Noli Me Tangere

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JOSÉ RIZAL

Born in the Philippines during the time of Spanish colonization, Rizal came from a wealthy family and, like his protagonist in *Noli Me Tangere*, went to Europe in his twenties to pursue his studies. During this time, he banded together with likeminded expatriates and other anti-colonial sympathizers to advance the opinion that Spanish colonialism was a destructive force (though Rizal never publicly endorsed complete independence in the Philippines). Rizal wrote *Noli Me Tangere* while abroad, and when he returned to his country in the 1880s, he was accused of treason. In response, he traveled to Europe yet again and continued his writing and activism. By the time the Philippine Revolution began in 1896, he was back in the Philippines, though in exile in the city of Dapitan. At this point, he volunteered as a doctor treating the Spanish army, presumably to lift his exile. Unfortunately, though, he was arrested, found guilty of treason, and executed by firing squad, becoming a martyr for Filipinos struggling against colonialism.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Spanish colonization of the Philippines—which began in 1521—is the driving force of *Noli Me Tangere*, a novel that critiques the ways in which colonialism leads to corruption and abuse. The book itself predates the Philippine Revolution of 1896 by almost ten years, meaning that its rejection of Spanish oppression was groundbreaking and unprecedented in Filipino society. Unfortunately, Rizal—who had worked for the majority of his adult life to empower his countrymen—died in 1896, two years before the Philippines established independence from Spain.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The most obvious literary work related to *Noli Me Tangere* is the Gospel of John in *The New Testament*. Rizal borrows the novel's Latin title from Jesus telling Mary Magdalene "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father" (the Latin phrase for "touch me not" is "noli me tangere"). Rizal scholars have pointed out similarities between St. John and *Noli Me Tangere*'s Father Salví, suggesting that this parallel may account for the novel's borrowed title. The title could also refer to an antiquated name for a type of cancer that is excruciatingly painful and sensitive to touch. In this sense, the novel's title alludes to its political nature, asserting that the Philippines is suffering from a "social cancer." *Noli Me Tangere* is also a precursor to postcolonial literature, a genre that explores the negative influence of colonization and the unfortunate aftereffects of decolonization, which often further destabilized cultures that had come to rely on the flawed but strong presence of foreign governments. Like *Noli Me Tangere*, books like Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* or Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* examine the impact of colonization, but they do so from a different perspective. For example, while *Wide Sargasso Sea* was written during decolonization—when British forces were withdrawing from the Caribbean, where the book is set—*Noli Me Tangere* was composed *during* colonization, when the Spanish government still occupied the Philippines. Despite this difference, though, postcolonial literature concerns itself with many of the same ideas Rizal examines, a testament to the fact that Rizal's brave impulse to criticize colonialism was significantly ahead of his time. Finally, it is worth considering that *Noli Me Tangere* has a sequel, *El Filibusterismo*, a book that follows Ibarra on his quest to liberate his country from the church and government's oppressive rule. In this follow-up, Ibarra no longer invests himself in trying to change his nation using peaceful means. Instead, he disguises himself as a wealthy jeweler, infiltrates the elite class, and plans a violent revolution.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Noli Me Tangere (Touch Me Not)
- **When Written:** The 1870s.
- **Where Written:** Spain
- **When Published:** 1887
- **Literary Period:** Victorian Era
- **Genre:** Political Fiction and Political Satire
- **Setting:** San Diego, Spanish Philippines
- **Climax:** A group of bandits (secretly organized by Father Salví) attacks San Diego's military barracks. Father Salví frames Ibarra as their ringleader, and Ibarra is imprisoned and accused of treason.
- **Antagonist:** The foremost antagonists are Father Dámaso and Father Salví, though there is reason to believe the true antagonistic force in *Noli Me Tangere* is the corruption and unchecked power colonialism has bestowed upon the church and all its friars.
- **Point of View:** Third-person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Execution. As the common story goes, when José Rizal was executed by firing squad, he asked to face his shooters. Because traitors were customarily shot in the back so that they fell face-first to the ground, his request was denied. When the bullets hit his back, though, he tried with all his power to twist around,

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such that he died looking at the sun.

Persecution. Although he came from a wealthy family, José Rizal was no stranger to the oppressive ways of the Spanish government. When he was a young boy, for example, his mother was falsely accused of poisoning a neighbor. As a result, she was imprisoned for more than two years.

PLOT SUMMARY

Noli Me Tangere takes place in the Philippines during the time of Spanish colonization. In the opening scene, a wealthy and influential Filipino man named Captain Tiago hosts a dinner party to welcome Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra y Magsalin back to the Philippines. Ibarra has spent the last seven years studying in Europe. In talking to the various guests at Captain Tiago's dinner party, he discovers that his father, Don Rafael, recently died, though he doesn't know why or how. During the dinner, Father Dámaso, a loud-mouthed friar Ibarra has known since childhood, stands up and insults Ibarra, disparaging him for having traveled to Europe to pursue an education he could have obtained in the Philippines. In response, Ibarra swallows his pride and refrains from directing insults at the half-drunk friar. Instead, he leaves the dinner early, ignoring Captain Tiago's plea that he stay a little longer in order to see his fiancée (and Captain Tiago's daughter), María Clara.

On his way home, Ibarra walks with Señor Guevara, a lieutenant of the Civil Guard, Spain's colonial armed forces that police the Philippines. The lieutenant explains that a few months after Ibarra left, Father Dámaso accused Don Rafael of not going to confession. Don Rafael was a very powerful man, which meant he had many enemies in both the Spanish government and in the church. The lieutenant tells Ibarra that one day Don Rafael came upon a government tax collector beating a boy in the street. When Rafael interfered, he accidentally pushed the man too hard, causing the tax collector to hit his head on a rock. This injury eventually led to the man's death, and Ibarra's father was thrown in jail and accused of subversion and heresy. At this point, Father Dámaso heaped new accusations on him and everybody abandoned him. By the time he was finally proven innocent, Guevara explains, Don Rafael had already died in prison.

Ibarra goes to his hometown, San Diego, where the unfortunate events of his father's death took place. Since Captain Tiago owns multiple properties there, María Clara also relocates to San Diego. November is approaching, a time the town celebrates with a large festival. This festival is surrounded by various religious holidays, such as All Souls' Day, which commemorates dead people in purgatory waiting for their souls to be cleansed before ascending to heaven. Taking advantage of this, San Diego's priests implore the villagers to purchase indulgences, which they claim shorten the length of time a soul must languish in purgatory. Ibarra quickly sees that the power of the Catholic friars in the Philippines has greatly increased since he left for Europe, a fact made clear by their control over even governmental officials. For instance, Father Salví, San Diego's new priest, is constantly at odds with the military ensign in charge of the village's faction of the Civil Guard. Salví uses his important religious position to spite the ensign, fining the man for missing church services and delivering purposefully boring sermons when he *does* attend.

The friars interfere with other elements of everyday life in San Diego too, which Ibarra learns after speaking with the schoolmaster. The schoolmaster tells him that Father Dámaso actively meddles with his educational techniques by demanding that he teach only in the country's native language, Tagalog, instead of instructing the children to speak Spanish. Dámaso also insists that the schoolmaster beat the children, creating a hostile environment that doesn't lend itself to productive learning. Hearing this, Ibarra decides to build a secular **school** in San Diego, a project his father dreamed about before his death. On the advice of the town's old philosopher, Tasio, Ibarra presents his ideas to the town's religious and civic leaders, making it seem as if he wants them to be involved with the school, even though he plans to ignore their influence after it is built.

Meanwhile, two poor boys named Crispín and Basilio study to be sextons, or people who take care of the church. They do so in order to financially help their mother, Sisa, but Crispín is unfairly accused of theft and thus must work constantly with his brother to pay off the absurd amounts the chief sexton claims that Crispín owes the church. When he protests this injustice one night, Crispín is hauled away and severely beaten. Scared for his brother's life, Basilio searches him out before running home during a storm and waiting in vain with his mother for Crispín to appear. This never materializes, and the next day Basilio goes back into town. Frightened, Sisa looks for both her boys and is told that the Civil Guard has been ordered to arrest them for theft, though nobody can find them. She herself is arrested and then released, at which point she searches throughout the night for her boys, working herself into permanent insanity and destitution as she wanders the town and the surrounding woods.

Visiting the Catholic cemetery, Ibarra speaks to a gravedigger and learns that, upon Father Dámaso's orders, he dug up Don Rafael's body. Although the friar had instructed the gravedigger to take Rafael's body to the Chinese cemetery—a less respected cemetery—the gravedigger threw Don Rafael into the lake, thinking it a more honorable resting place.

Ibarra and the town's influential religious and government leaders decide to celebrate the new school on the same day as the town's fiesta. The church makes plans to bless the new educational building (though it is not yet completed) directly after a long sermon by Father Dámaso. During this sermon, a

mysterious figure approaches Ibarra. His name is Elías, a man whose life Ibarra recently saved on an eventful fishing trip. Elías tells Ibarra that there is a plan to kill him during the school's benediction ceremony, warning him not to walk beneath a certain large stone suspended by a pulley system. Ibarra ignores this advice, and sure enough, the stone hurdles toward him. Luckily Elías takes action and covertly puts the criminal—the man plotting against Ibarra—in the way of the stone, killing him instead of Ibarra. The festivities go on, but Ibarra now knows he has enemies.

That night, during a celebratory dinner hosted by Ibarra, Father Dámaso arrives uninvited. All of San Diego's most respected individuals are in attendance, including the governor and the town's other friars. Dámaso loudly insults the school and its architecture while also making callous remarks about "indios," a racial slur for native Filipinos. He flippantly speaks about how "indios" abandon their country because they think they're superior, traveling to Europe instead. "In this life the fathers of such vipers are punished," he says. "They die in jail, eh, eh, or rather, they have no place…" When Ibarra hears Dámaso make this crude reference to his father's unfair death, he jumps up and pins the priest down, holding a knife in his free hand and publicly accusing Dámaso of exhuming his father's body. Ibarra says he won't kill Dámaso, but his actions say otherwise, and as he lifts the knife to bury it in the friar's body, María Clara snatches it from his hand.

In the aftermath of this scandalous event, Ibarra is excommunicated from the church. Captain Tiago proves himself a spineless socialite by calling off the wedding between Ibarra and María Clara, instead betrothing his daughter to Linares, a young man from Spain. Linares is the nephew of Don Tiburcio de Espadaña, a fraudulent doctor who treats María Clara for a sudden illness that incapacitates her for several days after the incident between Ibarra and Father Dámaso. Meanwhile, the Captain General—the topmost government official representing Spain—visits San Diego. The friars implore him to punish Ibarra, but because his priorities are more civic than religious and because he supports Ibarra's mission to build a school, he pulls strings to have the young man's excommunication lifted.

While Ibarra continues his project, Father Salví makes arrangements with a man named Lucas, the brother of the man hired to kill Ibarra with the large stone. Because his brother died, Lucas wants revenge on Ibarra. Father Salví—who secretly loves María Clara and who believes Ibarra is a heretic—hatches a plot with Lucas to frame Ibarra. With Lucas's help, he organizes a band of rebels to attack the Civil Guard's military barracks, telling them that Ibarra is the ringleader. Hours before the attack takes place, Father Salví rushes to the ensign and warns him of the plan, making sure to request that the ensign let it be known that he—Salví—was the one to save the town by discovering the plot and issuing a warning.

The attack goes according to Salví and Lucas's plan, and Ibarra is arrested. He is imprisoned and found guilty, a verdict based on an ambiguous line in a letter he sent to María Clara. Once again Elías comes to the rescue, breaking him out of prison and taking him away in a boat. Before they leave town, Ibarra stops at María Clara's house, climbs onto her patio, and says goodbye to her. She explains that she only parted with his letter—which led to his guilty sentencing—because she was blackmailed. Apparently, a man came to her and told her that her real father is Fray Dámaso, not Captain Tiago. The man threatened to spread this information if she didn't give him Ibarra's letter. Feeling that she must protect Captain Tiago's honor and the memory of her deceased mother, she handed over Ibarra's letter. Nonetheless, she tells Ibarra that she will always love him and that she is deeply sorry for having betrayed him.

After saying goodbye to María Clara, Ibarra gets into Elías's boat. As the two men row into the night, they continue a heated discussion they've already begun about the nature of revolution and reform, debating the merits of working within a corrupt system to change it rather than overthrowing the system completely. As they talk, they realize they're being chased by another boat. Elías tries to out-row their pursuers, but quickly realizes they'll eventually catch up. As bullets whip by, he tells Ibarra to row, deciding to jump off the boat to confuse the people behind them. Before diving, he tells Ibarra to meet him on Christmas Eve in the woods near San Diego, where Ibarra's grandfather is buried with the family's riches. When Elías plunges into the water, the boat follows him instead of Ibarra. Elías throws them off by diving deep into the water, only surfacing periodically. Soon, though, the people chasing him don't see him come back up. They even think they see a bit of blood in the water.

Back in San Diego, Father Dámaso visits María Clara, who tells him she can't marry Linares because she doesn't love him. She references a newspaper, which falsely reported that Ibarra was found dead on the banks of the lake. She tells the friar that this news has given her no reason to live and, as such, she can't go through with the wedding, instead deciding to enter a convent.

On Christmas Eve, the young Basilio wanders forth from a cabin in the woods, where he's been living with a kind family ever since the Civil Guard started looking for him. He goes into San Diego in search of Sisa, his mother. When he finds her, she doesn't recognize him and runs away, leading him back to the woods, where she goes to the old tomb that contains Ibarra's grandfather. Once he finally catches up to his mother, though, Basilio faints. Seeing finally that he is her son, Sisa covers him with kisses. When Basilio wakes up, he finds that she has died by his side. At that moment, Elías appears. He is wounded, and seeing that Ibarra has not arrived, he tells Basilio he is about to die, instructing the boy to burn his and Sisa's bodies on a pyre. Looking up at the sky, he utters his final words: "I die without seeing dawn's light shining on my country…You, who will see it,

welcome it for me…don't forget those who fell during the nighttime." The book ends without mention of Ibarra's fate.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra y Magsalin (Ibarra) – A wealthy young man of mixed Spanish and Filipino ancestry who has recently returned to the Philippines from Europe after spending seven years studying abroad. Ibarra is cultured and well-respected, though the friars in his hometown of San Diego are suspicious of him. This is because his father Don Rafael was recently imprisoned and labeled a subversive and heretic, a sentence that eventually led to his death in jail. Ibarra learns of this on his first night back in the Philippines. Hoping to carry out his father's dreams, he later decides to build a secular **school** in San Diego, one that remains uninfluenced by overzealous friars like Father Dámaso and Father Salví, Ibarra's two primary adversaries. Unfortunately, building the school proves a difficult task due to the fact that Father Salví works together with a number of Ibarra's enemies to frame him as a conspirator against the government, ultimately forcing him to flee San Diego as an outlaw revolutionary. This means leaving behind the love of his life, María Clara, whom he was originally supposed to marry. Ibarra is a politically important character because Rizal uses him to voice ideas regarding colonialism and the nature of power in the Philippines. For the majority of the novel, Ibarra believes that, although the Catholic friars and the Spanish government are corrupt, they provide the Philippines with valuable support. In contrast to his friend Elías (a more drastic revolutionary who wants to overthrow the country's prevailing power structures), Ibarra insists upon reforming the Philippines from the inside out, working with the friars and Spanish officials to bring about positive change without dismantling the system entirely. However, by the end of the novel, once Ibarra is branded a heretical subversive, his ideas about reform and revolution begin to align with Elías's more radical theories.

María Clara – A woman well-regarded in San Diego for her high social station. Having grown up together as childhood friends, María Clara and Ibarra are engaged to be married, though Father Dámaso—her godfather—is displeased with this arrangement and does what he can to interfere. When Ibarra is excommunicated after almost killing Dámaso at a dinner party, arrangements are made for María Clara to marry a young Spanish man named Linares. She doesn't speak up against this idea because she doesn't want to cross her father, Captain Tiago, a spineless socialite who disavows Ibarra to stay in the good graces of friars like Father Dámaso. Later, María Clara discovers that Captain Tiago isn't her real father—rather, Father Dámaso impregnated her mother, who died during childbirth. When Ibarra is put on trial after being framed as a subversive by Father Salví, María Clara is blackmailed into providing the court with letters Ibarra has sent her—letters his prosecutors unfairly use as evidence of malfeasance. She does so in order to keep secret the fact that Dámaso is her biological father, since she doesn't want to disgrace her mother's name or compromise Captain Tiago's social standing. Still, she feels intense remorse at having sold Ibarra out. When the newspapers eventually falsely report his death, she calls off her marriage with Linares, instead deciding to enter a convent because she can't stand to exist in a world that doesn't contain Ibarra.

Father Dámaso – A Spanish friar living in the Philippines, Father Dámaso is an arrogant and pedantic priest who, despite having lived amongst Filipinos and hearing their confessions for over twenty years, is barely able to speak or understand Tagalog, the country's native language. A shameless loudmouth, he is unafraid of slandering nonreligious citizens who he thinks undermine his power. Ibarra learns that this is exactly what happened between his father, Don Rafael, and Dámaso—because Rafael refused to go to confession and supported secular means of empowering Filipino citizens, Dámaso jumped at the opportunity to cast Rafael as a heretic and a subversive. As such, Dámaso is Ibarra's most evident and outspoken rival, a fact Dámaso seems to leverage by taunting the young man at a dinner party one night, making allusions to Rafael's death and insulting Ibarra's project to build a **school**. Unfortunately, Ibarra is unable to ignore these provocations, and his violent response leads to his own excommunication. To make matters worse for Ibarra, Father Dámaso is very well-connected in San Diego, and he is María Clara's godfather, which puts him in a position of power over Ibarra's engagement (indeed, he forbids her from marrying Ibarra). María Clara later discovers that Dámaso is her real father, a fact she hopes to keep quiet at all costs because it would disgrace her deceased mother's honor and her father's respectability, so Dámaso gets away with his corruption.

Elías – An outlaw and vagabond revolutionary who resents the power the Catholic church and Spanish government have over the Philippines. After Ibarra saves his life from a vicious crocodile, Elías swears to protect the young man from his enemies, which are legion. Lurking in the town in the disguise of a day laborer, Elías discovers plots against Ibarra and does everything he can to thwart them. He also tries to convince Ibarra to join him and a band of disenchanted revolutionaries who want to retaliate against the abusive Civil Guard that empowers the church and oppresses the people it claims to govern. He and Ibarra engage in long political discussions throughout the novel, each character outlining a different viewpoint regarding the nature of national growth and reform. Elías urges his friend to see that nothing productive will come of working within the existing power structures, since the church and government are both so corrupt and apathetic

when it comes to actually improving the Philippines. Ibarra is more conservative and doesn't agree with Elías's drastic opinions until he himself experiences persecution at the hands of the country's most powerful institutions, at which point he agrees with his friend and accepts his fate as a committed subversive revolutionary.

Father Salví – A serious and committed Spanish friar who takes over Father Dámaso's post in San Diego as the town's priest. Fray Salví is a meticulous and cunning man who uses his religious stature for political influence, benefitting both himself and the church. He is often at odds with the town's military ensign, volleying back and forth for power over San Diego and its citizens. While preaching, he will often have his sextons (people who tend the church grounds) lock the doors so that listeners, and especially the ensign, must sit through long sermons. Unlike other priests, he refrains from frequently beating noncompliant townspeople, though he applies excruciating might on the rare occasions he does resort to violence. On the whole, though, he asserts his influence by engineering behind-the-scenes plans to defame his enemies. For instance, to ruin Ibarra—who is engaged to María Clara, the woman Father Salví secretly loves—he organizes a violent rebellion against the Civil Guards and frames Ibarra as the ringleader. Just before the bandits descend upon the town, Salví rushes to the ensign's house and warns him of the imminent attack, thereby portraying himself as a hero concerned with the town's wellbeing.

Captain Tiago (Don Santiago de los Santos) – A Filipino socialite and well-respected member of the country's wealthy elite. Close with high-ranking clergy members like Father Salví and Father Dámaso, Captain Tiago is one of the richest property owners in Manila and San Diego. He is concerned with making sure his daughter, María Clara, marries an affluent man with ample social capital, which is one of the reasons he so quickly abandons his support of Ibarra when the friars disgrace the young man's name. As for his own disgrace, Captain Tiago is not actually María Clara's biological father—rather, his wife had an affair with Father Dámaso before dying in childbirth. This is perhaps why he is so concerned with keeping up the appearance of respectability, for his own wife dishonored him. As such, he is blind to the vapid posturing of people like Doctor de Espadaña, a fraudulent doctor for rich people, and his wife, Doña Victorina, an obvious social climber. When they present their nephew Linares as a possible new match for María Clara, Captain Tiago is quick to assent, thinking that such a pairing will ensure respectability.

The Ensign – A Spaniard in charge of the Civil Guard in San Diego. The ensign has a bitter relationship with Father Salví, since he thinks Father Salví takes his position too seriously. To retaliate against Salví (who uses his religious authority to control the ensign), the ensign enforces curfews that make it difficult for the citizens of San Diego to attend church at the proper times. Given to excessive drinking and unnecessary displays of power, the ensign is married to a strong-willed Filipina woman named Doña Consolación, with whom he fights day in and day out.

Old Tasio (Don Anastasio) – An old man who used to study philosophy and who prefers secular knowledge to Catholicism. This atheistic worldview attracts attention from the friars and pious townspeople, who call him a "madman" (or, if they are being kind, "Tasio the Philosopher"). Tasio respects Ibarra and hopes dearly that Ibarra will succeed in building a **school** that is independent of the church. When Ibarra comes to Tasio for advice, though, Tasio counsels the young man to avoid talking to him, fearing that it will hinder the project to build a school. He tells Ibarra that people call anybody who disagrees with their own beliefs a "madman," which means that Ibarra should seek the approval of the friars and government officials before starting to build the school. This, he tells the young man, will make it seem as if he actually cares what these powerful and influential leaders think, though this attitude need only *appear* to be true. On the whole, Tasio is an extreme representation of what it is to live without caring what other people think: though he enjoys a certain freedom of thought, he also isolates himself from the rest of the community, ultimately dying alone with nobody to empathize with his lifelong struggle toward reason and intellectual liberation.

Don Rafael Ibarra – Ibarra's father, who has died before the novel's opening pages. Ibarra learns from a sympathetic friend of his father's, Lieutenant Guevara, that Don Rafael perished in prison after Father Dámaso accused him of heresy and subversion. These accusations surfaced because Don Rafael refused to attend confession, thinking it useless and instead trying to live according to his own moral compass, which was, Lieutenant Guevara says, incredibly strong and respectable. As such, Father Dámaso started making allusions to Ibarra's father while preaching. Not long thereafter, Don Rafael came across a government tax collector beating a little boy. When he intervened, he accidentally killed the collector and was subsequently imprisoned. This is when Father Dámaso and a handful of Don Rafael's other enemies came forward and slandered his name. Lieutenant Guevara hired a lawyer, but by the time he'd cleared the old man's name, Don Rafael had died in his cell. He was buried in San Diego's catholic cemetery, but Ibarra eventually learns that Father Dámaso ordered a gravedigger to exhume his body and transport him to the Chinese cemetery in order to separate him from non-heretical Catholics. Not wanting to haul his body all the way to the Chinese cemetery and thinking that the lake would be a more respectable resting place, the gravedigger threw Don Rafael's body into the lake.

Crispín – A very young boy studying to be a sexton, or a caretaker of the church. Crispín and his brother Basilio work tirelessly to send money home to their mother, Sisa, who is

married to a drunk gambler who provides nothing in the way of financial or even emotional support. Unfortunately, the chief sexton falsely accuses Crispín of stealing money from the church. This means that the boy has to work extra hard to make up his debt, though his elders are constantly fining him for minor or invented infractions. One night, he and his brother are supposed to go home to visit their mother for the first time in a week, but the chief sexton interferes with their plans, ordering that they stay past dark and past the town's curfew. When Crispín points out that this will make it impossible for them to visit Sisa, the sexton hauls him away and beats him severely. This is the last time he is seen, and one can presume he died at the hands of a merciless sexton or priest, though a church member tells Sisa that Crispín stole from the church and escaped in the night.

Basilio – Crispín's older brother, who is also training to be a sexton. When Crispín is dragged away, Basilio tries to find him unsuccessfully. Despite the town's curfew, he runs home to his mother and spends the night there, telling her that the next day he will seek out Ibarra and ask if he can work for him instead of training to be a sexton. This never transpires, though, because the Civil Guard comes looking for him and his brother. Basilio escapes from this mother's house and into the forest, where he lives with a kind family until Christmas Eve, when he goes looking for Sisa. Upon finding her, he discovers that she has gone crazy with grief and is unable to recognize him. He follows her back into the woods, where she eventually dies after finally understanding that he is her son.

Doctor Tiburcio de Espadaña – A Spaniard who speaks with a stutter and looks significantly older than his thirty-five years. Don Tiburcio came to the Philippines as a customs officer, but was dismissed upon his arrival. Having very little money to his name, he went to the country provinces of the Philippines to practice medicine, despite the fact that he had no training as a doctor. Nonetheless, because he charged exorbitant amounts of money, people came to think of him as one of the country's best doctors. After some time, the townspeople discovered his fraudulence and he was forced to find another means of survival. When María Clara falls ill, though, Tiburcio is once again falsely practicing medicine. His new wife Doña Victorina is a fierce social climber, so she convinced him to go back to medicine, advising him only to take on extremely well-respected patients. This is why Captain Tiago chooses him to attend to María Clara.

La Doctora Victorina de los Reyes de Espadaña – A Filipina woman married to Don Tiburcio. Above all else, Doña Victorina cares about her image as a beautiful and admired socialite, though she is actually—as Rizal goes out of his way to emphasize—past her prime. She is only in her thirties but looks much older, and she quickly adopts the latest trends, often changing her patterns of speech to reflect the sound of high society members. It is her idea to have Don Tiburcio treat María Clara. She also encourages him to bring along his respectable nephew Linares, whom she is eager to pair off with María Clara when Captain Tiago—whose advances she denied as a young woman because he was Filipino and not Spanish—calls off the wedding between his daughter and Ibarra.

Doña Consolación – An older Filipina woman married to the ensign. Doña Consolación is a brutal, vulgar partner who berates the ensign, engaging him in intense physical fights heard across the town. It is well known that she makes many of the ensign's decisions, and she even fuels his rivalry with Father Salví, encouraging her husband to take action against the priest to assert his dominance. Rizal depicts Doña Consolación as incredibly crass and very ugly, writing that her one "sterling trait" is that she seems to have "never looked in the mirror." Much like Doña Victorina, with whom she eventually gets into an intense fight, she believes herself to be much more worthy of respect than she actually is, constantly deceiving herself in regards to her station in life. She even pretends to not remember her native language, Tagalog, instead speaking very bad Spanish.

Señor Guevara – An elderly lieutenant of the Civil Guard who deeply respects both Ibarra and the late Don Rafael. Guevara tells Ibarra that he appreciated his father's conviction and moral compass, which went against the church and Father Dámaso's oppressive dominance. He is also the one to inform Ibarra about what exactly happened between Don Rafael and Father Dámaso.

The Captain General – An unnamed representative of Spain, and the highest government official in the Philippines. Civil Guard members, townspeople, and friars alike deeply respect him and defer to his judgment, each set of people volleying for his favor. Fortunately for Ibarra, the Captain General is not an enthusiastic supporter of the church and its over-inflated power, believing that the friars have been afforded too much power in Filipino society. Nonetheless, he recognizes the church's influence and does nothing to impede it, though he does pull strings to have Ibarra's excommunication lifted after the young man's dispute with Father Dámaso at the dinner party. Despite his support of the project to build a **school**, he is unable to help when Father Salví frames Ibarra as a subversive and heretic.

