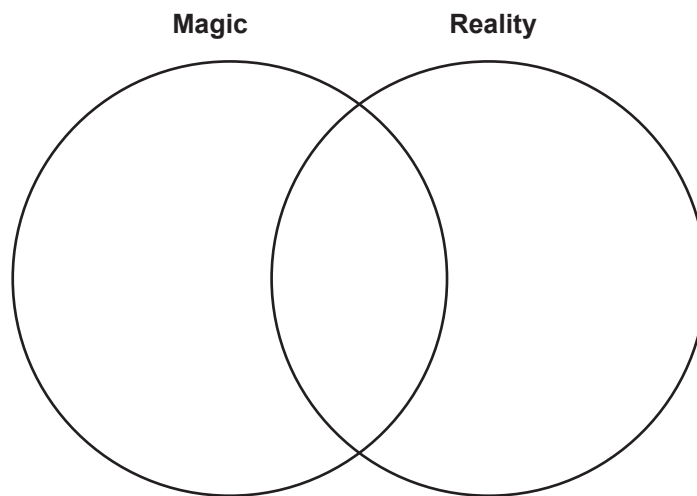


## One Hundred Years of Solitude review – Gabriel García Márquez’s classic makes for startling TV beauty

Level 3: Advanced

### 1 Warmer

- a. The novel’s genre is magical realism, which blends elements of magic into an otherwise realistic setting. Think about magic and reality. Where might they overlap? How are they different? Share your ideas. Give examples from your life, books or other TV shows/films.



### 2 Key words

- a. Choose the correct word to match each definition. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.
- a symbol or representation of an important concept or ideal
    - utopia
    - totem
    - benign
  - to prepare something insufficiently or not cook it enough
    - undercook
    - sceptical
    - distasteful
  - consisting of or occurring in irregular or occasional episodes
    - disparaging
    - levitate
    - episodic
  - doubting that something is true or useful
    - distasteful
    - sceptical
    - benign
  - lasting for a very short time; temporary
    - episodic
    - nonchalance
    - ephemeral

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6. unpleasant, offensive or causing discomfort
  - a. ravages
  - b. distasteful
  - c. imperialism
7. expressing the opinion that something or someone is not valuable; derogatory
  - a. disparaging
  - b. ephemeral
  - c. benign
8. an imagined place or state of ideal perfection
  - a. utopia
  - b. nonchalance
  - c. eccentric
9. to rise or float in the air without physical support
  - a. predecessors
  - b. utopia
  - c. levitate
10. calm and relaxed behaviour that gives the impression you are not worried
  - a. eccentric
  - b. nonchalance
  - c. benign
11. people who came before or preceded others
  - a. predecessors
  - b. imperialism
  - c. utopia
12. unconventional and slightly strange
  - a. totem
  - b. distasteful
  - c. eccentric
13. gentle and kindly; not harmful
  - a. benign
  - b. nonchalance
  - c. ravages
14. severe damage or destructive effects
  - a. disparaging
  - b. ravages
  - c. predecessors
15. a policy of extending power and influence through colonisation
  - a. ravages
  - b. imperialism
  - c. undercook

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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You may have to change the form of the word.

1. The critics warned the director not to \_\_\_\_\_ the development of such an important scene.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ nature of the story made it perfect for television adaptation.
3. I’m a bit \_\_\_\_\_ about how good the film adaptation will be.
4. Social media trends are often \_\_\_\_\_, lasting only a few days or weeks.
5. Many readers found the graphic scenes \_\_\_\_\_ and hard to stomach.
6. The journalist’s \_\_\_\_\_ remarks about the performance hurt the young actor’s confidence.
7. She displayed remarkable \_\_\_\_\_ despite the chaos around her.
8. Like their \_\_\_\_\_, the younger generation repeated the same mistakes.
9. His \_\_\_\_\_ behaviour made him stand out in such a reserved community.
10. The \_\_\_\_\_ of time had taken their toll on the small farm town.

