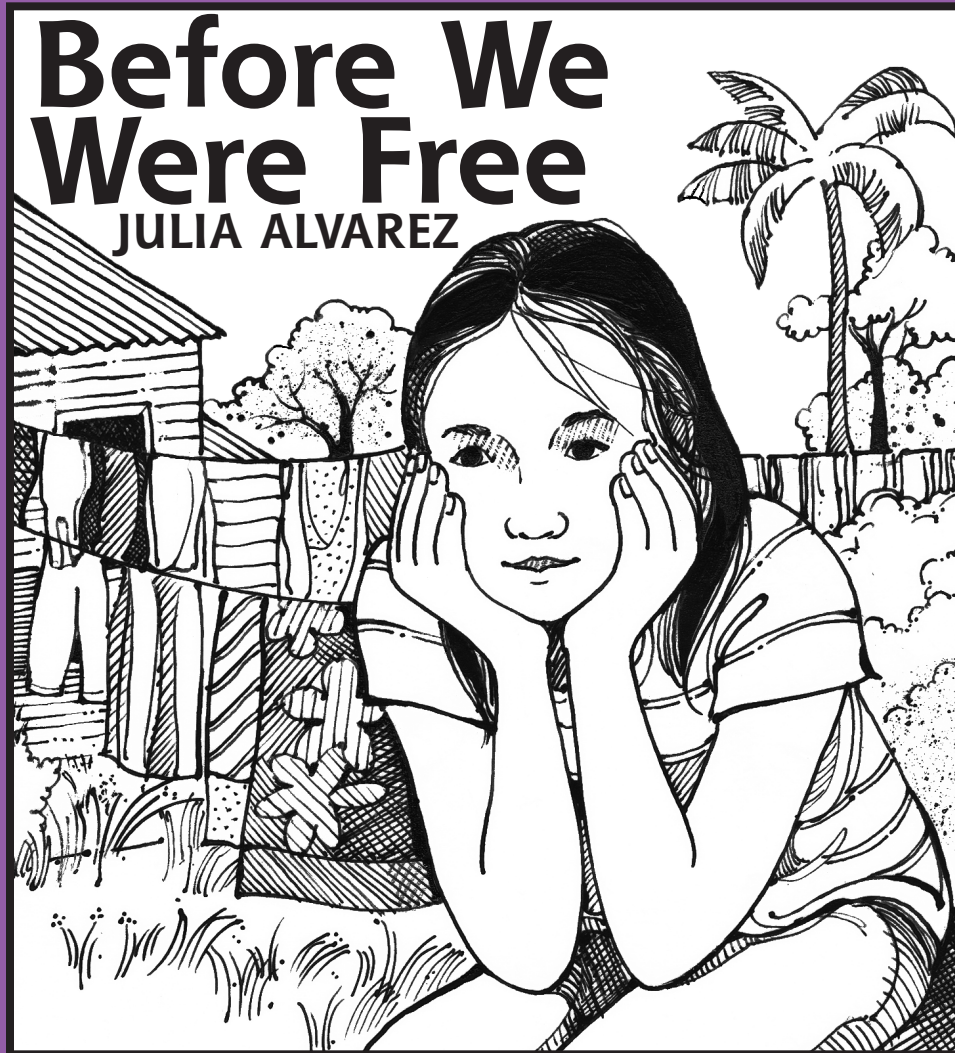


Novel•Ties



A Study Guide

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LEARNING LINKS

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For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide consists of lessons to use in conjunction with the book *Before We Were Free*. Written in chapter-by-chapter format, the guide contains a synopsis, pre-reading activities, vocabulary and comprehension exercises, as well as extension activities to be used as follow-up to the novel.

In a homogeneous classroom, whole class instruction with one title is appropriate. In a heterogeneous classroom, reading groups should be formed: each group works on a different book at its reading level. Depending upon the length of time devoted to reading in the classroom, each book, with its guide and accompanying lessons, may be completed in three to six weeks.

Begin using NOVEL-TIES for guided reading by distributing the book and a folder to each student. Distribute duplicated pages of the study guide for students to place in their folders. After examining the cover and glancing through the book, students can participate in several pre-reading activities. Vocabulary questions should be considered prior to reading a chapter or group of chapters; all other work should be done after the chapter has been read. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. The classroom teacher should determine the amount of work to be assigned, always keeping in mind that readers must be nurtured and that the ultimate goal is encouraging students' love of reading.

The benefits of using NOVEL-TIES are numerous. Students read good literature in the original, rather than in abridged or edited form. The good reading habits will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.