Linares – Doctor de Espadaña's nephew from Spain. Linares has a law degree and is the most intelligent member of the de Espadaña family, a fact that endears him to Doña Victorina. Eager to use Linares as a means of climbing the social ladder, the family encourages him to lie to Father Dámaso, telling the priest that he is the godson of one of the priest's close friends. Linares gives Dámaso a letter—presumably forged, though this is never made clear—from his friend that asks him to find the young man a job and a wife. Seeing an opportunity to ensure that his daughter, María Clara, doesn't marry the disgraced

Ibarra, Father Dámaso arranges her engagement to Linares.

The Schoolmaster – A teacher whom Don Rafael supported, helping him find a house and enabling him to properly do his job. The schoolmaster tells Ibarra about the unfortunate circumstances in San Diego surrounding education, which greatly inhibit the town's students. Because the current classroom is in the parish house, the lessons are heavily monitored by the priest. The schoolmaster tells Ibarra about his experience trying to conduct class when Father Dámaso was the town's friar; during this period, Dámaso forbade him from teaching Spanish even though the government had written a decree that all students must learn the language. It is in conversation with this man that Ibarra first reveals his plan to build a new **school** independent of the friars. Though grateful for his help, the schoolmaster is pessimistic that Ibarra will have more success in establishing a strong secular academy than he or anybody else has had in the past.

Don Filipo (Filipo Lino) – The deputy mayor of San Diego. Don Filipo is described as "almost liberal" and represents the informal party of the younger, more open-minded generation. Like his followers, he resents the idea that the town should spend great amounts of money on the yearly festival celebrating the various religious holidays in November. Unfortunately, Don Filipo works for the mayor, who essentially acts as the church's political puppet. This makes Don Filipo largely unable to bring about actual change, meaning that the town's power structures remain closely tied to the church.

The Mayor – The mayor of San Diego is a conservative man who is devoted to religion. The mayor allows himself to be manipulated by the church, thinking himself a pious man. As such, anybody accused of heresy finds himself or herself not only held in contempt by the church, but by the government, too. Don Filipo, the deputy mayor, resents the mayor for blindly following the friars' orders.

The Yellow Man – A man hired to kill Ibarra. This man helps build the **school**, engineering a large stone that he intends to drop on Ibarra on the day of San Diego's fiesta. When the time comes, though, Elías holds the Yellow Man in the way, and the stone kills him instead of Ibarra.

Társilo – A man whose father died at the hands of the Civil Guard. Lucas convinces Társilo and his brother Bruno to attack the military barracks, telling them that Ibarra is organizing the rebellion. After the attack, Társilo is captured and tortured by the ensign but refuses to give any information, merely telling them that he never had contact with Ibarra. He dies when the ensign drowns him in a well.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Sisa – Crispín and Basilio's mother, who goes crazy after losing her boys. Sisa wanders the town and forests in vain, hoping to find her children, though when she actually meets Basilio, she is apparently unable to recognize him at first. When she does, she dies of surprise and happiness.

Father Sibyla – A priest in Binondo, a district in Manila. Sibyla is a skillful and sly debater who agitates Father Dámaso at Ibarra's welcome-home party. He is an even-tempered, rational religious figure that contrasts the absurd Dámaso and the corrupt Salví.

Captain Basilio – Sinang's father, a pedantic man who is the speaker of San Diego's conservative party. An enemy and rival of Don Rafael, Basilio fashions himself after famous Roman orators, advocating for a strict adherence to the church.

Lucas – The Yellow Man's brother. Wanting revenge on Ibarra, he teams up with Father Salví to frame the young man as the ringleader of the group of bandits that attacks the military barracks.

Captain Pablo – The leader of the band of "persecuted" men who want revenge on the Civil Guard. Elías meets with Pablo and asks him to delay his plan to attack civilization, convincing him that it would be best if Ibarra represented them so they can achieve their goals nonviolently.

Bruno – Társilo's brother, who dies the night of the barracks attack. Before his death, Bruno repeats what Lucas has told him—namely, that Ibarra is the leader of the rebellion.

Aunt Isabel – Captain Tiago's cousin, and the woman who raised María Clara after her mother's death during childbirth.

Captain Tinong – A friend of Captain Tiago's. Like Tiago, Tinong only cares about his own image. When it seems as though Tiago's family has been disgraced because of its association with Ibarra, he quickly turns his back on his friend.

The Chief Sexton – The man in charge of taking care of the church. The sexton essentially does Father Salví's dirty work, like beating Crispín or hanging Lucas after the attack on the barracks.

Victoria – One of María Clara's friends, and one of her cousins.

Andeng – One of María Clara's friends. Andeng has known María Clara for a very long time, having even shared the same wet-nurse as an infant.

Sinang – One of María Clara's friends and cousins.

Iday – One of María Clara's friends.

The Gravedigger – A cemetery worker who, on Father Dámaso's orders, exhumes Don Rafael's body. Ibarra interrogates this man, desperate for information about his father.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have

a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

COLONIALISM, RELIGION, AND POWER

José Rizal's political novel *Noli Me Tangere* examines how Spain's colonization of the Philippines allowed the Catholic church to dominate and rule the region. Colonialism produced tensions that would, roughly a decade after Rizal's novel was published, lead Filipino natives to revolt against Spain's oppressive religious and governmental bodies in the Philippine Revolution. Through Ibarra, the book's protagonist who returns to the Philippines after having spent seven years in Europe, Rizal shows the shocking extent to which the Catholic friars have commandeered the country's politics and culture, manipulating the lives of Filipino citizens in an attempt to assert authority and influence. Thus, Rizal illustrates the Catholic priests' corruption and their unchecked power, which doesn't stem from actual religious zeal, but rather from a love of supremacy that colonization has enabled and encouraged.

The Spanish friars' abuse of power is evident early in *Noli Me Tangere*. When Ibarra returns from seven years in Europe, he discovers that his father Don Rafael—who openly criticized the church and refused to go to confession—tangled with the friars in his hometown of San Diego. Because of his views about the church and his commitment to helping poor children attend secular **schools**, the friars slandered his name and did everything in their power to undermine his influence. He eventually died in prison because the church labeled him a "heretic and subversive." To make matters worse, Ibarra finds out that the unbearable Father Dámaso ordered Don Rafael's body to be exhumed from the Catholic cemetery. Dámaso justifies his actions by invoking his station as a priest, saying that when a friar exhumes a body, even a king can't complain, let alone "impose punishment." This means that Dámaso sees himself as even more powerful than the King of Spain and, more importantly, as exempt from all forms of punishment because he is a friar. His confidence shows how powerful he thinks he is: despite the fact that he dug up a dead body—a deeply irreverent thing to do—he feels no remorse, and even seems to think his actions were respectable and fair.

In addition to controlling the townspeople with threats of excommunication, punishment, and accusations of heresy, the friars clash with their own countrymen—Spanish people who had come to the islands as government workers or military personnel. This is apparent in the seemingly never-ending feud between Father Salví (Father Dámaso's successor in San Diego) and the town's military ensign. Father Salví knows that the ensign resents attending church services, so he spites the man by elongating his sermons or—Rizal later makes clear—making the ensign pay fees for missing church. Although the relationship between the ensign and Father Salví is certainly playful, it denotes the broader rivalry between the government and the church, a rivalry in which church figures wield religion as a means of leveraging their own power. In the same way that Father Dámaso believes he has the right to overrule even the King of Spain when it comes to religious matters, Salví clearly invests himself in his own authority as a man of God.

While Father Salví's rivalry with the ensign is rather petty, the church seeks to prove its worth and power to the Spanish government by demonstrating its ability to solve problems and protect the country from danger. "Our power will last so long as it is believed," one priest says, insinuating that to maintain power, they must only appear legitimate. As such, the church needs to manufacture tangible and manageable enemies, as well as false threats from which they can protect the public. This is why Father Salví organizes an attack on the military barracks, frames Ibarra as its ringleader, and then warns the ensign of what's coming; the presence of threat and Salví's help in staving it off makes him seem useful and frames Ibarra (a man who stands for education rather than religion, and who has challenged the friars in the past) as heretical and dangerous. Of course, the fact that all of this is based on Father Salví's lie indicates Rizal's belief that the friarocracy is an illegitimate and suspect way of governing a nation and its people.

Money is another realm in which Rizal shows religion to be corrupted, as the clergy often conflate piety with riches. By selling indulgences, for example, the friars promote the idea that salvation can be purchased. The nuns keep a ledger of indulgences that they balance like a checkbook, and their attitude is so practical that it seems to lose sight of genuine spirituality. Furthermore, the church financially manipulates people to keep them in a state of subservience and debt. For example, the chief sexton falsely accuses Crispín (who is studying to be a sexton) of stealing money from the church. Because of this, Crispín must work extra hours, and since the amount of money he earns each week is significantly less than the supposed sum he stole, he will be indebted to the church for a long time. In this way, the church authorities keep less powerful members in a perpetual state of subordination.

Considering the friars' unmitigated control over government officials, townspeople, and lowly church members, it's clear that Rizal is highly skeptical of allowing religious institutions to have so much influence over a community and its governing body. The scholar and translator Harold Augenbraum—who wrote an introduction to *Noli Me Tangere*—outlines this concern when he explains that the early colonizers of the Philippines approached the notion of power and control by asking themselves whether they "were meant to rule or to guide, to govern as tyrant or as father." It is clear that Rizal thinks the Spanish decided to use religion as a way to "rule" and to "govern as tyrant," a decision that led to a divided and unequal country.

REVOLUTION AND REFORM

Because Spanish friars and the Spanish colonial government had such control over the Philippines, Rizal naturally focuses much of his attention on the possibility of political change. He outlines two schools of thought for making political change: the moderate liberalism embodied by Ibarra, and the radical revolutionary ideology espoused by Elías. The first approach advocates for reform that would take place within the context of the oppressive religious and governmental forces that already exist in the Philippines. According to this point of view, there is still something worth salvaging in the prevailing system. The second approach—championed by Elías—argues for a complete overthrow of the existing power structures, which are irrevocably flawed and incapable of organic change. These opposing viewpoints run throughout the novel, posing an important question about political and cultural transformation: is it better to change a corrupt system from within, or is it better to completely overthrow it using whatever means necessary?

The Civil Guard, Spain's militarized colonial law enforcement, has a strong presence in *Noli Me Tangere*, as it represents the Spanish government's civic power. Although the ensign—the leader of San Diego's Civil Guard—is often at odds with Father Salví (the embodiment of the church), the church and the state often work together to dominate Filipino natives who resist Spain's civic and religious authority. The fact that Ibarra's father is labeled a "subversive and heretic" is a perfect example of how the church and state work together to oppress townspeople, since they punish the man simultaneously and equally for being "subversive" to the government and for challenging Catholic doctrine. In this way, the church and Civil Guard mutually reinforce each other's power, which makes them a formidable political force.

Throughout the novel, Ibarra and Elías debate the morality and logic of total revolution. Elías, for his part, believes that the current government is simultaneously too removed from and too harsh on the population. When Ibarra argues that the Civil Guard acts brutally toward its citizens in order to improve their behavior, Elías points out that the government doesn't give its citizens the necessary tools to live the way it wants them to. In other words, the government—in conjunction with the church—has so disempowered the native population that it can't possibly expect them to rise to the high standards it sets, and so punishing them is unjust. This is an important argument because it refutes Ibarra's belief that there is a morally justifiable reason for the government to treat its citizens badly, and it justifies Elías' commitment to overthrowing the system entirely.

Elías continues this argument by considering the notions of agency and empowerment. He believes that the "individual, neglected and abandoned by the state" has less "responsibility" under oppressive circumstances, since he will inevitably make bad decisions and live a less "enlighten[ed]" life. In other words, disempowerment creates unmotivated citizens, and in an oppressive system, there is no incentive to live a good and moral life. Because of this, the government must be more "lenient." Unfortunately, the Civil Guard eagerly labels anybody who strays from what they view as the path of "enlightenment" as "subversive," teaming up with the church to level claims of heresy against these individuals who have not been given the necessary tools to succeed on the "enlightened" path in the first place.

At first, Ibarra rejects Elías' logic, since he optimistically believes that one must retain a small amount of faith in the systems that control the Philippines. He believes that the government recognizes the church's corruption and is "working to introduce reforms that will correct these things." He has even told Elías that he believes the church, for all its faults, is a positive presence: "This institution might be imperfect, yet I believe that, but for the fear it inspires, the number of criminals would increase." Simply put, Ibarra believes that even the threats posed by such institutions are potentially valuable because they discourage criminality. However, Ibarra finally changes his mind after Father Salví organizes a revolt against the Civil Guard and frames Ibarra as their leader, leaving Ibarra at the mercy of the corrupt power of the Civil Guard and the friars. Ironically, his reaction to being labeled a subversive is to *actually become* a subversive: "They opened my eyes," he tells Elías, "they made me see the sores and forced me to become a criminal! And so, just what they wanted, I will be a subversive, but a true subversive." This reaction confirms Elías's theory that the oppressive system ultimately drives good people into lives of crime because they have been given no other prospects or choices. With Ibarra's transformation into a radical, Rizal champions retaliation and revolution, a risky political move for an author writing in a colonial state that is incubating rebellion.

EDUCATION

Rizal holds up education as a way of overcoming oppression. Ibarra, who is a respected figure because of the fact that he studied in Europe, fiercely advocates the importance of intellect and education by building a **school** in San Diego. In doing so, he seeks to give the townspeople a means of empowerment outside the context of the church. Unfortunately, though, the friars are suspicious of such endeavors, so Ibarra must convince them that his educational ambitions are closely related to their own religious values. When it becomes clear that his allegiances do not lie with the church, however, the friars do everything in their power to covertly derail his effort to spread secular knowledge. As such, Rizal pits religion and education against one another, portraying religion as an oppressive force and education as a liberating force in the colonized Philippines.

San Diego's friars are fearful of education's power to liberate natives from the church's control. Tasio, for example, is an old man who disregards religion in favor of philosophy and reason, for which the church labels him a madman. This is a defensive move that demonstrates to the other citizens that anybody who doesn't believe what the church says will be seen as crazy and untrustworthy. Knowing his own reputation, Tasio advises Ibarra not to associate with him, since it will only discredit Ibarra's project to build a school. In saying this, Tsaio recognizes that there are certain repercussions that come along with devoting oneself to unpopular modes of thought, but that building a school (and offering education) is more important than his own dignity. Nonetheless, Ibarra bristles at Tsaio instructing him to appease authority figures by asking permission at each step of building the school. "Can't I carry my idea forward without a shadow hanging over it?" he asks. "Can't good triumph over everything, and truth not need to dress in the borrowed clothes of error?" When he refers to the "borrowed clothes of error," he means that education is an intrinsically valuable pursuit, one that is so "good" that it shouldn't need to disguise itself as part of a flawed governmental and religious system.

Although it is unwise of Ibarra not to recognize the importance of working with the Spanish colonial powers, he is right that the friars stifle education and stand in the way of allowing students to grow. Their presence is unfortunately ever-present and limiting. For example, the schoolmaster tells Ibarra that even the physical conditions of his classroom invite the church's unproductive scrutiny; the school is beneath the parish house, and sometimes the priest comes down to yell at the children while they learn. This emphasizes the inescapable influence of the friars by demonstrating how even the physical layout of the town—in which the classroom is beneath the parish house—is designed to empower friars to censor all forms of secular life. This censorship goes beyond the friar's annoyance at the classroom's noise. Father Dámaso interferes with the schoolmaster's attempts to teach the children Spanish, telling him, "Be content to speak your own language, and don't ruin Spanish, which is not for you." This, despite the fact that the Spanish government "decreed" that Philippine natives be taught Spanish. The contradiction makes sense in the context of the friars' wish to control the townspeople, since if Filipinos exist in a society ruled by Spaniards but can't speak Spanish themselves, then they must depend on the church to be their connection to the government. Indeed, this is why the friars interfere with the process of education. When the schoolmaster decides to stop using corporal punishment in his classroom, for instance, he finds that his students start enjoying the process of learning and vastly improve in their studies. Yet again, though, Father Dámaso steps in to stunt the children's growth, telling the schoolmaster he must revert back to the old ways. As a result, the students revert to disliking school, and even stop attending.

In this manner, Rizal shows that, though education *could* lead to positive change in the Philippines, the church curtails its effectiveness. In keeping with his view that the best way forward is for the country to reform the corrupt system rather than completely destroy it, Ibarra takes Tasio's advice. He tells the schoolmaster that he wants "the religion that brought education to this society to be respected." As such, he frames education as a pursuit that is naturally linked to the church itself. Unfortunately, Ibarra undermines his own tactic with his eventual violent outburst at Father Dámaso, which reveals to the friars that Ibarra does not actually believe education stands to benefit from the influence of religion. In the end, Ibarra is unable to see his project through because he is deemed a subversive heretic before completing the building of the school. This is yet another example of how the church disrupts positive social change in *Noli Me Tangere*.

ISOLATION

One of the primary ways characters in *Noli Me Tangere* are disempowered is through isolation: political isolation, religious isolation, or intellectual isolation. Politically, all of the characters are isolated from Spain, the governing body that controls the Philippines. While the friars take advantage of this remoteness, the townspeople suffer. Religiously, any character who disagrees with Catholic doctrine is isolated and labeled a heretic. This religious seclusion is often related to intellectual isolation, which characters like Tasio experience when they openly voice an affinity for alternative ideas, such as those promoted by philosophy or logical reasoning. For Tasio, intellectual isolation almost seems liberating, since he embraces his status as a supposed "madman" and is therefore free to think whatever he wants. However, Rizal ultimately implies that estrangement and the loss of community most often lead to disenfranchisement and woe.

The most obvious form of isolation in the novel has to do with colonialism. First and foremost, this type of isolation is a geographic reality, since the Philippines is an island chain in Southeast Asia, while Spain—its colonial overlord—is in Europe. The fact that Spain colonized and controls the Philippines means that the friars and government officials who travel from Madrid and other Spanish cities are significantly removed from what they refer to as the "homeland." Unfortunately, as Tasio points out, this means that the Spaniards in the Philippines have an inordinate amount of control. Since their government is so remote, they can manipulate with impunity rules and policies passed down from Spain. This confirms the notion that geographic isolation easily turns into a form of political isolation that benefits the friars. Furthermore, as Tasio points out, the friars find a way to use their political isolation to their advantage even when somebody influential bothers to make a trip to the Philippines from Spain. On these rare occasions, the

friars tell the Spanish visitor that, because he is so unfamiliar with the Philippines, it would be best to trust the priests who have power over the population. Therefore, the region's top authorities are able to use their own remoteness to their advantage as a way of holding onto their influence.

Another type of isolation that disempowers the Filipino characters of *Noli Me Tangere* is religious isolation. The threat of excommunication hangs heavily over the town, since banishment from the church leads to social and even economic estrangement. Furthermore, despite the fact that the friars are supposedly in the Philippines to spread religion, they often keep the townspeople from fully integrating into Spain's Catholic tradition. Harold Augenbraum makes this clear in his introduction to *Noli Me Tangere* when he notes that "in 1817, only 171 of the 782 parishes in the Philippines were led by native or mestizo priests." This exclusion of Filipinos is in keeping with Father Dámaso's insistence that the schoolmaster not speak in or teach Spanish, instead telling him to use Tagalog, the country's native language. Whereas the friars are able to use their geographic isolation to their advantage, they keep the townspeople from integrating into Spanish life, which leaves them without access to institutional power. In other words, the friars allow the citizens to participate in the church, but only insofar as the church benefits monetarily from the community involvement. Consequently, friars isolate Filipinos in their own country as a way of ensuring the strength and power of the church.

As an intellectual who believes in reason rather than religion, Tasio experiences intellectual isolation, since everybody calls him a "madman" due to his secular viewpoints. However, at the same time, he is perhaps the novel's only character who seems to feel liberated by isolation. This is because he sees his own estrangement as license to live unencumbered by outside perceptions. He takes comfort in the fact that the people he disagrees with think he's crazy; "the day on which they restore my reason is the day they deprive me of the small bit of freedom I've purchased at the price of a reputation as a sane person," he tells Ibarra, meaning that he feels somewhat liberated as a result of being ostracized for his ideas. "I neither think nor live according to their laws," he says. "My principles, my ideals, are different." It's worth noting that the difference between Tasio's isolation and the other townspeople's isolation is that his is willful. He is intellectually isolated because he *chooses* not to partake in the society's customs. As a result, he exercises his own personal agency within an otherwise oppressive context. And instead of lamenting that his ideas have estranged him from his own culture, he celebrates his ability to disagree with the church.

While Tasio's intellectual isolation may seem liberating, Rizal tacitly condemns embracing this kind of private existence. This is made clear when Tasio dies alone, having perished "on the very threshold of his solitary refuge." The phrase "solitary refuge" emphasizes the old man's isolation, and because the sentence containing these words tells readers of Tasio's death, Rizal subtly implies a connection between his sad demise and his "solitary" ways. If Ibarra and Elías each represent two ways of dealing with oppression (working to improve the system from within or striving to overthrow the system completely), Tasio represents a third: a retreat into the intellect. This, Rizal suggests, is a futile and defeatist way to deal with the country's problems. A more effective way of addressing oppression, then, is to establish strong communities capable of collective political action. Although the characters in *Noli Me Tangere* never accomplish this, they come close to doing so when they build the **school**, which is a project that brings together the town's secular minds and even gains support from high-ranking likeminded government officials like the Captain General. Furthermore, if Ibarra had more people like Elías on his side—people looking out for him and trying to protect him from the friars' evil schemes—it is quite possible he and his group of forward-thinking citizens would have been able to effect meaningful change.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE SCHOOL

Ibarra's effort to build a school in the town of San Diego is the most tangible manifestation of his political views. The school is a symbol of empowerment, since education is a way to avoid succumbing to the country's domineering friarocracy. Children like Crispín and Basilio are perfect examples of Filipinos who stand to benefit from a secular education, since their hardship is the direct result of having committed themselves to becoming sextons. If they had been offered the opportunity to attend school instead, they wouldn't find themselves mired in the harmful lies and accusations of the church. The presence of Ibarra's school in *Noli Me Tangere* also reveals the many tensions between church and state in the Philippines, considering that people like Father Dámaso and Father Salví actively interfere with the schoolmaster's educational pursuits, while the Captain General—the most important government official on the island—adamantly supports Ibarra's vision. And although Ibarra himself originally gains permission from the priests before building his institution, it is telling that he's nearly murdered during the school's benediction ceremony; this clearly illustrates that secular education poses a threat to the corrupt priests, a threat so large they feel they must murder somebody who has—for all intents and purposes—paid them the proper respect. As such, the school becomes a menace to the friars,

despite the fact that it is an institution dedicated to helping and improving San Diego.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Books edition of *Noli Me Tangere* published in 2006.

Chapter 4 Quotes

In addition, Don Rafael was an honest man, more just than many men who go to confession. He held himself up to a rigorous moral standard and when the unpleasantness began he often said to me: "Señor Guevara, do you think God pardons a crime, a murder, for example, solely because one tells it to a priest, who is, in the end, a man, and who has the duty to keep it to himself, and who is afraid of burning in hell, which is an act of attrition, who is a coward, and certainly without shame? I have another conception of God," he would say, "to me one does not correct one wrong by committing another, nor is one pardoned by useless weeping or by giving alms to the church." He gave this example: "If I kill the head of a family, if I make a woman into a destitute widow and happy children into helpless orphans, will I have satisfied eternal justice if I let them hang me, or confide my secret to someone who has to keep it to himself, or give alms to the priests, who need it the least, or buy myself a papal pardon, or weep night and day? And what about the widow and children? My conscience tells me I should replace as much as possible the person I have murdered and dedicate myself completely and for my whole life to the welfare of the family whose misfortune I have created. And even then, even then, who will replace the love of a husband and father?"

Related Characters: Señor Guevara (speaker), Father Dámaso, Don Rafael Ibarra, Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra y Magsalin (Ibarra)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 26

Explanation and Analysis

Lieutenant Guevara says this to Ibarra while explaining to the young man the circumstances of his father's death. His explanation of Don Rafael's approach to religion outlines the ways in which a Filipino person can be religious despite not agreeing with the friars, who are corrupt and hardly capable of helping guilty people atone for their actions. Indeed, Don Rafael uses words like "useless" to describe the act of turning to priests in times of guilt. Rather than paying "alms" that benefit the church instead of the community, Don Rafael believes people should take responsibility for their own actions, "dedicat[ing]" themselves to counteracting the "misfortune [they] have created." In this way, Ibarra's father demonstrates that he doesn't need the friars to tell him what to do in order to live a virtuous life, and it is this "rigorous moral standard" that sets the stage for Ibarra's quest to improve his country throughout the novel. In other words, Don Rafael's—and thus Ibarra's—"conception of God" has everything to do with morality and nothing to do with the superfluous and oppressive rules the friarocracy argues are integral to religion.

To be a heretic anywhere is a great disgrace, especially at that time, when the mayor made a great show of his religious devotion and prayed in the church with his servants and said the rosary in a great loud voice, perhaps so that everyone could hear him and pray with him. But to be a subversive is worse than being a heretic and killing *three* tax collectors who know how to read, write, and sign their names. Everyone deserted him. His papers and books were confiscated. They accused him of subscribing to the *Overseas Mail*, of reading the Madrid newspapers, of having sent you to German Switzerland, of having been in possession of letters and a portrait of a condemned priest, and who knows what else! They found accusations in everything, even of his wearing a peninsular-style shirt. If he had been anyone other than your father, he would have been set free almost immediately, especially since a doctor had attributed the death of the unfortunate tax collector to a blockage. But because of his wealth, his confidence in justice, and his hatred of anything that was not legal or just, they ruined him.

Related Characters: Señor Guevara (speaker), The Mayor, Father Dámaso, Don Rafael Ibarra, Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra y Magsalin (Ibarra)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 28

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Lieutenant Guevara explains to Ibarra that Don Rafael's demise depended heavily on the social context surrounding his accusations. Because he was "wealth[y]" and powerful—and because he genuinely believed in "justice" rather than blindly accepting whatever the church told him to do or think—the friars went out of their way to find evidence against him. By listing the arbitrary claims that were leveled against Don Rafael, Rizal reveals the insularity

of the San Diego community: this is a town so threatened by outside sources of power that it thinks reading "the Madrid newspapers" counts as an act of subversion. This is rather ironic, given that Spain is supposed to be the motherland of the Philippines, meaning that Filipinos are generally expected to abide and respect their governing country. But since the Spanish government could potentially stand in the way of the friars' local power, Don Rafael's involvement with the mainland is cast as suspicious. As such, readers see that the friars are capable of turning even the most trivial accusations into grave condemnations.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝❝ That he was at peace with God was beyond question, and almost dogmatic. There is no reason to be at odds with God when one is at peace on earth, when one has never communicated with God, nor has ever lent him money. He never prayed to God, even when he was in the direst of straits. He was rich, and his gold prayed for him. For masses and alms, God had created powerful, supercilious priests. For novenas and rosaries, God in his infinite goodwill had created the poor, for the benefit of the rich, in fact, since for one peso poor people would recite the sixteen mysteries and read all the holy books, including the Hebrew bible, if one increased the payment. If in a time of great need one required the intervention of heaven and could not find at hand even a Chinese red candle, he would direct himself to the saints to whom he devoted himself, promising them many things in order to obligate them to him and to end up convincing them of the goodwill of his desires.

