

Approved for use in 8th Grade English

Summary of the Work:

From *Gale Cengage Learning*

After 30 years of living under the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo, many people in the Dominican Republic want to overthrow him and build new lives. Anita doesn't understand how deeply involved her family is in the conspiracy and when her favorite cousins leave the family compound for New York, she doesn't realize they're escaping while they can. Gradually it becomes apparent that the secret police watch them and their maid spies on the family. When Trujillo is assassinated, his son takes over and is crueler than his father. Anita's father and uncle are arrested for being part of the assassination plot, her older brother Múndin hides in the Italian Embassy, and she and her mother spend two months hiding in a friend's bedroom closet until they can escape to America.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

From *Publishers Weekly*

In her first YA novel, Alvarez (*How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*) proves as gifted at writing for adolescents as she is for adults. Here she brings her warmth, sensitivity and eye for detail to a volatile setting, the Dominican Republic of her childhood, during the 1960-1961 attempt to overthrow Trujillo's dictatorship. The story opens as 12-year-old narrator Anita watches her cousins, the García girls, abruptly leave for the U.S. with their parents; Anita's own immediate family are now the only ones occupying the extended family's compound. Alvarez relays the terrors of the Trujillo regime in a muted but unmistakable tone; for a while, Anita's parents protect her (and, by extension, readers), both from the ruler's criminal and even murderous ways and also from knowledge of their involvement in the planned coup d'état. The perspective remains securely Anita's, and Alvarez's pitch-perfect narration will immerse readers in Anita's world. Her crush on the American boy next door is at first as important as knowing that the maid is almost certainly working for the secret police and spying on them; later, as Anita understands the implications of the adult remarks she overhears, her voice becomes anxious and the tension mounts. When the revolution fails, Anita's father and uncle are immediately arrested, and she and her mother go underground, living in secret in their friends' bedroom closet, a sequence the author renders with palpable suspense. Alvarez conveys the hopeful ending with as much passion as suffuses the tragedies that precede it. A stirring work of art. Ages 12-up.

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Rationale:

This text is to be used in a literature circle setting, where students will choose to read this text among others on and about Latin America. Students will research the history, culture, customs, music, art, architecture, etc. of the setting of this novel. They will discuss the text, its issues, and present on the book and their research to the rest of the class.

Noted Distinction:

Awards:

2004: Pura Belpré Award: Text Award

2002: Americas Book Award

Expert Picks:

ALA's "Best Lists: 2003

The Best, Notable & Recommended for 2003

KLIATT Editors' Hardcover YA Fiction Choices 2003

Teachers' Choices for 2003: A Project of the International Reading Assn.

Readability:

- Lexile Score: 890L
- Readability Level:

Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment:

Literature:

Content Standard 1—Students construct meaning as they comprehend, interpret, analyze and respond to literary works.

Content Standard 2—Students recognize and evaluate how language, literary devices, and elements contribute to the meaning and impact of literary works.

Content Standard 3—Students reflect upon their literary experiences and purposefully select from a range of works.

Content Standard 4—Students interact with print and nonprint literary works from various cultures, ethnic groups, traditional and contemporary viewpoints written by both genders.

Content Standard 5—Students use literary works to enrich personal experience and to connect to the broader world of ideas, concepts and issues.

Writing:

Content Standard 1—Students write clearly and effectively.

Content Standard 2—Students apply a range of skills and strategies in the writing process.

Content Standard 3—Students evaluate and reflect on their growth as writers.

Content Standard 4—Students write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

	<p>Content Standard 5—Students recognize the structures of various forms and apply these characteristics to their own writing.</p> <p>Content Standard 6—Students use the inquiry process, problem-solving strategies, and resources to synthesize and communicate information.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p>Content Standard 1—Students construct meaning as they comprehend, interpret, and respond to what they read.</p> <p>Content Standard 2—Students apply a range of skills and strategies to read.</p> <p>Content Standard 3—Students set goals, monitor, and evaluate their progress in reading.</p> <p>Content Standard 4—Students select, read, and respond to print and nonprint material for a variety of purposes.</p> <p>Content Standard 5—Students gather, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from a variety of sources, and communicate their findings in ways appropriate for their purposes and audiences.</p> <p>Speaking:</p> <p>Standard 1—Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the communication process.</p> <p>Content Standard 2—Students distinguish among and use appropriate types of speaking and listening for a variety of purposes.</p> <p>Content Standard 3—Students apply a range of skills and strategies to speaking and listening.</p> <p>Content Standard 4—Students identify, analyze, and evaluate the impacts of effective speaking and evaluative listening.</p> <p>Approval: Submitted to Committee: Approved for Adoption:</p>
<p>Notes on the Text: <i>(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)</i> References to revolutionary violence and dissidence Love, peace, and family death Loss of home, country, and family</p>	<p>Connection to the Curriculum:</p> <p>Please see rationale.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Additional Connections: <i>(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)</i></p>	