

***Before We Were Free* by Julia Alvarez**

Year 2 Summer Reading Guide

[Barnes and Noble \\$8.99](#)

[Amazon \\$8.82](#)

In Year 2, Language and Literature students study texts through the following themes:

- Bold Actions
- Perception and Reality
- Risk and Exploration
- Guided by a Cause

This novel was chosen because each of the themes can be seen throughout the text as well as its strong connections to Individuals and Societies (Civics) content. It also connects us globally by studying literature based on issues faced in other cultures. Our MYP focus is to have students think about issues not only locally, but through the lens of global context. Use this guide to pace yourself on our reading and acquaint yourself with the ideas that will be discussed in class.

Directions: Choose **ONE** question from each chapter to answer. Be sure to answer questions with an even mix of the four themes of Year 2 Language and Literature. Also, answer at least 3 questions based on the Individuals and Societies (Civics) connection.

Click [here](#) to join the MyLearning Course where you can submit your answers.

Chapter 1: (Week of June 4th)

1. **Perception and Reality:** Why does Mrs. Brown give the “not-so-good” parts in the skirts to the Dominicans? What does this say about her character?
2. **Perception and Reality:** Anita is confused because she is not asked to pack her school belongings at the same time as her cousin Carla. What does this say about Anita’s family ties?
3. **Perception and Reality:** Anita doesn’t know if she can believe her mother when she says that they will see the cousins soon. Why? What does this say about her character?
4. **Individuals and Societies (Civics) Connection:** Anita says people do things differently in Haiti. Locate the Dominican Republic and Haiti on a map and research 3 ways the cultures are different.

Chapter 2: (Week of June 11th)

1. **Guided by a Cause:** Why does Anita cling to her mother while the search continues?
2. **Guided by a Cause:** Why does the family sleep on mattresses on the floor?
3. **Perception and Reality:** Why doesn’t Anita realize earlier that her family doesn’t like the dictator?
4. **Individuals and Societies (Civics) Connection:** During the time that this novel takes place, the Dominican Republic is under the rule of Rafael Trujillo. Compare and contrast a dictatorship to a democracy. How is a dictator different than a president?

Chapter 3: (Week of June 18th)

1. **Bold Actions:** Is it wise for Mami not to tell Anita too much?
2. **Guided by a Cause:** What does Papi say is the key to improving the lives of their countrymen? Do you agree?

Chapter 4: (Week of June 25th)

1. **Perception and Reality:** Why does Chucha tell Sammy that Toni is “someone he did not see”?
2. **Guided by a Cause:** Mami says, “But sometimes life without freedom is no life at all,” and she says they must stay in the Dominican Republic. How does this apply to Anita’s family? Do you agree with this statement?

Chapter 5: (Week of July 2nd)

1. **Perception and Reality:** Do you think that the family is unnecessarily concerned about their home being bugged and their maid being a spy?
2. **Guided by a Cause:** Anita has wanted to be like Joan of Arc. Do you think Anita is a heroine?

Chapters 6&7: (Week of July 9th)

1. **Perception and Reality:** Why can’t Mami simply fire the maid?
2. **Bold Actions:** Anita feels, “It’s so unfair to have to live in a country where you have to do stuff you feel bad about in order to save your life.” What does this mean?

Chapter 7:

1. **Perception and Reality:** How does Sam feel about his sister leaving? Is it the same way Anita feels about her sister leaving?
2. **Perception and Reality:** Anita and her siblings react differently to the tension in their lives. Compare and contrast their reactions.
3. **Individuals and Societies (Civics) Connection:** What part can the radio play in broadcasting information about alternative governments?

Chapter 8: (Week of July 16th)

1. **Risk and Exploration:** Oscar understands the fear that Anita is living with. He says, "You can't be brave if you're not scared." How are his and Anita's feelings similar?
2. **Perception and Reality:** Papi turns to Anita in the car with a "if-looks-could-kill" look, but he quickly changes it. Why do you think he is so preoccupied? How does Anita interpret his look?
3. **Guided by a Cause:** When the men return, Papi says that they are free. What has happened?

Chapter 9: (Week of July 23rd)

1. **Bold Actions:** How is Anita going to stay "one step ahead of being scared?"
2. **Perception and Reality:** The official radio station does not announce El Jefe's death. Instead it plays organ music, which reminds Anita of an endless funeral. What does the music mean?
3. **Risk and Exploration:** Why would Papi put El Jefe's body in his own garage, ignoring the possible risks it places on the family?
4. **Bold Actions:** Little Razor Blade tells Mami that they are taking Papi and Tio Toni "to the place where they took El Jefe." What does that mean?

Anita's Diary: (Week of July 30th)

1. **Perception and Reality:** Tio Pepe says, "boredom is a sign of poverty of the mind." Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
2. **Perception and Reality:** Tio Pepe says that human beings aren't using their full potential. Do you agree?
3. **Guided by a Cause:** How were Mami and Papi pulled into the revolutionary movement? Why did they stay to fight for freedom when so many of their family members left the country?

Chapter 10&11: (Week of August 6th)

1. **Perception and Reality:** Why can't Anita go with her grandfather to get the medicine? What is the family's financial situation?
2. **Bold Actions:** Why does Anita fill up the grocery cart?
3. Anita is not sure the United States is a free country for those who are not Americans. Do you think it is? Explain.
4. **Perception and Reality:** Anita knows when she sees Mr. Washburn at the apartment that her father is dead. Why does she deny it to herself until she hears the words?
5. **Individuals and Societies (Civics) Connection:** Research how many immigrants come to the United States from the Dominican Republic.
6. **Individuals and Societies (Civics) Connection:** Interview someone in the community who was born in a different country. Discuss whether or not it was hard to learn English and what was most difficult about adapting to America.

Chapter 11:

1. **Perception and Reality:** There are many references to death in the novel. Mami mentions that the trees look gray and dead. Tia Laura says the kids will catch deathly colds. Why does Anita feel that death isn't something to scare people with?
2. **Guided by a Cause:** Anita thinks Chucha would say, "What good is it to escape captivity only to be imprisoned in your own misery?" Do you agree with her philosophy?
3. **Risk and Exploration:** Compare Anita's life to that of a butterfly.
4. **Bold Actions:** How does the emptiness inside Anita finally begin to fill?