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Synopsis

Part One: 1938-1946

Chapter One: Dedé

A Dominican-American journalist arrives at the home of Dedé Mirabal to ask about her three sisters. Some 34 years after the trio died, interviewers continue to question the lone survivor.

At the Mirabal homestead, Dedé lives among memories after a divorce and tries to concentrate on the positive side. For ten years she has sold life insurance. She reflects on her family's concern that Minerva gets a law degree in a period of spying and subverting the regime of Generalissimo Rafael Leonidas Trujillo.

Chapter Two: Minerva

In 1938, the Mirabal girls live under a stern patriarchy. Because Patria wants to be a nun, Papá lets her attend Inmaculada Concepción in La Vega under the chaperonage of Minerva and Dedé. On the first day at school, Minerva meets Sinita Perozo, a charity student who sleeps next to Minerva in the dormitory. In exchange for girl talk, Sinita offers to tell Trujillo's secret, which impacted her family with the shooting of her five uncles, father, and brother José Luis.

In 1941, Lina Lovatón gains the love of other schoolmates. After Trujillo catches sight of her, he begins visiting and bringing gifts for Lina and for the school. On her 17th birthday, Trujillo holds a party for her at his home outside Santiago, but Lina never returns to school. That summer, Minerva learns from Papá that Lina has become the dictator's concubine and is pregnant.

In 1944, in a new gymnasium named for Lina, convent students present historical skits of the island's

past century to Trujillo and his son, Colonel Ramfis. Sinita pretends to aim her bow and arrow at the dictator. After Ramfis intervenes and breaks the bow, she proudly identifies the name of her family, whom the dictator has targeted for persecution.

Chapter Three: María Teresa

After María Teresa "Mate" Mirabal begins keeping a diary on December 8, 1945, she reveals her father's immersion in the cacao harvest. She chronicles

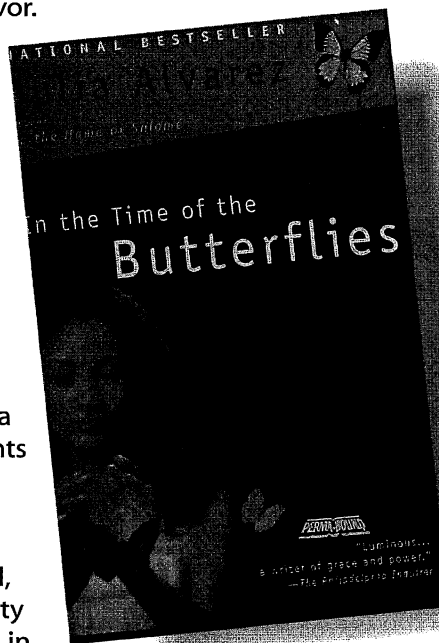
Minerva's clandestine departures from the convent to meet with Elsa, Lourdes, and Sinita at the home of Don Horacio, Elsa's grandfather. Hilda, an atheist, joins the group and is arrested. To conceal group secrets, Minerva buries incriminating papers and letters, including Mate's diary.

Chapter Four: Patria

For her piety, Patria is a favorite of the nuns. Puberty alters her focus on Holy Thursday, when she washes the feet of farmer Pedrito González. By age 16, she is engaged to him. They marry on February 24, 1947. By the time of her third pregnancy, she worries about Minerva's protests against

Trujillo. Minerva destroys Patria's childlike faith by reporting on priests taking graft.

Following the death of Patria's third child at birth in July 1946, the next month, she and Pedrito move in with the Mirabals. Rumors of Haitians massacred at the western border and the killing of Martínez Reyna and his wife stir terrors. Patria joins her mother and sisters in a pilgrimage to Hugüey on the island's east coast. Mamá proclaims that all males are scoundrels, including agents of the government and Papá. She confides to Patria Enrique's adultery.



Part II: 1948-1959

Chapter Five: Dedé

Fela, a family servant, practices divination. Dedé disrespects the telling of fortunes. She recalls Minerva's beau Virgilio "Lío" Morales, a teacher at the medical school. Papá allows the sisters to play volleyball while he attends to "men's business." Dedé is annoyed to find Minerva and "Lío" in the bushes. Mamá protests Lío's communist principles. Minerva meets him in secret. He reports that his friend Freddy was found hanging in his prison cell. The police question the Morales family about Lío. He goes into hiding about the time that Dedé is betrothed to her cousin, Jaimito Fernandez. Lío sends a letter asking Minerva to seek asylum with him. Dedé burns the letter.

