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Chapter 1
I Sell My Dreams



serpent ring

Gabriel García Márquez · NCERT Kaleidoscope, Reprint 2026-27 · CBSE board 2027

About the author

Gabriel García Márquez (1927–2014), the Colombian novelist, short-story writer and journalist, was brought up by his grandparents in northern Colombia. He won the **Nobel Prize in Literature in 1982**. Masterpieces: *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) and *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985). His themes are violence, solitude and the human need for love. This story is a high point of Latin American **magical realism**: it mixes reality with fantasy.

What is inside

1. Concept notes: story in brief, themes, characters, devices, key lines
2. NCERT exercises, fully solved (Stop and Think, Understanding, Talking, Appreciation, Language Work)
3. **CBSE PYQs 2024–2026, fully solved** as per the marking scheme
4. Practice set A–G with answers, 20 MCQs, 6 Assertion–Reason, summary

★ ***Exam tip:*** **Theme in one line:** a woman lives, and grows rich, by "selling" her dreams to people who are willing to believe them; reality and fantasy blur so completely that even the narrator, a rationalist, obeys her.

Asked in CBSE (English Elective 001)

Year	Question	Marks
2026	Q7(I)(A) Extract: "I only came to tell you that I dreamed about you last night…" (leave Vienna; train to Rome; survivor of a catastrophe; *conviction* = certainty)	6
2025	Q7(I)(A) Extract: "Vienna was still an old imperial city…" (Second World War; "fugitive compatriot"; Frau Frieda; windy cliffs of Quindío; *compatriot*)	6
2024	Q7(I)(B) Extract: "After lunch, during the inevitable stroll along the Ramblas…" (stratagem = artifice); Q9(B) Neruda's manner of eating	6 + 3

Exam pattern (Section C): Q7 extract (6 × 1), Q8 short answer 30–40 words (2), Q9 short answer 40–50 words (3), Q10 long answer 120–150 words (5). This story has come in the extract question every single year: learn the four big scenes (Havana, Vienna, Barcelona, the ambassador).

Four places, four scenes

Havana (frame: the wave and the ring) → **Vienna** (34 years earlier: "I sell my dreams"; the warning) → **Barcelona** (13 years after Vienna: Neruda; "you can go back to Vienna now") → **Havana** again (the ambassador: "She dreamed.").

1.1 The story in brief ★★★

1. The disaster in Havana (the frame)

One morning at nine, while the narrator is breakfasting on the terrace of the **Havana Riviera Hotel**, a huge wave lifts several cars from the seafront avenue and **embeds one in the side of the hotel**. Cuban volunteers clear the debris within six hours. When a crane lifts the car out, the crushed body of a woman is found strapped behind the wheel. She was the **housekeeper of the new Portuguese ambassador**, in Havana for two weeks. Her name means nothing to the narrator, but he is intrigued by her **gold ring shaped like a serpent with emerald eyes**. He cannot find out on which finger she wore it: a crucial clue, because a woman he knew wore such a ring on her **right forefinger**.

2. Vienna, thirty-four years earlier

In a tavern of Latin American students in Vienna the narrator had met a Colombian woman of about thirty, plain, ageing early, but "charming" and "awe-inspiring". Post-war Vienna, between "two irreconcilable worlds", was a paradise of **black marketeering and espionage**, a fitting spot for this "**fugitive compatriot**". She never told her real name; the students called her **Frau Frieda**. Asked how she came there from the windy cliffs of **Quindío**, she said: "**I sell my dreams.**"

3. Her past

Third of eleven children of a prosperous shopkeeper in old Caldas, she began the family custom of telling dreams **before breakfast**, when their "oracular qualities" are purest. At seven she dreamed a brother was carried off by a flood; she interpreted it as "he shouldn't eat sweets". The boy **choked on a caramel** eaten in secret. In the cruel Viennese winters she took a job in a rich house simply by saying "**I dream.**" Each breakfast she decided the day of the financier, his music-loving wife and two children; her control became absolute. The master died and left her part of his estate on condition she keep dreaming for the family.

4. The warning

The narrator, waiting for money that never came, stayed over a month. One night Frau Frieda whispered: "I dreamed about you last night. **You must leave right away and not come back to Vienna for five years.**" He took the **last train to Rome** that very night, ever after considered himself "a survivor of some catastrophe I never experienced", and has **never returned to Vienna**.

