

Durga Mahavidyalaya, Raipur (C.G.)

Department of English

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Course Code: ENSE 01, (DSE)

Course Title: **New Literatures in English**

Study Material on **The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World**

(Unit IV, Section B)

Madhu Kamra

HoD

Gabriel Garcia Marquez

The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World

- Columbian novelist
- Short story writer
- Journalist for Columbian paper El Espectador
- Pioneer of magic realism
- Won Nobel Prize in 1982.

Life in Focus

- Born in Aracataca on March 6, 1927.
- Introduced to the world of story by his maternal grandparents
- Studies Law but practiced journalism for survival
- Also known as ‘Gabo’
- Reinvigorated Latin American writing

Works

Wrote –

1. Six Novels
2. Four Novellas
3. Dozens of short stories
4. Non – Fiction pieces
5. His masterpiece is *One Hundred Years of Solitude*
6. *Leaf storm* was his first writing.
7. *Until August* – (Posthumous work in 2024)

The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World

- Written in 1968
- Translated into English in 1972.
- An example of Magic realism
- The story alludes to Homer's *Odyssey*
- Published in *Leaf Storm and other stories*

Plot

The story begins on a note of fearful noticing of a dead body as an unfamiliar bulge in the sea by the village children at the coast. After playing with the corpse for sometime, the villagers are alarmed, who rush to carry the body to the nearest house. Here the 'huge size' of the corpse is another addition to the surprise of the folks as he barely fits into a house to be put there until he is identified and claimed for cremation.

The large size of the corpse is everyone's bewilderment as it does not fit into any bed, table and set of clothes. The villagers who survive on minimum benefits of the environment, connect the corpse to a land of fertility and rich living. These villagers strive to find his identity but men of neighbouring villages are of no help.

The corpse being the tallest, strongest and handsomest of all around, began to generate an air of fantasy. In comparison to such a broad -built corpse, the woman find the own man the weakest and the most useless people.

Plot

As a response to the mental dreamy connectivity with the corpse, they name him Esteban and when his face is 'covered with a handkerchief, the woman burst in long and loud mourns finding him the most destitute and most peaceful but irrevocably dead.

The man remove the handkerchief from the corpse's face and realize how physical structure add strength and power to a man's presence. They out of respect and admiration arrange a splendid funeral and announce every villager his kin. After funeral they decide to erase the barrenness of their village by building big houses, by growing flowers, painting their houses bright and naming their village as 'Estabens village' to keep alive his memory. Beautifying their life's and their solidarity, the villagers bring in a permanent change of character.

Setting of the Story

- Complex pattern- with no identifiable location and recognizable race of man.
- Vague Time of the Story- a timeless prehistoric era.
- The represented village is mythical yet much real.
- Action moves in dual time- the prevailing time and the time elapsed.

Theme and Message

- A story about:
 - a. Acceptance: of one's flaws
 - b. Community: Unity leads to easy Transformation
 - c. Honouring the Dead – to amass inspiration
- Rebuilding of houses to accommodate broad built people is to accommodate “Memory”.
- Death and life are linked together.

Major Symbols

- *The Sea-*

1. A symbol of life's mysteries
2. An image of the mysterious the unknown.
3. The spread of infinite possibilities of life.
4. An image of vastness the endless number of opportunities exist within it.

- *The dead body-*

1. Represents something 'extra' that enlarges his existence beyond death.
2. Represents the miracle of life – a non-existing one can exist forever.
3. An example of living life beyond – life.
4. Represents idealized form of 'Humanity'.

Use of Magic Realism

- Applies fantasy to ordinary events.
- Portrayal of a barren and mundane village getting transformed into an extraordinary one.
- Invites readers into a world of the dead where a drowned man becomes ‘a transformative image’.
- Mirrors the profound world of *Gulliver’s Travels*.

Mythological Figure

- Estabén – another name of Estevanico – a slave from the early 1500. He was the first man to reach America from Africa. His structure reminds of an Aztec God named Quetzalcoatl

Thank You