Chapter Six: Minerva

In 1949, Minerva still lives at home at the time when she uncovers Papá's love nest in the cacao groves. Disillusioned by the discovery of four illegitimate sisters, she suffers compounded hurt after Lío departs without saying goodbye. She uncovers in her father's armoire four letters from Lío that Papá confiscated. She drives back to her father's Ford at the love nest and crashes her Jeep into it. Papá slaps her.

An invitation to a Discovery Day dance at Trujillo's mansion requires the chaperonage of Papá, Pedrito, Patria, Dedé, and Jaimito. Minerva surmises that Papá has moved his second family to San Francisco on the northern shore. Greeted by Manuel de Moya, Minerva sits at Trujillo's table. She witnesses Trujillo fondling a senator's wife under the table. While he dances with Minerva, she states her intent to study law. Because of Trujillo's vulgar hip thrusts, she slaps him. As rain interrupts the party, she slips away in the family car. The next morning, Papá sends an apologetic telegram. The following morning, agents arrest Papá. Minerva gives his paramour money to enroll her four illiterate girls in school.

Minerva and Mamá take rooms in San Francisco while they petition the Office of Missing Persons for news of Papá. The next day, Minerva meets General Federico Fiallo, who knows about Lío's letters in the purse she left at the party. Manuel de Moya insists that she meet Trujillo. After three weeks of house arrest, Papá departs from the prison hospital gravely ill from a heart attack that went untreated for five days. At Trujillo's office, he

indicates friendship with Chiche, Mamá's uncle, who is a notorious gambler. Minerva throws dice to determine whether she goes to law school or Trujillo "gets his wish." At the toss of two doubles, he acknowledges a stalemate and releases the family.

Chapter Seven: María Teresa

The family weeps for Papá, who dies on December 14, 1953. Mamá composes a conciliatory letter stating family loyalty to Trujillo. Minerva continues her suspect behaviors by listening to Fidel Castro's stirring broadcasts over the radio. In February 1954, Mate teaches Mamá to read. Minerva dates Manolo. For graduation, Mate receives a \$10,000 legacy and enrollment at the university. The family discovers that Prieto, a yardman, spies for the government. They reassign him to the pigpen. Mate switches from law to philosophy and letters. In November 1955, Minerva moves in with Manolo. In April 1956, Mate is elected Miss University. In July, Minerva graduates and settles in Monte Cristi. She earns a diploma, but no license to practice law.

Mate lives with Minerva and Manolo and helps her sister through marital disputes over Manolo's adultery. The couple hide munitions. Mate receives a message for Minerva, called "La Mariposa," and falls in love with the deliverer, Leandro "Palomino" Guzmán Rodríguez. On Valentine's Day, 1958, the couple marry.

Chapter Eight: Patria

In 1959, Patria takes stock of her sisters' unsettled lives. After Mamá builds a cottage, Dedé and Jaimito occupy the family homeplace. Mate and Leandro move frequently to rented quarters. Minerva and Manolo own their small coastal house. Patria conceives after 13 years and names her son Raúl Ernesto after Marxist guerrilla leader Che Ernesto Guevara. Nelson joins his uncles Leandro and Manolo in adventures. Nelson decides to enter Santo Tomás de Aquino, a seminary in Santo Domingo. By Easter, he wants to join the liberators. Minerva asks Patria to keep baby Manolito at Conuco. Only four months from the birth of her next child, Patria agrees.

Almost weekly, Minerva, Mate, their husbands, and others meet under a roofed veranda in Pedrito's cacao groves. Patria tries to keep Nelson from joining the revolutionary cell. In late May, the group anticipates an invasion in June. Patria, in her fifth

month of pregnancy, chooses to go on retreat. Mate admits to being one of the cabal.