5. Barcelona and Pablo Neruda

Years later, the Chilean poet **Pablo Neruda** landed in Spain for the first time since the Civil War. He hunted old books, bought a torn volume for two months' consular salary, moved "like an invalid elephant" with a child's curiosity. At lunch he was like a **Renaissance pope**: gluttonous and refined; he ate three lobsters with a surgeon's skill and tasted from everyone's plate. He sensed someone staring at him: it was **Frau Frieda**, old and fat, with the snake ring on her index finger. Neruda said he did not believe in prophetic dreams: "**Only poetry is clairvoyant.**"

On the Ramblas she told the narrator she had sold her Austrian properties and retired to **Oporto**, to "a fake castle on a hill". Clearly, dream by dream, she had taken over the whole fortune of her Viennese patrons. He told her he had always thought her dreams were "**a stratagem for surviving**". She laughed: "You're as impudent as ever." Then: "By the way, **you can go back to Vienna now.**" Thirteen years had passed. He replied: "Even if your dreams are false, I'll never go back. **Just in case.**"

6. Two dreams and an ending

After his siesta Neruda said: "**I dreamed she was dreaming about me.**" ("That's right out of Borges.") On the ship Frau Frieda said: "**I dreamed he was dreaming about me.**" Months after the Havana disaster the narrator asked the Portuguese ambassador what the housekeeper had actually done. "**Nothing. She dreamed.**" The ambassador praised her but gave no clue to settle whether she was Frau Frieda.

I.2 Themes, characters and literary devices ★★★

Themes

- **Reality and fantasy (magical realism):** a real disaster, real people (Neruda, Matilde, Borges) and real cities sit beside prophetic dreams and a dream within a dream. The reader can never decide which is which.
- **Superstition and suggestibility:** rational people (the financier's family, the narrator) yield to "archaic superstitions". The narrator calls her dreams a trick, yet obeys her "just in case".
- **Survival and cunning:** Frau Frieda turns her only talent, dreaming, into a livelihood and finally into a fortune: "a stratagem for surviving".
- **Power and control:** through dreams she controls a whole household; "even the faintest sigh was breathed by her order".
- **Poetry versus prophecy:** Neruda: "Only poetry is clairvoyant"; yet he too dreams of her.
- **Identity and mystery:** she never tells her real name; the dead woman is never identified.

Characters

Character	Traits (with evidence)
Frau Frieda	Colombian expatriate; plain, aged early, yet "charming" and "awe-inspiring"; shrewd, manipulative, confident; generous to poor students; loyal to her origins (eats in the students' tavern); witty ("You're as impudent as ever")
The narrator	a young Latin American writer (Márquez himself); curious, observant, sceptical yet suggestible; impudent; a born storyteller
Pablo Neruda	Chilean poet; gluttonous and refined, childlike curiosity, eloquent about food; rejects prophetic dreams; observant ("There's someone behind me…")
The Portuguese ambassador	admires the housekeeper; his "She dreamed" closes the story with irony

Literary devices

Device	Example and effect
Frame / circular structure	Begins and ends in Havana; the middle is a flashback
Symbol	**Serpent ring with emerald eyes**: mystery, temptation, wisdom, cunning; the only link between Frau Frieda and the dead woman
Irony	The dreamer who foresaw others' fate could not foresee her own death; "Nothing. She dreamed" for a woman who made a fortune by dreaming
Simile	Neruda moved "like an invalid elephant"; "like a Renaissance pope"
Hyperbole / humour	a bib "to keep him from taking a bath in sauce"
Dream within a dream	Neruda and Frieda dream of each other dreaming: a Borges-like labyrinth
Ambiguity (open ending)	We never learn whether the dead housekeeper was Frau Frieda

Key lines explained

Ans. **"I sell my dreams."** Her only trade; dreams become a commodity, and the title.

"...a survivor of some catastrophe I never experienced." He believes he escaped a disaster only because he obeyed her; shows how suggestible even a sceptic is.

"Only poetry is clairvoyant." Neruda claims true vision belongs to poets, not to fortune-tellers.

"Even if your dreams are false, I'll never go back. Just in case." Reason and superstition coexist in him.

"Nothing. She dreamed." The ironic last line: dreaming looks like doing nothing, yet it was her whole profession and power.

