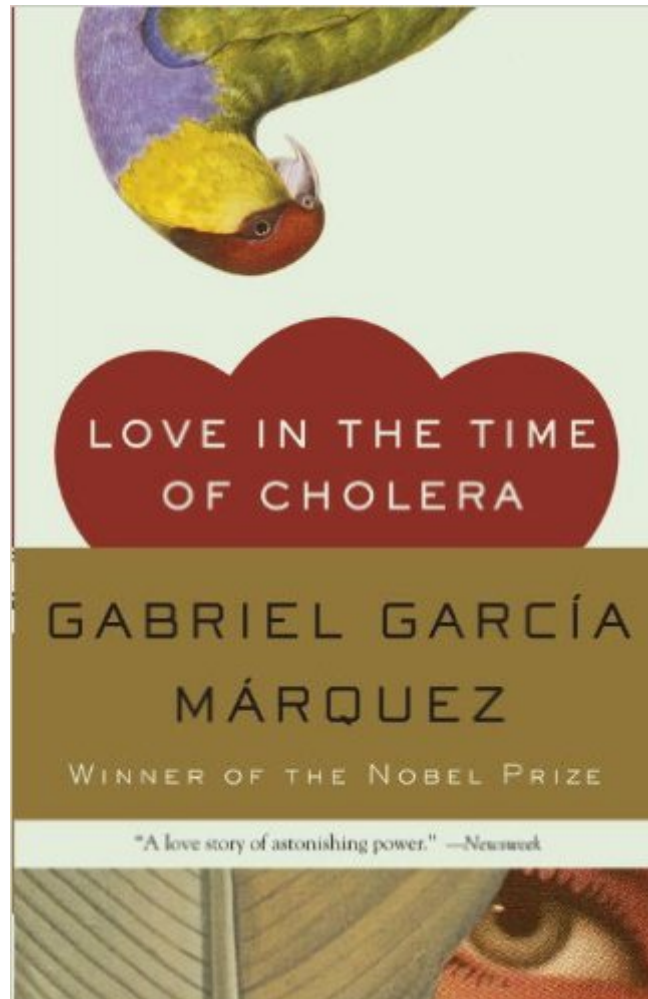


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Love In The Time Of Cholera (Oprah's Book Club)



Synopsis

In their youth, Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza fall passionately in love. When Fermina eventually chooses to marry a wealthy, well-born doctor, Florentino is devastated, but he is a romantic. As he rises in his business career he whiles away the years in 622 affairs--yet he reserves his heart for Fermina. Her husband dies at last, and Florentino purposefully attends the funeral. Fifty years, nine months, and four days after he first declared his love for Fermina, he will do so again.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Love in the Time of Cholera takes place circa 1880-1930 in an unnamed Caribbean seaport city. The three main characters form a triangle of love, with the hypotneuse being the quintessential romantic, Florentino Ariza, a man whose life is dedicated to love in all its aspects. As a young apprentice telegrapher, Florentino Ariza falls hopelessly in love with the haughty teenager, Fermina Daza. Although the two barely meet, they manage to carry on a passionate affair via letters and telegrams, until one day, Fermina Daza, realizing that Florentino Ariza is more "shadow than substance," rejects him and marries the wealthy dandy, Dr. Juvenal Urbino instead. Florentino Ariza, who has sworn to love Fermina Daza forever, is, of course, stricken to the core, but Fermina's marriage is nothing he can't handle. As one century closes and another begins, Florentino Ariza rises through the ranks of the River Company of the Caribbean and sets off on a series of 622 erotic adventures, both "long term liaisons and countless fleeting adventures," all of which he chronicled and all the while nurturing a fervent belief that his ultimate destiny was with Fermina Daza. Fifty-one years, nine months and four days after Fermina's wedding, on Pentecost Sunday, fate intervenes

and Fermina becomes a free woman once again when Dr. Juvenal Urbino dies attempting to retrieve his wayward parrot from a mango tree. Seeing his chance at last, Florentino Ariza visits Fermina Daza after the funeral and declares, "I have waited for this opportunity for more than half a century, to repeat to you once again my vow of eternal fidelity and everlasting love." Fermina's reaction is not quite what Florentino was hoping for.

This is a difficult book for me to review, because there are two factors at work here that for me are at very much at odds. On the one hand, *Love in the Time of Cholera* is a beautifully written book, rich with imagery and emotive language. This is all the more impressive when you consider how difficult it must be to translate any work from one language to another and still manage to evoke the feelings that the original author intended, and for that I must give high praise to Edith Grossman, the translator for the English edition that I read. On the other hand, there is a very real difficulty in sympathizing with Florentino Ariza, the protagonist of the novel. In his youth, he courts Fermina Daza, the daughter of a wealthy businessman from a poor family who is obsessed with social climbing. Because her father disapproves of Ariza (a poor boy who would not improve his family's social standing), their relationship consists almost entirely of love letters sent back and forth. After a long while, though, Fermina finally rejects him. Later she marries Juvenal Urbino, a doctor and a member of one of the most respected families in the city, and has a relatively happy marriage. Florentino, however, never gets over her, and continues to desire her from afar, even after fifty years, and when her husband dies, Ariza is ready to pick things right back up from where they left off. Here is where the novel falls apart for me, though: I can believe a man could be so hopelessly in love with a woman that he obsesses over her for the rest of his life. However, Florentino's actions do not befit a lovelorn man pining for his sweetheart. Over the course of his life he has sexual relationships with literally hundreds of women, many of them married.

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