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### Level 3: Advanced

*This 16-part series might struggle with the novel's problematic sexual politics, but it's a big, gorgeous adaptation of a big, gorgeous book*

**Jack Seale**

**11 December, 2024**

- 1 Gabriel García Márquez's 1967 novel is not one to take lightly. Not just a classic but a totem of at least one genre, standing as it does as a high point of magical realism and Spanish-language literature in general, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a big, big book. Netflix is evidently keen not to undercook its dramatisation, made in the novel's home of Colombia: at 16 episodes, it's a pretty big TV series.
- 2 Márquez's masterwork is by no means an unfilmable novel, taking place largely in one location and, as it moves through several generations of the same family, telling its story in an episodic fashion. Against that is the difficulty of rendering images that were planted in one's imagination by Márquez's prose. Devotees of the book might think the pictures on the screen can never measure up, while those sceptical about magical realism – *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a work cursed by its own influence, its innovations now cheapened by too many imitators – will be primed to dismiss it as ephemeral, sentimental or, in its riskier moments, distasteful.
- 3 We start in the middle of the 19th century, at the wedding of José Arcadio Buendía (Marco González) and Úrsula Iguarán (Susana Morales). They are cousins, so their union is frowned upon by Úrsula's mother, who predicts their offspring will have pig's tails. Stung by this, and feeling unwelcome in their home town on account of José Arcadio being haunted by the ghost of a man he killed in revenge for a disparaging comment made during a cockfight, they pursue José Arcadio's dream of founding a new settlement: Macondo.
- 4 Macondo is an isolated utopia where strange things happen. Priests and babies levitate; the dead choose not to stay dead. A band of gypsies visit annually, peddling such miracles as alchemy, magnets, ice and a syrup that makes you invisible. All are treated as equally plausible. As reality bends around them, the townsfolk often stare impassively across the colourful madness, embracing it and their own eccentricities with the deadpan nonchalance of characters in Wes Anderson films. The camera swoops from room to room and house to house, certain that it will find something extraordinary behind every new door.
- 5 The curse that says the couple's inbreeding will produce beasts does not come true, at least not for a long time, but the sons and grandsons of José Arcadio and Úrsula are doomed in another way. They are destined to repeat their own mistakes and those of their predecessors, a problem highlighted by all the males in the family having similar names. The men tend to be randy daydreamers and the women resourceful realists. Male Macondans' choices often go beyond the merely eccentric, however, and it's here the TV show has a problem to solve.
- 6 The show is on firmer ground when politics impinges on the haven of Macondo, bringing with it corruption, civil war and a host of opportunities to reveal hidden cowardice or courage. The show presents these relationships as benign, which sparked debate. It's not yet time for Macondo to become a metaphor for the ravages of capitalist imperialism – the story is split into two parts, with a second batch of eight episodes coming next year.
- 7 The rain of yellow flowers announcing the death of José Arcadio, and the trickle of blood impossibly snaking all the way across town to Úrsula's feet to tell her that her son is dead, are rendered with care and are startlingly beautiful. There's enough warped wonder here to make Macondo worth revisiting.

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### 3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. When was the novel originally written?
2. How many episodes is Netflix's adaptation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* divided into?
3. According to the article, why might the novel be considered 'cursed by its own influence'?
4. What specific prediction does Úrsula's mother make about the couple's offspring?
5. Why do José Arcadio and Úrsula leave their home town?
6. What is the name of José Arcadio's new settlement?
7. What are the four miraculous things the gypsies bring to Macondo?
8. What phenomenon announces José Arcadio's death?
9. How is the news of her son's death communicated to Úrsula?
10. What makes Macondo an isolated utopia according to the text?

### 4 Key language

a. Complete the sentences with the passive voice.

1. Images \_\_\_\_\_ (plant, past passive) in one's imagination by Márquez's prose.
2. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* \_\_\_\_\_ (curse, present passive) by its own influence.
3. Their union \_\_\_\_\_ (frown, present passive) upon by Úrsula's mother.
4. All the miracles \_\_\_\_\_ (treat, present passive) as equally plausible.
5. The sons and grandsons of José Arcadio and Úrsula \_\_\_\_\_ (doom, present passive) in another way.
6. The rain of yellow flowers and the trickle of blood \_\_\_\_\_ (render, present passive) with care.

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b. Rewrite the sentences from the previous activity in the active voice.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

### 5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- The book is always better than the film.
- Filming the series in Colombia, where the novel is set, is important for authenticity.
- Putting magical realism on the screen takes away from the genre because nothing is left to the imagination.

### 6 In your own words

a. Write your own review of a TV show or film you have recently watched. Answer these questions.

- Why did you choose this particular TV show or film?
- What is the summary of the plot?
- Describe one of the best scenes. What visual elements are present?
- What themes or messages are present in the work?
- What makes this production unique or noteworthy?

a. Share your review with the class, the facts you learned about the film and your opinions of it.