At a mountain religious retreat at Constanza on June 14, the group incurs shelling. The sight of a young boy shot in the back transforms Patria, who identifies him as her stillborn child. The total kill is 49. The second wave meets disastrous results on June 20. In August, Patria attends the Christian Cultural Group in Salcedo, where priests ask serious questions about how to help the peasants. They form a national underground called the Acción Clero-Cultural. Patria holds meetings with her sisters' cell in the farmhouse. The government threatens confiscation of property for conspiracy. The 40 conspirators, called the Fourteenth of June Movement, make bombs and count ammunition that Pedrito and Nelson bury in the fields.

Part Three: 1960

Chapter Nine: Dedé

Dedé tells the interviewers that all the husbands except Jaimito went to prison. Minou arrives at sundown and asks why her aunt did not accompany the sisters the day they died. Dedé recalls Jaimito's complaints that she had lost her sunny disposition. To Patria's request to bury boxes of armaments in the cacao fields, Jaimito refuses and roughs up his wife to make her swear not to take part in sedition. In the last week of July, the three sisters inform Dedé that the next big push will take place on August 15. Their cell will take the Salcedo Fortaleza. Minerva accuses men like Papá and Jaimito of keeping Trujillo in power by doing nothing to protest tyranny. Dedé's decision to join forces her to consider leaving Jaimito.

Dedé takes stock of Jaimito's business failures, morose behaviors, and solitary drinking. She creeps out to the garden shed to hear Castro and Virgilio's speeches on a banned radio station. To spend a day at the church, she lies to Jaimito about accompanying Don Bernardo and Doña Belén to the doctor's office in Salcedo. Dedé is forced to admit that she is too frightened to take part in the revolution. She returns to an empty house after Jaimito takes the boys to his mother's house in San Francisco. On the porch of Doña Leila's house, Jaimito accuses Dedé of consorting with Father de Jesús, a reputed Communist.

Manolo suggests that Jaimito take his wife on a second honeymoon. On return from a trip to the mangrove swamps in a rented boat, Dedé and Jaimito learn that Leandro is in police custody. Dedé explains to Mamá about the sisters' involvement in conspiracy. The SIM comes to arrest Nelson and Pedrito, who flee to the mountains. Agents destroy the farmhouse looking for contraband. Nelson and Pedrito return when they see flames. Patria suffers a breakdown.

A succession of crises engulfs the Mirabals—Manolo is arrested, Minerva needs money to pay for her tuberculosis treatments, and Minerva is arrested. Dedé, who mothers Minou, experiences a shift in the power structure of her marriage after Jaimito begs for a second chance. The crises continue—Captain Peña arrests Mate and takes her to the capital, agents seize family cars, spies watch the homestead, and the family petitions in vain for the girls' return. Rumors report that Trujillo wants Minerva dead. The Organization of American States (OAS) clamors for an end to jailings and executions.

Chapter Ten: Patria

Patria reels under the loss of husband, son, and home. Captain Peña shows an interest in Minou. He reports that Pedrito rejected an offer of freedom from the SIM in exchange for divorcing Patria. In the third week, names of family prisoners appear in the media. The family worships in Salcedo, where the SIM arrests Padre de Jesús for sedition. His replacement, Padre Gabriel, encourages public involvement in the overthrow of Trujillo. The government retaliates by trying to murder the archbishop, sending prostitutes to disrupt mass, and desecrating the church with sewage. Margarita, who is a pharmacist in Salcedo, brings a note from cell 61 in La Victoria prison, which begs for medicines, food, and news from home. The family packages underwear, biscuits and molasses, toilet articles, money, and a prayerbook.

The Mirabal women begin nettling spies in their hedges by planting thorn bushes and dumping bathwater on agents. A positive sign comes from the prison, where Mate hangs her black towel at the window. Peña buys Patria's farm. Don Bernardo provides transportation to Peña's office, where Patria begs for Nelson's release. Before Easter, Patria sends another packet of medicine, soap, and writing and sewing supplies. Peña

reports that Manolo is in solitary confinement, Leandro is considering a job for Trujillo, and the two Mirabal women have refused pardons. Patria goes to Trujillo's office to seek Nelson's release. As the boy approaches, Trujillo flirts with Nelson's sister Noris. Patria and Mamá invite Peña to a meal.

