



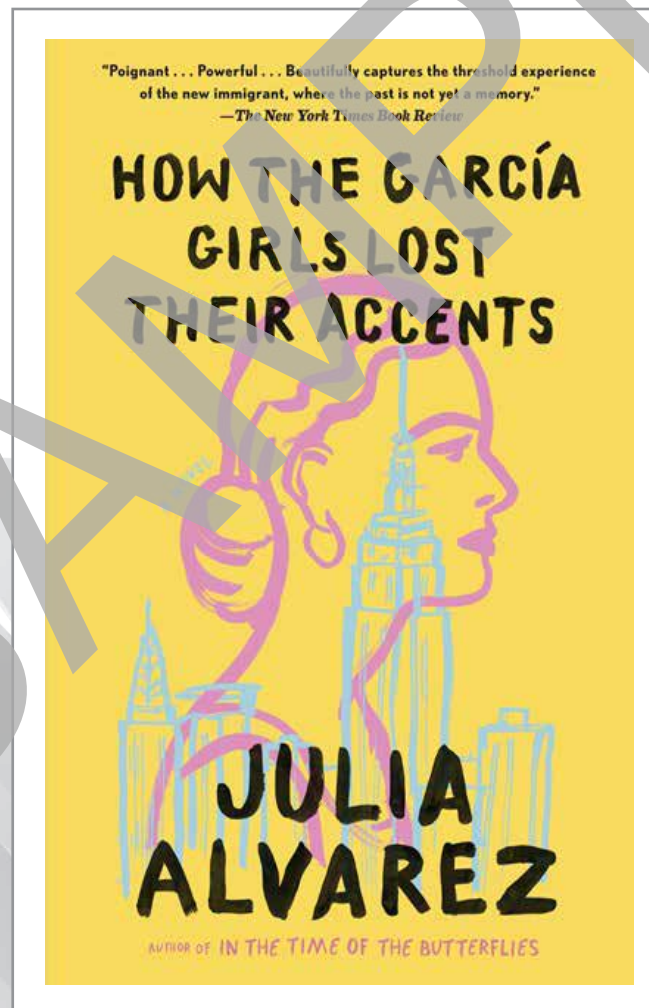
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