Related Characters: Captain Tiago (Don Santiago de los Santos)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 35

Explanation and Analysis

This is a description of Captain Tiago and the way he views religion. Although Tiago believes himself to be a pious man who is "at peace with God," in reality he relies on his excessive wealth to cultivate this image, often confusing financial largesse with genuine spirituality. The wording of this passage's first sentence is notable: "That he was at peace with God was beyond question, and almost dogmatic." Indeed, Tiago believes he is so "at peace with God" that to even challenge his piety is "beyond question." As such, he is so invested in the mere *idea* of his profound spirituality that he becomes "dogmatic" about his own religious worth, viewing his faith as indisputable. Furthermore, his conception of the priests is rather odd, considering the extent to which he tries to stay in their good graces throughout the novel. Nonetheless, this passage shows that he has a noticeably condescending attitude toward these religious men, as evidenced by his notion that he himself is above actually praying, leaving the execution of "masses and alms" to "supercilious priests." For somebody to be "supercilious" means that he or she believes him or herself to be superior to others. Of course, it's ironic that Tiago thinks the priests are supercilious, since the very thought itself that he is in some way better than these friars indicates that *he* is supercilious. In this way, Rizal uses Tiago's superficial piety to show that the citizens of San Diego see religion as something that can earn them respect, not something in which they actually need to meaningfully invest themselves.

Chapter 14 Quotes

❝❝ Pure, simple faith is as different from fanaticism as flames from smoke, as music from cacophony. Imbeciles, like deaf people, confuse the two. Between you and me, we can admit that the idea of purgatory is a good one, holy and rational. It maintains the connection between those who were and those who are, and obliges one to lead a purer form of life. The bad part is when people abuse it.

Related Characters: Old Tasio (Don Anastasio) (speaker), Don Filipo (Filipo Lino)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 84

Explanation and Analysis

Tasio says this to Don Filipo during a discussion about religion and purgatory. The two men are examining the idea of purgatory in this moment because it is All Souls' Day, a Catholic holiday co-opted by San Diego's church, which claims that people can reduce a tormented soul's length of time in purgatory by purchasing an indulgence. When Tasio says that "pure, simple faith is as different from fanaticism as flames from smoke," he suggests that the distinction between reasonable spirituality and irrational dogmatism is quite fine; in other words, he implies that the church in his community has taken a good thing—"pure, simple faith"—and made it into something else: "fanaticism." He further suggests that this is a common error because religion naturally lends itself to this sort of behavior. The friars, then, are "like deaf people" who confuse "music" with "cacophony."

These analogies are significant because they prove that, despite his commitment to rational thought and secular education, Tasio is still religious, for he does think "the idea of purgatory is a good one." The problem, though, is that the friars leverage the idea in order to profit from unsuspecting people willing to part with their money for an empty promise.

Chapter 16 Quotes

But the poor and indigent, who barely earn enough to sustain life and who must bribe bureaucrats, clerks, and soldiers to leave them in peace, they do not sleep with the tranquility described by courtly poets who have never felt the loving hand of poverty. The poor are sad and pensive. Tonight, if they have prayed a little, they have made many requests, with pain in their eyes and tears in their hearts. They have no novenas, nor do they know the jaculatory prayers or the verses or the oremus the friars have composed to prevent them from developing their own ideas or their own emotions, nor do they understand them. They pray in the language of their misery. […] You who blessed the poor, and you, shadows in torment, will the simple prayer of the poor make you happy […]? Or do you long for tapers placed before bloody images of Christ or small-mouthed Virgins with glass eyes, or with a priest's mechanical droning of the mass in Latin? And you, your religion created for a suffering multitude, have you forgotten your mission of consoling the oppressed in their misery, and humbling the hubris of power, and now render promises only to the rich, those who can pay?

Related Themes:

Page Number: 90

Explanation and Analysis

This passage showcases Rizal's frustrations with religion. He speaks directly to the readers, imploring them to ask whether their supposedly pious practices actually benefit anybody but themselves. He delivers this rumination before shifting his attention to Sisa, who sits nervously waiting for her over-worked sons to come home from the parish house to visit her. Rizal emphasizes the stark delineation between the rich and the poor in this moment, saying that impoverished people "pray in the language of their misery," a phrase that suggests that spirituality need not follow what he sees as the elitist practices of the church. In fact, he makes clear that the poor are *forced* to "pray in the language of their misery" because the priests intentionally keep them from being able to fully participate in religious services; they don't know "the jaculatory prayers or the verses or the oremus" (a call to prayer in Latin) that the priests have intentionally "composed to prevent them from developing their own ideas or their own sermons." In other words, the church purposefully isolates poor people, alienating them by using Latin, a language they have had no opportunity to learn. Furthermore, Rizal refutes the idea that the friars' customs have any true effect in the first place, asking the "shadows in torment" if a "simple prayer" can even make them happy. When he says "shadows in torment" he refers to the souls in purgatory who the friars claim are affected by the prayers and even the monetary spending of people on earth. Taking this skepticism a step further, Rizal asks these purgatorial souls if they want people to place "tapers" (candles) on various altars, a sardonic question that portrays such religious practices—for which the friars charge money—as superstitious and ineffective.

Chapter 25 Quotes

"You write in hieroglyphics? But why?" the young man asked, finding it hard to believe his eyes and ears.

"So that no one will understand what I'm writing."

Ibarra looked him up and down, wondering if indeed the old man was crazy. He gave the book a quick examination to see if he was lying and saw well-drawn animals, circles, semicircles, flowers, feet, hands, arms, and other things.

"But why are you writing if you don't want anyone to read it?"

"Because I'm not writing for this generation, I'm writing for the ages. If they could read these, I would burn my books, my life's work. On the other hand, the generation that can decipher these characters will be an educated generation. It will understand me and say, 'In the nights of our grandparents, not everyone was asleep.' Mystery and these curious characters will save my work from the ignorance of men, just as mystery and strange rites have saved many truths from the destructive priest class."

Related Characters: Old Tasio (Don Anastasio), Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra y Magsalin (Ibarra) (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 162

Explanation and Analysis

Rizal once again shows the absurdity of intellectual isolation and obscurity in this moment, in which Ibarra finds Old Tasio writing his ideas using hieroglyphics so that "no one will understand" him. Linguistic concerns run throughout *Noli Me Tangere*, and this scene is perhaps the best example of Rizal's ability to depict his characters' various failures when it comes to communication. Tasio and Ibarra both yearn for change, hoping their country will rally against the corruption of the church and the Spanish government. Unfortunately, though, Tasio is almost completely incapable of effecting this change, since he has so blatantly resigned himself to a futile existence in which he indulges obscurity. For all intents and purposes, he has stopped even trying to work with the people around him to improve his country. He says that he isn't "writing for this generation," failing to see that the likelihood of future generations understanding his hieroglyphics is extraordinarily slim. Interestingly enough, then, by resigning himself to obscurity, he actually shows that he is wildly hopeful, since he places an inordinate amount of faith in future generations being able to understand him. He emphasizes the importance of "mystery," championing the notion that sometimes the best ideas have to be hidden or difficult to access so that ignorant people can't destroy them via misinterpretation. He even points out that this is the case with religion: the Bible contains many difficult references and ideas that are hard to grasp, and Tasio insinuates that the "destructive priest[s]" of San Diego aren't smart enough to understand these things—a fact for which he's grateful. Of course, by making this point, he underhandedly compares himself to the class of great thinkers who created these ideas in the first place.

"Because sane people," he went on with a bitter irony, "will think you are crazy, too. People believe that madness is when you don't think as they do, which is why they take me for a madman. And I'm grateful for that, because, well, the day on which they restore my reason is the day they deprive me of the small bit of freedom I've purchased at the price of a reputation as a sane person. And who knows if they are right? I neither think nor live according to their laws. My principles, my ideals, are different. Among them the mayor enjoys a reputation as a sane individual, since he has not learned anything more than how to serve chocolate and suffer Father Dámaso's ill humor."

Related Characters: Old Tasio (Don Anastasio) (speaker), Father Dámaso, The Mayor, Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra y Magsalin (Ibarra)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 162

Explanation and Analysis

Tasio says this to Ibarra as a way of convincing the young man to stop seeking advice from him about the project of building the school. In doing so, he shows his understanding of how important social associations are in San Diego, saying, "People believe that madness is when you don't think as they do." Tasio himself has accepted this fact, and as a result the townspeople believe he his a "madman." Ibarra, though, can't risk being called this because it will impede his ability to build the school. To be seen as a "sane individual," Tasio suggests, one must act in accordance with the priests' rules. This is why the mayor is considered "sane," since he unquestioningly obeys Father Dámaso and the other friars. In short, Tasio acknowledges two things in this passage: that free-thinking people like himself are often isolated from the rest of society, and that this isolation strips them of their ability to bring about positive change. Once again, then, Rizal illustrates the dangers of intellectual isolation, showing that freedom of thought is a wildly tenuous concept in colonized countries.

"The government, the government," muttered the philosopher, lifting his eyes to the ceiling, "for all its enthusiastic desire to increase the benefit of this and the mother country, for all the generous spirit of the Catholic Monarchs that some functionary or other remembers and repeats to himself, the government neither sees, nor hears, nor judges any more than the priest or the mayor wants it to see, or to hear or to judge. The government is convinced that it relies on them, that if it maintains itself it is because of them, that if it lives, it is because they allow it to live, and the day it falters, it will fall like a puppet without a stick. The government is terrified of raising its hand against the people and the people of the forces of government. [...]

Related Characters: Old Tasio (Don Anastasio) (speaker), Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra y Magsalin (Ibarra)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 162

Explanation and Analysis

Tasio says this to Ibarra while the two men talk about the relationship between the Spanish government and the friarocracy in the Philippines. This particular passage comes

after Ibarra argues that Filipinos should place their faith in the government to protect them against the corruption of the church. Tasio, on the other hand, is pessimistic regarding the influence of the colonial government, which is so far away that it "neither sees, nor hears, nor judges any more than the priest or the mayor wants it to see, or to hear or to judge." This means that the geographic isolation of the Philippines impacts the ability of Spain to actually govern, a fact that makes it easy for the church to rule the land and thereby manipulate local officials like the mayor. Furthermore, Tasio notes that the government has come to believe that this structure is indispensable to the way the entire country operates, saying that "the government is convinced that it relies on [the priests], that if it maintains itself it is because of them, that if it lives, it is because they allow it to live." Of course, this is something of a self-fulfilling prophecy, since this particular hegemonic narrative will inevitably continue to be the case as long as the government keeps telling itself that it "relies" on the church.

Chapter 31 Quotes

"Believing in chance is the same as believing in miracles. Both situations presuppose that God does not know the future. What is chance? An event no one has foreseen. What is a miracle? A contradiction, an undermining of natural laws. Lack of foresight and contradiction in the intelligence that governs the world machine means two great imperfections."

"Who are you?" Ibarra asked him with a certain anxiety. "Are you a scholar?"

"I have had to believe a great deal in God because I have lost my belief in men," the boatman answered, evading the question.

Ibarra thought he understood this fugitive young man. He rejected man's justice, refused the right of man to judge his peers, protested against the force and superiority of certain classes over others.

Related Characters: Elías, Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra y Magsalin (Ibarra) (speaker), The Yellow Man

Related Themes:

Page Number: 221

Explanation and Analysis

This conversation takes place after the "yellow" man dies while trying to kill Ibarra. In the aftermath of this event, the townspeople speak excitedly about how Ibarra was able to survive, calling it a "miracle" that he didn't die. Ibarra himself doesn't seem to know how, exactly, he escaped death, and he puts the question Elías, asking if the young fugitive thinks it was a question of luck or a miracle that saved his life. Elías's response is interesting because it demonstrates yet again that even characters who are supposedly subversive or heretical in *Noli Me Tangere* still put their faith in God. Although Elías doesn't attend church and is in fact openly against the friarocracy, he believes "a great deal in God." Indeed, he's so pious that he rejects the very notions of luck and miracles because they "presuppose that God does not know the future." In other words, though his faith in God has been cultivated on his own terms—outside the church—his piety keeps him from questioning God's power and wisdom. This mentality ultimately serves as an example for Ibarra, who is himself religious despite the fact that he is often at odds with corrupt friars like Father Dámaso and Father Salví.

Chapter 35 Quotes

"But, gentlemen," the mayor interrupted. "What can we do? What can the town do? Whatever happens, the friars are always right!"

"They are *always* right because we *always* let them be right," Don Filipo answered with impatience, emphasizing the word "always." "Let us be in the right for a change and then let's talk!"

The mayor scratched his head and, looking at the ceiling, replied sourly, "Ay, the heat of blood! It seems like we don't even know what country we're in; we don't even know our own countrymen. The friars are rich and united, and we are divided and poor. Sure, try to defend him and you'll see how everyone will abandon you to your task."

"Sure," Don Filipo exclaimed bitterly, "it will always happen if you think that way, while fear and restraint are synonymous. Everyone pays more attention to something bad rather than to a needed good thing. Suddenly it's all fear and lack of trust. Everyone thinks about himself, and no one about other people. That's why we're so weak!"

Related Characters: Don Filipo (Filipo Lino), The Mayor (speaker), Father Dámaso, Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra y Magsalin (Ibarra)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 233

Explanation and Analysis

This is a conversation Don Filipo has with the mayor after Ibarra behaves violently toward Father Dámaso. As the citizens of San Diego gossip about what will become of Ibarra, Don Filipo and other government officials privately brainstorm how they might protect Ibarra from trouble at the hands of the church. The mayor proves himself to be a defeatist, ready to say that the "friars are always right" without even trying to argue for his own beliefs. Don Filipo, on the other hand, is the opposite of a defeatist and encourages the mayor to abandon such fatalism. He tries to emphasize that the local government *does* actually have some authority and agency but that it never trusts itself to band together to challenge the almighty church. Once again, the tensions between the church and the state come to the forefront of *Noli Me Tangere*. When the mayor says "Ay, the heat of blood!" he essentially chastises Don Filipo for getting too worked up, trying to get the younger man to see that he's too wrapped up in the moment to remember that "the friars are rich and united" and seemingly impossible to argue against. This calls to mind Ibarra and Elías's many conversations about the nature of revolution and reform, a debate that revolves around the notion of whether or not they should try to change the country from within or overhaul the system completely. In this moment, Don Rafael argues for reforms that would make use of the powers afforded to him in the current governmental system. The mayor, on the other hand, opposes this idea because he recognizes that the system is rigged designed to make this sort of reform impossible.

Chapter 42 Quotes

❝❝ The servants all had to call them by their new titles and, as a result as well, the fringes, the layers of rice powder, the ribbons, and the lace all increased in quantity. She looked with increasing disfavor than ever before on her poor, less fortunate countrywomen, whose husbands were of a different category from her own. Every day she felt more dignified and elevated and, following this path at the end of a year she began to think of herself of divine origin.

Nevertheless, these sublime thoughts did not keep her from getting older and more ridiculous every day. Every time Captain Tiago ran into her and remembered that he had courted her in vain, he would right away send a peso to the church for a mass of thanksgiving. Despite this, Captain Tiago had great respect for her husband and his title "Specialist in All Types of Diseases" and he would listen attentively to the few sentences his stuttering permitted him to utter successfully. For this reason, and because he didn't visit absolutely everyone like other doctors did, Captain Tiago chose him to attend his daughter.

Related Characters: María Clara, Captain Tiago (Don Santiago de los Santos), La Doctora Victorina de los Reyes de Espadaña, Doctor Tiburcio de Espadaña

Related Themes:

Page Number: 284

Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes the arrogance of Doña Victorina de Espadaña, who has recently added yet another "de" to her name, so that it reads, in full: Victorina de los Reyes *de* de Espadaña. In Spanish, the prefix "de" means "of." Because her husband's last name is "de Espadaña," Victorina adds yet another "de" in order to clarify that she has taken his last name, which she believes adds a modicum of dignity and class to her overall title. The fact that she forces even her servants to call her by this illustrates just how much pleasure she takes in hearing her absurdly long and pretentious new name. Indeed, Victorina is one of the most vain characters in *Noli Me Tangere*, a Filipina woman who represents the worst kind of superficial and materialistic obsessions, as seen in her tendency to dress in "fringes," "layers or rice powder" (makeup), "ribbons," and "lace." The funniest element of her storyline, though, is that her pretentious airs and absurd posturing actually trick Captain Tiago, who hires her husband as María Clara's doctor despite the fact that Don Tiburcio knows nothing about medicine. As a result, Rizal once again shows how ridiculously preoccupied with social class many high society

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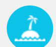
Filipinos are, an obsession that causes them to make ill-informed decisions about important matters in the name of garnering "great respect."

Chapter 45 Quotes

❝ A man who, like me, has spent his youth and maturity working for his own future and for that of his children, a man who has been at the beck and call of his superiors, who has carried out difficult tasks conscientiously, who has suffered his whole life in peace and in the possibility of tranquility, when this man, whose blood has been made cold by time, renounces at the brink of the grave his entire past and his entire future, it's because he's made the mature judgment that peacefulness neither exists nor is the supreme good. Why would I live out such miserable days in a foreign land? I had two sons and one daughter, a home, a fortune. I benefited from respect and esteem. But now I'm like a tree shorn of its limbs, a wandering fugitive, hunted like a wild animal in the forest, and everything that goes along with it. And why? Because a man undid my daughter, because her brothers demanded this man make restitution, and because the man's station was above everyone else's, with the title of God's minister.

Related Characters: Captain Pablo (speaker), Elías

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 298

Explanation and Analysis

Captain Pablo delivers this short monologue to Elías in an attempt to explain his motives for organizing a group of bandits to rise against the Civil Guard. In doing so, he spotlights his previous commitment to following the rules of the Spanish-Filipino government, customs that encouraged him to "suffer his whole life in peace." When Pablo uses the word "peace" in this sentence, he equates it to the word "silence," meaning that the systems of power in the Philippines have long discouraged him from complaining about his grievances, promoting the idea that it is honorable to passively accept "difficult tasks" without voicing his anguish. This mentality, he maintains, was sustainable because it seemed to promise "the possibility of tranquility," as if by toiling and suffering throughout his early years he might someday relax into a new kind of luxury, reaping the benefits of his labor. When a friar raped his daughter and both his sons died as a result of their desire for justice, though, he saw that this "possibility of tranquility" had always been an illusion, that "peacefulness neither exists nor is the supreme good." Consequently, he advocates for rebellion, a belief that has forced him to embrace the isolation of a fugitive bandit, driving him away from society.

Chapter 46 Quotes

❝ The San Diego cockpit is no different from the ones one finds in other towns, but for a few chance occurrences. It consists of three parts: the first, or the entrance, is a large rectangle, some twenty meters long and fourteen wide. On one side is a door, which is usually guarded by a woman charged with collecting the *sa pintú*, or the entry fee. From this contribution, which everyone puts in, the government is entitled to one part, several hundred thousand pesos a year. They say that with this money, through which vice pays for its own freedom, they erect magnificent schools, build bridges and sidewalks, and establish awards to encourage agriculture and commerce...Blessed be the vice that produces such good results!

Related Themes:

Page Number: 302

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Rizal describes San Diego's cockpit, an area in the center of town where citizens are allowed to gamble on Sundays. By examining this practice, he provides yet another example of how the friarocracy does whatever it can to earn money. Despite the fact that most religions condemn gambling—based on multiple Biblical allusions to its sinfulness—the priests of San Diego collect an "entry fee" that they share with the government. This is a perfect demonstration, then, of the way the church appeases the government, creating the illusion that religion tangibly benefits the state—of course, this is not the case, since gambling is a decidedly unreligious activity and thus has nothing to do with the church. The only reason the church is able to make itself look useful to the government in this context is because it has the audacity to charge an entrance fee. As a result, readers see how the church profits off of sin while also sustaining the narrative that the government relies on the friars for financial support. In turn, this solidifies their power over the community.

Chapter 49 Quotes

❝❞ It's a poor doctor, señor, who only seeks to treat the symptoms and choke them off without attempting to root out the cause of that malady, or when he learns what it is, is afraid of attacking it. The Civil Guard has no more objective than the suppression of crime by terror and force, an objective met or accomplished only by chance. And one must bear in mind that society can only be harsh with individuals when it has furnished the means necessary for their moral perfectibility. In our country, since there is no society, since the people and the government do not form a unified structure, the latter must be more lenient, not only because more leniency is needed, but because the individual, neglected and abandoned by the state, has less responsibility when he has been afforded less enlightenment.

Related Characters: Elías (speaker), Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra y Magsalin (Ibarra)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 320

Explanation and Analysis

Elías says this to Ibarra in yet another conversation about reform and revolution. In this passage, Elías argues that the colonial government in the Philippines has failed to provide its citizens with the opportunity to succeed under its own dictates. Unfortunately, though, the government itself refuses to recognize this, instead punishing people for not living up to its impossible standards. He solidifies this point by saying that "one must bear in mind that society can only be harsh with individuals when it has furnished the means necessary for their moral perfectibility." By saying that there is no "society," he emphasizes the rift between the governmental or religious institutions and the actual people themselves, highlighting the fact that these organizations claiming to advocate for citizens don't actually do anything to "enlighten" or empower those people. Furthermore, the beginning of his argument addresses Ibarra's belief that, though the Philippines is ailing from a "social cancer," it can perhaps be healed by improving these failing institutions. Elías refutes this point, saying that reforming the Civil Guard would be like "treat[ing] the symptoms" without "attempting to root out the cause of [the] malady." Once again, Elías urges his friend to embrace the idea of total revolution, this time speaking in medical terms that align with Rizal's extended metaphor of the country's "social cancer," which he identifies in the preface as too painful to touch.

❝❞ Perhaps they need [the Civil Guard] more in Spain, but not in the Philippines. Our customs, our mode of being, which they are always invoking when they want to deny us our rights, they forget completely when there is something they want to impose on us.

Related Characters: Elías (speaker), Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra y Magsalin (Ibarra)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 321

Explanation and Analysis

Elías makes this point to Ibarra as a way of underlining the fact that the Civil Guard is ill-suited to Filipino culture and society. By asserting that the oppressive Spanish colonial forces often "forget" Filipino "customs" whenever they want to "impose" something on the country, he shows that the Spanish regime's primary failure has to do with an inability to embrace the idea of integration. Indeed, integration and cross-cultural plurality only seems attractive to the Civil Guard when it stands to benefit Spain's interests. In this way, Spain eagerly "impose[s]" various customs that don't take into account the country's circumstances, which Elías argues are inherently unreceptive to the hallmarks of colonialist rule (like the installation of the Civil Guard as a governing force).

Chapter 61 Quotes

❝❞ You're right, Elías, but man is a creature of circumstance. I was blind then, disgusted, what did I know! Now misfortune has ripped off my blinders. Solitude and the misery of prison have shown me. Now I see the horrible cancer gnawing at this society, rotting its flesh, almost begging for a violent extirpation. They opened my eyes, they made me see the sores and forced me to become a criminal! And so, just what they wanted, I will be a subversive, but a true subversive. I will call together all the downtrodden people, everyone who feels a heart beating in his breast, those who sent you to me...No, I won't be a criminal, you aren't a criminal when you fight for your country, just the opposite!

Related Characters: Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra y Magsalin (Ibarra) (speaker), Elías

Related Themes:

Page Number: 400

Explanation and Analysis

This consideration of how the oppressive colonialist government inspires—rather than discourages—criminality comes in the form of a brief monologue delivered to Elías by Ibarra. The passage not only invokes Rizal's previous idea that the church and the Spanish government's rule over the Philippines is like a "social cancer," it also brings to mind Crispín's earlier wish that he *had* actually stolen money from the parish house. Once again, Rizal suggests that the measures the current systems of power take to prevent crime actually create *more* crime, turning good people into "subversive[s]" and law-breaking citizens. In turn, this notion evokes Elías's earlier argument that the government shouldn't be harsh with its citizens if it doesn't provide them with the means to achieve a state of "moral perfectibility."

Furthermore, Ibarra's new embrace of life as a "subversive" proves Elías's point—made during their first argument about revolution and reform—that a person can only see the necessity of true revolution after having experienced persecution firsthand. Ibarra acknowledges this when he says that "misfortune has ripped off [his] blinders." At the same time, he rejects the thought that a person who cares for his country like he does should be considered a "criminal," instead proposing that his love for the Philippines inspires a kind of subversive patriotism that is, in fact, more genuine and respectable than living according to the government and church's oppressive rules. This, Rizal seems to propose, is what true "moral perfectibility" looks like.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

TO MY COUNTRY

Rizal prefaces *Noli Me Tangere* with a short dedication to the Philippines. He writes that there are certain kinds of cancer that are incredibly vulnerable and sensitive to touch, growths aggravated by even the slightest contact. Rizal says he often thinks of his country in these terms, stating that he believes the Philippines suffers from a "social cancer." And because he wants "good health" for his nation, he resolves to "reproduce [its] current condition faithfully, without prejudice" so that he might "lift the veil hiding [its] ills, and sacrifice everything to the truth."

This preface to Noli Me Tangere *ensures that readers understand that the novel is intentionally political. Although the pages that follow this short chapter often preoccupy themselves with melodramatic love scenes and action plots, it's clear from the very first pages that Rizal is primarily interested in exploring what was then the taboo topic of political corruption in the Philippines.*

CHAPTER 1: A GATHERING

In late October, Don Santiago de los Santos, who is known as Captain Tiago, throws a large dinner party in Manila. He is very wealthy and, as such, the party takes place in his impressive home, to which people eagerly flock so as not to miss an important social event. As the guests mill about, groups of soldiers, European travelers, and priests speak to one another. An old lieutenant in the Civil Guard engages in conversation with a quiet but argumentatively cunning Dominican friar named Fray Sibyla, a loudmouthed Franciscan friar named Fray Dámaso, and two civilians, one of whom has just arrived in the Philippines for the first time. Authoritatively speaking over the others, Fray Dámaso lectures this newcomer about the nature of "indios," or native Filipinos.

The fact that Father Dámaso thinks he can generalize about the nature of "indios" indicates his excessive confidence and lack of cultural compassion, considering that the term "indio" is a derogatory term for Filipinos. Furthermore, his domineering character is evident by his authoritative tendency take command of a conversation, lecturing newcomers instead of welcoming their questions. It is clear right from the start, then, that priests are afforded an outsized amount of power in this community.

Father Dámaso explains to his listeners that his first post in the Philippines was in a small town, where he worked for three years. He boasts that he made strong connections with the townspeople, who he claims loved and respected him. When he was transferred three years later to the town of San Diego, he explains, the town was sad to see him go. He then spent the next twenty years in San Diego, and though he still doesn't understand very much Tagalog—the country's native language—he believes himself a good preacher who intimately knows the townspeople. Because of this, he is upset that when he recently ceased to be San Diego's friar, only "a few old women and a few tertiary brothers saw [him] off."

Father Dámaso's ignorance emerges in this moment, when he admits that he has spent 23 years in the Philippines but still doesn't understand Tagalog, the native language. What's more, his disrespect for the community and people he claims to serve is painfully apparent in his apathy toward learning Tagalog. Thus, it's not hard to see that he's more interested in appearing *to be well-liked than he is in actually taking the necessary measures to win the townspeople's respect.*

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Continuing his rant, Father Dámaso says that "indios are very lazy." The foreigner who is new to the Philippines challenges this notion, asking, "Are these natives truly indolent by nature, or is it, as a foreign traveler has said, that we make excuses for our own indolence, our backwardness, and our colonial system by calling *them* indolent?" As Dámaso refutes this idea, Father Sibyla steps in and puts him back on track, underhandedly prodding what he intuits is a sensitive issue by asking the boisterous priest why he left San Diego after twenty years.

In this moment, Rizal uses the unnamed foreigner as a mouthpiece for his own political belief that powerful colonial forces project their own expectations and shortcomings onto the people they try to govern. Unfortunately, Father Dámaso is too wrapped up in his own self-image—his power and importance—to acknowledge that Filipinos are respectable people; in order for him to feel authoritative, Filipinos must be below him.