Chapter Eleven: María Teresa

Santioló, a guard at La Victoria, smuggles in Mate's notebook. She reports on prison activities, including Minerva's singing of the national anthem on March 18. Four days later, Mate breaks down in a panic attack. She survives questioning and lewd remarks from interrogators. The men consider Minerva the cell leader. On March 25, two female prisoners gain release. Six days a week, Minerva holds school for cellmates. On April 2, she returns to solitary confinement for three weeks when she wards off guards seizing crucifixes and halting hymn singing. Others shout "Viva la Mariposa!"

Mate realizes that she is pregnant and fears that the SIM will seize her child. She suffers a miscarriage. After Minerva's return to the cell at Easter, Mate begins writing about the privations of prison. On May 25, Minerva and Mate are arraigned and sentenced to five years and a fine of 5,000 pesos each. By June, Leandro is accused of conspiracy; the movement founders. Manolo taps out a message encouraging solidarity. A news clipping reports that a car bomb engineered by Trujillo injured President Betancourt of Venezuela on June 24.

By July, prison morale rises. Leandro joins his brothers-in-law at La Victoria. The government publishes a book condemning the Mirabal cabal. On August 6, Mate represents the cell at a meeting in the visitors' hall with the seven-member OAS Peace Committee. She drops from her braid a folded note for one member to read. On August 7, before the women's release the next day, Mate collects signatures from cellmates.

Chapter 12: Minerva

Under house arrest, Minerva suffers flashbacks. The Mirabals begin making christening gowns to sell. Minerva and Mate tell prison stories. They go to church weekly and visit their husbands each Thursday. Elsa visits and brings bags of clothes and news of OAS sanctions. Dedé discourages the wives' visits to the prison. Minerva informs Manolo that new cells guide the underground movement.

After agents deliver revolutionary leaflets, Peña prohibits prison visits until late September.

Manolo fears that the men's lives are over. In October, the wives prefer Rufino for their driver. From Dr. Delia Santos, they learn that Sinita has sought asylum. Replacing old cell leaders is Dr. Pedro Viñas, a Santiago urologist, with whom Patria wheedles an appointment. The doctor reports that the U.S. no longer supports a revolt. He looks to Minerva as an example of bold defiance.