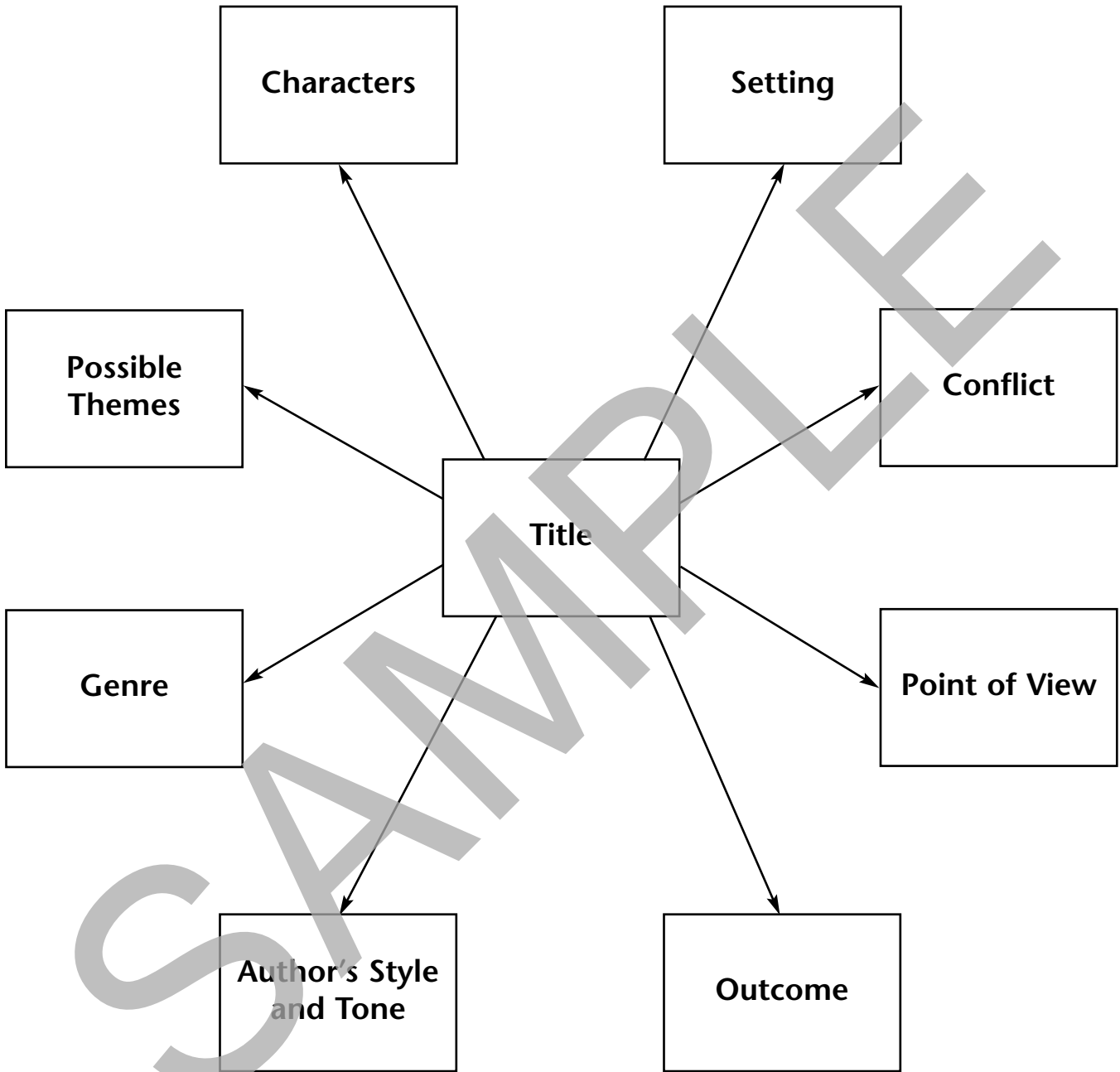
How the García Girls Lost Their Accents

Julia Alvarez



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Story Map



“Antojos/Yolanda,” pp. 3–23

Aunts and cousins celebrate Yolanda’s visit to the Island. Yolanda defies tradition by traveling alone. José and his friends help Yolanda pick guavas. Two men fix the car’s flat tire. Yolanda rewards José with dollars and returns him to the *cantina*.

Vocabulary

facsimile (6)
collaboration (7)
reverts (7)
guerrillas (10)
cede (11)
machetes (19)
collusion (19)
docile (20)
enunciates (21)

