



How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents

Discussion Questions

- 1) In what ways do the Garcia girls "lose their accents"? How do the characters try to become more American? How does language shape someone's identity?
- 2) How was America represented to the girls when they are children (for example, the toys from FAO Schwartz)? How does this compare to the reality of their experiences in New York?
- 3) The García sisters have distinct personalities and experiences. How do they each approach the challenges of assimilation and identity differently? Which character do you relate to most?
- 4) How does the García family's exile from the Dominican Republic impact their relationships in the United States? Would they relate to one another differently if they had not been forced out of the D.R.?
- 5) Consider how Mami and Papi change after moving to the United States. Do you think the conflicts between them and their children are primarily cultural, generational, or both?
- 6) The sisters struggle to fit into American culture while staying true to their roots. How does Alvarez depict the tension between assimilation and maintaining cultural authenticity?
- 7) Have you ever felt torn between two identities, cultures, or communities? How did reading this novel resonate with your experiences?
- 8) The novel highlights the importance of memory and storytelling. What are the stories from your past shape how you see yourself? What are the stories that your family tells?

These questions are partially inspired by questions issued from Penguin Group USA on LitLovers (litlovers.com).



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Julia Alvarez

Photo from X/Bluesky
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About Julia Alvarez

Julia Alvarez is a Dominican-American author, poet, and essayist renowned for her work exploring themes of identity, immigration, family, and Latina experiences. She was born on March 27, 1950 in New York City. Similarly to the characters in her novel, Alvarez spent her early childhood in the Dominican Republic before her family fled to the United States in 1960 due to political turmoil under the Trujillo dictatorship. This bicultural upbringing deeply influenced her writing and is often reflected in her exploration of cultural dislocation.

In addition to her novels, Alvarez has written poetry, essays, and books for children and young adults. Today, she is celebrated as one of the most influential contemporary authors, with her work contributing to a broader understanding of bicultural identity. Some of her other popular works include *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994), a historical novel inspired by the true story of the Mirabal sisters, who opposed the Trujillo regime, and *Yo!* (1997), a continuation of the García Girls' story. Her most recent novel, *The Cemetery of Untold Stories*, was published in 2024. She was awarded the National Medal of Arts in 2013.

Sources

- "Julia Alvarez," juliaalvarez.com/about
- Wikipedia, "Julia Alvarez," en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julia_Alvarez