

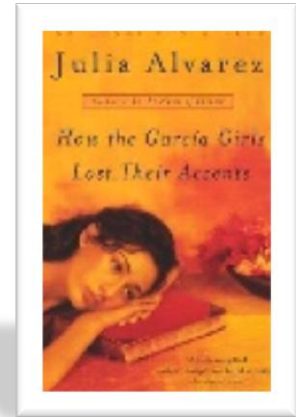
Title: How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents

Author: Julia Alvarez

Grade Level: 7th Grade

SUMMARY

How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, is a wonderful story about a wealthy family from the Dominican Republic that is forced to abandon the lives they know and move to New York City. This book is extra unique because it is told in reverse time order following the lives of the four Garcia sisters. It begins with their lives as adults in the United States and continues back to when they were children in the Dominican Republic. Each chapter is a short story told from the perspective of each of the sisters. Your family will enjoy reading this book aloud or independently because it focuses on family relationships, particularly sisters. It is a great read especially for anyone who understands the challenges of fitting in culturally or otherwise. It includes real world historical events, so it will allow for some rich discussions in many ways!



QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- phalanx (pg. 3)
- turbulent (pg. 11)
- verandah (pg. 14)
- machetes (pg. 19)
- rhetorical (pg. 41)
- tryst (pg. 127)
- inhospitable (pg. 141)
- infinitesimal (pg. 152)
- monotone (pg. 216)
- medallions (pg. 223)
- modest (pg. 240)
- coppery (pg. 265)

You might use a question like:

Based on the information in the book, what do you think a verandah is? How does the context help you figure out what it means?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:



1. One of the book's themes is the Garcia girls' struggle to fit into their new world. What are some examples from the novel where the girls feel conflicted between their old and new worlds? How do they resolve these challenges?
2. As you read, ask your child if he or she notices anything with the way in which the story is being told. How does the fact that this book is told backward affect the story? Why do you think the author chose to write the story in this way?
3. Each chapter is told from the perspective of one of the sisters. Talk about each of the sisters using characteristics and events from the story. How are they different from one another? How do you think changing point of view affects the story? Why do you think the author chose to write the story in this way?
4. What are some of the political events that occur in the novel concerning the history of the Dominican Republic? Talk about why the Garcia family was forced to flee from the Dominican Republic for the United States.
5. A lot of the story centers on relationships. What are some examples of the close relationships that develop in this story? How does the relationship the girls have with each other impact their relationship with their husbands?

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1. Some people speculate that the reason the character of Yolanda is highlighted throughout the novel is because she is the author's alter ego. Using the Internet, do some research of your own into the life of the author, Julia Alvarez. Do you see any similarities between these two women? Do you agree that Yolanda reflects Alvarez's life?
2. The beginning of the book has a family tree tracing the Garcia family back to the Conquistadores. Create a timeline family tree of your own family going back as far as you can. You may want to do some research by interviewing your oldest living relatives (like grandparents, great aunts and uncles, great-grandparents).