For the first time all evening, Fray Dámaso falls silent before slamming his fist into his chair and cryptically shouting, "Either there is religion or there isn't, and that's that, either priests are free or they aren't! The country is being lost…it *is* lost!" When Sibyla asks what he means, Dámaso says, "The governors support the heretics against God's own ministers!" This seems to unnerve the lieutenant, who begins to stand and asks Dámaso to clarify. "I mean that when a priest tosses the body of a heretic out of his cemetery, no one, not even the king himself, has the right to interfere, and has even less right to impose punishment," Dámaso says without explanation. He then references a "little general," before trailing off, which angers the lieutenant. The lieutenant, a member of the government's Civil Guard, yells his support of the Spanish king's representative in the Philippines, whom Dámaso has insulted.

Rizal has a habit of plunging readers into new storylines and alluding to certain plot elements that aren't explained until later. In this scene, Father Sibyla's question—regarding why Dámaso had to leave San Diego—prompts an outburst from Dámaso that references the exhumation of an important dead man, though readers aren't expected to understand the relevance of this until later. For now, it will suffice to point out that Dámaso insults the king and asserts that priests have more power than the government. Unsurprisingly, this infuriates the lieutenant, who represents the government's Civil Guard. This is the novel's first manifestation of the tension between the Spanish government and the Catholic church.

As Father Dámaso and the lieutenant approach the possibility of a fistfight, Father Sibyla intervenes with philosophical and diplomatic reasoning. The lieutenant dismisses this, saying that Dámaso is out of line. He explains that the man whose body was removed from the Catholic cemetery was a friend of his—"a very distinguished person." "So what if he never went to confessions," the lieutenant says. "So what? I don't go to confession either. But to claim that he committed suicide is a lie, a slur. A man like him, with a son in whom he has placed all his hopes and affections, a man with faith in God, who understands his responsibilities to society, an honorable and just man, does not commit suicide."

Once again, Rizal throws readers into a web of specifics they haven't yet learned how to untangle. Nonetheless, it is clear now that the dead person Father Dámaso referenced earlier was a respected man with friends in relatively high places, considering that the lieutenant vouches for him so adamantly. Furthermore, another delineation between the government and the church becomes apparent when the lieutenant supports the dead man's decision not to go to confession.

Continuing with his story, the lieutenant says that Father Dámaso exhumed this distinguished man's body from the cemetery. The Captain General knew about this, and thus transferred Dámaso from San Diego as a punishment. Having finished the story, the lieutenant storms off, leaving Father Sibyla to say, "I am sorry that without knowing it I touched upon such a delicate matter." Changing the subject, one of the civilians asks about Captain Tiago, the host of the party. Dámaso says that there is "no need for introductions" because Tiago is "a good sort." And in any case, there are rumors that he has stepped out of the house for some reason, leaving his guests to mingle. Just then, two people enter the room.

It's worth noting that the Captain General is the highest ranking governmental figure in the Philippines. As such, the fact that the Captain General transfers Dámaso away from San Diego yet again underlines the tensions between the church and state. On another note, Father Sibyla's apology for having "touched upon such a delicate matter" calls to mind Rizal's earlier metaphor regarding the "social cancer" plaguing the Philippines, a sickness that is too tender to touch.

CHAPTER 2: CRISÓSTOMO IBARRA

Turning their attention to the door, the dinner guests behold Captain Tiago and a young man named Don Crisóstomo Ibarra. When Tiago announces Ibarra to the crowd, the entire room is silent except for several cries of surprise or bewilderment. Father Dámaso, for his part, goes pale. Seeing him, Ibarra bounds over with a smile, extending his hand and saying, "It's my village priest! Father Dámaso, a close friend of my father's!" When Dámaso hesitates—all eyes on him—Ibarra voices his confusion. Finally, Father Dámaso says, "You are not mistaken, but your father was never a close friend of mine."

This first interaction between Father Dámaso and Ibarra quickly establishes the harsh dynamic of their relationship. Dámaso's cold reception of Ibarra's enthusiasm also suggests that something has happened between the two men and that Ibarra is unaware of the change in circumstances. The crowd's silence seems to further suggest that the circumstances of Ibarra's arrival are fraught with tension, and Ibarra is left to piece together the strangeness on his own.

Puzzled, Ibarra turns around to find the lieutenant behind him. "Young man," says the lieutenant, "are you Don Rafael Ibarra's son?" Ibarra confirms that he is, and the lieutenant eagerly welcomes him back to the Philippines, speaking about his father using the past tense, which confirms Ibarra's suspicion—heretofore unvoiced—that his father has died.

The lieutenant's sincere reception of Ibarra—along with the fact that Ibarra's father has died—suggests that Ibarra's current situation is most likely related to the lieutenant and Father Dámaso's recent argument. The kindness the lieutenant shows Ibarra also aligns the young man with the government rather than the church.

Moving throughout the party, Ibarra finds that the subsets of guests either awkwardly ignore him or warmly embrace him. Captain Tinong, a friend of Tiago's, is one of the ones who jump to make Ibarra's acquaintance, inviting him to dinner the next day, though Ibarra must decline because he has plans to travel to San Diego. Their conversation is interrupted when a waiter announces that dinner is served.

The fact that the group of dinner guests is so stratified when it comes to how they treat Ibarra suggests that he is a controversial figure in this community. The reason for this, though, seems to be a mystery to Ibarra. How the guests treat him most likely has to do with whether they align themselves with the church or the state.

CHAPTER 3: DINNER

The two friars, Father Sibyla and Father Dámaso, verbally spar with one another for the seat at the head of the table, though they do so by deferring to one another, heaping worthless praise upon each other in the hopes that doing so will win them the seat. At one point, unable to make a decision, they offer the seat to the lieutenant, saying, "Lieutenant, here we are in the world, not in the church. Here the seat is yours." Not wanting to get involved, the lieutenant declines. At this point, the food is brought in, and Father Sibyla wins the seat, as suggested by the fact that it is he who dishes out everybody's serving. In doing so, he gives Father Dámaso a bowl of broth filled with the most undesirable parts of a chicken.

That Father Dámaso and Father Sibyla offer the seat to the lieutenant only in an attempt to put an end to their own dispute is a small-scale example of the way the church manipulates the government throughout Noli Me Tangere. *In this moment, readers catch a glimpse of what's to come regarding how friars encourage the authority of the state only when it benefits themselves.*

The guests turn their attention to Ibarra, asking about his studies in Europe. He tells them that he has been away for seven years and that never in that entire time has he received news from the Philippines. "I still don't know how or when my father died!" he says. The guests are quick to change the subject, eventually asking him "what made the greatest impression" on him while he was away. He tells them he's learned that "a people's prosperity or misery [lies] in direct proportion to its freedoms or its inhibitions and, along the same lines, of the sacrifice or selfishness of its ancestors." Father Dámaso pipes up at this, saying, "That's it? It doesn't seem worth it to waste all that money just to find out such an insignificant thing. Any schoolboy knows that."

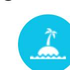
It's no surprise that Father Dámaso scoffs at Ibarra's notion that happiness depends on "freedoms," considering that—as a powerful Spanish friar in a colonized land—he's uninterested in promoting "a people's prosperity" or "freedom." Furthermore, he shows a disdain for education in general, framing it as something that isn't worth going out of one's way to obtain. In doing so, Dámaso insults Ibarra's hard work in addition to undermining the means by which Ibarra has attained his community's respect.

In response to Father Dámaso's rude interjection, Ibarra maintains his composure, despite the fact that he wants to tell the man that he must have already had too much to drink. Instead, he explains to the other dinner guests that he isn't vexed by the friar's remarks because he has known him for a long time, so the two have a jocular rapport that permits such blunt statements. "This is how he treated me when I was a boy," he says, "and though many years have passed they add up to little for him. I thank him for bringing back to me the days when he visited our house and often honored my father's table with his presence." Ibarra then announces that he must leave. Before departing, he raises his glass and says "I give you Spain and the Philippines!" Everybody follows suit. The lieutenant, though, drinks but doesn't repeat the phrase.

By reminding his listeners that Dámaso once ate at Don Rafael's table, Ibarra portrays the priest as ungrateful while also insulting his old age. In addition, it's worth noting that the lieutenant doesn't repeat Ibarra's toast, neglecting to say "Spain and the Philippines!" This suggests that, although he works for the government, the current circumstances surrounding his argument with Father Dámaso make him disinclined to praise colonialist rule, since the toast itself emphasizes Spain's supposed right to the Philippines.

Captain Tiago stops Ibarra and pleads with him to stay, saying that his daughter, María Clara, will soon arrive. He also tells Ibarra that the new priest of San Diego will be joining the dinner, but Ibarra says he must go, reassuring Tiago that he will return the next day before going to San Diego. In his absence, the dinner guests talk about the scandalous exchange between Ibarra and Father Dámaso. A foreign young man with blond hair chastises Filipinos like Ibarra for showing an unwillingness to be reprimanded by their priests. Similarly, a class-conscious woman named Doña Victorina criticizes the lieutenant behind his back for frowning the entire night. Later that evening, the young blond man writes about the party in his journal: "In the current state of things, not allowing [Filipinos] to leave the country—or even teaching them to read—would actually be doing them a favor…"

The young blond man's callous belief that Filipinos would be better off if they didn't leave their homeland illustrates the power of isolation and shows the deep ignorance and disdain of the Spanish colonizers. If Ibarra never left the Philippines, he wouldn't necessarily even know how to challenge Father Dámaso. As such, it is in the best interest of the country's friarocracy to discourage Filipinos from traveling abroad and educating themselves. This is also further proof that the colonizers project their own desires and insecurities onto Filipinos. Isolation doesn't benefit Filipinos, as the blond man alleges—it benefits Spanish colonizers like him.



CHAPTER 4: HERETIC AND SUBVERSIVE

As Ibarra walks home that night, the lieutenant catches up to him. His name is Señor Guevara, and he explains the circumstances of Don Rafael's death: because Ibarra's father was the richest man in the province, he had many enemies. This was exacerbated by the fact that he refused to go to confession, which Father Dámaso greatly resented. As a result, the angry friar made "veiled allusions" to Don Rafael in his sermons. Still, Don Rafael didn't relent, for he believed in following his own moral compass rather than pretending he believed in the power of confession simply to appease church officials.

This scene is the first time in Noli Me Tangere *that the tensions between the church and nonreligious Filipinos is explicitly acknowledged. Given Don Rafael's fate, it's clear that refusing religion can be a fatal decision in this community. Not only can it lead to death, it also seems to lead to social isolation, considering that Father Dámaso made "veiled allusions" to Don Rafael, thereby spreading word of the man's transgression throughout the churchgoing society.*

Lieutenant Guevara explains that around the time Don Rafael refused to go to confession, there was a tax collector employed by the government who was very stupid. This tax collector had been an artilleryman before being fired because of his idiocy. Not knowing what to do with the man, the government had him go door-to-door collecting taxes. It soon became evident to the townspeople that this man—a Spaniard—couldn't read, and they started making fun of him. One day several schoolboys mocked him for his illiteracy, and he chased them in the street until finally catching one and severely beating him. Don Rafael happened to be passing by, the lieutenant explains, and he intervened by pushing the tax collector away from the boy. Unfortunately, the push was a little too hard, and the collector fell backward and dashed his head open on a rock.

Señor Guevara's story about the tax collector illustrates the privileges Spaniards enjoy in the Philippines. Even though this tax collector was an imbecile, the government still made sure he had a job. This suggests that even the lowliest of Spaniards benefits from his or her national affiliation, regardless of whether or not he or she deserves the various luxuries the government provides.

Continuing his story, Guevara explains that Don Rafael rushed the collector to the courthouse, but it was too late. The man died shortly thereafter, and Ibarra's father was thrown into a jail cell. At this point, his enemies and detractors came out of the woodwork to slander his name, accusing him of heresy and subversion. These, the lieutenant says, are serious accusations; "To be a heretic anywhere is a great disgrace, especially at that time, when the mayor made a great show of his religious devotion," he says. Guevara assures Ibarra that he did everything in his power to save Don Rafael, even contacting the Captain General and hiring a lawyer, but unfortunately the government was too corrupt to afford any assistance, and by the time Guevara successfully cleared Don Rafael's name, he had died in his cell.

Although Rizal has clearly developed a sense of enmity between the government and the church, here he complicates that dynamic by showing that government officials like the mayor actually answer to the church. A heretic is somebody who believes something that goes against Christian doctrine. That the mayor—who isn't even part of the church—views this as a serious infraction worthy of punishment denotes just how much influence the friars have over the local bodies of government in the Philippines. To be sure, anybody—especially a Filipino—who isn't devoutly religious finds himself isolated by both the church and the state.

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CHAPTER 5: A STAR IN THE DARK NIGHT

Ibarra returns to the room where he's staying. In the distance, Captain Tiago's house is visible; if Ibarra wanted, he could probably make out the party, where he would see—if indeed he looked—a gathering of Filipinos, Spaniards, Chinese people, soldiers, priests, and a young beautiful woman standing next to Father Dámaso, who is smiling in her presence. Instead, though, Ibarra sees an image of his father dying in a jail cell while he—Ibarra—spills wine on flowers and laughs unencumbered by grief. As the party ends and the lights go out in Captain Tiago's house, Ibarra weeps himself to sleep.

Ibarra's vision of his father's death—and its juxtaposition with his own life—illustrates the immense guilt Ibarra feels at having abandoned Don Rafael in the Philippines to die while he—Ibarra—reaped the benefits of international education and freedom of thought. This guilt will drive Ibarra throughout the novel as he reminds himself that he owes it to his father to improve the circumstances of his ailing country.

CHAPTER 6: CAPTAIN TIAGO

Rizal devotes this chapter to describing Captain Tiago, a man of Filipino descent who is considered one of the region's richest property owners. He is an influential planter in San Diego, an upwardly mobile town where Tiago spends two months per year. In addition to being wealthy and well-respected in government circles, he is also a pious man. Indeed, his riches ensure his godliness, for he pays priests and poor people to pray for him. Whenever Tiago finds himself in a pinch, when he really needs something from the heavens, he promises all sorts of things to certain saints. He even believes in polytheism and, in order to make sure his religious affinities pay off, spreads his devotion between multiple saints and divine figures.

Rizal's depiction of Captain Tiago as a pious man is shot through with irony, since what Tiago is most interested in is his own prosperity. He doesn't even pray for himself, and his belief in polytheism quite obviously goes against Christian doctrine. Nonetheless, he's well-regarded in the religious community because of his riches and his willingness to pay priests to make up for his lack of actual spiritual devotion.

Regarding his strong ties to the government, Rizal notes that Tiago is "always ready to obey the army's lower-ranking officers." Whenever he hears somebody critique Filipino natives, he eagerly joins in, since he doesn't consider himself a "native." When Captain Tiago was young, he met and married a woman who gave birth to a little girl, despite the fact that he had requested to a saint (while performing a honorific dance) that she give birth to a boy. Unfortunately, his wife died during childbirth, leaving him to raise María Clara with the help of his cousin, Aunt Isabel. To this day, everybody loves and admires María Clara, who is engaged to be married to Ibarra.

That Tiago jumps at the opportunity to insult the character of his own people further shows how spineless he is. He wants to be in the good graces of anybody who has a modicum of power, including "lower-ranking officers." The fact that Tiago is a sycophant obsessed with gaining power by association is important to keep in mind as Rizal explores the social dynamics at play in the Philippines during Spanish colonization, especially insofar as they pertain to Tiago's affiliation with Ibarra.

CHAPTER 7: IDYLL ON A TERRACE

Aunt Isabel and María Clara visit church the next morning. When the service ends, María Clara promptly rushes away, ignoring her aunt's scolding for her disrespectful exit. At home, the family decides that she will move to San Diego. At this point, Ibarra arrives, discusses his engagement to María Clara with Captain Tiago, and then goes onto the terrace to speak privately with the young woman herself. Together they talk about the time they've been away from one another, and María Clara explains that she has been in the convent since he left. She lightly challenges him, trying to discern if he's been faithful to her before coming to believe that she has been the only woman on his mind these past seven years.

In contrast to Captain Tiago's false piety—which is primarily fueled by his riches—Aunt Isabel shows herself to be a genuinely religious woman who invests herself in the importance of attending church, though even she appears to adhere to the notion that social appearances factor into spirituality, as evidenced by her desire to linger after the church service—a desire that seems to say that being seen in church is as important as hearing the sermon.

To further convince her of his fidelity, Ibarra implores María Clara to read a letter he sent her. The letter unexpectedly recounts the last interaction he had with his father, in which Ibarra's father chastised him for not wanting to go away to school. Ibarra told Don Rafael that he loved María Clara and thus didn't want to go to Europe. "To you, the future opens its doors, to me it closes them. Your love is being born, mine lies dying," his father told him. "And yet you cry and cannot figure out how to sacrifice today for a useful tomorrow, for you and your country!" Hearing María Clara read these lines to him once more, Ibarra goes pale, telling her he must go because she has "made [him] forget [his] responsibilities."

Ibarra's statement that he has forgotten his "responsibilities" reinforces the idea that his guilt over his father's death drives him throughout the novel in his attempt to reform the country, though at this point it's unclear what he believes his "responsibilities" are. Nonetheless, readers can reasonably assume that these "responsibilities" have something to do with Don Rafael's assertion that one must "sacrifice today for a useful tomorrow," especially since the old man applies this both to Ibarra's personal life and to the wellbeing of the country itself.

CHAPTER 8: MEMORIES

Riding in a coach on the way to San Diego, Ibarra notices change in streets that used to be unpaved and full of potholes, which prisoners used to fill while receiving lashes from a whip as people rushed by in coaches without noticing. Now Ibarra crosses resplendent carriages pulled by beautiful ponies and even thinks he spies Father Dámaso riding in a particularly classy victoria. He goes by a tobacco factory whose offensive smells remind him pleasingly of his childhood. A new botanical garden, though, brings him back to the current moment, making him think of his time in Europe.

Ibarra's passage through the streets of his childhood shows how much his country has changed since he left. More importantly, these changes are the result of Spain's growing influence, which Ibarra recognizes in the beautiful carriages and, to a greater extent, the botanical garden that reminds him of Europe. In this moment, the immediate, visible effects of colonialism come to the forefront of Ibarra's consciousness, showing him that European customs have replaced (rather than mingled with) Filipino customs.

CHAPTER 9: NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Father Dámaso pulls up to Captain Tiago's home in his victoria, passing Aunt Isabel and María Clara on his way up the steps. They tell him that they are going to the convent to collect María Clara's belongings, and he says, "Aha! Aha! We'll see who wins out, we'll see...," a statement they dismiss before taking their leave. He then goes into the house and tells Captain Tiago that they must speak right away—the two men retreat to talk in private.

In this scene, Rizal once more shows his affinity for only partially revealing certain plotlines. Often, when a character in Noli Me Tangere *says something nonsensical that trails off with an ellipsis, it indicates some secret plan is afoot. In this case, it seems Father Dámaso has pitted himself against somebody and is confident that he himself will "win out."*

Meanwhile, Father Sibyla goes to visit a very old priest who remains unnamed. The priest tells Sibyla that he's dying and that he's decided to let it happen rather than undergoing surgery. Sibyla then informs the old man of the incident the previous night between Father Dámaso and Ibarra, and the two priests agree that having Ibarra in the church would greatly benefit their religious order, since he is such a wealthy and influential individual. As such, they hope that he does indeed marry María Clara, for then they could be sure he would support the church, given Captain Tiago's undying devotion.

It seems in this moment that Father Dámaso isn't the only person who has plans surrounding Ibarra's return to the Philippines, though Father Sibyla's intentions appear markedly less sinister. Indeed, Sibyla wants to use Ibarra's strong social standing to further empower the church, a fact that suggests that the friars not only gain authority by securing the government's endorsement, but also by ensnaring people like Ibarra and Captain Tiago—respected individuals that can help endear them to the community.

Rizal turns his attention to the Captain General, who hears from somebody present at the dinner party that Father Dámaso spoke unfavorably about him. He laughs this off, saying, "Women and friars can do no harm. I mean to live in peace during the time left to me in this country, and I want no more problems with men who wear skirts." In private, though, he laments the fact that the Philippines gives the friars so much power.

Once again, Rizal illustrates the divide between the church and the state, though in doing so he also shows that only high-ranking government officials are comfortable disputing the friars' power. The Captain General is the most influential member of the government, and even he will only admit his disapproval of the church's unchecked power in private, when nobody's listening.

Back at Captain Tiago's house, Father Dámaso finishes speaking with his host. "You have been warned!" he tells Tiago. "All this could have been avoided if you had only consulted me beforehand and if you had not lied to me when I asked you. Try not to make any more stupid mistakes. And trust her godfather!" When Dámaso leaves, Captain Tiago rushes to his household shrine and extinguishes the candles he lit for Ibarra's safe passage to San Diego. "There's still time, and the road is very long," he says to himself.

Yet again, Rizal hints at various behind-the-scenes plans but doesn't reveal what's at play. Suffice it to say, Dámaso's animosity toward Ibarra becomes even more evident when, after their conversation, Captain Tiago rushes to blow out candles for Ibarra's safe travels. That Dámaso can convince Tiago to wish for harm to befall Ibarra speaks to the mighty influence friars have over townspeople.

CHAPTER 10: THE VILLAGE

Ibarra's family history is intertwined with the village of San Diego. Legends circulate throughout the town about the resting place of his great-grandfather, an old Spanish man who came to San Diego years ago, bought the forest from people who falsely claimed to own it, retreated into the woods, and hung himself from a banana tree. Not long afterward, Ibarra's grandfather appeared and built a wall around the grave, married a woman from Manila, and fathered Don Rafael. Don Rafael inherited his father's farm and quickly gained respect from his workers as the town of San Diego grew into what it is today.

It's no surprise that Ibarra's relationship with the citizens of San Diego is complicated, since his family history brings with it both disrespect and honor. On the one hand, his great-grandfather's suicide is seen as dishonorable (especially since suicide goes against Christian doctrine). On the other, his father worked to establish the town's first successful farm. In both cases, though, the community holds Ibarra's family members at a distance, either exalting or rejecting them, but never simply allowing them to be normal citizens.

CHAPTER 11: SOVEREIGNTY

San Diego is not run by the figures one might expect. Captain Tiago, for instance, is influential but doesn't have control. Even the mayor doesn't command much power, as he does whatever he's told. Not even God controls the town, since the citizens of San Diego hardly ever think about Him, despite their frequent church visits. As such, there is a constant struggle for power between the town's priest, Father Salví, and its military ensign. Father Salví takes his job very seriously, but the ensign finds this characteristic aggravating, thinking Salví is "too diligent."

Once again, the tension between the church and the government manifests itself in the relationships between opposing figures. Though the ensign and Father Salví should conceivably be able to respect one another and allow each other to do their jobs in peace, they find themselves in a perpetual state of competition because their respective institutions are so often at odds.

To undermine the friar, the ensign imposes a curfew that interferes with the citizens' ability to attend church services at the appropriate times. In retaliation, Salví lets his goat run free on the ensign's property. When he sees the ensign enter the church, Salví orders the sextons to lock the doors so that he can preach for hours on end. In addition, it is well known that the ensign allows himself to be controlled by his wife, Doña Consolación, a Filipina woman who tries to act more sophisticated than she actually is and with whom the ensign frequently physically fights.

The ensign and Father Salví both use their institutional powers to interfere with one another. It's worth noting that their energies would be better spent serving the town of San Diego, but they're too concentrated on spiting one another to care about how they're treating the townspeople. As such, the community they ostensibly work for suffers. Indeed, the townspeople find their various freedoms cut short by the ensign's curfew or by the priest's insistence that sermons last long into the day.

CHAPTER 12: ALL SAINTS

In San Diego's Catholic cemetery, two men are digging a grave. One complains to the other, who is a more experienced gravedigger, about the fact that they are digging into the site of a recent grave. The experienced gravedigger makes fun of his companion, saying, "If you had dug up a twenty-day-old corpse the way I have, at night, in the dark, in the rain…and my lantern went out…The coffin came open and the body almost came out. It stunk. And we had to carry it…" He goes on to tell his friend that the head priest ordered him to do this. At a certain point, an old man approaches and asks the gravedigger where a skull he put in the cemetery has gone. The gravedigger doesn't know, and the old man berates him, accusing him of not understanding how important his job is.

Rizal's characteristic use of ellipses in the gravedigger's dialogue indicates that the gravedigger is saying something of importance, and one can intuit that the body he's referring to is Don Rafael's, since it has already been noted that Don Rafael's corpse was exhumed. The fact that he justifies digging up a body by saying that the head priest ordered him to do it once again shows the absurd power of the San Diego friars, who can seemingly demand anything.

CHAPTER 13: THE STORM BREWS

Ibarra arrives at the graveyard and interrogates the gravedigger, who tells him that he burned a cross that Ibarra's servant had set up in the graveyard. The gravedigger burned it because the head priest told him to. He also tells Ibarra that he dug up the corresponding body because the priest wanted it transferred to the Chinese cemetery, but because the gravedigger thought it would be "better to drown than to be with the Chinese," he threw the body into the lake.

In this moment, the gravedigger evokes his orders from the head priest, as if they justify his actions. This is significant because it demonstrates the efficacy of the friars: in order for the friars to maintain their authority, the people of San Diego must also believe in it, and clearly they do. The gravedigger doesn't feel guilty about exhuming Don Rafael's body because he believes he had to follow the priest's orders.

Enraged, Ibarra leaves the graveyard. About to come upon his house, he sees Father Salví walking in the opposite direction. Although the two men have never met, Ibarra stops the friar by putting his hand on his shoulder and asking, "What have you done with my father?" in a gruff voice. "You are mistaken. I have done nothing to your father," Salví replies, shaken. Ibarra persists, pressing his hand on the priest's shoulder until the man cowers on his knees. Salví then tells Ibarra that it was his predecessor, Father Dámaso, who ordered Don Rafael's exhumation. Realizing his mistake but neglecting to apologize, Ibarra rushes away, leaving the friar on his knees in the street.

Considering how much the townspeople—like, for instance, the gravedigger—are afraid of disobeying the friars, Ibarra's aggressive actions toward Father Salví are rather unprecedented. Indeed, by forcing Salví to bend to the ground, Ibarra asserts his dominance over arguably the most powerful person in town. As the novel progresses and Ibarra and Salví interact in other contexts, its important to remember that their relationship began in this hostile moment when Ibarra subverts the town's previously established power dynamics.

CHAPTER 14: TASIO, MADMAN OR PHILOSOPHER

The old man who asked the gravedigger about a skull now wanders the streets. His name is Tasio, and the townspeople either call him a madman or a philosopher depending on their opinion of him and his strange ways. He values rationalism and philosophy rather than religion, which is uncommon in town. Near the church, he comes upon the mayor and playfully chastises him for installing a new bell tower, saying that this extravagant addition to the church will surely attract lightning from the storm that is brewing. As he says this, a bolt flashes and the mayor crosses himself as Tasio laughs disapprovingly, critiquing the mayor's frivolous use of money and his superstitious ways.

Tasio represents pure freedom of thought in a world that refuses to accommodate ideas that go against prevailing power structures (like the Catholic church or the Spanish government). His claim that the church's new bell tower will attract lightning is surely symbolic, a way of expressing that God cares little for such extravagances. Tasio seems to understand that San Diego lacks spirituality despite its supposed devotion to religion, a devotion that often seems to only manifest itself monetarily.

