: *Love in the Time of Cholera*is a story about love and death at the turn of the twentieth century in a South American community ravaged by war and disease.The story focuses on Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza, who enjoy a romance in their youth but spend a lifetime apart; the two are then reunited in old age after Fermina’s husband dies, and Florentino returns to profess his undying love. Florentino never stopped loving Fermina, and his feelings for her grew into an obsession that consumed him throughout his life. Although much of the story tells of their separate lives, the love between them drives the plot and proves to be an overwhelming force.

**Major Characters:**

1. **Florentino Ariza:** The protagonist, a romantic and persistent lover who waits for over fifty years to be with his true love, Fermina Daza. His character represents unwavering devotion and the enduring power of love.
2. **Fermina Daza:** The object of Florentino's affection, she marries Dr. Juvenal Urbino but harbors lingering feelings for Florentino. Her character symbolizes the societal expectations and constraints placed on women.
3. **Dr. Juvenal Urbino:** Fermina's husband, a respected physician and prominent figure in society. His character represents the traditional values and social status that often conflict with true love.
4. **Tránsito Ariza:** Florentino's mother, a strong and supportive figure who encourages his love for Fermina. Her character represents the importance of maternal love and guidance.
5. **Leona Casseres:** Florentino's longtime mistress, a woman of humble origins who teaches him about physical love. Her character represents the complexities of desire and the different forms love can take.

**Themes:**

* + **Enduring Love:** The novel explores the enduring nature of love and the lengths one may go to pursue their true love, even in the face of adversity and societal conventions.
  + **Societal Expectations and Constraints:** The novel examines the societal expectations and constraints that often conflict with personal desires and true love, particularly for women like Fermina.
  + **Aging and Mortality:** The novel delves into the themes of aging, mortality, and the passage of time, reflecting on how love and relationships evolve over the course of a lifetime.
  + **Class and Social Status:** The novel touches on the dynamics of class and social status, and how they can impact relationships and personal choices.
  + **Passion and Desire:** The novel explores the complexities of passion, desire, and physical love, contrasting them with the ideals of romantic love.

**Chapter Review Questions**: Answering the following questions will increase your comprehension of the novel. Respond to these questions by writing the answers in your notebook. *Some of the questions require you to express an opinion or describe your reaction to events in the novel. In these instances, there is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will vary.* The answers to factual questions are included in this reading guide.

**Chapter 1**

1. How would you describe Dr. Juvenal Urbino to someone that has not read this chapter? Include your explanation along with at least one quote that supports your thinking.
2. Based on what you have read, do you think Dr. Juvenal Urbino is a good doctor? Explain your thinking.
3. Describe the relationship that Dr. Juvenal Urbino and Jeremiah de Saint-Amour had. How would you describe their relationship to someone that had not read this chapter? Include your explanation along with at least one quote that supports your thinking.
4. How does the description of the city, with its colonial history and decaying grandeur, contribute to the overall atmosphere of the story? What does it reveal about the social and economic divides present in the narrative?
5. Find one quote that you think highlights a key theme of this chapter. Include the quote along with your explanation for selection.
6. What do you think about the reaction Saint-Amour’s significant other had to his death and what do you think about her thoughts about her life moving forward? Consider her actions and words in the immediate aftermath. How does this shape your view of her as a character?
7. Describe the relationship that Dr. Juvenal Urbino and Fermina Daza have. How would you describe their relationship to someone that had not read this chapter? Include your explanation along with at least one quote that supports your thinking.
8. What do you think Dr. Juvenal Urbino was trying to convey to Fermina Daza in his last moments with his parting words? Does this align with what you have learned about his character and their relationship? Explain your thinking.
9. This chapter notes that Dr. Juvenal Urbino’s death was a memorable one and there are many notes about his accomplishments. What impressed you most about his life? Do you agree that his death was a significant loss? Explain your thinking.
10. Does Fermina Daza’s response after her husband’s death surprise you based on what you have learned so far from this chapter? Explain your thinking.