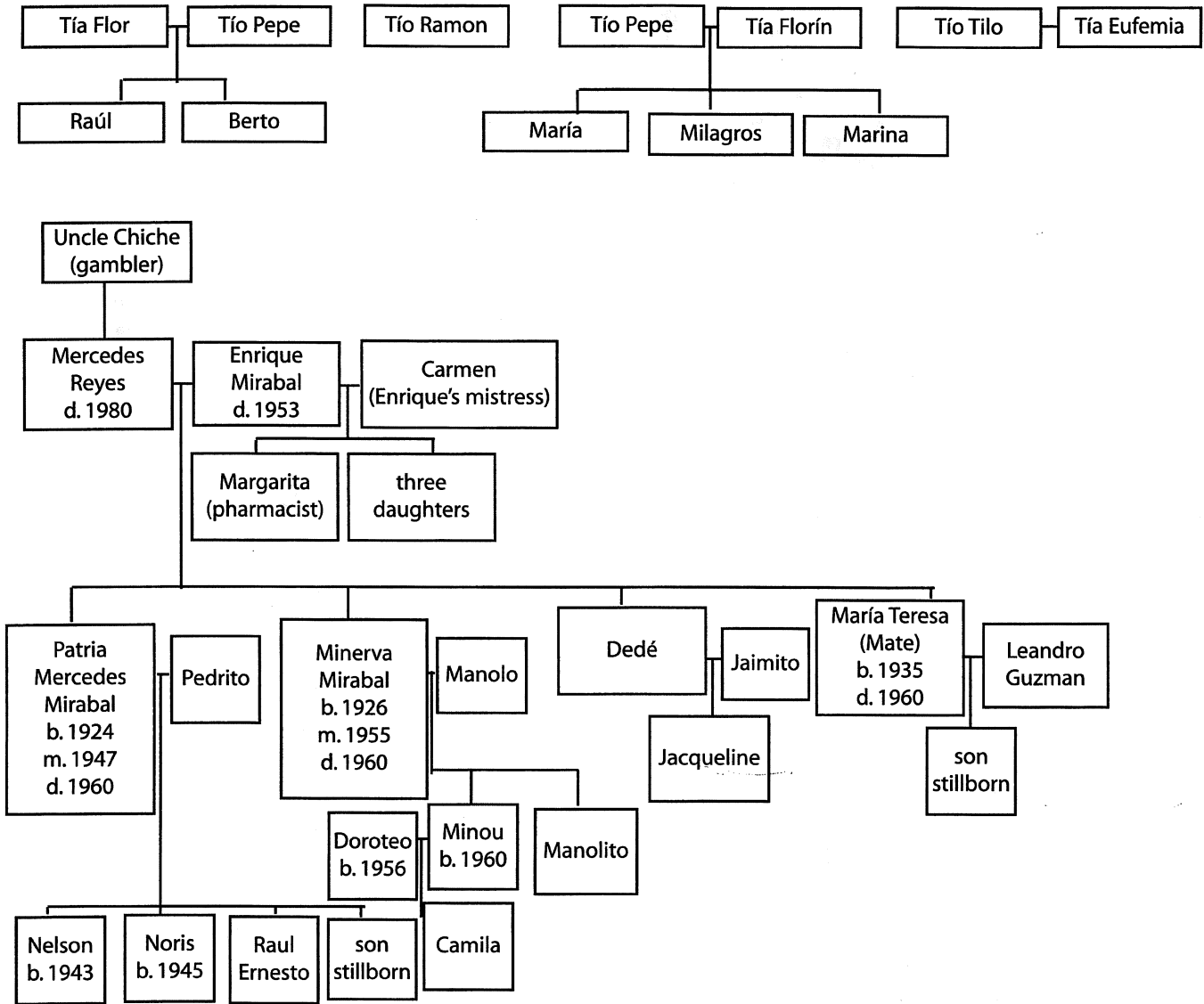
Manolo grows grim and expects to die. The SIM takes Minerva's house. On her drive with Dedé to pick up household goods, agents halt the car. Guards surround the square to disperse strollers. On Trujillo's visit to Salcedo, he complains of libertarian revolt from the church and the Mirabals. Tío Pepe thinks the sisters should remain indoors; Dedé concurs. Peña reports that Leandro and Manolo have been moved to Puerto Plata. On the drive to the prison on November 25, Rufino picks up a young soldier. At Trujillo's mansion at La Cumbre, the presence of Peña's car indicates an ambush.

Epilogue: Dedé

To honor the murdered Butterflies, visitors bring memorials to Dedé. Reports indicate that soldiers took the Mirabals to Trujillo's mansion. At 7:30, after the girls were shot and bludgeoned, agents pushed their jeep over a cliff. At the murderers' trial, they got 20 or 30 years each, but were freed during the revolution. Trujillo is assassinated; the Mirabal husbands are released.

The morning after the girls' deaths, Dedé identifies their bodies at José María Cabral Hospital in Santiago and washes and dresses them for burial. The family returns the Butterflies and Rufino in four pine boxes. Mourners toss flowers from the roadside. Dedé accuses SIM agents of being assassins. Manolo addresses peasants on the radio. After his murder in 1963, Jaimito moves to New York to work in a factory. Pedrito marries a young girl. Leandro gives up politics and becomes a builder. Dedé becomes the family oracle.

Character Genealogy



Author Sketch

Dominican-American novelist, children's writer, and poet Julia Álvarez turns biculturalism into the source of deft, gripping fiction. A native of

New York City, she was born on March 27, 1950, to an intellectual family, including a grandfather who was a cultural attaché to the United Nations. Under tyrant Generalissimo Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, she grew up in the Dominican Republic from infancy, absorbed Caribbean lore from her family, and attended boarding school. In August 1960, the family fled the island's repressive regime after her father, a physician and hospital manager, promoted a coup. She remarked in an interview with *National Public Radio*, "It was the either-or model of immigration, assimilation. You know, you became an American, you cut off your ties to the past." At first mystified by Americans and by idiomatic English, she eased duality by retreating into fantasy, reading, and writing.