PRE-READING ACTIVITES

1. Preview the book by reading the title and the author's name and by looking at the illustration on the cover. Read the publisher's blurb that appears on the back of the paperback version, or on the cover flap of the hardback edition. Where and when do you think this book takes place? What do you think it will be about? Do you expect the tone of the book to be humorous or serious? Have you read any other books by the same author?
2. Read the Background Information about the Dominican Republic on page two of this study guide and do some additional research to learn about the history and politics of this island that it shares with Haiti. Then fill in the first two columns of a KWL chart, such as the one below. When you have finished the book, fill in the third column and share your responses with your classmates.

Dominican Repulic

What I Know -K-	What I Want to Know -W-	What I Learned -L-

3. Read about Rafael Trujillo and his thirty year reign as dictator of the Dominican Republic from 1942 to his assassination in 1961 in the Background Information on page two of this study guide. Do some additional research to learn more about the harshness of his rule and whether the Dominican Republic has become more democratic in the years following Trujillo's dictatorship. As you read the book, determine whether the story adheres to the historical facts.
4. Read about the life of the author, Julia Alvarez, in the Author's Note at the back of the book. You may do some additional research to learn more about the author. From what you have learned about the book and the author, how do you think the place of her birth influenced the book she wrote? As you read, determine which parts of the book are strictly autobiographical and which parts are fiction.
5. Look carefully at the diagram of the compound at the beginning of the book. Notice how several generations of an extended family live in an enclosed area in houses near one another. Have you ever encountered or lived in a family compound? What do you think might be its advantages and disadvantages? As you read the book, refer back to the diagram and determine how the family property plays an important part in the story.
6. Before you begin reading, look at the diagram of the second floor of the Mancini house on the page opposite the diagram of the compound. Why do you think the walk-in closet might become a good hideout? Is there any other place on that floor that might work as a hiding place?
7. If you were living in a dangerous time or place, do you think that the adults in your home should describe to you all of the details of your situation? What kind of information should they share? What kind of information should they withhold?

Chapters 10, 11 (cont.)

Media Connection: Television

Anita watched television in order to improve her English and learn about America. One of the programs she watched, that was popular in the 1950s and 1960s, was *I Love Lucy*. Go online and search on YouTube for broadcasts of the *I Love Lucy* show. You may also Google “I’m Chiquita Banana” and see for yourself the ad that upset Anita.

Sayings:

Anita remembers some of Chusa’s sayings and writes them into her school assignment. In your own words, tell what each of these sayings mean:

1. *With patience and calm, even a burro can climb a palm.*

2. *Dress the monkey in silk, he’s still a monkey.*

3. *You can’t dry yesterday’s laundry with tomorrow’s sun.*

Sometimes the wisdom of different sayings contradict each other. For example:

- *Don’t do as I do, do as I say.*
[and]
- *Practice what you preach.*

Are you aware of any other sayings that contradict each other?

Writing Activities:

1. Imagine that you are on a plane that is leaving the place that has been your home, and you look down, as Anita did, and describe all the things you might miss if you were never to return.
2. Imagine you are Anita or Mundín and write a diary entry expressing your thoughts and feelings on Thanksgiving Day in America.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Ho, Minfong. *The Clay Marble*. Square Fish.
- Iweala, Uzodinma. *Beasts of No Nation*. Harper Perennial.
- * Lai, Thanhha. *Inside Out and Back Again*. HarperCollins.
- Llosa, Mario Vargas. *The Feast of the Goat*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Nazario, Sonia. *Enrique's Journey*. Ember.
- * Park, Linda Sue. *A Long Walk to Water*. Clarion Books.
- * _____ . *A Single Shard*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- * _____ . *When My Name was Keoko*. Clarion Books.
- Perkins, Mitali. *Bamboo People*. Charlesbridge.
- * Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *Esperanza Rising*. Scholastic.
- St. John, Warren. *Outcasts United*. Ember.
- * Uchida, Yoshiko. *A Jar of Dreams*. Aladdin.
- * Yep, Laurence. *Dragonwings*. HarperCollins.

Some Other Books by Julia Alvarez:

- Finding Miracles*. Laurel Leaf.
- How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*. Algonquin Books.
- In the Name of Salome*. Algonquin Books.
- In the Time of the Butterflies*. Algonquin Books.
- Return to Sender*. Knopf Books for Young Readers.
- A Wedding in Haiti*. Algonquin Books.

- * NOVEL-TIES Study Guides are available for these titles.