**Chapter 2**

1. How would you describe Forentino Ariza to someone that has not read this chapter? Include your explanation along with at least one quote that supports your thinking.
2. Describe the relationship between Florentino Ariza and his mother, Tránsito Ariza. How would you describe their relationship to someone who has not read this chapter? Include your explanation along with at least one quote that supports your thinking.
3. Find a quote that you think reflects Florentino’s views on love. Include the quote along with your explanation for selection.
4. What do you think about the reaction of Aunt Escolástica to Fermina Daza’s budding relationship with Florentino Ariza? Consider her actions and words throughout the chapter. How does this shape your view of her as a character?
5. Quite a bit happens during the courtship of Fermina Daza and Forentino Ariza. Pick out what you think are the most important moments and work to create a concise five sentence summary of these events.
6. Does Fermina Daza’s final dismissal of Forentino Ariza surprise you based on what you have learned so far about her and their courtship? What about Florentino Ariza’s reaction to that dismissal? Did that surprise you based on what you have read so far? Explain your thinking.
7. What do you think of Lorenzo Daza? What impression has he left on you as a reader? Explain your thinking.
8. Compare the younger Fermina Daza from this chapter with the one you read about in the first chapter. How has her character evolved over time? What do you think contributed the most to this development? Explain your thinking.
9. How does the cultural setting of the Caribbean, particularly the influence of colonial history, shape the characters’ lives and actions in this chapter? Provide specific examples from the text that highlight the impact of this cultural backdrop on Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza. What differences do you think there would be if the setting was your current hometown? Explain your thinking.
10. How does Florentino Ariza’s pursuit of Fermina Daza reflect the social norms and expectations of their time? Provide examples from the text to support your thinking. How might have their interactions been different if this took place today? Explain your thinking.

**Chapter 3**

1. This chapter includes some information about cholera as a disease alongside the importance of water filtration in fighting that disease. Watch this [linked video about John Snow and his work tracing a major outbreak of cholera](https://mass.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/envh10.sci.life.nathis.johnsnow/john-snow-pioneer-of-epidemiology/). Why do you think it was difficult for people to accept that water carried the disease? How does this disease and its spread contribute to the themes of this novel?
2. Find a quote that you think reflects Dr. Juvenal Urbino’s views on his homeland. Include the quote along with your explanation for selection. What do you think impacts his views and their shift of his home?
3. How does the news of Dr. Juvenal Urbino’s father’s death impact him? Does his then obsession with cholera make sense to you in terms of this news? Explain your thinking.
4. What do you think of Dr. Juvenal Urbino’s efforts to modernize and sanitize the city? What impression has he left on you as a reader? Explain your thinking.
5. What do you think about the reaction of Lorenzo Daza to Dr. Juvenal Urbino’s pursing Fermina Daza? Why do you think there is the difference in his reaction with Dr. Juvenal Urbino verses Florentino Ariza? How does this shape your view of him as a character? Explain your thinking.
6. The author uses foreshadowing in this chapter to hint at future events in the story. Find an example of foreshadowing that sticks out to you from this chapter. Include it here along with your reasons for selecting it.
7. Examine the role that social class plays in Fermina's marriage to Dr. Juvenal Urbino. How does this impact their marriage and what others think of the union? Do you think social class plays a role in the views people have of marriages today? Explain your thinking.
8. Examine this quote describing Florentino's reaction to seeing Fermina leave mass on her husband’s arm: "Florentino Ariza did not feel either jealousy or rage -- only great contempt for himself. He felt poor, ugly, inferior, and unworthy not only of her but of any other woman on the face of the earth" (page 67). What does this quote reveal about Florentino's sense of self? How does his response contrast with the confidence and status of Fermina and Dr. Urbino as a couple? Does this reaction align with what you have learned so far about Florentino Ariza’s character? Explain your thinking.
9. Dr. Juvenal Urbino says that he did not love Fermina Ariza when he married her. What does this indicate about Dr. Urbino’s motivations for marriage? What are your thoughts on a marriage that did not start with two people in love?
10. The author uses symbolism in this chapter to communicate deeper meanings in the story. Find an example of symbolism that sticks out to you from this chapter. Include it here along with your reasons for selecting it.

