

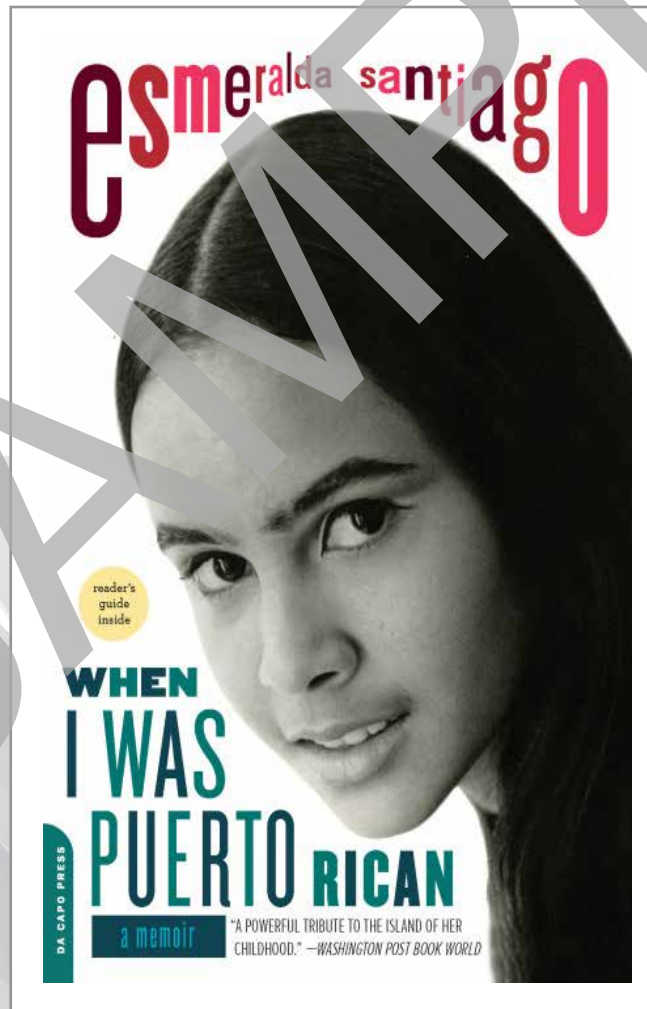


STUDENT PACKET

GRADES 9-12

When I Was Puerto Rican

Esmeralda Santiago



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

When I Was Puerto Rican

Esmeralda Santiago

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NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Name _____

minced (213)
vacillated (240)
proclivities (261)

swarthy (216)
truncated (243)
modulated (263)

kosher (224)
morose (247)
impeccably (264)

projects (230)
mesmerized (259)
chutzpah (269)

Directions: Complete the following chart for six of the vocabulary words. Share your finished charts with the class.

Synonyms

Antonyms

WORD

**Definition in
your own words**

**Used in a
sentence**

Name _____

Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper. Starred questions indicate thought or opinion questions. Use your answers in class discussions, for writing assignments, and to review for tests.

Pages 3–33

1. *What do you think the introductory statement, “A ship that doesn’t sail, never reaches port” (p. 3), means?
2. What does the author pick up in the Shop & Save? What memory does this trigger?
3. What is a *jíbara* (see glossary at end of book)? Why does Esmeralda want to be a *jíbara*? Why does Mami tell her this is impossible?
4. How old is Esmeralda when her family first comes to Macún? Briefly describe their house.
5. *What does Esmeralda call her parents? Describe her relationship with each of them.
6. Identify Esmeralda’s nickname, and explain its significance.
7. *Where does Papi tell Mami he is going? How long is he gone? What happens when he returns? Why do you think this incident is significant?
8. Identify Margie and Provi. What does Esmeralda want to do when she learns about Margie? How do her parents react?
9. When Esmeralda starts school, what does she learn about the following: dignity, other families, fighting? Why does she “fight naked”?
10. Why do Mami and the children move to the city?
11. *How do you think the introductory statement, “He falls in love even with broomsticks” (p. 21), relates to Papi’s lifestyle?
12. ***Prediction:** Will Mami and Papi reconcile after she moves to the city?