Leaving the mayor behind, Tasio passes two young boys who are studying to be sextons. He asks if they're coming home with him, since he lives near their mother, who is expecting them for dinner. They tell him that the chief sexton won't let them leave until eight o'clock and that they have to go up the tower to ring bells to commemorate souls trapped in purgatory. Tasio tells them to be careful and continues on his way.

The fact that two young boys trying to make a meager living must put themselves in danger by mounting the bell tower in a lightning storm further reinforces the idea that the church doesn't have the townspeople's best interests in mind. Tasio, on the other hand, shows concern for the boys' safety. In this way, Rizal invites readers to side with this secular old man, showing him capable of empathy in a way the friars are not. As such, Rizal endorses rational thinking over the power-hungry religious zeal promoted by the Catholic church.

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As Tasio walks the streets, a voice calls from a window and invites him inside. It's Don Filipo, the deputy mayor and "almost liberal" party chief. Inside, Tasio, Filipo, and Filipo's wife talk about Ibarra's appearance in the graveyard that afternoon. Tasio tells them that he complained to the Captain General when he saw the "extraordinary profanation" brought about by the exhumation of Don Rafael's body. This conversation leads to a discussion of purgatory, and Tasio makes clear that he doesn't pay much attention to the notion of saving souls who languish between heaven and hell, giving his listeners a long history of how the idea of purgatory entered into Catholicism, though he doesn't finish this lecture. Instead, he takes his leave, lamenting the fact that on this day—All Souls' Day—"Christian piety permits robbery" that the government allows to happen. He flees into the night, lightning breaking across the sky.

All Souls' Day commemorates deceased people living in purgatory. As these souls wait, they must repent for the sins they didn't repent for on earth. The friars of San Diego take advantage of this by selling plenary indulgences to churchgoers. The priests claim that buying indulgences shortens the length of time a soul languishes in purgatory. This is what Tasio refers to when he says that "Christian piety permits robbery" on All Souls' Day, because he doesn't believe such economic transactions have any effect on how long a soul must stay in purgatory. In addition, readers also see in this moment yet another instance in which the government yields to the church, as Tasio points out that the government sanctions the church's greediness in the name of this holiday.

CHAPTER 15: THE SEXTONS

Crispín and Basilio, the two young apprentice sextons that Tasio spoke with earlier, stand at the top of the bell tower as the storm rages on. Basilio tolls the bell and Crispín laments that the sextons and priest have accused him of stealing. He wishes they were at home with their mother, who is expecting them for dinner. Since they've started studying to be sextons, they rarely get to see her, and she doesn't know the torment they live through on a day-to-day basis in the church. Calculating how much the church claims Crispín owes, the two boys determine that the sum is far larger than what they regularly earn. "Now I'm sorry I didn't steal anything!" Crispín complains. When his brother reproaches him, he responds, "The priest told me he would beat me to death if the money didn't appear…if I had taken it I could make it appear…"

When Crispín says that the accusations heaped upon him by the church make him wish he actually did *steal, he hits upon the idea that sometimes unreasonable rules and regulations actually lead to the very misbehavior they aim to prevent. If a governing body or powerful system (like the church) treats its subordinates like criminals, it may indeed turn innocent people toward subversion, since they're already forced to live with the consequences of breaking the law. Since* Noli Me Tangere *is a political novel concerned with examining the impact of oppressive power structures on Filipino citizens, this is an important notion to bear in mind.*

As Crispín and Basilio worry what their mother will think if the priest tells her Crispín is a thief, the chief sexton appears from the stairwell. Scolding Basilio for not tolling the bells in the correct rhythm, he tells Crispín that he must stay in the tower until what he stole is replenished. The boy tells him that their mother is expecting them at eight, to which the sexton says the brothers won't be permitted to leave until ten. Crispín points out that the town's curfew is at nine o'clock, which means they won't be able to walk the streets at ten. This correction upsets the sexton, who grabs Crispín, slaps Basilio away, and hauls Crispín down the steps. Petrified, Basilio remains in the dark tower as he hears his brother scream, "They're going to kill me!" until all is silent again.

The bitterness between the ensign and Father Salví come to fruition in this scene. However, neither the ensign nor the priest feel the adverse effects of their battle—rather, it is Crispín who suffers from their enmity, since it is only because he points out that the ensign has imposed a curfew that he is dragged away by the chief sexton. In this way, the tension between the church and the state is brought to bear on the community itself.

After a few moments, Basilio descends the tower and goes into the church, following his brother's fading screams until a door closes and he loses the sound. He wanders through the church and then slips outside again. Moments thereafter, two gunshots and a handful of voices are audible in the streets, but nobody pays any attention and the night envelops itself once again in silence.

It is brave of Basilio to seek out his brother in the dark church by following the boy's screams, but the fact that he didn't immediately set off behind the chief sexton and Crispín further illustrates the fear church officials inspire in their subordinates.

CHAPTER 16: SISA

As poor people in the outskirts of the village sleep or think of their loved ones—for whom they must sacrifice their money to save from purgatory, since "heaven is expensive" and the church won't "save beloved souls for free"—Crispín and Basilio's mother, Sisa, waits in the darkness for her boys. She is an impoverished and luckless woman married to a gambling addict who abuses her. On this night, though, she has prepared a decadent feast for her sons. Unfortunately, her husband appears and eats the majority of the food before leaving again, telling her to save for him any money the boys bring home. The night wears on and Sisa sobs, worried about her sons. She prays for a moment and then an apparition of Crispín comes to life near the fireplace. Just then, Basilio's voice shakes her from this vision. "Mother, open up!" he says, banging on the door.

Sisa is one of the most tragic characters in Noli Me Tangere. *Not only does she miss her sons—who are living away from her as mere children—but she is also poor and further disempowered by her abusive husband, who only shows up to deplete her of whatever she may have, as he does by eating the majority of the dinner intended for Basilio and Crispín. In terms of power, Sisa is at the bottom wrung of San Diego's socioeconomic ladder. To make matters worse, her only allies are her sons, who rarely see her. This means that she's not only isolated from San Diego's power structures, but from her own sons, too.*

CHAPTER 17: BASILIO

Once Basilio comes inside, Sisa sees that he's bleeding from the forehead. He tells her that the chief sexton ordered him to stay until ten but that he slipped away, defying the town's curfew in order to come home. On his way, two members of the Civil Guard spotted him and fired gunshots, and one of the bullets grazed his forehead. He tells his mother that Crispín has stayed behind in the parish house, and changes the subject when she asks if he's still alive. He tells her about the accusations that Crispín is a thief, and she believes him when he says these claims are false.

Once again, readers see a citizen of San Diego caught between the church and the government, since Basilio runs away from the church and by doing so is forced to violate the ensign's curfew. As a result, the Civil Guard shoots at him. In this way, it becomes apparent that the entire town's structure is rigged against people like Basilio who want nothing more than to earn a modest amount of money and spend time with family.

Basilio goes to sleep while his mother prays. In his dreams, he sees the chief sexton, the priest (Father Salví), and Crispín, who trembles in fright and looks for a place to hide. Furious, the priest questions him and then viciously strikes him with his cane. Crispín tries to run, but the chief sexton takes hold of him and the savage beating continues. Suddenly, Crispín swells with rage and bites the priest's hand. The priest drops the cane, but the sexton finds a walking stick and slams it against Crispín's head, knocking the boy unconscious. Angry that he's been wounded, the priest goes on caning the youngster, who no longer responds to the pain.

Basilio's dream is ominous because it so closely resembles what readers know about Crispín's actual circumstances: the boy was dragged away by the powerful and ruthless chief sexton, presumably to be reprimanded by the even more powerful Father Salví. Because Basilio's dream aligns with all of these details, it seems more of an extension of Crispín's story than a fabrication, and readers get the sense that they are witnessing reality through Basilio's sleeping mind. Furthermore, Sisa's vision of Crispín near the fireplace also suggests that something serious has happened to the young boy.

Sisa wakes Basilio up and asks him why he's crying. Basilio lies about his dream, not wanting to divulge his terrible visions. After several moments, he admits he no longer wants to be a sexton, instead proposing a new plan. The next day, he explains, he'll go get Crispín from the parish house and visit Ibarra, who he's heard has returned from Spain and who he thinks is probably a good man, given that he's Don Rafael's son. Basilio will ask Ibarra if he can work on his farmland, and Crispín can study with Old Tasio. "What more do we have to fear from the priest?" he asks. "Can he make us any poorer than we already are?" He tells Sisa that he has seen Tasio privately praying in church when nobody is around to see. Sisa agrees to this plan, and the boy falls asleep happy.

Basilio's confidence in Ibarra and his negative perception of the priest illustrates that—if they're able to see through the corruption of the church—disenfranchised Filipinos gravitate toward secular and wealthy individuals, since these people actually stand a chance of resisting priests and government officials. Indeed, Basilio puts his faith in the power of education as a means of liberation, urging his mother to send Crispín to learn from Tasio. Furthermore, the fact that Basilio has seen Tasio praying is important because it shows that the old man is, in fact, a religious person, despite his misgivings about the church. This means that Tasio finds fault not in religion itself but in the domineering way the priests go about imposing their supposedly spiritual authority.

CHAPTER 18: SOULS IN TORMENT

The next day, Father Salví is in a noticeably bad mood, which churchgoers recognize by the way he delivers mass. A group of gossiping nuns eventually turn their attention to plenary indulgences, which churchgoers buy from the church to supposedly relieve purgatorial souls of sins for which they haven't yet repented. One of the sisters brags that she keeps "clean accounts" of her indulgences. She prays, asking a saint to tell her if there is a soul in purgatory who needs the exact amount of indulgences she's received at a given time—she flips a coin to determine whether she'll use the indulgence or store it away. If she stores it, she writes it neatly in her ledger. "It's too bad you can't do with them what you can with money: get interest," she says. "You could save more souls."

In this scene, Rizal satirizes the Catholic church's tendency to conflate spirituality and piety with finances. This nun approaches plenary indulgences as if she is some sort of investor, a sentiment underscored by her disappointment that indulges can't earn interest. In this way, Rizal illustrates how supposedly religious people easily lose sight of the true value of their devotion, instead focusing on materialistic and earthly concepts that have nothing to do with piety and everything to do with social status.

Another nun tells the group her own method of gathering plenary indulgences. Whenever a maid or servant breaks a dish, she explains, she makes him or her say a prayer for every broken piece. These prayers supposedly decrease the time a soul must spend in purgatory. When another nun points out that these prayers belong to the servants, the sister says, "And who is going to pay for my cups and my plates then?" At the end of their discussion, the nuns turn their attention to the task at hand, which is to make a decision regarding which priest should deliver a sermon at the town's big fiesta, a celebration of the community's patron saint. They choose Father Dámaso because he is well-spoken in his sermons. "But we can't understand what he's saying," one says. "Because he is very profound," another responds, "which is why he preaches so well."

Again, the nuns conflate social status with piety, using their authority to force people below them—their servants—to shoulder the nuns' religious burdens. When the nun justifies this practice by asking who would pay for her broken plates if she didn't claim her servants' indulgences, she reveals that she is more concerned about material items than she is about purgatorial souls. Throughout Noli Me Tangere, *religious figures prioritize social status and largesse over actual piety, as evidenced by one sister's assertion that they should choose Dámaso to speak at the fiesta precisely because they don't understand what he's saying; for her, the mere idea that he's "profound" is more important than receiving a spiritual message.*

Sisa, who has apparently been sitting amongst these nuns, stands and goes upstairs to visit the priest to ask about Crispín's whereabouts. She comes upon a parish servant, who tells her she can't speak to the priest because he's feeling unwell. She asks after Crispín, and the servant frowns, saying, "Isn't he at home?" She says that he stayed behind the night before. "Yes, of course," the servant says, "At first he stayed, then he left. He took a lot of things. This morning the priest told me to go to the barracks to let the Civil Guard know. I assume they have already gone to your house after the boys." Crying, Sisa bursts out into the street and sets off toward home.

Once again, the false accusations leveled by the church adversely affect the people the institution is supposed to serve. In this case, these people are Crispín and Sisa, whose reputation is surely impacted by these unfair circumstances, ultimately further disempowering her and isolating her from her own community.

CHAPTER 19: ADVENTURES OF A SCHOOLMASTER

Looking over the lake, Ibarra speaks with the town's schoolmaster, who says that the gravedigger showed him where Don Rafael's body was dumped. The schoolmaster greatly respects Ibarra and his late father, saying that he owed Don Rafael many favors because the old man used to give his poor students scholarships to encourage them to pursue education. In Rafael's absence, though, these children live in rags and hardly have time for their studies. Ibarra takes an interest in this dilemma, asking the schoolmaster questions about San Diego's current education system and telling him that he isn't asking out of "an empty curiosity." Rather, Ibarra wants to continue his father's efforts to empower the town by promoting secular education. "I want the religion that brought education to this society to be respected," he says. "I want my own spirit to be inspired by what has given my life so much meaning."

Interestingly enough, Ibarra wants to address the corruption in San Diego by using the same means that produced that corruption in the first place: religion. When he says "I want the religion that brought education to this society to be respected," he invests himself in Catholicism's potential to bring about good in his community. Rather than angrily wanting to abandon the church, he wants to find a way to use it to his advantage. This is because he himself has benefitted from an education informed by religion, which he expresses by saying that he wants his "own spirit to be inspired by what has given [his] life so much meaning."

The schoolmaster assures Ibarra that his intentions are noble, but tells him that there are many obstacles standing in the way of the town's educational success. First of all, he points out that children aren't encouraged to aspire toward academic achievement, especially because economic concerns and the will to survive usurps their ability to dedicate themselves to intellectual pursuits. Furthermore, teachers are forced to teach children rote memorization, which is ineffective and unpleasant. Unfortunately, it is hard for the schoolmaster to change these things because of the immediate circumstances surrounding him. His classroom is beneath the parish house, meaning that the children bother the priest when they read aloud. The priest, he explains, will often storm downstairs and berate the schoolmaster, undermining the man's authority in front of his students.

In this moment, the schoolmaster challenges Ibarra's optimism that the church is capable of contributing positively to education. He insists that the church isolates educational institutions in an unaccommodating society, forcing teachers to sacrifice their productive lesson plans in service of religious doctrine that will hardly benefit the students. Of course, the schoolmaster doesn't propose any alternative measures, instead resigning himself somewhat to the hopelessness of education in San Diego—a hopelessness Ibarra is eager to disprove.

The schoolmaster gives Ibarra more details regarding how the friars interfere with teaching in San Diego. Because the Spanish government decreed that all students must learn Spanish, the schoolmaster started teaching Spanish instead of using Tagalog. Several days later, though, Father Dámaso called upon him. He greeted the priest in Spanish, to which Dámaso said, "When you come to see me, it should not be in borrowed clothes. Be content to speak your own language, and don't ruin Spanish, which is not for you." Even though this upset the schoolmaster, he explains to Ibarra that he was forced to comply because his salary is dependent upon his relationship with the friars.

When Father Dámaso interferes with the governmental decree that all children learn Spanish, the tension between the church and state once again emerges. This time, though, it is the schoolmaster who's caught in the middle. Because the priests pose an immediate threat to him, he's forced to side with the church, despite the fact that doing so goes against his principles as an educator. What's more, Dámaso's insistence that even the schoolmaster not speak Spanish illustrates the friarocracy's tactic of keeping Filipinos isolated from the structures of power, thereby making it impossible for townspeople to address their own oppression.

Continuing his account of education in San Diego, the schoolmaster explains to Ibarra that his encounter with Father Dámaso redoubled his motivation to be a good teacher. As such, he read many of Old Tasio's philosophy books and discovered that the best way to teach is to refrain from using corporal punishment, since violence inspires fear rather than curiosity. His students immediately improved, and attendance increased. Unfortunately, though, Father Dámaso once again stepped in, demanding that the schoolmaster revert back to the old ways, reminding him that "according to the Holy Spirit, the word enters only with the blood." The priest also threatened to tell the mayor if the schoolmaster didn't obey his orders. To make matters worse, the entire community—including the students' parents—rallied behind Dámaso and advocated for the old method. As such, the schoolmaster reverted to corporal punishment, and his students once again hated school.

The retaliation the schoolmaster had to face from the parents of his students clearly shows the extent to which the friars have manipulated the townspeople to reject measures that might lead to their own empowerment. It's easy to see that encouraging students to aspire toward a healthy education would only enable Filipinos to climb the socioeconomic ladder, but people like Father Dámaso have so much influence over the town that anything he deems out of step with religious doctrine is immediately met with scorn. As such, Rizal demonstrates the power of the church to interfere with the community's growth.

The schoolmaster tells Ibarra that even the new priest, Father Salví, interferes in the classroom, often reminding the teacher that his first duty is to teach religion. Having heard this story, Ibarra says, "Don't be so pessimistic." He tells the schoolmaster that Don Filipo—the liberally-inclined deputy mayor—has invited him to a meeting at the city hall. "Who knows but that there you will get an answer to your questions," he says mysteriously.

Ibarra maintains his optimism that education in San Diego can be reformed by working within the current systems of power. He emphasizes this viewpoint by believing that he will be able to make a difference by attending a city hall meeting—a belief that assumes the government will, unlike the church, make room for rational thought.

CHAPTER 20: THE MEETING AT CITY HALL

Before the meeting at city hall begins, the two factions of influential authorities separate into groups. The older men represent the town's conservatives while the younger men represent San Diego's liberal component—these two sides are notorious for never seeing eye to eye. Don Filipo, the deputy mayor, complains to his friends about the mayor, who's older and more conservative. The meeting they're about to have is in regards to San Diego's large fiesta, which traditionally celebrates the religious holidays of November with expensive fireworks and musicians and other extravagancies. The liberals resent these lavish customs, which are encouraged by the church and drain economic resources from the rest of the town. Don Filipo tells his comrades that Tasio advised him to propose the conservatives' idea—that the town should spend large amounts of money on the fiesta—because he's confident the old men will disagree with whatever he says.

Much like the conversation between the nuns about plenary indulgences, this scene examines the church's relationship to money, this time putting these considerations in the context of the government. It's clear that the friars have a strong influence over the conservative governmental officials, as evidenced by the latter's willingness to spend absurd amounts of money to celebrate religious holidays.

The mayor begins the meeting. As he pauses to cough, Captain Basilio—one of the conservatives and an old rival of Don Rafael's—rises and delivers a long-winded introduction that opens the floor to discussions regarding the fiesta. Don Filipo then takes the floor and says that the town's youth wish to spend the majority of San Diego's budget on theater performances, fireworks, and other ridiculous celebratory luxuries. As planned, the old men reject this idea, and the entire room erupts in argument until a quiet young liberal of a low station requests permission to speak. Hoping to undermine Don Filipo's authority, the old men give the man the floor, which he uses to propose the liberal party's actual idea, a much more reasonable festival. Still trying to insult Don Filipo's honor, the conservatives accept the young man's suggestion.

Again, Rizal satirizes the—in this case bureaucratic—tendency to lose sight of what one actually wants in order to preserve various social norms and spite perceived enemies. The conservatives want so badly to disagree with the liberals that they undermine their own beliefs. In the same way that the nuns obsess over economic and materialistic concerns that they think make them appear pious (thereby forgetting their primary commitment to spirituality), the conservatives distract themselves from their own ideals by going out of their way to oppose the town's liberal component.

Although Don Filipo successfully tricked the conservative old men into approving a reasonable budget for the fiesta, the mayor speaks up and says that the proposal won't go through because the priest wants something else. "Is the priest paying for the festival or are we? Has he donated even a quarter?" shouts Tasio. Ignoring this, the mayor informs his listeners that the priest has ordered a number of expensive religious services and performances and that the issue is not up for debate. The mayor says that he was going to tell them this at the beginning, but Captain Basilio's long interruption rendered this impossible. The young men say that they won't pay for such a fiesta, but the mayor reminds them that their contributions have already been collected.

The mayor's uncompromising devotion to Father Salví once again demonstrates just how much power the church has, even when it comes to governmental matters. Worse, even the liberals are at the command of the church, since their money has already been collected—this means that they truly have no way of asserting what they want. As such, the friars render political debate useless, essentially hoarding all the power and not allowing anybody else to partake in the town's decision-making process.

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At the end of the meeting, Ibarra approaches the schoolmaster and asks him if he has anything he wants to send to the provincial capital, since Ibarra is going there. "You have some business there?" asks the schoolmaster. "*We* have some business there!" Ibarra says without explanation. Meanwhile, Tasio and Don Filipo make their way home together. On their way, Tasio bemoans the fact that the mayor—Don Filipo's boss—is a slave to the priest.

Yet again, Rizal uses vague dialogue—in this case Ibarra's statement that he and the school master have "business" in the capital—to hint at a storyline that hasn't been fully revealed yet. Nonetheless, it's fair to assume that his use of the pronoun "we," which unites him with the schoolmaster, indicates that whatever he's planning has to do with education in San Diego.

CHAPTER 21: A MOTHER'S TALE

Just as Sisa is about to reach her house—hoping to find Crispín and Basilio safe inside—she sees two Civil Guard soldiers. They're leaving her house empty-handed, having searched it for Crispín and Basilio. They call Sisa to them and ask where she's stashing the money her son stole. "We've come to take your sons and the older one got away. Where have you hidden the younger one?" they ask. She tells them she hasn't seen Crispín, saying "I was hoping to see him this morning at the parish house and when I was there they only told me that…" She trails off after seeing the soldiers exchange a look fraught with meaning. They then tell her they will leave her alone if she pays them the money they claim her family owes. When she's unable to do so, they take her as a prisoner and set off toward town.

Rizal uses the soldiers' meaningful glance at one another to insinuate that something ominous has happened to Crispín. Sisa has now been told by both the church and the Civil Guard that they don't know where her child is. As such, readers yet again see how lowly townspeople easily slip between the cracks of San Diego's dual forces of power. The fact that the last glimpse Rizal gives of Crispín is in the form of Basilio's nightmare—in which Crispín seem to have been beaten to death—suggests that the boy has died and that neither the church nor the Civil Guard is going to acknowledge this death.

Sisa is ashamed as the soldiers march her through town for everybody to see. Ushered into the military barracks, she collapses on the ground, where she remains for several hours while the soldiers wait for further orders from the ensign, who seems to know nothing about the situation. When the ensign finally arrives, he quickly dismisses the accusations against Sisa and her boys, saying "Bah! This is what comes from a stingy friar!" before releasing Sisa.

Once more, the ensign and Father Salví's rivalry comes to the forefront of the novel, this time centering around the church's greedy ways, as the ensign accuses Salví of punishing innocent young sextons simply because he wants more money.

For the rest of the day, Sisa wanders from place to place, helplessly looking for her children. She shouts their names over and over again until the sun goes down, leaving her to make her way through the darkness. "Perhaps pale human resistance cannot cope with such sufferings," Rizal writes, "and Mother Providence intervened with a sweet leniency, forgetfulness." Distraught, Sisa slips into dissociation and lunacy.

When Sisa goes crazy with grief, Rizal reveals the emotional and psychological pressure that oppressive colonizers—whether religious or governmental—put on a country's native citizens. With both the Civil Guard and the church refusing to help her (and even actively working against her), Sisa has nothing to turn to and, thus, estranges herself completely from her unfortunate circumstances by dissociating.

CHAPTER 22: LIGHT AND SHADOW

For the next three days, the town prepares for the fiesta. María Clara arrives with Aunt Isabel, and the townspeople notice a profound difference in Father Salví, who seems distracted during his sermons and becomes thinner. Even more notably, he stays out late at night while visiting María Clara's house. As for Ibarra, nobody knows why he's absent, and some speculate that he has been imprisoned for having forced Father Salví to his knees on All Saints' Day. These suspicions are dispelled, though, when he arrives in front of María Clara's house in San Diego and warmly greets Father Salví, who is also on his way to pay the young woman a visit.

The fact that Father Salví spends his time staying out late at night to visit with María Clara—along with his distracted demeanor and neglected physical appearance—implies that the priest lusts after the young woman. This, of course, reflects poorly on his character, since as a friar he isn't in a position to court a woman. As such, Rizal casts him as a suspicious figure who hides behind his religious title without actually aspiring toward true piety.

In an intimate conversation, Ibarra and María Clara plan an outing with friends the next day. María Clara pleads with Ibarra to not let Father Salví come, because he's always watching her with "sad, sunken eyes" that unnerve her. "He once asked me if I had dreamed about letters from my mother," she says. "I think he's half crazy." Ibarra says that, because of the town's customs, it is impossible to not invite Father Salví. However, he decides the party will be organized around a boat trip that will leave early in the morning, so that Father Salví will have to decline in order to fulfill his priestly duties in the first half of the day. This plan works, though Salví is so disappointed to miss out on spending time with María Clara that he promises to meet up with them later in the day, after they've finished their boating.

Ibarra's plan to exclude Father Salví from the boat trip without obviously insulting the priest is in keeping with his ideas about educational reform in San Diego—in both cases, he believes there are ways to work within the prevailing system to change daily life for the better. What he underestimates, though, is the intensity of Father Salví's desire to see María Clara, and his wise plan doesn't take into account the fact that the priest will do everything in his power to get what he wants. On another note, moving forward, it will be important to remember Father Salví's question about María Clara's mother's letters—once again, Rizal alludes to a subplot without giving any context.

As Ibarra leaves María Clara's house that evening, a stranger comes upon him in the street and tells him he's been waiting to speak with him. He explains that nobody will help him because everybody thinks he's a thief, but he has recently lost both his sons and his wife has gone crazy. He implores Ibarra to "have pity" on him and his family, and though Ibarra says he doesn't have much time, he invites the man to walk with him and tell him what has happened.

Judging by this man's story, which involves two missing boys and a wife who's gone crazy, he is Sisa's husband. The fact that he asks for Ibarra's help indicates the power and influence the villagers attribute to Ibarra—though this popularity may sometimes work in Ibarra's favor, it's worth remembering that his father's fame and popularity invited trouble, as many detractors emerged when he was imprisoned.

CHAPTER 23: A FISHING EXPEDITION

Ibarra and María Clara go on the planned outing the next morning, taking with them María Clara's friends Sinang, Victoria, Iday, Nenang, their mothers, and several of Ibarra's friends. Two boatmen—one elderly and one roughly the same age as Ibarra—row them to a remote beach, where they cast fishing rods in the hopes of catching something to eat. They eventually discover, though, that there's a crocodile stuck in the muck beneath the boat. The younger boatman jumps into the water, lassoing the crocodile and bringing it above the surface level. As the crocodile thrashes about, it drags the boatman back into the water. Ibarra quickly dives in to save the man, driving his knife into the crocodile's tender belly. "I owe you my life," the boatman says after the ordeal is over. The group then goes back to celebrate in the woods surrounding Ibarra's house.

Thankfully, Ibarra's bravery in this scene wins him a devoted ally. In contrast to Sisa's husband—who shamelessly wants something from Ibarra—the boatman declares that he "owe[s]" Ibarra. This alliance and loyalty becomes important later on, when Ibarra must face San Diego's most powerful figures and a handful of detractors.

CHAPTER 24: IN THE FOREST

Father Salví rushes through his morning mass and other religious duties in order to meet up with María Clara and her friends. When he arrives, he walks through the woods and hears María Clara and several other girls talking about him, saying that he creepily follows her everywhere she goes. When he comes upon the rest of the group, he sees that the majority of the town is there, including his nemesis the ensign, the mayor, Don Filipo, and even Captain Basilio, who was Don Rafael's enemy in a past lawsuit that has been left unsettled. When the priest emerges, he hears Ibarra saying to Captain Basilio, "We may disagree over rights, but disagreement does not mean enmity."