Discussion Questions

1. Examine what the party scene reveals about the Island family. Include comments about gender interactions, living arrangements, and social status. *(Yolanda is part of an extended family. Members socialize by gender; men do not attend. Children are appreciated and indulged. Nuclear families within the extended group reside in a compound and gather at the largest house, which is reserved for Tía Carmen, the head of clan’s widow. Family members possess great wealth, as evident by their expensive clothing and service from a uniformed staff of maids, chauffeur, cooks, and nursemaids. pp. 3–7, 11)*
2. Note how Yolanda does and does not fit in with her Island family members. How is language a factor? *(Yolanda is accepted as a family member by birth. However, she dresses unlike her cousins. She is greeted with the song, “Here she comes, Miss America!” She is losing her Spanish-speaking ability. She is scolded when she speaks in English. Her aunt expects her to return to her “native tongue.” It is reasonable to view Yolanda as somewhat estranged from her family by her American background and imperfect Spanish-speaking ability. pp. 4, 7–9)*
3. Examine the opinion of Tías Carmen and Flor on the subject of traveling alone and Yolanda’s reaction to the opinion. Analyze the phrase “hoping she has learned, at last, to let the mighty wave of tradition roll on through her life and break on some other female shore” (p. 9). *(Tías Carmen and Flor believe that women should not travel alone. Yolanda is independent. She rejects traditional expectations for women. She will do as she wishes, but she prefers to be quiet, tactful, and let the aunts have their say. p. 9)*
4. Note Yolanda’s wish in front of the cake. How does she compare her and her sisters’ lives to the lives of their cousins? Explain why you do or do not think Yolanda can adjust to permanent residency on the Island. *(“Let this turn out to be my home” [p. 11]. Yolanda recalls 29 years since her family left the Island. She and her sisters have led turbulent lives, changing husbands, jobs, and homes. They have made mistakes. The Island cousins have households and authority within them. Yolanda may not adjust to residency because she is independent, unwilling to respect the traditions of elder aunts, too “Americanized,” and unable to fully adopt the Spanish language; Answers will vary. pp. 7–11)*
5. Note how her first solitary moments of travel impress Yolanda, and examine the statement, “Standing here in the quiet, she believes she has never felt at home in the States, never” (p. 12). *(Yolanda rejects her aunts’ staged presentations of landscape. She enjoys the freedom to view the foothills alone. She remembers the turbulent lives she and her sisters have led in the United States. She sees simplicity in open hillsides inhabited by isolated families, thus commenting on American life as too complex, busy, or confusing for her. Answers may vary. pp. 11–12)*
6. Speculate about Yolanda’s determination to pick guavas herself. What is the significance of the statement, “The old woman has turned into the long arm of her family” (p. 16)? *(Guavas constitute Yolanda’s antojo, or a personal craving. Yolanda may feel that picking guavas*

is a way to express her independence or reconnect with her Island roots. She may relate picking guavas to a breakaway from her American past or a moment too special to share. The old woman warns Yolanda that she will get hot and soil her clothes. In other words, an obviously wealthy Island woman does not behave that way. The old woman's attitude reminds Yolanda of the conservative views of aunts she left behind in the compound. pp. 8, 16)

7. Discuss the encounter between Yolanda and the two Island men who fix the flat tire on her car. What can be inferred about Yolanda from her initial reaction to these men? *(Yolanda encounters the men in fading light, thinking about the guard she saw and her aunts' warnings. She sends José for help. She is alone. The men wear ragged clothes and bear machetes. They are polite, notice the car, ask if she is all right, and offer help. Then one man assumes she is American and unable to understand them. It can be inferred that Yolanda reacts like a woman would react in similar circumstances in the United States. She perceives these unassuming Dominican workmen as threatening to her. She falls back upon her American English and Island family attachment to extricate herself from what she thinks is a dangerous situation. The workmen really want to help. They fix her tire. pp. 19–22)*
8. Brainstorm about how to interpret Alvarez's inclusion of the soap poster. Describe the poster. Why might Alvarez end "Antojos" with mention of the poster and the phrase, "her mouth still opened as if she is calling someone over a great distance" (p. 23)? *(Answers will vary. Alvarez may wish to show the incongruity of such a poster in this Spanish-speaking land whose people typically have darker skin. She may include the poster as a symbolic reminder that Yolanda is indeed American, that the United States still calls her from a distance. pp. 14, 23)*
9. **Prediction:** Will Yolanda make the Island her permanent home?

Supplementary Activities

1. Begin a Character Web (see page 8 of this guide) for Yolanda, and add to the web as you read. Complete webs for other characters as they are introduced.
2. Begin a list of metaphors and similes, and add to the list as you read.
3. Begin the Story Map on page 9 of this guide, and add to the map as you read.
4. Gather information and statistics about a major city in the Dominican Republic, and prepare a brief listing for a directory of significant Latin American cities.
5. Reread page 8 in the novel. Then think of your own *antojo*. Write a few paragraphs telling about your *antojo*.