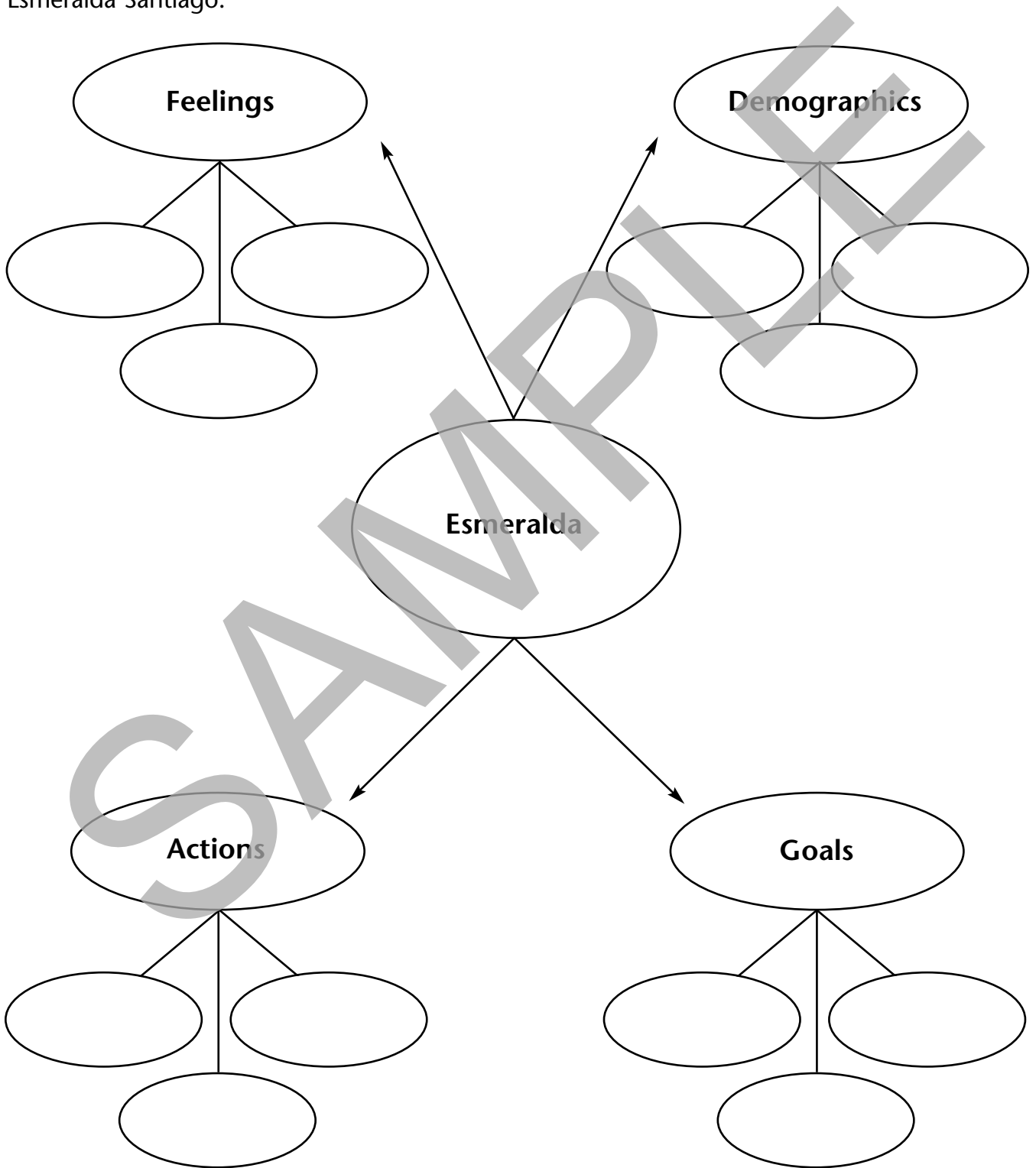
Pages 37–83

1. *Explain why Esmeralda says, “In Santurce I had become what I wasn’t in Macún” (p. 39). How does she feel about this?
2. *How does Esmeralda’s family celebrate Christmas? Do you think the family views this as a religious or a secular holiday?
3. What definition does Papi give Esmeralda for sin?
4. What is the name of Esmeralda’s new baby sister? What effect does her birth have on the family?
5. How does Papi assist in Don Berto’s funeral? What is Esmeralda’s role? What question does she ask Papi after the funeral? How does he respond?

Name _____

Character Web

Directions: Complete the attribute web by filling in information specific to Esmeralda Santiago.



Name _____

Character Web

Directions: Complete the web below for Mami. Cite evidence from the story as you fill in information. Then complete a web about Papi on a separate sheet of paper.