Ibarra's claim that "disagreement does not mean enmity" illustrates his good nature and his willingness to work with people who don't see eye-to-eye with him. This mentality is perhaps how he manages to maintain a sense of optimism when it comes to matters like the state of education in San Diego. Simply put, he's not interested in indulging rivalry for rivalry's sake. Rather, he prefers to work with *people who think differently than him.*

During the dinner, Father Salví asks the ensign if he knows anything about a criminal who apparently attacked Father Dámaso on the road the previous day. The ensign hasn't even heard of this offense, and Salví tells him that the suspect in question is a man named Elías, a criminal and bandit notorious for having thrown the ensign himself into a lake. At this moment, Sisa appears and wanders throughout the dinner party. Seeing her, Ibarra orders the servants to give her something to eat, but she disappears into the trees again. This prompts a discussion between the dinner guests about the missing young sextons, and the ensign takes this opportunity to lampoon Salví for having lost track of Crispín and Basilio, accusing him of caring more about missing money than missing children.

When the ensign accuses Father Salví of caring more about money than about Crispín and Basilio, he accurately assesses the priest's priorities. Interestingly enough, the ensign finds himself using Salví's lack of empathy against him, despite the fact that the Civil Guard also mistreated Sisa and even shot at Basilio when he ran through the night. As such, it's clear that the ensign cares more about making Salví look bad than actually showing the townspeople empathy.

Ibarra receives a telegram during the party that says his plan to build a **school** has been approved. A sergeant then emerges and demands that the group of dinner guests hand over the criminal Elías, who they tell Ibarra is the same boatman he saved earlier that day. Because the ensign recently left the party, the sergeant explains the encounter that the ensign had with Elías not long ago: the two men were traveling in opposite directions across a narrow bridge. Riding on a horse, the ensign refused to yield to Elías, who also neglected to step out of the way. Just as the horse was about to trample Elías, the outlaw grabbed a piece of wood and hit it on the head, causing it to topple over, bucking the ensign into the mud.

Ibarra's realization that the boatman is a wanted criminal is important because Ibarra knows that this criminal has an affinity for him, since he saved Elías's life. As such, Ibarra is secretly affiliated with a controversial figure, a fact that could potentially interfere with his public image and his ability to carry out the philanthropic projects he has envisioned.

CHAPTER 25: AT THE PHILOSOPHER'S HOUSE

The next day, Ibarra pays a visit to Old Tasio and finds him writing in hieroglyphs, which the old man says he does so that nobody will understand his ideas. This is because he is not writing for his contemporaries. "The generation that can decipher these characters will be an educated generation," he says.

Tasio is already a figure that represents isolation from his own community—given his commitment to rational thought over church-ordered policy—but his insistence upon writing in hieroglyphics highlights his intellectual solitude. In this moment, Rizal uses Tasio to illustrate that Filipino society is ignorant while also showing the downside of embracing isolation, which leads to an irrational acceptance of obscurity.

Tasio tells Ibarra that he heard about his encounter with Elías—the boatman—from "the Muse of the Civil Guard," his term for the ensign's wife, Doña Consolación, whom Ibarra neglected to invite to his party. Insulted, Doña Consolación heard about the incident with the crocodile, guessed that the boatman was the same person who threw her husband into the mud, and dispatched the Civil Guard to invade Ibarra's party as a way of spiting him for not inviting her.

Doña Consolación's manipulation of the Civil Guard to serve her own grievances brings to mind once again the many ways in which characters abuse power in Noli Me Tangere. *In fact, with the exception of Ibarra's project to build a school, it's quite rare in the novel for a character to use an institution properly to benefit the community. Rather, people like Doña Consolación assert their authority over others by wielding whatever form of power is at their disposal.*

Ibarra turns his attention to his plans to reform San Diego, telling Tasio that he intends to build a new **school** and asking for his advice, since Tasio always helped Ibarra's father navigate tricky situations. First, Tasio tells Ibarra to not come to him for advice anymore, since the majority of the town thinks he is a madman because of his secular posturing and his commitment to reason. "People believe that madness is when you don't think as they do, which is why they take me for a madman," he says. "And I'm grateful for that, because, well, the day on which they restore my reason is the day the deprive me of the small bit of freedom I've purchased at the price of a reputation as a sane person."

In this moment, Tasio insists that the idea of "madness" is predicated upon differing viewpoints. This means that powerful figures will claim their opponents are insane in order to discredit opposing ideas. The fact that Tasio is "grateful" for this because being a "madman" gives him "freedom" reinforces the idea that the old man welcomes his own social and intellectual isolation.

Tasio's second piece of advice to Ibarra is that he consult the town's influential leaders, including the priest and mayor. Tasio acknowledges that these people will offer bad advice. Nonetheless, it's important for Ibarra to act like he'll heed their suggestions. Ibarra asks, "Can't I carry my idea forward without a shadow hanging over it? Can't good triumph over everything, and truth not need to dress in the borrowed clothes of error?" Still, Tasio insists that Ibarra's plans to build a **school** will only be met with scorn unless he gains the approval of the church and government. Eventually, Ibarra admits his belief that, though the Spanish government abuses its powers and overlooks the tyranny of the Catholic church, it is "working to introduce reforms that will correct these things." Tasio points out that this is worse, because reforms from high places are "undermined at lower levels thanks to vice everywhere."

Tasio's argument that Ibarra must gain the church's support before building the school is interesting because it implies that, despite his own affinity for the freedom that comes along with isolation, Tasio recognizes that an individual can't bring about change if he is labeled a madman. As such, Ibarra must avoid social and political isolation by consulting with the priests and members of the local government, even if he believes this is unnecessary because the larger Spanish government will support his efforts.

Tasio urges Ibarra to "kiss the hand" of the country's reigning powers in order to bring about good in San Diego. When Ibarra replies disgustedly that these same powers led to his father's death, Tasio says, "If you hold on to those memories, […] abandon the task you have set before you […]." After a while, Ibarra accepts that the old philosopher is right, resolving to sacrifice his dignity in order to pull of his project.

In this moment, Tasio shows Ibarra that sometimes submission and subservience can be used tactically. In other words, if Ibarra swallows his pride, he'll have a better chance of reforming his country and its system of education. Revenge, it seems, doesn't lead to true change. Rather, Ibarra must focus on how he can work with his enemies to improve the Philippines.

CHAPTER 26: FESTIVAL EVE

On the night before the fiesta, the town prepares itself. One of the more notable preparations involves the **school**, which is under construction and shaping up to be a magnificent building. The architect oversees the work, walking over to a yellowish man involved in hoisting up a collection of wood. "I think that's too much wood for a hoist," he says. In response, the yellow man convinces him that the bigger they make the structure, the more respect it will command.

Rizal tends to provide readers with a wealth of information and expository details. Sometimes, though, these moments foreshadow or relate to significant events, and the attention he gives this "yellow" man and his insistence on attaching heavy loads to various construction machinery is no exception.

CHAPTER 27: AT NIGHTFALL

As the town prepares for the fiesta, Captain Tiago also gears up for celebration. He speaks with Ibarra—his future son-in-law—about the **school**'s name, urging the young man to call it the Saint Francis School instead of the School of Primary Instruction, the name on which Ibarra has already settled. "If you call it the School of Primary Instruction," he says, "you get nothing out of it. Who is 'primary instruction?'"

When Tiago says that Ibarra will "get nothing out of" naming the school the School of Primary Instruction, he reveals his real reason for devoting himself to the church: to "get" something out of his affiliations. With this mentality, he completely overlooks the fact that Ibarra is trying to give rather than get. Unlike Tiago and other socialites, Ibarra wants to improve his community regardless of whether or not doing so will benefit him.

Later, as María Clara and her friends walk through town at dusk, they see a leper collecting donations from people by putting a basket down, retreating until they fill it up with money or trinkets, and retrieving it when they're gone. Moved by the scene, María Clara steps forward and gives the leper a reliquary—a container for holy relics—and the leper bows to the ground, putting his face in her footprints to show his gratitude. As he kneels this way, Sisa approaches and touches him. She is then taken away by a soldier, chanting insane things about her lost children.

In this scene, two social outcasts come together. Estranged from her own community—and separated from her sons—Sisa's only opportunity to engage in human connection is to make contact with a leper. In this way, Rizal again frames isolation as dangerous, since to touch a leper is to risk contracting a horrible disease.

CHAPTER 28: CORRESPONDENCES

Rizal gives excerpts of several letters describing the events of the festival, which include descriptions of the music, the priests in attendance, the theater spectacles, the feasts, and the sermons. In a letter from María Clara to Ibarra, she tells her lover that she misses seeing him—because he has apparently been sick for the last couple of days—and says that Father Dámaso has been keeping her company in the meantime.

María Clara occupies an interesting space in Noli Me Tangere *because of her affiliations with both Ibarra and Father Dámaso, who for all intents and purposes is the young man's enemy, considering the fact that his actions led to Don Rafael's death. In this way, she represents the kind of balance Ibarra himself tries to strike—a balance between public life (church or government) and an unencumbered personal life.*

CHAPTER 29: MORNING

On the last day of San Diego's festival, Don Filipo and Old Tasio discuss how absurd it is that the town has spent so much money on celebrations. Tasio urges Filipo to resign from his post as deputy mayor because the mayor is controlled too much by Father Salví. Meanwhile, the church fills up for the festival's concluding high mass. Unfortunately, it seems as if Father Dámaso, the featured speaker, may be unable to preach due to a slight congestive illness. As people flood the streets on their way to the church, a young woman carries a baby that, upon seeing Father Salví, says, "Pa…pá! Papá! Papá!" Onlookers witness this and snicker to one another, winking, and Salví blushes. Rizal notes: "But the people were mistaken. The priest didn't even know the woman, who was a stranger."

Although Rizal refutes the otherwise very strong implications that Father Salví rapes or otherwise engages sexually with the townspeople, the mere inclusion of this scene—in which a baby calls him Papá—is certainly intended to raise suspicions regarding how Salví might abuse his power. Combined with the knowledge that Salví inappropriately lusts after María Clara, this moment solidifies the notion that he is an unsavory man. Indeed, the fact that he blushes when the baby calls him Papá indicates that, even if he's not this child's father, he clearly has a guilty conscience.

CHAPTER 30: IN THE CHURCH

The church fills up so quickly that it's difficult for attendees to breathe. Ibarra sits in a corner, and when Father Dámaso ascends to the pulpit, the two men make eye contact. Dámaso winks at him, as if to say that he won't "forget him in his prayers."

Dámaso's wink is most likely meant to be ironic, since he and Ibarra have from the very beginning of the novel been at odds with one another. Or, bearing in mind that Dámaso is a vengeful man, it's possible that his prayers about Ibarra will invite harm upon the young man rather than good graces.

CHAPTER 31: THE SERMON

Father Dámaso begins the sermon in Latin before transitioning to Spanish, lightly demeaning the ensign and the Civil Guard. At one point, he pauses, but not because he wants to infuse the moment with solemn silence—he kicks the sexton feeding him lines from beneath the pulpit, and the small man reminds the priest what he's supposed to say by giving him a prompt. Even his most pious listeners begin to yawn, and one person even leaves, causing a scene that Dámaso notices. In the second part of the sermon, the friar switches to Tagalog, but his knowledge of the language is so poor that even the native speakers can't understand. Despite this, throughout the service Dámaso asserts the importance of respecting the church, reiterating that "indios" must revere priests. He also underhandedly insults Ibarra, though nobody but Ibarra himself understands the sermon well enough to discern this.

The obscurity of Father Dámaso's sermon—owing both to his highfalutin speech and his poor command of Tagalog—mirrors Tasio's practice of writing in hieroglyphs. In both cases, the men use language for non-communicative purposes. The difference, though, is that Tasio's non-interactive use of language is a way of isolating himself while Dámaso's inscrutable sermon is a way of asserting his authority. Indeed, the community allows him to get away with this, as evidenced by the nuns' earlier assertion that Dámaso is very "profound" precisely because *they can't understand him. As such, he benefits from speaking over his listeners' heads.*

While the church sings religious incantations, Elías approaches Ibarra and whispers, "During the benediction ceremony, don't get too far from the priest, don't go down into the trench, and don't go near the cornerstone, and you'll go on living."

When Elías warns Ibarra of this vague but imminent danger, Ibarra reaps the benefit of having a sly criminal in his debt—though potentially harmful to his reputation, this covert affiliation is indeed a form of power that enables Ibarra to avoid danger.

CHAPTER 32: THE CRANE

After the church service ends, everybody makes their way to the **school** because Father Salví is set to deliver a ceremony to bless the structure. The yellow man has created a large pulley system to lower a time capsule into the earth by the building in order to commemorate the day. As such, a heavy stone hangs suspended in the air over a large trench, waiting to be lowered into the ground. The architect praises the yellow man's handiwork, asking him where he learned so much. The yellow man says that his father was taught by Ibarra's grandfather, saying "In time you'll see what my father taught me, you'll see!"

The "yellow" man's relation to Ibarra's grandfather is a mysterious revelation, since Rizal has revealed very little about the deceased old man other than that he hanged himself in the woods of San Diego many years ago. Judging by how strongly the lieutenant reacts when Father Dámaso implies that Don Rafael committed suicide, though, it's clear that suicide is greatly frowned upon in the community. In this way, Rizal associates the "yellow" man with disgrace—an association that is ominous considering that this man has been so integral to the school's construction.

After Father Salví blesses the **school**, the revered Captain General says a few words before the town's most influential members descend one by one into the trench to symbolically shovel a pile of dirt over the time capsule, which is to buried by the suspended stone after this process. Avoiding going into the pit, Ibarra offers a trowel to Father Salví, who reluctantly accepts it and descends, all the while looking at the stone above. After doing so, he asks if Ibarra is going to go down. The governor pipes up at this, further encouraging the young man.

There is no doubt Salví seems nervous in this moment, as he casts suspicious glances at the overhanging stone. This seems to indicate that Salví is perhaps implicated in the plot against Ibarra. Given that the mayor allows himself to be influenced so heavily by Salví—and given his encouragement that Ibarra descend down into the pit—it isn't so much of a stretch to suspect that he too is in on the plan.

Ibarra goes down into the trench, eyeing Elías and the yellow man. Meanwhile, Elías watches the yellow man's hand, which is placed on the lever that controls the pulley system. A big crash sounds suddenly and the stone hurdles to the ground. When the cloud of dust settles, the people see that Ibarra has survived. The yellow man, though, has been crushed by the stone. The people rejoice that Ibarra lives, saying, "The dead man is only an indio!" and pointing out that, unlike Ibarra, the yellow man didn't attend that morning's church service.

It comes as no surprise that the townspeople who witness this disaster attribute Ibarra's safety to the fact that he attended church that morning—after all, this is a community that willingly relinquishes its power to the friars. Unable to explain how Ibarra survived, the citizens of San Diego attribute the miracle to the very institution that seems to be plotting his death: the church.

CHAPTER 33: FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

Later that day, Elías visits Ibarra and informs him that he has enemies. Elías emphasizes that it's important that these enemies think Ibarra is unaware of their malicious intentions. Ibarra is surprised to hear he has foes, but Elías assures him that "enmity is the law of life." He explains that he met the yellow man the night before and that this man said mysterious things, statements that rose Elías's suspicions, especially because this man previously visited the **school**'s architect and asked to oversee the setting of the large stone, asking for very little money in exchange. When Ibarra went down into the trench, Elías held the yellow man in his place so that he couldn't escape, thereby killing him by putting him in the stone's way. Grateful as he is, Ibarra questions the morality of this, but Elías says, "I didn't kill him. I let the hand of God kill him."

When Elías says that he "let the hand of God" kill the "yellow" man, he justifies his actions in a religious manner. This is significant because it shows that even a criminal in Noli Me Tangere *still believes in God and sees religion as a positive force, even if the people currently running the church are corrupt. Indeed, Ibarra is similarly devoted to religion despite his bitterness toward people like Father Dámaso—this devotion can be seen in his earlier statement to the schoolmaster that he wants to "respect" the religion that brought education to the Philippines.*

Impressed by Elías' diction and his ideas, Ibarra asks who he is, wondering if he's a scholar. "I have had to believe a great deal in God because I have lost my belief in men," Elías replies. Before leaving, he says that he still owes Ibarra—because of the incident with the crocodile—and that he will be available whenever the young man desires his service.

Elías's assertion that he must believe in God because he can't believe in men illustrates that he too is isolated from his own country. Similar to how Tasio's intellectual isolation gives him a sense of freedom, Elías's distrust in other people instills in him religious faith—a faith perhaps more genuine than that of the priests themselves, who manipulate their religious offices to gain power.

CHAPTER 34: THE BANQUET

That night Ibarra hosts a large dinner. All of the town's most important people are in attendance, except for Father Dámaso. During the meal, Captain Tiago receives a telegram saying the Captain General will arrive to stay at his house that evening, and he rushes off to prepare. The friars exchange furtive glances at one another, clearly insulted that the Captain General isn't staying in the parish house. A number of other telegrams then come to the table, each one announcing the same news to the governor, the ensign, and the mayor. Again, the friars are insulted by having been excluded.

The list of people who receive the Captain General's telegram are all affiliated in some way or another with either San Diego's high society or the local government. A clear indication that the Captain General is weary of the friarocracy, this is yet another instance in which Rizal puts the church and the government at odds with one another.

At a certain point in the dinner, Father Dámaso arrives uninvited. He sits down just as the other guests raise a toast to Ibarra, celebrating the young man's project and referencing the wonderful architecture. Father Dámaso interrupts, saying, "You would have to be dumber than these indios, who put up their own houses, not to know how to build four walls and put a thatched roof on top, and then you have a **school**!" Ibarra tries to ignore this, and Dámaso's subsequent rant turns more pointedly insulting. "You know what an indio is like," he says later. "The minute he learns one thing, he's an expert. Every snot-nose goes to Europe." He then makes a reference to Don Rafael's death, and Ibarra jumps out of his chair, pinning the priest with one hand and holding a knife in the other.

Ibarra's rage is certainly the result of Dámaso's insulting remark about Don Rafael, but there is something else that fuels his anger: the friar's racism. Ibarra himself is a native Filipino (though his ancestry also includes Spanish blood), rendering him what Dámaso would call an "indio." As such, the racism that is deeply ingrained in a colonized country surfaces at Ibarra's own dinner party when Dámaso calls "indios" "dumb" and naïve. It's evident Dámaso is trying to assert his power over Ibarra by insulting his race and expecting him to take such harsh words in stride. Dámaso miscalculates, though, and his assumption that Ibarra will refrain from harming him because he's a priest is gravely incorrect.

"Get back!" Ibarra yells to the crowd as he holds down Father Dámaso. He assures his audience that he is of sound mind and body, and he tells everybody what Dámaso did to his father. As his anger reaches new heights, he raises the knife, but María Clara snatches it from his hand. He looks at her with crazed eyes before covering his face and fleeing the scene.

Once more, Rizal puts María Clara in a difficult position, choosing between Father Dámaso (who is close to her father) and Ibarra (who is her fiancé). Though she supports Ibarra, she sees that he is about to commit an act he won't be able to undo, and she uses the power she has to stop him, stepping into the tumultuous dynamic between the priest and her lover.

CHAPTER 35: COMMENTS

In the wake of Ibarra's violent outburst, the town's influential members discuss the situation amongst themselves, wondering how they can protect Ibarra, given all he and his father have done for San Diego. Don Filipo in particular hopes to do what he can to shield Ibarra from public harm, but the mayor steps in and says, "What can we do? What can the town do? Whatever happens, the friars are always right!" Don Filipo points out that this is the case because officials like themselves always *let* the friars have their way. The mayor reminds him that the church is "rich and united," while the government in the Philippines is "divided and poor." Exasperated, Don Filipo resigns as deputy mayor.

In this conversation, the mayor provides a reason for why the church has more power than the local government: it is "rich and united." Once again, readers see that financial concerns factor into the church's influence over the town, a fact that is unsurprising considering how obsessed the friars are with collecting indulgences and accusing people like Crispín of stealing, which amasses tremendous wealth for the friarocracy. Additionally, since anybody who disagrees with the friars is isolated from the community (like Tasio), the church is a powerful unified institution.

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CHAPTER 36: THE FIRST CLOUD

Ibarra is excommunicated from the church. Captain Tiago's first response is to forbid María Clara from speaking to Ibarra until this excommunication has been lifted. To make matters worse, Father Dámaso—María Clara's godfather—calls off the young lovers' engagement. Even Father Sibyla tells Tiago he must not let Ibarra into his home. Breaking the news to his daughter, Tiago tells María Clara that Father Dámaso has a relative who recently arrived from Spain whom he intends to betroth to her. Aunt Isabel pulls him aside and reprimands him for his callousness, but he asks her what she expects, considering the fact that the priests have told him he himself is in danger of excommunication. Stricken with grief, María Clara runs to her room just as the Captain General arrives.

The fear Tiago shows regarding the prospect of being excommunicated underlines how devastating the idea of social isolation is in San Diego. However, it's worth mentioning that Tiago is perhaps especially fearful of this isolation, since his primary concern is to stay in the friars' good graces. In order to do so, he quickly makes arrangements with Dámaso for María Clara to marry a new, more acceptable partner. As such, readers see how willing he is to abandon Ibarra—whom he previously showed such kindness—in order to yield to the church's power.

CHAPTER 37: HIS EXCELLENCY

The Captain General decides he'd like to speak to Ibarra. Nonetheless, he must first meet with the friars, whom he's reluctant to see. He makes them wait in the antechamber of Tiago's house (where he's staying), infuriating them with his lack of respect. When they finally do come in, he treats them brusquely, immediately asking which one is Fray Dámaso. They say Dámaso is absent because he isn't feeling well, and the Captain General insults the truant priest. When the friars try to broach the subject of Ibarra's excommunication, the Captain General waves them off, dismissing them before they can tell him their thoughts regarding the conflict.

Once again, the conflict between the church and state arises, as the Captain General refuses to respect the friars of San Diego. Of course, he's more capable of mistreating priests than other governmental officials—like the ensign—because he is the highest ranking Spanish officer in the Philippines. Although the church controls the day-to-day operations of the town, there's no disputing that the Spanish government is the overarching power structure. Unfortunately for the town, this governmental scorn for religious corruption only seems to manifest itself in personal interactions, rather than in tangible reforms.

Ibarra arrives to meet with the Captain General, who greets Ibarra very warmly, telling him that he is impressed and pleased by Ibarra's work to improve the town by selflessly building a **school**. He assures Ibarra that the "unpleasantness" with Father Dámaso will cease to be a problem, for he will speak with the archbishop and have the excommunication rescinded. "Here you can't laugh these things off in public like on the Peninsula or in the more sophisticated Europe," he tells the young man, warning him to be more careful. When Ibarra leaves, the Captain General summons the mayor and tells him to help Ibarra reach his "patriotic goals" and to make sure the young man doesn't face similar circumstances in the future. Meanwhile, Ibarra runs to María Clara's room, but she doesn't open the door. Instead, her friends tell him to meet her at the theater that night.

Although the Spanish government rarely interferes with the friars' domineering control over San Diego, in this moment the Captain General uses his authority to pull strings for Ibarra. It is telling that he says such disputes with the church can usually be "laugh[ed]" off in Spain, since this statement solidifies the notion that, unlike the local government (with its spineless officials like the mayor), the national government has little respect for the church's power-hungry ways.

CHAPTER 38: THE PROCESSION

Ibarra watches a long procession in the street, which culminates with the Virgin Mary, who is pulled in a cart by people dressed as ghosts. Amidst the celebrations, police officers beat back onlookers to make sure the streets remain clear. Ibarra is disgusted by the vigor these officers apply to the task, and he asks the mayor if "they hand out these blows as punishment for one's sins or merely because they enjoy it." The Captain General overhears this and agrees with Ibarra, saying it would be "better to ban" this kind of celebration.

Once again, the Captain General voices his skepticism regarding how much power the town of San Diego grants the church. When he says that it would be "better to ban" such processions, he aligns himself with the town's younger, liberal body, putting himself alongside people like Don Filipo, who resent the fact that the town must pay for spectacles that only benefit the church.

CHAPTER 39: DOÑA CONSOLACIÓN

While the town celebrates, the ensign's house remains dark. Inside, Doña Consolación sleeps in an armchair in unbecoming clothing. That morning, the ensign didn't allow her to go to church because she dresses "ridiculously" and because he didn't want to be seen with her. She, on the other hand, thinks she is more beautiful than even María Clara. Throughout the day, she grows steadily angrier as she remains pent up in the house, ordering the servants to close the windows so she can't hear the festivities.

Rizal's attention to Doña Consolación reinforces his interest in isolated characters. Consolación is a perfect example of the kind of disempowered person Rizal is interested in exploring—oppressed by even her own husband, she further cuts herself off from the world, a choice Rizal suggests leads only to anger and resentment.

After being arrested by the Civil Guard for touching the town's leper, Sisa was transported to the military barracks, where she now sings sad songs that Doña Consolación hears. "Get her up here immediately!" the ensign's wife orders her servants. When the madwoman arrives, Doña Consolación uses poor Tagalog to order Sisa to sing. This is a habit of hers—to appear more cultured, she pretends to not know her own native language, Tagalog. As such, she is pleased when Sisa doesn't understand her demand. She asks a servant in Spanish to translate her request into actual Tagalog. Sisa starts singing a song about vanity, though, and Doña Consolación can't stand to hear the words, erupting in perfect Tagalog: "No, don't sing!"

The nature of Consolación's isolation is unique because it manifests itself in two ways. First of all, she is a Filipina married to a Spaniard who is ashamed of her, so she's unable to connect with even her own husband. But she also further isolates herself by estranging herself from her fellow native Filipinos by pretending to have forgotten Tagalog. In this way, she strands herself between Spanish culture and Filipino culture, rendering it impossible to relate to anybody at all.

Embarrassed by having revealed herself as fluent in Tagalog, Doña Consolación orders Sisa to dance, calling the poor madwoman an "indio whore" and whipping her feet. She draws more and more blood from Sisa, taking a wicked pleasure in the deranged spectacle until the ensign comes in and puts his hand on the dancing woman's shoulder, allowing her to stop. He tells his servants to take Sisa away and to care for her wounds, for before this incident he had actually been treating her kindly, making sure she was well-fed and warm. When Sisa leaves, the couple starts fighting, shaking the entire house with their blows. Finally, Doña Consolación retreats into the bedroom and locks the door. To lure her out, the ensign pretends to leave but sneaks back inside. When Consolación asks the servants if he's actually gone out, they tell her he has, and the fighting continues.

Consolación's mistreatment of Sisa stems from her own insecurities. She recognizes that Sisa is—much like herself—a Filipina woman isolated from the community. It makes sense, then, that she beats Sisa because she resents this recognition. In other words, rather than showing Sisa compassion and camaraderie as a fellow estranged woman, she tries to assert herself over the poor woman. Of course, abusing a disempowered person is no way to gain power, and Consolación only ends up further isolating herself, since she's apparently unable to connect even with somebody who occupies a similar societal position as her.

CHAPTER 40: RIGHT AND MIGHT

At the theater that night, Don Filipo tells Tasio that the mayor hasn't accepted his resignation, instead suggesting that they postpone discussing the matter until after the festival. When the performance starts, Father Salví stares at María Clara with his sunken eyes. At a certain point, the priest approaches Don Filipo and implores him to eject Ibarra from the premises, but Filipo says there is no reason to do so—Ibarra isn't disrupting the peace. As a result, all of the priests leave. Just as Filipo is turning his attention back to the entertainment, two members of the Civil Guard approach him and ask him to stop the performance because the ensign and his wife "have had a fistfight and can't sleep." Don Filipo refuses to do so, saying that this event has been approved by the mayor. He then turns his back on the soldiers, who leave.