NCERT exercises, fully solved

Stop and Think

1. How did the author recognise the lady who was extricated from the car encrusted in the wall of the Havana Riviera Hotel?

Ans. He did not actually see her; he read about her in the newspaper. Her name meant nothing, but the **gold ring shaped like a serpent with emerald eyes** made him suspect she was Frau Frieda, who wore such a ring on her right forefinger. He could not confirm it because he could not find out on which finger the dead woman wore the ring.

2. Why did the author leave Vienna never to return again?

Ans. Frau Frieda told him she had dreamed about him and that he must leave Vienna at once and not return for five years. Her conviction was so real that he took the last train to Rome that night. Even when she later said he could go back, he refused, "just in case", because he had come to regard himself as a survivor of some catastrophe.

Stop and Think

1. How did Pablo Neruda know that somebody behind him was looking at him?

Ans. He sensed it intuitively. While eating he suddenly stopped, "tuned his lobster's antennae" and quietly said someone behind him would not stop looking at him. Neruda was extremely observant and sensitive to his surroundings; three tables away Frau Frieda was indeed staring at him.

2. How did Pablo Neruda counter Frau Frieda's claims to clairvoyance?

Ans. He paid no attention to her dreams and declared at the outset that he did not believe in prophetic dreams. He said, "**Only poetry is clairvoyant**", meaning only the poet's vision can see beyond the present.

Understanding the Text

1. Did the author believe in the prophetic ability of Frau Frieda?

Ans. Rationally, no: he told her he had always thought her dreams were "no more than a stratagem for surviving". Emotionally, partly: he left Vienna the same night on her word and never went back "just in case". His attitude is a mixture of scepticism and superstition.

2. Why did he think that Frau Frieda's dreams were a stratagem for surviving?

Ans. She had no other skill or trade; dreaming won her a home, meals, a salary, absolute control over a rich family and finally their entire fortune. Since the dreams always worked in her favour, he saw them as a clever survival strategy rather than true prophecy.

3. Why does the author compare Neruda to a Renaissance pope?

Ans. Renaissance popes were known for luxury, power and refined taste. Neruda was "gluttonous and refined", always presided at the table, ate three lobsters with a surgeon's skill, tasted from everyone's plate and spoke only of delicacies. His love of food and grand presence made the comparison apt and humorous.

Talking about the Text (model points)

Ans. **1. Rational yet suggestible:** even educated people consult horoscopes, avoid "unlucky" numbers or obey omens; the financier's family and the narrator himself illustrate this. Fear of the unknown makes us cautious "just in case".

2. Dreams, clairvoyance and poetic vision: poets, like seers, perceive what others cannot; dreams and imagination feed literature (Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* came from a dream). But poetic vision is creative and symbolic, while superstition is passive belief.

Appreciation

1. Responses evoked by the gold ring shaped like a serpent with emerald eyes.

Ans. The ring is exotic ("Egyptian"), mysterious and slightly sinister. The serpent suggests wisdom, cunning and temptation; the emerald eyes suggest watchfulness and wealth. It is the only clue linking the dead housekeeper to Frau Frieda, so it creates suspense and keeps the reader guessing to the end.

2. Interweaving of imagination and reality.

Ans. Yes. Real places (Havana, Vienna, Barcelona, Oporto), real people (Neruda, Matilde, Borges) and a real-seeming disaster are mixed with prophetic dreams, a brother's death foretold, and two people dreaming of each other. The matter-of-fact tone makes the fantastic believable: the essence of magical realism.

3. Contradiction in the last exchange.

Ans. The ambassador praises her as "extraordinary", yet says she did "nothing"; she only "dreamed". In ordinary terms dreaming is idleness, but for her it was a full profession that earned her a fortune and power over others. The contradiction exposes the irony at the heart of the story.

4. Ironical element in the story.

Ans. (A) A woman who foretold others' dangers could not foresee her own death in a freak wave. (B) The rationalist narrator obeys a dream "just in case". (C) Neruda, who does not believe in dreams, dreams of her. (D) Her "nothing" made her rich.

Language Work

Ans. **A. Vocabulary:** *dream on* (what you hope for will not happen), *dream something away* (waste time daydreaming), *(not) dream of doing* (would never consider), *dream something up* (invent), *look like a dream* (look wonderful); *sell-by date* (last date for sale), *selling point* (feature that attracts buyers), *sell-out* (event with all tickets sold; also a betrayal), *selling price*, *seller's market* (demand exceeds supply, prices favour sellers).