**Chapter 4**

1. Pick one quote from this chapter that you think captures Florentino Ariza’s motivations and actions in this chapter. Include your quote along with both your explanation for selecting it and discuss its implications on his personal and professional life.
2. How does the relationship between Florentino Ariza and his Uncle Leo XII evolve throughout the chapter? What key moments define their dynamic? What do you think about their dynamic. Explain your thinking and include examples from the chapter.
3. How does the historical and cultural context of the setting influence the events and characters in this chapter? Discuss specific elements from the text that reflect the time period and societal norms.
4. The author uses irony in this chapter to add depth to the story. Find an example of irony that sticks out to you from this chapter. Include it here along with your reasons for selecting it.
5. Examine the quote, "Love is the only thing that interests me." How does this statement from Florentino Ariza's father’s notebook align with Florentino’s own motivations? Do you think he is like his father? Explain your thinking.
6. Analyze the quote, "Human beings are not born once and for all on the day their mothers give birth to them, but that life obliges them over and over again to give birth to themselves" (page 72). What does this mean to you? Do you agree with this philosophy? Explain your thinking.
7. Sara thinks that Fermina married for money. Why do you think she married? Explain your thinking.
8. Analyze Fermina Daza's feelings of entrapment and alienation in the house of the Marquis de Casalduero after her honeymoon. How do these feelings manifest in her daily life and interactions with her in-laws?
9. In what ways does Fermina Daza's role as a mother influence her sense of identity and purpose? How does her relationship with her son provide her with solace or complicate her emotional state? Use evidence from the chapter to support your thinking.
10. What do you think leads to Fermina wondering if she would have been happier with Florentino? Do you think she would have been happier with Florentino? Explain your thinking.

**Chapter 5**

1. Describe the relationship between Fermina Daza and Dr. Urbino at this point in their lives. How do you think their marriage is faring? Explain your thinking.
2. Based on what you know about Fermina Daza and the situation, were you surprised that she went to go stay with Hildebranda? Explain your thinking.
3. While Fermina is away, Florentino Ariza realizes his feelings toward her have changed. How have his feelings evolved?
4. How does the author use the description of the banana plantations to comment on the social and economic conditions of the time? What is the significance of Fermina's childhood memory in this context?
5. What do you think of Fermina’s reaction to Urbino coming after her? Did you think she would be happy and relieved to be going back home with him? Explain your thinking.
6. What do you think of Dr. Urbino now and how have your thoughts of him changed throughout your reading of this book? What impression has he left on you as a reader? Explain your thinking.
7. There are several references to racism and prejudice against Black people in this chapter. Analyze how racism is depicted through these characters and descriptions. What do you think this reveal about racial attitudes and discrimination in this society?
8. The chapter goes into detail describing the signs and attitudes about aging in this society, such as the way men and women were expected to dress and behave as they got older. What do you think the author is trying to convey through these depictions of aging? What commentary is he making? Does his commentary resonate with how you feel about aging? Explain your thinking.
9. Make a prediction about what is in the letter that Florentino finds floating in a puddle inside his house. Do you think it is the letter he has been waiting for as he believes? Explain why you made the prediction you did.

**Chapter 6**

1. Analyze the theme of grief as depicted in this chapter. How does the author portray the different facets of Fermina Daza's mourning process? Do any pieces of her mourning process surprise you? Explain your thinking.
2. What does Fermina think makes for a good marriage? Do you agree? Explain your thinking.
3. Explore the dynamics between Fermina Daza and Florentino Ariza in this chapter. How does their interaction in this chapter reflect the complexity of their past and present relationship?
4. Examine the role of América Vicuña. How does her relationship with Florentino Ariza influence her actions and ultimate fate? What does her character reveal about Florentino's complexities and moral ambiguities? Do you think Florentino loved her like he thought he did? Explain your thinking.
5. Analyze Dr. Urbino Daza's views on old age. How does his perspective on aging and the elderly contrast with the experiences and attitudes of the older characters, particularly Fermina Daza and Florentino Ariza? What does this contrast reveal about generational differences in attitudes towards aging and love? How do you feel this view compares to how people see older people today? Explain your thinking.
6. Pick one quote from this chapter that you think captures either Florentino Ariza’s or Fermina Daza’s motivations and actions in this chapter. Include your quote along with both your explanation for selecting it and discuss its implications on his personal and professional life.
7. Reflect on the philosophical musings about love, life, and death presented in this chapter. How do these reflections shape the characters' actions and the narrative's direction? What do you think the author’s views are on love, life, and death? Explain your thinking.
8. The author uses imagery in this chapter to show verses tell about death in the story. Find an example of imagery that sticks out to you from this chapter. Include it here along with your reasons for selecting it.
9. Does the end of the novel surprise you? If you could have the novel end in a different way, how would you change it and why?
10. Now that you have finished the book, which character do you think changed the most during the course of the book and why?

