According to the Wikipedia entry on the novel *The Old Gringo* (Spanish: *Gringo Viejo*), Carlos Fuentes’s novel was written between 1964 and 1984, and was first published in 1985. Inspired by the historical disappearance of American writer Ambrose Bierce amidst the chaos of the Mexican Revolution, the novel addresses the themes of death, cultural exchange, and Mexican identity, among other topics through the character interactions between Bierce, Harriet Winslow, and General Tomas Arroyo.

In order to understand the cultural attitudes reflected in Carlos Fuentes’ *The Old Gringo*, students need a basic knowledge of the history of Mexico, which is a history of psychological, physical, economic, and cultural oppression at the successive hands of various world powers from the Spanish to the United States over the past 500+ years. The character development in the novel portrays attitudes among Mexicans and the two Americans that point to the idea that the past is inextricable from the present, and the events of the past retain immediacy in the minds of Mexicans constantly as a result of their economic oppression. Concepts that students need to explore in the interactive oral include discussions on the following topics:

1. Research and discuss how the psychological concept of *The Collective Unconscious*, as defined by C.G. Jung, helps to analyze the novel *The Old Gringo* through a psychoanalytical critical lens.

2. Research and discuss the history of Hernan Cortez, the Conquistadores’ conquest of Central America, and the Conquistadores’ encounter with La Malinche. How does an understanding of this history enrich a sociopolitical understanding of the events in the novel and how the novel’s characters are defined and interact with each other?

3. Research and discuss the Mexican-American War Treaty of 1848 and the Mexican Peoples’ ensuing attitudes toward Americans. How does an understanding of this history enrich a sociopolitical understanding of the events in the novel and how the novel’s characters are defined and interact with each other?

4. Research and discuss the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and its goal of economic equitability. How does an understanding of this history enrich a sociopolitical understanding of the events in the novel and how the novel’s characters are defined and interact with each other?

5. Research and discuss the revolutionary leaders Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, and Mexican attitudes toward them. How does an understanding of these historical figures enrich a sociopolitical understanding of the events in the novel and how the novel’s characters are defined and interact with each other?

6. Deliver a biographical discussion of Ambrose Bierce and how his characterization as “the Old Gingo” in the novel depend heavily on Bierce’s biography and his published writing as a journalist and as a short story writer (*An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge, A Horseman in the Sky, The Devil’s Dictionary*, etc.).

7. Research and discuss the influence that Miguel de Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* had on Carlos Fuentes and then explore the ways in which *The Old Gringo* is *quixotic* novel or, at the very least, an exploration of Quixotism.

8. Research and discuss William Randolph Hurst's and his publishing empire’s (especially the San Francisco Examiner, for which Bierce wrote) agenda against Mexico and why Hurst had such a prejudice against Mexico and had such an investment in Mexico’s social and political order?

9. Carlos Fuentes once said that *The Old Gringo* was his attempt to explain Mexico to the United States. What attitudes do we encounter in the text that is applicable in our relationships with Mexico/Mexicans today, and how may knowledge of these attitudes enhance our interaction with our neighbors to the South?

The group of students assigned to conduct the Interactive Oral for *The Plague* must assign responsibilities and report to me by ___________.

Each student is responsible for conducting a brief presentation in response to his or her assigned prompt, followed by facilitating a class discussion in response to the information or analysis he or she presented. Each student should conduct a total of 10 minutes for interactive oral presentation.

ALL students in class will write a reflection for each Interactive Oral Presentation, so not only do you need to fully participate, you need to keep notes on all information and analysis covered in these presentations/seminars on your Major Works Data Sheet.