B. Emphasis (end of sentence): (1) "...the snake ring on the woman who died in the Havana Riviera disaster" (2) "...a stratagem for surviving" (3) "...she had taken over the entire fortune of her ineffable patrons in Vienna" (4) "... eating without haste and staring at him" (5) "...waited for money that never arrived".

C. Syllables: two: dream-ing, tav-ern, ba-lance; three: Vi-en-na, char-ac-ter, gen-er-ous; four: im-pu-dent-ly, ca-tas-tro-phe, af-ter-wards (3), ex-tra-or-di-nar-y (6).

CBSE board questions 2024–2026, fully solved

CBSE 2026 · Q7(I)(a) 'I only came to tell you that I dreamed about you last night,' she said. 'You must leave right away and not come back to Vienna for five years.' Her conviction was so real that I boarded the last train to Rome that same night. As for me, I was so influenced by what she said that from then on I considered myself a survivor of some catastrophe I never experienced. I still have not returned to Vienna. *[6 × 1]*

Ans. (i) What prompted her to tell him to leave right away? **Her conviction about a dream that showed danger to the author's life.**

(ii) Where did the author go after leaving Vienna? Rome.
(iii) Why does the author say he considered himself a survivor of some catastrophe he never experienced? He was convinced of her oracular power; he believed he had escaped a disaster only because he left on her warning.
(iv) What do you infer about her attitude towards the author? She was concerned about him / she knew she could easily influence him.
(v) Why did the author not return to Vienna? Out of fear of the unknown: she had convinced him a catastrophe would occur if he stayed; he did not wish to risk his life.
(vi) Apt synonym for 'conviction': (D) certainty

CBSE 2025 · Q7(I)(A) Vienna was still an old imperial city, whose geographical position between the two irreconcilable worlds left behind by the Second World War had turned it into a paradise of black marketeering and international espionage. I could not have imagined a more suitable spot for my fugitive compatriot... 'I sell my dreams'.

Ans. (I) How did the Second World War affect the city of Vienna? Lying between the two irreconcilable worlds (East and West) left by the war, Vienna became a paradise of black marketeering and international espionage. [6 × 1]
(II) Who is referred to as a "fugitive compatriot"? Frau Frieda, the narrator's fellow Colombian.
(III) Why does the author call her 'a fugitive'? She had left Colombia as a child, never revealed her real name or full past, and lived in secrecy in a city of spies: she seemed to be running from her identity.
(IV) How did she come to be known as 'Frau Frieda'? She never told her real name, so the Latin American students invented this Germanic tongue twister for her.
(V) What do you infer from 'a world so distant and different from the windy cliffs of Quindío'? Post-war Vienna, cold, imperial and full of intrigue, was utterly unlike her rural Colombian homeland; the narrator wonders how she survived there.
(VI) Word meaning 'a fellow citizen': compatriot

CBSE 2024 · Q7(I)(b) After lunch, during the inevitable stroll along the Ramblas, I lagged behind with Frau Frieda so that we could renew our memories with no other ears listening... 'You're as impudent as ever,' she said. And said no more, because the rest of the group had stopped to wait for Neruda... When we resumed our conversation, Frau Frieda changed the subject. [6 × 1]

Ans. (i) Explain the 'inevitable stroll'. The usual, habitual walk after lunch that could not be avoided.
(ii) Why did the writer lag behind others with Frau Frieda? To renew their memories with no one else listening.
(iii) How was Frau Frieda able to grab the property of her 'ineffable patrons'? By selling her dreams to the rich family in Vienna, dream by dream, until she controlled them and inherited their wealth.
(iv) Why did the writer think her dream-telling was only a clever trick to earn money? He had known and observed her for a long time and saw that her dreams always benefited her: a strategy to survive.
(v) Why did Frau Frieda change the topic? The others had joined them; she did not want them to listen.
(vi) Synonym of 'stratagem': (D) Artifice

CBSE 2024 · Q9(b) What impression do you form of Pablo Neruda from his manner of eating? (40–50 words) [3]

Ans. Model answer: Neruda appears gluttonous yet refined, like a Renaissance pope. He ate three whole lobsters, dissecting them with a surgeon's skill, devoured everyone's plate with his eyes and tasted from each with contagious delight. He spoke eloquently of delicacies, was choosy and observant, and so childlike that Matilde tied a bib round his neck.