During this scene, Don Filipo feels the strain of being pulled between two systems of power: the church and the government. It's commendable, though, that he refuses to call off the performance, standing strong against both Father Salví and the Civil Guard members. This refusal to yield to the town's most powerful institutions shows the extent to which Filipo is committed to advocating for the townspeople, whom this performance is intended to please. It becomes clear in this moment that he cares more about representing his constituents than bending to the will of the corrupt people above him.

Suddenly, in the middle of the performance, people start shouting, "Bandits! Bandits" and, "Fire! Fire! Thieves!" because two Civil Guards have attacked the musicians in the orchestra in order to stop the event. As Don Filipo and his men quell the soldiers, the crowd curses the Civil Guard, proposing to burn the military barracks. Don Filipo begs Ibarra to help him dissuade the masses from this violent idea. Seeing Elías in the crowd, Ibarra asks if there's anything he can do, and Elías bounds into the mob to try.

The informal chain of command in this scene is worthy of attention. Filipo (a government official) asks Ibarra (an influential public figure) to do something to stop the chaos. In turn, Ibarra asks Elías (a wanted outlaw hiding from the authorities) to help. In the end, it is Elías who jumps at the task. This suggests that only somebody free of any governmental or public obligations is capable of affecting true change—a significant implication given Ibarra's desire to reform San Diego from within the preexisting structures of power.

Watching this chaotic scene, Father Salví thinks he sees Ibarra pick up María Clara and run away with her. Because he can't stand the idea that this might lead to some sort of sexual act, he sets off in the same direction, running through the danger. When he reaches María Clara's house, though, he sees her on the terrace with Aunt Isabel, who is tending to the young girl because she has—evidently—fallen ill. On his way back, he fantasizes about her sleeping body and many other salacious images. Rizal then includes a newspaper correspondent's summary of the hectic night, which gives "a thousand thanks" to "the opportune and active intervention" of Father Salví, who the correspondent claims rushed into the crowd despite the danger and brought peace to the streets using only his words.

The correspondent's mistake about Father Salví's motives for rushing into the crowd is indicative of the way the public in San Diego view friars. Indeed, the mere image of a priest rushing through a riot seems to bring comfort to onlookers, and this is because the church has cultivated the notion that friars represent salvation. In reality, of course, Salví's intentions are significantly less pure than the correspondent gives him credit for, a fact that Rizal uses to emphasize the discrepancy between what people think *religious figures represent in Filipino society and what the role they actually play.*

CHAPTER 41: TWO VISITORS

Late that night, Elías visits Ibarra, who is unable to sleep and is therefore awake and doing experiments in his study. Elías tells him that María Clara has fallen ill and then he explains that he was able to break up the crowd at the theater by speaking to the two people who were leading the revolt. They were two brothers whose father was killed by the Civil Guard, two brothers whom Elías happened to save one day from the same fate. As such, he asked them to calm down the angry crowd that night in the theater, and they obliged his request.

Elías's story about how he disbanded the riot builds upon the previously mentioned informal chain of command. The fact that two rather insignificant characters were able to stop the chaos suggests that lowly townspeople actually have a certain kind of power that higher officials—like Don Filipo or Father Salví—don't possess.

After Elías departs, Ibarra goes out into the street. He comes upon a man named Lucas with a large scar on his cheek. Lucas tells Ibarra that he is the yellow man's brother and asks Ibarra how much he intends to pay his brother's family to make up for his unfortunate death. Ibarra has little patience for this and says that Lucas should visit him the next day, for he is on his way to visit a sick person and can't stop to talk about such matters. "Ah," says Lucas, "and for a sick person you would forget the dead?" Ibarra ignores him and walks away, leaving him standing in the street, muttering, "I know you're the grandson of the man who put my father under the earth. The same blood flows in your veins."

Lucas's assertion that Ibarra is the "grandson of the man who put [his] father under the earth" is very strange—since Lucas is the "yellow" man's brother, readers know that his father is the same person as Ibarra's grandfather. This seems to be a discrepancy that Rizal fails to address. Nonetheless, if Lucas and Ibarra descend from the same family, they each represent two different ways of existing in Filipino society. Ibarra holds the power and influence of an affluent socialite, whereas Lucas remains disempowered, isolated, and bitter about the ways his family has been wronged. Of course, this bitterness calls to mind Tasio's advice that Ibarra set aside his notions of revenge if he wants to succeed.

CHAPTER 42: THE DE ESPADAÑAS

The festival finally over, Captain Tiago invites Doctor de Espadaña and his wife, Doña Victorina, to stay with them while the doctor treats María Clara, who is still ill. Doña Victorina is a Filipina social climber whom Captain Tiago used to love. She never accepted his advances, though, because she wanted to marry a Spaniard. Because of this, she aged past her prime before finally marrying Don Tiburcio de Espadaña, a Spaniard who arrived in the Philippines as a customs officer but was promptly dismissed. Don Tiburcio saw how badly Victorina wanted a Spanish husband and proposed to her to secure financial support. Once married, she encouraged him to pretend he was a doctor. He now sees very wealthy patients to give the impression that he is in high demand.

Once again, social relations come to the forefront of the novel. It seems that characters like Doña Victorina (and, for that matter, Captain Tiago) are desperately afraid of isolation, unlike people like Tasio, who embrace estrangement because of the intellectual freedom it affords them. Indeed, the de Espadañas are so obsessed with appearances that Don Tiburcio not only pretends to be a doctor, but pretends to be a doctor in high demand. As such, the couple cultivates an image of themselves as greatly sought after, and this image solidifies their sense of belonging in Filipino high society.

With the de Espadañas is Don Tiburcio's Spanish nephew, Linares, whom Victorina has convinced to travel to the Philippines in order to escort her to Spain. This trip never takes place, though, and Linares remains with the couple. At lunch, Linares asks after Father Dámaso and learns from Father Salví that the priest will be stopping by that afternoon. As Doña Victorina eagerly introduces María Clara to her nephew, Father Dámaso enters the room.

The de Espadañas—including Linares—immediately associate themselves with the church by asking after Father Dámaso. This is because they recognize that power in San Diego flows through the friars. In this way, they affiliate themselves with the town's most influential figures.

CHAPTER 43: PLANS

Father Dámaso goes straight to his goddaughter's bed and says, "María, my child, you cannot die!" with tearful eyes. Linares then gives Dámaso a letter from his brother-in-law, who Linares says is his godfather. He reads the letter, in which Linares's godfather asks Dámaso to find the young man a job and wife. Father Dámaso says it will be easy to find him a job, but ponders for a moment about where he might find Linares a wife. As he thinks, Father Salví watches from afar. "I didn't think it would be so difficult," Dámaso says to himself, "but it's the lesser of two evils." He then embraces Linares, saying, "Come here, kid, we're going to talk to Santiago."

When Father Dámaso takes Linares to speak with Captain Tiago, he does so primarily out of self-interest. Given the disputes he's had with Ibarra—and given his general dislike of Ibarra's family legacy—he's motivated to interfere with the young man's engagement to María Clara. In this moment, readers see how much of an opportunist Dámaso is as he manipulates the volatile circumstances surrounding Ibarra's reputation in order to ensure that his goddaughter marries Linares instead of the young philanthropist.

Having heard this exchange between Father Dámaso and Linares, Father Salví paces back and forth until a man greets him. It is Lucas, and he tells Salví that he is the brother of the man who died in the **school** trenches during the town's fiesta. Father Salví takes one step back, saying, "And?" before Lucas explains that Ibarra has insulted him by neglecting to pay for his brother's death. He asks for the priest's advice, but Salví lunges toward him and tells him to get lost. When Captain Tiago, Father Dámaso, and Linares come to see what the commotion is, Salví tells them that he was only setting right a beggar. He then sets off for the parish house.

Father Salví's harsh reception of Lucas is strange, since there's no reason he should react so strongly to the young man's story. This overreaction suggests that there's perhaps something suspicious going on in Salví's head, as his outburst seems an overcompensation for something Rizal hasn't yet revealed. Salví uses his authoritative power to silence the man in such a vehement manner that one can only assume that the scheming priest actually does *want to hear what Lucas has to say, but not in Dámaso, María Clara, or Tiago's earshot.*

CHAPTER 44: AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

María Clara's health slowly improves, much to the surprise of Doctor de Espadaña, who has prescribed a simple marshmallow syrup regimen. Father Salví attributes this improvement to religion, for he took María Clara's confession. As he debates with Doña Victorina about the value of religion over science, María Clara's friends urge her to take one more pill, which they store in a glass tube secretly sent to them by Ibarra. Aunt Isabel enters the room and tells her to prepare to give another confession. As her friends leave, she whispers, "Tell him to forget about me" into Sinang's ear.

Father Salví and Doña Victorina's argument about religion and science speaks to their desire to portray their own affiliations as powerful. Salví, on the one hand, is a priest and therefore wants people to think that María Clara has improved because of his piety. Victoriña, on the other hand, wants people to think her husband's medical care is superior to Salví's religious efforts.

Aunt Isabel prepares María Clara for confession by reading her the ten commandments. María Clara weeps at first, heaving especially large sobs during the fifth commandment. But her woe falls away for the last five, which puzzles her aunt. When Father Salví comes and takes the young woman's confession, he looks deeply into her eyes. Upon leaving, he is covered in sweat, looking like *he* was the one who "had confessed, and did not deserve absolution."

The fifth commandment is "Honour thy father and thy mother." Bearing this in mind, María Clara weeps upon hearing this commandment because she feels pressured by Captain Tiago—and perhaps by the memory of her mother—to honor her family by abandoning Ibarra and consenting to marry Linares.

CHAPTER 45: THE PERSECUTED

In a cave set deep in the forest, Elías meets with a haggard old man named Captain Pablo. Pablo has with him a band of armed men with dirt on their skin and torn clothing. Elías is sorry to see that this friend of his is living in such unfortunate circumstances and tells him that he's planning to travel north to live "among the free, pagan tribes." He invites Pablo to come along. "I'll be your son, since you've lost your own, and I, who have no family, will find a father in you."

Until this scene, Rizal has not mentioned Elías's affiliation with Captain Pablo. Nonetheless, it's unsurprising that Elías would have relations with a set of men who are clearly living at the fringes of Filipino society. Indeed, Pablo's group of bandits have clearly been isolated from their communities, a fact that surely resonates with Elías, who is himself unwelcome in places like San Diego.

Captain Pablo refuses Elías's offer, saying that he is like a "tree shorn of its limbs," destined to be a fugitive. He briefly recounts his story, saying that a minister raped his daughter. Because the minister feared that Pablo's two sons would take revenge, he framed one of them as a robber and tortured him to death. The other son was arrested by the Civil Guard for not carrying identity papers and treated so badly that he committed suicide. Now, Pablo explains, he has assembled a number of similarly disempowered and abused citizens who are seeking revenge. Elías points out that the rebellion Pablo proposes will have adverse effects on innocent townspeople, since the church and government will respond by harming their own citizens.

For perhaps the first time in the novel, the focus truly centers around the nature of revolution and reform. Elías's point of view shows his compassion and his understanding that the current state of Filipino politics and social relations is too volatile to simply overthrow using violence, which will certainly lead to unfortunate citizen casualties. His realistic outlook is important to remember as the novel progresses, as it shows an understanding that—as Tasio has already made clear—revenge for revenge's sake leads only to more despair.

Elías tries to dissuade Pablo from launching a rebellion by telling him about Ibarra, whom he thinks he can convince to represent the disaffected people that the current systems of power have treated so poorly. He suggests that perhaps Ibarra can speak with the Captain General about these difficult matters. Although Pablo appears unconvinced, Elías persuades him to at least refrain from launching a bloody campaign until Ibarra has heard their case. He tells him to send somebody to the beach in San Diego in four days to learn whether or not Ibarra has agreed to help.

By convincing Pablo to let him try to convince Ibarra to represent the disenchanted bandits, Elías further establishes the notion that any revolutionary measures must be diplomatic. Rather than using brute force to take revenge upon the country's structures of power, Elías understands that violent rebellion will only be effective if it is tempered with levelheaded negotiation.

CHAPTER 46: THE COCKPIT

The two brothers whose father died at the hands of the Civil Guard—the ones who helped Elías stop the riot at the theater—visit the gambling house, where the townspeople bet on cockfights. While people like Captain Tiago and Captain Basilio throw their money around, the brothers—Társilo and Bruno—speak with Lucas, who tells them he will give them thirty pesos apiece if they organize an attack on the barracks. He tells them this money is coming from Ibarra, who will come the following night to deliver weapons. In two days, Lucas says, he himself will meet them in the cemetery to give them their final instructions.

To understand what's driving Lucas in his schemes, it's important to remember that he very recently begged Ibarra for money and that Ibarra refused to give him any. This begs the question: where did Lucas get the money to pay people to attack the barracks? The last time Lucas appeared in the novel, he was speaking with Father Salví, who seemed remarkably affected by the young man's words. Consequently, readers have cause to wonder if perhaps Lucas is acting on behalf of the powerful and conniving Father Salví.

CHAPTER 47: TWO LADIES

While the men of San Diego place their bets in the gambling house, Doña Victorina walks through town dressed in ribbons and flowers. She walks with her husband, who fails to stand up for her when passing Civil Guard officers don't take off their hats for her on their way by. She becomes even angrier when they come upon the ensign and he doesn't compliment her dress. As they go by the ensign's house, they see Doña Consolación smoking a cigar in the window. Victorina takes offense that the woman is staring at her. She asks if Consolación is jealous of her, and the two women launch into a verbal fight that quickly escalates into a screaming match for all to hear.

Doña Consolación and Doña Victorina are both Filipina women married to Spaniards who they'd like to think are important and powerful. They most likely recognize elements of themselves in one another—especially regarding the fact that they are Filipina, not Spanish—and thus they fight with one another to prove that they are different. In this way, readers see that social class and culture in Noli Me Tangere *often hinges—at least in the characters' minds—upon a person's affiliations.*

When the fight ends, Doña Victorina tells Don Tiburcio that he will have to challenge the ensign to a duel in order to defend her honor. When he doesn't agree, she decides that Linares will be the one to take on the ensign. Upon learning this, Linares objects, but Victorina says, "[…] if you don't I'll tell Don Santiago that everything you told him is a lie, I'll tell him—" At this point, Linares interrupts, telling her not to be "imprudent." Captain Tiago then enters, and Victorina tells him that Linares is going to challenge the ensign, ordering him not to let the young man marry his daughter if he fails to do so. That night, the de Espadañas set off for Manila, leaving Linares behind to defend Doña Victorina's name.

When Doña Victorina says that she will tell Tiago that Linares has been lying to him, she reveals that the young man—much like his uncle, the fake doctor—is most likely a fraud who is taking advantage of the remoteness of the Philippines from Spain. In other words, Linares has lied to Captain Tiago about who he is, and because the Philippines is geographically isolated from Spain, nobody—except Victoriña—can fact-check him. In this way, Rizal offers a new form of isolation, this time showing how Spaniards benefit from the geographical seclusion brought about by colonialism.

CHAPTER 48: AN ENIGMA

Ibarra visits María Clara to tell her that his excommunication has been lifted. When he arrives, he finds her with Linares. Confused, he says he'll come back another time, noting a strange look of hesitancy on his lover's face. He wanders into the street and winds his way to the **school**, where construction continues to thrive at a good pace. There, among the workers, he spots Elías, who tells him to meet him by the lakeside to discuss several important matters.

It's notable that, despite Ibarra's excommunication, construction has continued on the school. This is perhaps thanks to Tasio's advice that Ibarra gain approval for the project from the town's priests and government officials—because they have invested themselves in the endeavor, they don't stop its progress during the young man's excommunication.

CHAPTER 49: VOICE OF THE PERSECUTED

Taking Ibarra out in his boat, Elías explains the plight of Captain Pablo and his followers. This turns into a discussion about reform, one in which Elías advocates for a total upheaval of the government. Ibarra, on the other hand, argues for a tactic that seeks to bring about change by working within the already established systems of power. He points out that "weakening the Civil Guard would only endanger the people's security," but Elías says that the Civil Guard does little other than terrorize the very people it claims to protect. Ibarra admits that their country is flawed, but he voices his faith in the prevailing "institution." In response, Elías says that the government makes criminals out of honest citizens by ruining their lives and forcing them resort to crime.

Elías's claim that the government turns good citizens into criminals calls to mind what the young Crispín said in the bell tower when talking about the accusations that he stole money from the church; the boy told his brother that, because of how badly the sextons were punishing him, he wished he had *actually stolen. At least that way he could pay back the sums and avoid further punishment. Of course, Ibarra's optimism obscures his ability to see the truth in Elías' argument, and his faith in religion and government renders him unable to acknowledge that it is difficult to address corruption using the same means by which that corruption flourishes.*

Ibarra and Elías's political conversation continues. Elías succeeds somewhat in convincing Ibarra, but not completely. Rather, Ibarra decides to think these matters over more carefully before accepting to write to his influential friends in Madrid, who may be able to help improve the situation. Despite his agreement to think things over, though, he doubles down on his belief that the current institution benefits the Philippines, saying, "Have the Filipinos forgotten what they owe these orders? Have they forgotten the immense debt of gratitude they owe those who showed them the error of their ways and gave them faith […]?" He says that he thinks the friars are capable of helping the country, a statement that agitates Elías, who concludes that the reason Ibarra doesn't understand is because he has never experienced true persecution.

When Ibarra insists that Spanish colonialist powers "showed" Filipinos the "error of their ways," he demonstrates the extent to which he has internalized the oppressive discourse promoted by colonialism, a practice that uses religion to justify greed and subjugation. Elías points this out by saying that Ibarra has never experienced persecution for himself, a statement that is more or less true, considering that Ibarra has lived a privileged life in Spain for the past seven years. Given the amount of opportunity Ibarra has been afforded, it's no wonder that he doesn't see the need for true revolution.

Ibarra sees Elías's frustration, acknowledging his friend's "suffering" and utter discontent. Elías says that his misgivings about the country arise out of his personal experiences. "Perhaps knowing them will change my thoughts," Ibarra says, encouraging his friend to tell him his life story in order to better express the origins of his views.

One of the qualities that saves Ibarra from total ignorance is his willingness to remain open-minded in discussions regarding reform and revolution. Perhaps recognizing that his privilege has lent him a certain kind of unjustified power over his friend, he goes out of his way to consider Elías's point of view, rendering him an empathetic character.

CHAPTER 50: ELÍAS'S FAMILY

Elías tells Ibarra that sixty years ago his (Elías's) grandfather worked for a Spanish merchant in Manila. One night, the warehouse catches on fire, and the merchant blames Elías's grandfather, who is subsequently dragged behind a horse in public as punishment. Everybody abandons him except for his wife, who is pregnant and starts begging on the family's behalf, though nobody contributes any money. To make up for this, she starts working as a prostitute. Elías's grandfather goes into the mountains with his wife and son, where the wife gives birth to a baby who dies soon thereafter. Unable to take the grief, the disgraced man hangs himself in front of his living son, who watches his father's body decay and tries to care for his ailing mother.

Once again, the oppressive power of colonialism rears its head, this time in the form of the Spanish merchant who doesn't think twice about blaming his own misfortune on an innocent Filipino. In this way, Rizal illustrates once more how Spaniards often manipulate less fortunate native Filipinos.

Elías continues his story. Before long, he says, Manila authorities smell his grandfather's decomposing body and arrest his wife for not reporting the death. She is pregnant once again, so they wait until she gives birth to whip her. They then release her into the mountains again, and she flees with her two children to a nearby province where the small family lives in the woods like animals, "hating and hated." The older boy soon becomes a notorious bandit. The younger lives peacefully with his mother. One day not long after his older brother has been caught and persecuted for his crimes, the boy finds his mother dead underneath a tree, her stricken gaze fixed on a basket hanging in the overhanging tree—a basket containing his older brother's bloody head.

Elías's tragic and gruesome story demonstrates yet again what isolation and estrangement from society often leads to in Noli Me Tangere: *misery and death. Furthermore, the older brother's decision to become a bandit recalls the previous idea—as outlined by Elías—that the oppressive government often turns people into criminals by treating them as such. These accusations become self-fulfilling prophecies that lead to a cycle of forced subversion and criminality.*

The young boy in Elías's story runs away from his dead mother and brother, finally reaching a town where nobody knows of his family's misfortune. There, he works hard for a rich man and saves money. During this time, he meets a young woman and falls in love. When the two try to marry, though, officials ask for his identification papers, and his past comes to light. His lover's father—a wealthy man—takes him to trial and he is eventually sent to prison. Meanwhile, his lover gives birth to twins, whom her father raises secretly. One of these twins is Elías, and his grandfather—the rich man—tells him his father is dead. The twins live a good life full of many riches.

Elías's wealthy upbringing is important because it means he has not always lived a life of isolation from Filipino society. In fact, his affluent childhood doesn't seem so different from Ibarra's, a fact that is significant because it implies that Elías—having experienced life on both sides of the economic line—is capable of relating to Ibarra, which means he is even more capable of guiding the young philanthropist than previously thought.

One day Elías insults a distant relative, who retaliates by revealing the truth about his family history. In fact, it appears Elías's father has been working in his grandfather's house as a servant for the boy's entire childhood. The relative finds this out and makes it known, and Elías renounces his family inheritance. His grandfather dies out of shame, and his twin sister loses her fiancé to another woman. This same sister disappears one day, and Elías learns that she drowned in a nearby lake with a knife shoved into her chest. Since this discovery, he has been wandering the Philippines as people slander his name and fear him.

Elías's story about his fall from society's good graces illustrates how much importance Filipino culture (under Spanish colonization) places on wealth and reputation. It's worth noting that Elías's real father was never a bandit—he was simply a poor man. That the revelation of this secret ruins Elías's life by estranging him from society just goes to show how superficial and arbitrary the structures of power are in this community.

Having heard his friend's story, Ibarra says he understands why Elías feels the way he does about corruption and criminality. But he also challenges Elías's notion that "justice should seek goodness to recompense virtue and to reeducate criminals," saying that this idea is "utopian" and unrealistic. He says that he refuses to be the leader of a rebellion, asserting that it is wrong to force change upon a government body. Rather, he wants to effect change through other means. "I want good for [my country]," he says, "which is why I built a **school**. I seek it in education, for forward progress. Without light, there is no path." Elías replies by saying that "without struggle there is no freedom," but Ibarra holds fast to his point of view.

In this conversation, Ibarra and Elías represent two differing ideologies regarding how to effect change. Ibarra wants to improve his country using education, a fact that illustrates his desire to make use of whatever means he already has available to him in society. Though he had to build a school, he sees this as an organic step in the country's "forward progress." As such, he works within the nation's preexisting framework to develop new resources. Elías, on the other hand, isn't interested in this kind of progress—rather, he asserts that freedom inherently demands a "struggle" against power.

After Ibarra gets off the boat, Elías rows to a different beach, where he meets one of Captain Pablo's men. "What should I tell the captain?" the man asks. "Tell him that Elías, if he doesn't die before, will make good on his word," Elías says.

When Elías tells Captain Pablo's representative that he will "make good on his word" (despite the fact that Ibarra has refused to align with the bandits), he implies that he's confident that Ibarra will eventually change his mind and join the revolution.

CHAPTER 51: CHANGES

Back in town, Linares frets about Doña Victorina's demand that he duel with the ensign. After reading a letter from Victorina—very poorly spelled and full of absurd claims—he wonders who will support him in the fight, asking himself, "Who will be my second? The priest? Captain Tiago? Damn the day I listen to advice from that jerk! Who made me put on airs, bluster, make up fairy stories?"

Linares's short monologue is worthy of attention because it suggests that Captain Tiago is aware of the young man's fraudulent identity. Indeed, when Linares asks himself the rhetorical question, "Who made me put on airs, bluster, make up fairy stories?" he implies that Tiago actually encouraged *that he lie to Dámaso about his background. In turn, this suggests that Tiago has actively been manipulating the people around him in order to ensure that his daughter marries whomever is considered the most well-respected suitor.*

As Linares worries, Father Salví arrives at the same time as Captain Tiago. The friar tells Tiago that Ibarra's excommunication has been officially lifted, adding that the young man "grows" on him, though he didn't like him at first. He says that he thinks Ibarra will even be able to convince Father Dámaso to allow his marriage to María Clara—if, that is, he asks for Dámaso's forgiveness. When Captain Tiago asks what will happen if Dámaso doesn't grant Ibarra his forgiveness, Father Salví says, "Well…María Clara will see…Father Dámaso is her father…spiritually, that is. But I think they will come to an understanding."

Considering Salví's jealousy over Ibarra's relationship to María Clara—combined with the fact that he was suspiciously nervous just before the "yellow" man tried to kill Ibarra—it's strange that he now happily endorses the prospect of the young lovers' marriage. As such, it seems likely that something is at play behind the scenes, though Rizal allows this odd discrepancy in Salví's behavior to pass without further comment.

Ibarra arrives at Captain Tiago's house and speaks in private with Sinang, who tells him that María Clara—who has just overheard Father Salví talking with Tiago—says it would be best if he forgot about her. She also tells him that Captain Tiago and Father Dámaso want María Clara to marry Linares, but she hasn't yet decided. At Ibarra's request, Sinang agrees to arrange a meeting between him and María Clara.

In keeping with Salví's mysterious change of heart, María Clara's insistence that Ibarra forget about her suggests that something ominous is in the works. Although she loves Ibarra, María Clara seems to think she must protect him by distancing herself.

CHAPTER 52: THE CARD OF THE DEAD AND THE SHADOWS

That night the moon is blotted out by clouds. Three figures speak inside the cemetery, standing behind the gate. Two of them are identifiable as Társilo and Bruno by remarks they make about their father, who has been murdered by the Civil Guard. The third person answers their questions about the impending attack, assuring them that Ibarra has organized twenty people to take part in the raid. The three figures go quiet upon seeing a shadow approach the cemetery gate. This new person unhooks the gate while periodically looking behind himself, as if he's been followed. Sure enough, another, larger shadow trails behind, slipping into darkness every time the other looks over his shoulder. The first figure opens the gate and comes upon the three people, telling them, "Scatter! I've been followed! You'll have your arms tomorrow and it will be at night. The signal is: 'Long live Don Crisóstomo!' Now, go!"

Again, Rizal slowly reveals the plot against Ibarra, in which the young protagonist is framed to look like the ringleader of a violent uprising against the town of San Diego. By telling Társilo and Bruno that Ibarra is at the center of this plan, the real mastermind—at this point unnamed—ensures that Ibarra's name and reputation is negatively affected by the attack.

The first three figures disperse, but the new arrival stays, hiding in a hollow space underneath the cemetery gate and waiting to see who's following him. Just then, rain starts to fall and the follower escapes the droplets by stepping under the gate. The two men find one another and make up stories about what they're doing, ultimately both deciding to say they've come to the cemetery at night to play a card game against the dead. One of them points out that the spirits won't appear if there are two living souls present, so the men decide to play a card game to decide who will stay and who will leave. They light a match, and though they don't recognize one another, Rizal identifies the first figure as Lucas and the second as Elías. Elías loses the game and leaves.

Lucas's involvement in the plan to attack the military barracks once again reminds readers of Father Salví's potential affiliation with the entire ordeal, since Salví's suspicious behavior was evident when Lucas first came to him complaining of Ibarra's unwillingness to pay for his brother's death. In this way, the town's most powerful man is vicariously implicated in this insurrection.

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Two Civil Guard members patrol the dark and rainy streets, talking with one another to pass the time. "They say Elías is in town," one remarks. "The ensign says the one who grabs him will get no whippings for three months." They then come upon Lucas and question him. One of the guards notices Lucas's scar and asks the other if Elías is said to have a similar facial marking. They let him go and then find Elías walking the streets only minutes later. They seize him and ask him where he's going. "After a man who beat up and threatened my brother," Elías says. "He has a scar on his face and his name is Elías…" The guards look at one another in surprise before rushing off to where they last saw Lucas.

