Notes for Students: A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Summary (Short and Simple):
The story is about an old man with wings who appears in a village after a storm. Pelayo and Elisenda, a couple, find him in their courtyard. He looks weak, dirty, and unable to move because of his large wings. At first, they think he is a shipwrecked sailor, but a neighbor says he is an angel. The couple locks him in a chicken coop and charges people to see him, making a lot of money. The old man is treated poorly, like a circus animal, but he stays patient. Later, a new attraction (a spider-woman) takes away his popularity. Over time, the old man grows weaker but eventually grows new feathers and flies away. The story shows how people treat those who are different and the importance of kindness.

Important Points:

1. **Setting and Discovery**: The story happens in a coastal village during a stormy time. Pelayo finds an old man with wings in his courtyard, stuck in the mud.

2. **Treatment of the Old Man**:
   - Pelayo and Elisenda lock him in a chicken coop and charge money to see him.
   - The crowd treats him like a circus animal, throwing food and stones at him.
   - The old man is patient despite the bad treatment.

3. **Magical Realism**: The story mixes real life (village, family, money) with magical elements (an old man with wings, a spider-woman).

4. **Change in Popularity**: A spider-woman becomes more popular because she is cheaper to see and talks to people.

5. **The Old Man's Condition**: He is weak, old, and sickly but survives a harsh winter. Eventually, he grows new feathers and flies away.

6. **Themes**:
   - **Kindness and Compassion**: The story shows how people lack kindness toward the weak and different.
   - **Human Nature**: People exploit the old man for money and lose interest when something new comes along.
   - **Hope**: The old man's flight at the end gives a sense of freedom and hope.

7. **Characters**:
   - **Old Man**: Mysterious, patient, weak, with enormous wings.
   - **Pelayo**: Practical, responsible, but not very kind to the old man.
   - **Elisenda**: Caring mother but shrewd; she makes money from the old man.
   - **Neighbor Woman**: Believes the old man is an angel.
   - **Crowd**: Curious but cruel, treating the old man badly.
   - **Doctor**: Curious about the old man's wings, finds them logical.

- o **Child**: Innocent, plays with the old man without fear.

Meanings of Important Words (Simple Explanations):

1. **Enormous** (Page 1): Very big or huge.
   Example: The old man had enormous wings that covered his body.

2. **Impeded** (Page 1): Blocked or stopped from moving.
   Example: His wings impeded him from standing up in the mud.

3. **Ragpicker** (Page 2): A person who collects old, torn clothes or rags.
   Example: The old man's clothes looked like a ragpicker's because they were torn and dirty.

4. **Castaway** (Page 2): A person lost at sea, washed up on shore.
   Example: They thought the old man was a castaway from a shipwreck.

5. **Magnanimous** (Page 2): Kind and generous.
   Example: They felt magnanimous and decided to give the old man food and water.

6. **Supernatural** (Page 2): Something magical or beyond normal human understanding.
   Example: The old man's wings were supernatural because humans don't have wings.

7. **Bustle** (Page 3): Busy and noisy activity.
   Example: The courtyard had the bustle of a marketplace with so many visitors.

8. **Pilgrims** (Page 3): People who travel for a special purpose, often religious.
   Example: Pilgrims came to see the angel, hoping for miracles.

9. **Virtue** (Page 3): A good quality or strength.
   Example: The old man's only virtue was his patience with the crowd.

10. **Absurd** (Page 3): Strange or silly, hard to believe.
    Example: The spider-woman's story seemed absurd but attracted many people.

11. **Lament** (Page 4): To feel sad or regret something.
    Example: Pelayo and Elisenda had no reason to lament because they became rich.

12. **Senile** (Page 5): Weak or confused because of old age.
    Example: The old man's flight was like a senile vulture, clumsy and weak.

13. **Montage** (Page 9): A collection of pictures, videos, or music put together.
    Example: The students made a montage of photos with captions for the school display.

14. **Deplorable** (Page 8): Very bad or shameful.
    Example: The treatment of the old man was deplorable and unkind.

15. **Empathy** (Page 1, 10): Understanding and sharing someone else's feelings.
    Example: The caregiver showed empathy to the lonely old woman.

Key Questions to Understand the Story:

1. Why does Pelayo lock the old man in the chicken coop? (Because he is scared and unsure about the old man's identity.)

2. Why do people treat the old man like a circus animal? (They are curious but lack kindness, seeing him as entertainment.)

3. Why does the old man's popularity decrease? (A spider-woman is cheaper to see and more interactive.)

4. What makes the old man's wings seem "logical" to the doctor? (The wings fit his body so naturally that they seem like they belong.)

5. How does the story show the need for compassion? (The old man's poor treatment shows how society often ignores the weak, teaching us to be kinder.)