★ **Exam tip:** Marking scheme (2024): any two of: glutton; choosy (picked delicacies from others' plates); observant; eloquent about culinary delicacies. Content 2 + Expression 1.

Likely long-answer question (5 marks)

"The story is an excellent example of magical realism." Discuss. (120–150 words)

> **Ans. Answer:** Magical realism presents the fantastic as an ordinary part of real life. Márquez opens with a precise, journalistic account of a freak wave in Havana, a car embedded in a hotel wall and a crushed body, all real and documented. Into this real world he slips the marvellous: a woman who earns her living by prophetic dreams, a brother's death foretold, a family ruled by breakfast dreams. Historical figures (Neruda, Matilde, Borges) and real cities lend credibility, and the narrator himself obeys her warning and leaves Vienna. The climax is a dream within a dream: Neruda and Frieda dream of each other dreaming. The tone never changes from fact to fantasy, so the reader accepts both. The open ending (was the dead woman Frau Frieda?) keeps reality and magic inseparable. Thus the story is a fine example of magical realism.

Practice set: test yourself

A. Fill in the blanks (8)

1. The disaster took place at the _____ Hotel in Havana.
2. The dead woman was the housekeeper of the new _____ ambassador.
3. The narrator first met Frau Frieda _____ years before the disaster.
4. Frau Frieda was born in _____ and came to Austria to study music and voice.
5. She told dreams before _____, when their oracular qualities are purest.
6. Her younger brother died after choking on a piece of _____.
7. Neruda said, "Only _____ is clairvoyant."
8. Frau Frieda retired to _____ in Portugal.

B. True or False (8)

1. The car was found to contain the body of a man.
2. Frau Frieda wore the snake ring on her right forefinger.
3. The narrator took the last train to Rome on her warning.
4. Neruda believed in prophetic dreams.
5. Frau Frieda was the third of eleven children.
6. The master of the Viennese house left her nothing.
7. Thirteen years had passed between Vienna and Barcelona.
8. The ambassador clearly identified the dead woman as Frau Frieda.

C. Very short answer (1 mark each) (10)

1. What did the huge wave do to one of the cars?
2. What did the dead woman's ring look like?
3. What name did the students give the Colombian woman?
4. What was her "only trade"?
5. What did the narrator compare Neruda to?
6. How many lobsters did Neruda eat?
7. Who was Matilde?
8. Where did Frau Frieda say she lived after leaving Austria?
9. Whose story-world did the narrator compare Neruda's dream to?

10. What one word did the ambassador use for what she did?

D. Short answer I (2 marks, 30–40 words) (8)

1. Why was the finger on which the ring was worn a crucial piece of information?
2. Why was Vienna a suitable place for a "fugitive compatriot"?
3. How did Frau Frieda interpret her dream about her brother?
4. How did she get her job in the Viennese house?
5. What were the terms of the master's will?
6. Describe Neruda's siesta ritual.
7. Why did the narrator refuse to return to Vienna even after being told he could?
8. Why did Frau Frieda eat in the students' tavern though she was rich?

E. Short answer II (3 marks, 40–50 words) (6)

1. Describe Frau Frieda's control over the Viennese family.
2. Bring out the humour in the description of Neruda at lunch.
3. What does the episode of the two dreams (Neruda and Frieda) suggest?
4. How does the story begin and end in the same place? What is the effect?
5. What kind of person is the narrator?
6. Explain: "She had the elegance to leave her a part of his estate."

F. Long answer (5 marks, 120–150 words) (4)

1. Sketch the character of Frau Frieda.
2. Comment on the role of irony in "I Sell My Dreams".
3. "Dreams can be a means of survival as well as of control." Discuss with reference to the story.
4. How does the serpent ring hold the story together?

G. HOTS (4)

1. Was Frau Frieda a fraud or a genuine seer? Give your view.
2. Why do you think Márquez leaves the identity of the dead woman uncertain?
3. Do you think people in your own society "sell dreams"? Give examples.
4. If Frau Frieda had foreseen her own death, how might the story change?