In this scene, Elías is able to use his own isolation to his advantage. Indeed, he has been so estranged from society that nobody even knows what he looks like. This enables him to trick the Civil Guard members into pursuing Lucas while he sets off on his own.

CHAPTER 53: IL BUON DÍ SI CONOSCE DA MATTINA

The next morning, while the town whispers about having seen shadows in the cemetery the night before, Don Filipo speaks with Tasio, who has fallen gravely ill. Tasio criticizes him for having tendered his resignation to the mayor, saying that now that the young man is fighting against the Civil Guard, it's unwise to relinquish whatever authoritative power he might have. Filipo points out that the mayor is still corrupt, though, as evidenced by the fact that he freed a handful of Civil Guard members whom he—Filipo—had imprisoned for having started the riot in the theater. Tasio encourages him to reframe his ideas, saying that the primary fight is not against the mayor but against the abuse of power. The two then debate the nature of progress, about which Tasio says, "One can be progressive in three ways: forward, to the side, and backward."

Tasio's idea that "one can be progressive in three ways" relates to Elías and Ibarra's differing views about revolution and reform. Elías's wish to start anew can be thought of as "forward," since he wants to launch the country into completely new modes of governance. Ibarra's desire to reform the current system from within its own context, on the other hand, represents a lateral approach to progress, one that is less likely to bring about actual change but still proposes alternate or new ideas. Finally, the rule of the friarocracy represents "backward" progress, since the church seeks to negate governmental influence, thereby trying to rule the country with religion, as was the practice in ancient times.

CHAPTER 54: QUID QUID LATET

Father Salví rushes to the ensign's house and tells him that the town is in great danger. Before revealing the nature of this danger, he says, "You'll again see how important clerics are." He then says that he has discovered "a major conspiracy." According to him, a woman came to confession and told him that at eight o'clock a band of rebels will overtake the barracks, attack the parish house, and kill all the town's Spaniards. Because, he claims, this was told to him in a confession, he can't tell the ensign the name of his informant or how she knew about the conspiracy. The ensign snaps to attention, asking what he should do. Salví tells him to quietly ready his soldiers so that their enemies don't think they know about the impending attack.

At this point, it becomes clear that Father Salví is behind the plan to frame Ibarra. This is made apparent by the way he takes advantage of the opportunity to emphasize his own importance, telling the ensign that he will "again see how important clerics [religious officials] are." The most crucial word in this sentence is the word "again," for it implies that the church is constantly saving the government and town from disaster. In this way, Salví inflates his own power, framing himself as indispensable.

In exchange for this information, Father Salví requests that the ensign let it be known that he—Salví—was the one to uncover the plot. The ensign assures him he'll do so, saying, "I'll let it be known and maybe you'll end up with a miter," smiling derisively at his cordial enemy.

A "miter" is the kind of hat Bishops wear. The ensign's joke, then, indicates that he recognizes that Salví is using his knowledge of the impending attack as a way of rising in power in the church.

Meanwhile, Elías runs to Ibarra's house and warns him about the coming attack. He tells him that there is a conspiracy against him, urging him to burn all of his papers and correspondences, since they're liable to contain words that could be used against him in court. Elías starts helping Ibarra collect all of his things so that he can flee San Diego. In doing so, he finds a piece of paper with the name of the Spanish merchant who disgraced Elías's grandfather. Elías asks why Ibarra has this man's name written on a piece of paper, and Ibarra says that he was his great-grandfather. Enraged, Elías runs to Ibarra's weapon collection. About to charge Ibarra with daggers, Elías comes to his senses, saying, "What was I about to do?" before running out of the house.

It's important to remember in this scene that Elías has previously sworn to do anything he can to help Ibarra. As such, he has devoted himself to the very family that ruined his life. This perfectly mirrors the nature of reform in the Spanish Philippines; in the same way that Elías has sworn himself to his own enemy, true revolution requires a person to attack his own beloved country. In keeping with this idea, Rizal portrays loyalty as deeply complicated.

CHAPTER 55: CATASTROPHE

In Captain Tiago's house, Father Salví paces nervously back and forth, not wanting to leave. María Clara and Sinang whisper, acknowledging that he is clearly in love. Ibarra then arrives dressed in mourning, and shots begin to ring out in the street. "Bandits! Bandits!" yell people outside as chaos takes hold of the town. Ibarra runs into the street and to the barracks, where guards have captured the rebels. He goes to the court, and the ensign declares that nobody is permitted to leave town that night. Ibarra makes haste to his home and goes into his study, where he puts his belongings in a pile to be burned. Before he can light this pile on fire, though, guards arrive and arrest him, and he goes with them without protest.

Ibarra's willingness to allow the guards to whisk him away without protest shows his understanding of the fact that there is very little a civilian can do in the face of the colonial government, even if that person is—like him—rich and influential. It also reflects his overall reluctance to ever resist authorities in an overt manner.

After leaving Ibarra's house in a fit, Elías ran to the forests and mountains, delirious and enraged. He saw visions of his grandfather and his sister's ghost rising above the lake. Wading into the water now, he approaches his sister's apparition. When he's chest-deep, a large explosion yanks him from his revelries. Realizing suddenly that he's in the lake, he runs to shore and back to San Diego. He goes to Ibarra's house and burns the pile of papers and belongings that Ibarra himself didn't have time to destroy. Just as he's doing so, soldiers from the Civil Guard arrive to confiscate these items. Before they can do so, though, the house goes up in flames and Elías escapes out the window.

Once again, Elías is something of a guardian angel to Ibarra. Given that he recently learned Ibarra's great-grandfather caused his own family generations of pain, his loyalty to Ibarra is commendable. Ultimately, his devotion to Ibarra demonstrates that Elías understands the importance of casting aside all ideas of revenge, an idea Tasio has already depicted as a crucial mentality to adopt in times of oppression and crisis. This worldview suggests that a productive and conscientious citizen who wants to succeed in Filipino society must first and foremost act according to what he thinks will benefit his country.

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CHAPTER 56: WHAT IS SAID AND WHAT IS BELIEVED

Gossip and rumors fly throughout San Diego. Eventually the townspeople learn that Don Filipo and Ibarra have been imprisoned. Bruno—one of the brothers whom Lucas convinced to sack the barracks—has confessed that Ibarra organized the revolt in order to get revenge on Captain Tiago for calling off his wedding and engaging María Clara to Linares. Elsewhere, Lucas's body is found hanging from an apple tree. Disguised as a peasant, Elías inspects Lucas's body and sees the seeds of a certain kind of tree stuck to the man's collar. He then goes to the church and sees the chief sexton, noting that the same seeds are attached to his shirtsleeves.

The seeds attached to the chief sexton's shirt solidify the notion that the church ordered this attack, for it's clear Father Salví doesn't want to risk the possibility that Lucas may confess that he—Salví—took part in the organization of the plan. As such, Salví betrays Lucas by having him killed by the chief sexton, an act that further illustrates the friarocracy's corruption—rather than helping the people who act on its behalf, the church ruthlessly kills its own agents.

CHAPTER 57: VAE VICTIS

In the courthouse, Doña Consolación is delighted to witness the interrogation and torture of the prisoners. The court—which includes the ensign, the mayor, and Father Salví—brings out Társilo for questioning. He says that Ibarra never contacted him or his peers, insisting that the only reason he attacked was to revenge his father's death. Refusing to change his story, Társilo accepts multiple beatings, eventually looking up to see Doña Consolación, at whom he laughs and says: "I've never seen an uglier woman." The ensign then sets to work beating him severely before lowering him into a well to drown.

Although Társilo's honesty when he says that Ibarra wasn't implicated in the barracks attack is honorable, his fate serves as an example of what happens to somebody who allows himself to be motivated by revenge. Indeed, Rizal demonstrates that this man's determination to avenge his father's death leads only to a violent and painful death. This, of course, aligns with Tasio's advice to Ibarra to forget all ideas of revenge while working on building the school.

CHAPTER 58: THE ACCURSED

The ensign marches the prisoners, including Ibarra, into the streets. The townspeople insult Ibarra, calling him a heretic and hurling stones at him. Father Salví pretends to be sick and closes himself away in the parish house. Those who once supported Ibarra stand passively as the crowd rages. As the procession winds past Ibarra's smoldering house, he feels utterly hopeless, abandoned by his country, lover, and friends. Meanwhile, Old Tasio watches the procession from a hill. He observes the crowd until it disappears into the distance. After standing idle for some time, he turns around and sets off for home. He is found the next day, deceased "on the very threshold of his solitary refuge."

Tasio's death is yet another reminder that, though certain kinds of isolation may at first seem to liberate free-thinkers, it renders their actions futile and leads only to inglorious death. This is evident in the way Rizal phrases Tasio's death, saying that he dies "on the very threshold of his solitary refuge." Indeed, a life's worth of isolation ends for Tasio before he can even attain any sort of "refuge"—he perishes on the "threshold" of safety and comfort, a fact that symbolizes his failure to ever reach a point where he can benefit from his solitary ways.

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CHAPTER 59: HOMELAND AND INTERESTS

In parish houses around the Philippines, friars speak about the news of Ibarra's supposed uprising, using it as an excuse to throw celebratory religious feasts. "Long live Salví!" they chant. Meanwhile, Captain Tinong laments the downfall of his friend Tiago, realizing that he must sever all association with the man because of Tiago's affiliation with Ibarra. Similar conversations circulate throughout the high society, and it becomes clear that the Captain General has backed away from his good relationship with Ibarra.

Again, social affiliations prove tenuous and highly superficial in the Philippines, where priests, government officials, and the high society only associate with people who appear to be well-respected. Because everybody worries so much about their reputations—which translate to power—they are eager to sever their ties with the newly disgraced Ibarra, leaving the young man to his own devices in a system rigged against freethinkers like himself.

CHAPTER 60: MARÍA CLARA WEDS

As for Captain Tiago, he is happy and relieved to see that nobody pays him much attention during these turbulent times. Unlike many of his friends—whom the Captain General orders to live in government buildings for several days—he is permitted to remain in his home. While his acquaintances undergo close investigations, he is left alone. Rumors circulate that Ibarra will be hanged. The de Espadañas return to visit Tiago again, and Doña Victorina has adopted a new way of speaking, an imitation of a southern Spanish person's lisp—she takes this affectation so far that it's difficult to understand what she's saying.

Captain Tiago clearly owes his immunity to the fact that he immediately distanced himself—and his daughter—from Ibarra. Indeed, his decision to pair María Clara with Linares instead of Ibarra protected him from the fickle prejudices running throughout the community—prejudices that can quickly go from celebrating a person's respectability to slandering that same person's honor.

While Doña Victorina and Captain Tiago discuss plans for María Clara and Linares's wedding, Aunt Isabel comforts her niece, telling her that marrying Linares will grant her all kinds of privileges. "Everyone will envy us, they'll die of envy!" she says. The next night, Tiago hosts a party, where the ensign brags about the battle, portraying himself as a great hero. Indeed, he has been promoted to a commanding lieutenant. Turning his attention to Father Salví, the ensign says that he's heard the priest is leaving San Diego. Salví acknowledges this, saying there's nothing left for him in this town. The ensign then brags that he too is leaving because the government has called upon him to eradicate subversion in other provinces.

Aunt Isabel's statement that the town will envy María Clara and her family if she marries Linares reveals what really matters to her: that she be coveted for her position in high society. Once again, Rizal demonstrates that the citizens of San Diego are chiefly interested in superficial notions of power and social currency. In keeping with this, the ensign brags about his bravery despite the fact that he hardly had do anything to stop the attack (since he knew of it ahead of time). He therefore invests himself not in any form of actual bravery, but in his ability to seem as if he is brave—a blatantly superficial thing to be proud of.

Overhearing a conversation about Ibarra's fate, the lieutenant Señor Guevara angrily juts in, saying that it is only because Ibarra trusted the wrong people that he landed in such unfavorable and compromising circumstances. He casts a stern gaze at Father Salví, who turns away. Hearing this, María Clara drops the flowers she's holding and goes perfectly still. Guevara continues by saying that the defense attorney in Ibarra's case told him that "apart from several ambiguous lines [Ibarra] wrote to a woman before leaving for Spain, lines in which the prosecutor saw the planning and a threat against the government, and which he acknowledged were his, they couldn't accuse him of anything."

The letter used to condemn Ibarra is the note he sent to María Clara upon leaving for Europe (the one she read aloud to him on the terrace earlier in the novel). This is made clear by the fact that María drops the flowers upon hearing Guevara's remark. The lines the prosecutor claimed show Ibarra was "planning" a "threat against the government" most likely come from the portion of the letter in which he writes about what his father said to him, namely that he must "sacrifice today for a useful tomorrow," a phrase that can be construed as urging the young man to "plan" something secretive (given its forward-looking sentiment).

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One of the people speaking with Señor Guevara brings up the point that one of the bandits said Ibarra was the ringleader of the rebels. Guevara dismisses this, saying that the defense attorney later "negated all that" since at a different time the same bandit said he only ever spoke to Lucas. And since Lucas was an old enemy of Ibarra's, Guevara argues, it's obvious Ibarra was framed. One of the people listening to Guevara asks him about the incriminating letter, wondering how it made its way into the hands of the prosecutors in court. At this, Guevara falls silent and looks meaningfully at Father Salví before leaving.

Yet again, Father Salví seems to have somehow manipulated his powerful station in order to harm Ibarra, though Rizal does not yet make clear how the priest got ahold of this incriminating letter. Regardless, his obvious involvement once more places the church at the center of an ominous situation, thereby reminding readers of the institution's corruption and its ability to trick the government into acting on its behalf.

On his way out, Señor Guevara stoops to whisper to María Clara, who has been listening to his conversation about Ibarra. "You did well to give them the letter," he says, "it will assure you a peaceful future." When he's gone, María Clara retreats to her room, feeling ill and curling up on the floor, where she says "Mother, Mother, Mother!" over and over.

In this moment, María Clara shows deep remorse for having betrayed Ibarra by parting with his letter. Realizing that she has nobody to turn to in this time of sorrow and grief, she calls out to her dead mother, a fact that highlights the fact that the people surrounding her—who claim to have her best interest in mind—offer little in the way of true help or comfort.

Finally the party ends and the house goes quiet. María Clara opens her eyes and walks onto her private patio. Perched against the railing, she sees a boat docking below. A man emerges and climbs up the patio, and she sees that it is Ibarra. Elías has freed him from prison and now he's come to say goodbye. Before he leaves, though, María Clara tries to explain why she parted with his letter—which was used to find him guilty in court—but he isn't interested in listening. Still, she persists, saying: "You hate me and your hatred will embitter me until I die." Insisting that she'll always love him, she explains, "On one of the painful nights of my suffering, a man revealed the name of my real father to me and then forbade my love for you…unless my real father would forgive the injury you have done to him."

By saying the phrase, "…unless my real father would forgive the injury you have done to him," María subtly reveals that her father is Fray Dámaso, since he is the only person in the novel Ibarra actually "injur[es]." This piece of information makes sense of how invested Dámaso has been in interfering with María Clara and Ibarra's wedding, since Ibarra is the son of Dámaso's old enemy, Don Rafael—it's clear that it would be unbearable for him if his daughter married his foe.

Proceeding with her explanation, María Clara informs Ibarra that the man who came to her during her illness threatened to tell the public who her real father is if she didn't give him Ibarra's letter. Because she didn't want to disgrace Captain Tiago or the memory of her mother, she had no choice but to comply. She knew the man was telling the truth about her father because he showed her letters that her mother wrote before dying, letters that confirmed his claims. Ibarra forgives María Clara for having sold him out, and before he leaves, she tells him she won't "forget the oaths of fidelity" she's made to him. When he asks how she plans to do this, considering that she's engaged to Linares, she says, "The future is dark and destiny lies in the shadows!"

María Clara's explanation finally sheds light on how the powerful Father Salví found a way to force her into endangering Ibarra. Although Rizal doesn't specify that this "man" who came to her during "one of the painful nights of [her] suffering" was Salví, readers can intuit that it was him because of his (much) earlier question—in chapter 22—regarding whether or not María Clara had ever "dreamed about letters from [her] mother." As such, it's evident that the priest has been planning all along to blackmail María Clara into condemning Ibarra.

CHAPTER 61: PURSUIT ON THE LAKE

As Elías rows Ibarra to safety after stopping at María Clara's house, he suggests a plan: he will hide Ibarra at a friend's house in another town while he goes to Ibarra's grandfather's tomb, where he has hidden Ibarra's money. He'll then help Ibarra leave the country, safely transporting him to Spain where he can live free of danger. As thanks for everything he's done, Ibarra invites Elías to come live with him abroad, but Elías declines, saying, "It's true I can neither love my country nor be happy here, but I can suffer and die in it, and for it." When Ibarra asks why, then, Elías is telling *him* to leave, Elías says, "Because you can be happy elsewhere, but I can't […]." This insults Ibarra, who suddenly decides he wants to stay in the Philippines to fight for his country.

Elías's refusal to leave the country shows that, at least on some level, he understands the futility of isolation. Indeed, he knows that it is better to "suffer and die" fighting against oppression than to permanently estrange oneself from one's own country. Listening to this, Ibarra realizes that, now that he's been accused of heresy and widely condemned, he understands why somebody would believe in total revolution rather than organic reform. Readers will remember Elías previously asserted that a person can only understand this after having experienced persecution firsthand, and Ibarra's change of heart corroborates this theory.

As they row on the lake, Elías points out that Ibarra's newfound will to fight contrasts his earlier reluctance to support revolution. Ibarra argues that this is because he can now see "the horrible cancer gnawing at this society." Now that he has experienced the worst his country has to offer, he accepts the title of a "subversive." "They opened my eyes, they made me see the sores and forced me to become a criminal! And so, just what they wanted, I will be a subversive, but a true subversive," he declares. He then corrects himself, saying that he won't actually be a true criminal, since a person isn't a criminal if he's fighting for the good of his country. In contrast, Elías is apprehensive, warning Ibarra that his attitude is liable to start a war. "I will never accede to those measures as long as I see men hope," he says.

Suddenly, Ibarra has adopted the vehemence of a bandit revolutionary like Captain Pablo. Elías, on the other hand, remains less idealistic, urging his friend to temper his enthusiasm. But Ibarra is overzealous and enthralled by finally understanding that—as Elías has previously argued—oppressive systems create criminals and subversives. This is the same line of thinking that encouraged Crispín to wish he actually had stolen from the parish house, and this parallel demonstrates that Rizal has been developing this theory regarding subversion throughout the entire novel.

As Ibarra and Elías debate, a boat of Civil Guard members starts chasing them. Ibarra ducks beneath bales of hay, and Elías tries to out-row the Civil Guard, but it's clear they'll catch up. "Do you know how to handle a boat?" he asks Ibarra, telling him that he'll jump into the water so the Civil Guard members will follow him, thinking he's Ibarra. The real Ibarra will then row to shore. Bullets skim the water around them, and just before Elías dives overboard, he tells Ibarra to meet him on Christmas Eve at his grandfather's tomb in the woods. Then Elías dives and, as expected, the Civil Guard follows him, shooting all the while. He plunges deep and swims for long periods of time, only surfacing occasionally for air in a sporadic pattern. After a half hour, the guards don't see him resurface, and they even think they see hues of blood in the water.

Elías's willingness to endanger himself for Ibarra once again reveals his loyalty to his friend. When considering this loyalty, it's important to remember that Ibarra's great-grandfather disgraced Elías's family and caused them to live in destitution for multiple generations. In the same way that Elías has a complicated relationship with his country—feeling that he must fight for it despite the fact that he cannot "love" or "be happy" in it—he has a fraught relationship with Ibarra, whom he both resents and respects.

CHAPTER 62: FATHER DÁMASO EXPLAINS HIMSELF

Guests stack wedding gifts on a table in Captain Tiago's house, but María Clara is uninterested in anything other than the newspaper she holds, which reports that Ibarra has drowned in the lake. Father Dámaso comes up behind her and surprises her, but upon seeing her hesitancy to greet him, he asks what's wrong. As he sits to hear what she has to say, she weeps, and he asks if she's had a fight with Linares. "Don't talk to me of him…now!" she replies. She then asks if he still loves her, saying that if he does, he'll put an end to this arranged marriage. She explains that she felt able to move forward with the wedding only because she thought Ibarra was still alive—knowing that was the only thing keeping her going. Now, with nothing left to live for, she can't bear the thought of marrying Linares.

When María Clara orders Father Dámaso not to speak Linares's name, she asserts herself for the first time throughout the entire novel. In past scenes, she has remained passive, especially when conversing with powerful priests like Father Dámaso. In this moment though, she finally allows her strong feelings to surface. In doing so, she shows herself capable of standing up for what she truly feels, unlike Captain Tiago who would never dare tell a friar what he can or cannot talk about.

María Clara tells Father Dámaso that, now that Ibarra has died, she has only two options: "the convent or the grave." Seeing her intense unhappiness, Father Dámaso says the only reason he interfered with her engagement to Ibarra is because he wanted what was best for her. He reminds her that if she had married Ibarra, she would now be a disgraced woman doomed to a life of isolation. He then turns his attention to the convent, saying, "I would rather a thousand times see you unhappy in the world than in a cloister…" She reiterates her views, telling him she will either die or become a nun. Covering his head with his hands, he yells, "You can punish me, Lord, but the veil for my child…" Before leaving, he finally agrees to let her enter the convent.

Father Dámaso's reluctance to allow María Clara to embark upon a religious life is telling, for it indicates that he has very little affinity for spirituality. After all, a priest should be happy to hear his daughter wants to devote herself to God. But Dámaso's priorities have nothing to do with serving God—rather, it seems he's a priest because of the power it affords him. Furthermore María Clara's ultimatum—"the convent or the grave"—supports the idea that she has finally found a sense of personal agency, which she uses to stand up to Dámaso.

CHAPTER 63: CHRISTMAS EVE

On Christmas Eve, the young Basilio sits outside a cottage in the woods and watches two children play. They are his informal adoptive siblings, but he doesn't partake in their games. Rather, he tells the household's grandfather—who found him passed out and injured in the woods two months before—that he needs to go into town to look for his mother. Reluctantly, the old man lets him go, and Basilio limps his way through the woods and into San Diego, where Captain Basilio speaks with Don Filipo in the street, telling him he's lucky to have been let go unharmed by the Civil Guard, who merely burned his books. In this moment, Sisa runs by, still out of her mind. The young Basilio follows his mother's singing, but she doesn't recognize him.

Sisa's failure to recognize her son is a testament to how severely her isolation from society has affected her. Despite that she originally dissociated because she couldn't find her children, she now is unable to welcome Basilio, perhaps because she knows—on some unspoken level—that she no longer has a place in society and thus can't welcome him back into the everyday life of San Diego. In other words, she's cut herself off from everything she might be able to connect with—a survival tactic most likely meant to protect her from further heartache.

Trailing Sisa, Basilio finds himself entering the woods. Sisa runs into a thicket and enters a wooden gate that blocks off the tomb of Ibarra's grandfather. When he himself arrives at the gate, she refuses to let him in. He pounds against it, saying, "Mother, it's me, it's me, it's Basilio, your son!" When this fails, he climbs a tree, drops down on the other side of the fence, and keeps his mother from running away by hugging and kissing her. He then passes out, at which point Sisa sees she is holding her son. When he eventually wakes up, he discovers that now it is Sisa who is unconscious, and he's unable to wake her. Putting his ear to her heart, he hears no pulse.

The fact that Sisa dies upon discovering that the boy following her is her son Basilio supports the notion that her inability to recognize him earlier was the result of a psychological defense mechanism. This defensive tactic sought to shield her from the shock of suddenly being given the chance to leave behind her social and psychological estrangement from her surroundings—seeing Basilio yanks her out of her reveries, and this process of connection is too abrupt for her to handle.

At that moment, a wounded man appears and drops to the ground. He asks Basilio if he's seen anybody else at the tomb. He then asks what the boy is going to do with his dead mother. When Basilio fails to propose a plan, the man instructs him, telling him to fetch firewood to build a pyre. Explaining that he himself is about die, the man asks Basilio to put his and Sisa's body on the pyre before lighting it. "Then," he says, "if no one else comes…dig here, and you will find a great deal of gold…and it will all be yours." As Basilio scrambles off to get the wood to build the pyre, the man faces east and whispers, "I die without seeing dawn's light shining on my country…You, who will see it, welcome it for me…don't forget those who fell during the nighttime."

There are two indications in this scene that the man who comes upon Basilio is Elías. The first is that he knows precisely where the boy will find gold if he digs. Indeed, it was Elías who buried this gold in the first place in an attempt to save Ibarra's riches from being confiscated when the young protagonist was arrested. Second, his dying words, "I die without seeing dawn's light shining on my country" reflect Elías's wish—which he voiced to Ibarra on the boat—to remain in his country, willing to fight for its independence even if it cost him his life. (Lastly, readers can be sure this figure is Elías and not Ibarra because of the fact that Rizal wrote El Filibusterismo, *which follows Ibarra's life after the events of* Noli Me Tangere*).*

EPILOGUE

Rizal explains that, since many of the book's characters are still alive, "a true epilogue is impossible." Nonetheless, he reports on the whereabouts of several characters, starting with Father Dámaso, who travels to Manila when María Clara enters the convent. Father Salví also goes to Manila, where he waits in vain to be made a bishop. Months later, Father Dámaso is ordered by Father Salví to travel to and live in a faraway province, a fate he's so unhappy about that he dies that very night. Meanwhile, Captain Tiago is so distraught by María Clara's decision to become a nun that he shuts himself off from the world and becomes an opium addict. The ensign, basking in his newfound glory, goes to Spain, leaving behind Doña Consolación, who succumbs to drinking and smoking. Father Salví, Rizal adds to this brief summary, is the head priest of the convent to which María Clara belongs.

Not all of the characters' fates in this epilogue are fraught with symbolic or thematic meaning, though it's worth considering that Captain Tiago's life, for instance, follows in the sad footsteps of the book's other characters who have resigned themselves to isolation. Indeed, he becomes a tragic figure when he cuts himself off from the world and becomes an opium addict, and this is yet another instance in which Rizal condemns acquiescing to solitude. Father Salví, for his part, continues as a vain man obsessed with wielding his power to spite others and get his own way, as evidenced by his decision to move Dámaso—a natural competitor of his— far away.

One night during a hurricane, two Civil Guard members see a woman atop the roof of María Clara's convent in Santa Clara. As lightning strikes all around, the woman desperately moans in a tormented, sad voice. The next day, authorities visit the convent to investigate. One of the nuns steps forward in a wet habit, asking for the investigator's "protection against the violence of hypocrisy" and making "accusations of many horrors." According to legend, Rizal notes, this nun is very beautiful. Unfortunately, the investigator neglects to help her, and the nunnery's leader—the abbess—puts an end to the matter. However, Rizal adds that a "General S. J." hears of the incident and tries to protect the nun, but the abbess doesn't allow him to enter the convent, and nobody speaks of the issue again, "nor of the unfortunate María Clara."

Judging by Rizal's description, this beautiful nun is María Clara. Since Father Salví often preaches in Santa Clara, it's apparent that the "violence of hypocrisy" is a reference to him. That she makes "accusations of many horrors" seems to suggest that the disgustingly lustful priest rapes her when he visits the convent. It's tragic, therefore, that nobody does anything to stop this, a fact that once again demonstrates the excessive and unchallenged power friars have in the Philippines.

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Rizal, José. Noli Me Tangere. Penguin Books. 2006.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Rizal, José. Noli Me Tangere. New York: Penguin Books. 2006.