**Answers to Chapter Review Questions:**

**Chapter 1**

1. \*Answers will vary
2. \*Answers will vary
3. \*Answers will vary
4. \*Answers will vary
5. \*Answers will vary
6. \*Answers will vary
7. \*Answers will vary
8. \*Answers will vary
9. \*Answers will vary
10. \*Answers will vary

**Chapter 2**

1. \*Answers will vary
2. \*Answers will vary
3. \*Answers will vary
4. \*Answers will vary
5. \*Answers will vary
6. \*Answers will vary
7. \*Answers will vary
8. \*Answers will vary
9. \*Answers will vary
10. \*Answers will vary

**Chapter 3**

1. \*Answers will vary
2. \*Answers will vary
3. \*Answers will vary
4. \*Answers will vary
5. \*Answers will vary
6. \*Answers will vary
7. \*Answers will vary
8. \*Answers will vary
9. \*Answers will vary
10. \*Answers will vary

**Chapter 4**

1. \*Answers will vary
2. \*Answers will vary
3. The colonial past and social hierarchies are evident, such as through the River Company of the Caribbean where Florentino works. Social norms, like the importance of reputation and marriage, influence the characters' actions and interactions, making their lives a reflection of the era's customs and expectations.
4. \*Answers will vary
5. \*Answers will vary
6. \*Answers will vary
7. \*Answers will vary
8. After her honeymoon, Fermina feels trapped and alienated in her new home with her in-laws. Her daily life is filled with despair and constant criticism from her mother-in-law and her sisters-in-law. She finds solace only in her newborn son, while feeling increasingly distant from her husband.
9. Being a mother shapes Fermina's identity and purpose. Her bond with her son gives her comfort and a sense of companionship amidst her loneliness. But, this intense focus on her son also isolates her further from her husband and his family, adding to her emotional struggles.
10. \*Answers will vary

**Chapter 5**

1. \*Answers will vary
2. \*Answers will vary
3. Florentino Ariza's feelings for Fermina Daza evolve as he becomes more aware of the passage of time and their aging. While his love for her remains deep and steadfast, he starts to feel a sense of urgency and fear that he might not live long enough to be with her. His longing is now mixed with the harsh reality of mortality.
4. The author uses the description of the banana plantations to highlight the harsh and oppressive conditions faced by the workers, reflecting the social and economic exploitation of the time. Fermina's childhood memory of walking through the plantations with her mother contrasts sharply with the current desolation, symbolizing a lost innocence and the drastic changes over the years. This memory underscores the broader social and economic decline.
5. \*Answers will vary
6. \*Answers will vary
7. \*Answers will vary
8. \*Answers will vary
9. \*Answers will vary

**Chapter 6**

1. \*Answers will vary
2. \*Answers will vary
3. Fermina Daza and Florentino Ariza's interactions reflect their long and complicated history. Despite Fermina's initial anger and harsh words, Florentino sees an opportunity to reconnect, revealing his unwavering patience and love. Their encounters blend past misunderstandings with the potential for new beginnings, highlighting the enduring complexity of their relationship.
4. \*Answers will vary
5. \*Answers will vary
6. \*Answers will vary
7. \*Answers will vary
8. \*Answers will vary
9. \*Answers will vary
10. \*Answers will vary