20 MCQs

1. The story is an example of
   (A) satire only (B) science fiction (C) magical realism (D) detective fiction
2. Márquez won the Nobel Prize in Literature in
   (A) 1982 (B) 1967 (C) 1985 (D) 1999
3. Where was the car embedded?
   (A) a bank (B) a church (C) the seawall (D) the Havana Riviera Hotel
4. The dead woman worked for the
   (A) Spanish consul (B) Portuguese ambassador (C) Chilean poet (D) Cuban minister
5. The ring was shaped like a
   (A) lion (B) serpent (C) rose (D) heart
6. Frau Frieda came originally from
   (A) Austria (B) Chile (C) Portugal (D) Colombia
7. She told her dreams
   (A) before breakfast (B) after dinner (C) at midnight (D) on Sundays

8. Her brother died by
(A) drowning (B) a fall (C) choking on a caramel (D) a fever

9. In Vienna she worked for a family headed by a
(A) general (B) musician (C) doctor (D) financier

10. The narrator was told to stay away from Vienna for
(A) one year (B) five years (C) ten years (D) ever

11. Neruda moved through the crowd like
(A) a lion (B) a child (C) an invalid elephant (D) a pope

12. Neruda bought an old book for
(A) two months' salary (B) a few pesos (C) nothing (D) a lobster

13. "Only poetry is clairvoyant" was said by
(A) the narrator (B) Neruda (C) Frau Frieda (D) Matilde

14. Frau Frieda's house in Oporto was a
(A) cottage (B) palace (C) fake castle on a hill (D) tavern

15. The narrator thought her dreams were
(A) divine (B) poetic (C) scientific (D) a stratagem for surviving

16. 'Impudent' means
(A) cheeky (B) shy (C) humble (D) foolish

17. "I dreamed she was dreaming about me" was compared to the work of
(A) Borges (B) Neruda (C) Joyce (D) Kafka

18. Neruda wrote dedications in
(A) red ink (B) black ink (C) blue ink (D) green ink

19. The ambassador said the housekeeper did
(A) cooking (B) nothing; she dreamed (C) singing (D) housework

20. The ending of the story is
(A) happy (B) tragic only (C) open and ironic (D) moral

1 (C) · 2 (A) · 3 (D) · 4 (B) · 5 (B) · 6 (D) · 7 (A) · 8 (C) · 9 (D) · 10 (B) · 11 (C) · 12 (A) · 13 (B) · 14 (C) · 15 (D) · 16 (A) · 17 (A) · 18 (D) · 19 (B) · 20 (C)

Assertion–Reason (6)

(A) Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A. (B) Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A. (C) A is true but R is false. (D) A is false but R is true.

1. A: The narrator left Vienna the same night. R: Frau Frieda's conviction about her dream was so real that he was influenced by it.
2. A: The serpent ring was a crucial clue. R: Frau Frieda wore a similar ring on her right forefinger.
3. A: Neruda believed in prophetic dreams. R: He said, "Only poetry is clairvoyant."
4. A: Frau Frieda never became rich. R: Dream by dream, she took over the fortune of her patrons.
5. A: Frau Frieda ate in the students' tavern. R: She did so out of loyalty to her origins.
6. A: Márquez is a Latin American writer. R: He won the Nobel Prize in 1982.

Answers: 1 (A) · 2 (A) · 3 (D) · 4 (D) · 5 (A) · 6 (B)

Extract-based practice (case)

"In reality, that was her only trade. She had been the third of eleven children born to a prosperous shopkeeper in old Caldas, and as soon as she learned to speak she instituted the fine custom in her family of telling dreams before breakfast, the time when their oracular qualities are preserved in their purest form."

> **Ans.** (i) What was "her only trade"? **Selling (interpreting) her dreams.** (ii) Who was her father? **A prosperous shopkeeper in old Caldas.** (iii) What custom did she begin? **Telling dreams before breakfast.** (iv) Why before breakfast? **Then their oracular (prophetic) qualities are purest.** (v) What tone does "fine custom" carry? **Gently ironic.** (vi) Word meaning 'prophetic': **oracular**

Answers

A. 1 Havana Riviera 2 Portuguese 3 thirty-four 4 Colombia 5 breakfast 6 caramel 7 poetry 8 Oporto

B. 1 F (a woman) 2 T 3 T 4 F 5 T 6 F (left her part of his estate) 7 T 8 F

C. 1 Embedded it in the side of the hotel. 2 A gold serpent with emerald eyes. 3 Frau Frieda. 4 Selling (telling) dreams. 5 A Renaissance pope. 6 Three. 7 Neruda's wife. 8 A fake castle on a hill in Oporto. 9 Borges. 10 "Nothing": she dreamed.

