



Colorado Book Club Resource

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *IN THE TIME OF BUTTERFLIES* BY JULIA ALVAREZ

1. Although she does not reveal the details, Alvarez lets us know from the start that the novel will end tragically. Why do you think she made this choice?
2. How do the sisters differ in personality, goals and self-expression? How does Alvarez dramatize these differences?
3. How does the Trujillo regime portray itself? What means does it use to build a positive public image?
4. How does this police state control its citizens? How do its methods develop over the course of the novel?
5. What kinds of violence are directed against women both politically and socially? How do these forms of violence connect to the experiences of the men?
6. What events radicalize each sister? What personal commitments and feelings complicate the commitment to political activism for them?
7. What groups or institutions offer significant support or resistance to Trujillo both within and beyond the borders of the Dominican Republic?
8. This novel has been called polyphonic in that it contains many voices rather than a single narrator's. How many voices and kinds of writing can you track as you read? How do these multiple voices connect with the themes of the novel?
9. This novel can also be seen as an example of resistance literature. How does Alvarez's choice of subject and Dede's later life as the keeper of her sisters' history become a form of opposition to tyranny?
10. Readers of this novel have connected Maria Teresa's sections with *The Diary of Anne Frank*. How do the content and form of these two works express similar themes and approaches to writing?
11. Alvarez brings in many legends and sayings from traditional Dominican culture. What values do these sayings express?
12. Dreams play an important role in the novel. What are some of the dreams and how do they relate to reality?
13. The anacahuita tree and the moon are recurring images in the novel. When do they appear and how do they contribute to the narrative?



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14. How did you react to the intensity of suffering and pain in the novel? What kept you reading? Has the experience influenced you to do more reading or to take any sort of action?
15. In the face of the kind of brutality that the novel documents, do art and storytelling have any real power or social value?

Discussion questions provided by the Chicago Public Library.



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