D. 1 Frau Frieda wore such a ring on her right forefinger; knowing the finger would have confirmed whether the dead woman was she. 2 Post-war Vienna was a centre of black marketeering and espionage where secretive people lived unnoticed; she hid her name and past. 3 She said it meant not that he would drown but that he should not eat sweets; he later choked on a caramel. 4 She told the truth, "I dream", explained her gift to the lady and was hired to decipher the family's daily fate. 5 She was left part of the estate on condition that she continue dreaming for the family until her dreams ended. 6 Windows opened/closed for perfect warmth, a certain light from a certain direction, absolute silence; he slept ten minutes and woke refreshed like a child. 7 He had become so influenced that he felt like a survivor of an unseen catastrophe; "Even if your dreams are false... just in case." 8 Out of loyalty to her origins: to stay among Latin Americans; she even paid for the students' meals.

E. 1 At breakfast she decided what each member would do that day and how; her predictions became the sole authority; "even the faintest sigh was breathed by her order"; the master left her part of his estate. 2 He wears a barber's bib to avoid "a bath in sauce", eats three lobsters with a surgeon's skill, devours others' plates with his eyes, talks only of shellfish, "tunes his lobster's antennae": comic exaggeration. 3 The two dreams mirror each other like Borges' labyrinths; they blur dream and reality and show that even sceptics are drawn into the world of dreams. 4 Begins with the Havana disaster, moves back 34 years, ends with the ambassador in Havana; circular structure creates suspense and leaves the mystery unresolved. 5 Curious, sceptical yet superstitious, witty, impudent, observant; a storyteller who mixes fact and fancy. 6 "Elegance" is ironic: the master graciously rewarded her, but it also shows how completely she had captured the family.

F (points). 1 Plain, aged early, charming, awe-inspiring; shrewd and manipulative; confident; generous; loyal to roots; witty; mysterious (no real name); a survivor who turns dreams into a fortune. 2 Irony of the dreamer's own death; "Nothing. She dreamed"; sceptic narrator obeys; Neruda dreams of her; "elegance" of the will; "fine custom". 3 Survival: job, food, home, fortune; control: family's every act, the narrator's journeys. 4 Opens the mystery, recalls Vienna and Barcelona (ring on index finger), returns at the end unresolved; symbol of cunning.

G (hints). 1 Either view, with evidence: fortune accumulated (fraud) vs brother's death, narrator's escape (seer). 2 To preserve mystery and the magical-realist blend. 3 Astrologers, advertisers, "get-rich-quick" schemes. 4 Irony would vanish; the open ending would close.

Last-night summary

- **Author:** Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia, 1927–2014), Nobel 1982; magical realism.
- **Havana:** huge wave → car embedded in Havana Riviera Hotel → dead housekeeper of the Portuguese ambassador → gold serpent ring with emerald eyes.
- **Vienna (34 years earlier):** post-war city of black market and espionage; Colombian woman, called Frau Frieda; "I sell my dreams"; dreams before breakfast; brother choked on caramel; ruled a financier's family; inherited part of the estate.
- **Warning:** "leave right away... five years" → last train to Rome → never returned.
- **Barcelona (13 years later):** Pablo Neruda: invalid elephant, Renaissance pope, three lobsters, bib; "Only poetry is clairvoyant"; Frieda in Oporto (fake castle); "stratagem for surviving"; "you can go back now"; "Just in case".
- **Dream within a dream:** Neruda and Frieda dream of each other (Borges).
- **End:** ambassador: "Nothing. She dreamed." Identity of the dead woman never confirmed.
- **PYQs:** 2026 (warning extract), 2025 (Vienna extract), 2024 (Ramblas extract; Neruda's eating).

★ *Exam tip:* **Vocabulary to know:** embedded, encrusted, intrigued, impertinence, oracular, infamy, decipher, straitened, euphoria, fortuitous, gluttonous, intrepid, stratagem, ineffable, impudent, clairvoyant, disenchantment, compatriot, fugitive.