After enrolling at Connecticut College, Álvarez completed degrees in literature from Middlebury College and Syracuse University and polished her writing skills at the Bread Loaf School of English. She worked as poet in residence in Delaware, Kentucky, and North Carolina school systems and taught literature and writing at Phillips Andover Academy, George Washington University, Middlebury College, and the Universities of Illinois and Vermont. At age 41, she wowed the fiction market with a first novel, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accent*, a feminist story of philandering males and irritated wives. It earned the PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Award and an American Library Association Notable Book citation. The author moved to Champlain Valley, Vermont, to write and teach at Alta Gracia, a Dominican literacy center. She pursued the motif of fractious marriages in two works of historical fiction—*In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994), an autobiographical reflection of her decade in the Dominican Republic, and *In the Name of Salomé* (2000), a reprise of the feminism of educator Salomé Ureña de Henríquez, a women's rights crusader in the late 1800s.



Critic's Corner

Alvarez created a feminist libertarian classic with *In the Time of the Butterflies*. In polyphonic style, she imagines the homelife and education of three island martyrs, Dr. Minerva Mirabal de Tavárez and her sisters Patria Mercedes Mirabal de González and María Teresa Mirabal de Guzman. The girls came of age within the chauvinism of a macho Hispanic society. After Trujillo's henchmen shot and clubbed them by the wayside near La Cumbre, the women attained stature among islanders who despised the tyrannical government. Critics compare Alvarez's handling of themes of female silencing to those of Isabel Allende's historical novel *The House of the Spirits* (1982).

As a result of the Mirabal sisters' defiance of a despot, the United Nations chose November 25th as the International Day Against Violence Against Women. On October 7, 2001, the cable television version of *In the Time of the Butterflies* aired on Showtime, starring Salma Hayek and Edward James Olmos as Minerva and Trujillo. Critics approved of the pacing, which balanced the plotting of the political underground with the daily lives of a rural Dominican family. Active and personable, the screenplay captures the ebullience and idealism of Minerva, the original butterfly, who inspires others to overthrow a brutal despot.

Media Versions of Alvarez's Work

Download (PDF)

In the Time of the Butterflies Study Guide, Gale

DVD and Video

In the Time of the Butterflies, 2001

Spanish Translation

In the Time of the Butterflies, Plume

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Alvarez's Published Works

Homecoming, 1984
The Housekeeping Book, 1984
How the García Girls Lost Their Accents, 1991
In the Time of the Butterflies, 1994
The Other Side/El Otro Lado, 1995
Yo!, 1997
Something to Declare, 1998
Seven Trees, 1999
In the Name of Salomé, 2000

The Secret Footprints, 2000
How Tía Lola Came to Stay, 2001
A Cafecito Story, 2001
Before We Were Free, 2004

Related Reading

Isabel Allende, *The House of the Spirits*
 Mariano Azuela, *The Underdogs*
 Chris Collier and James Collier, *My Brother Sam Is Dead*
 Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*
 Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*
 Laura Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate*
 Zlata Filipovic, *Zlata's Diary*
 Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*
 Patrick Henry, "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death"
 Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables*
 Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*
 Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*
 Boris Pasternak, *Dr. Zhivago*
 Nawal El Saadawi, *Woman at Point Zero*
 Martin Luther King, "I Have a Dream"
 Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams* and *The Poisonwood Bible*
 Amy Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*
 Yoko Kawashima Watkins, *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*
 John Greenleaf Whittier, "Barbara Frietchie"

General Objectives

1. To understand the impact of dictatorship on a nation
2. To account for the success of radical movements
3. To interpret shifts in social and religious customs
4. To contrast causes of bribery, genocide, and sexual immorality
5. To discuss the themes of valor and united action
6. To explain the harm of family secrets
7. To analyze marital relationships
8. To describe attitudes toward risk and spying
9. To describe the atmosphere of a women's prison
10. To analyze the roles of parents, supporters, and religious leaders

Specific Objectives

1. To explain how Dedé perceives her regrets and losses
2. To analyze the symbolism of the title
3. To summarize Minerva's centrality to family and community
4. To account for change in Mamá, Jaimito, Papá, and Patria
5. To describe the smuggling and coding system in La Victoria
6. To predict how Dominicans will maintain admiration for the Butterflies
7. To summarize injustice under Trujillo
8. To discuss long-term implications of Trujillo's despoliation of young girls
9. To describe the roles of Santicló, Rufino, Sinita, Manolo, Pedrito, Elsa, Jaimito, Hilda, and Minou
10. To list events caused by hatred, suspicion, and revenge

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Julia Álvarez's fiction, present the following terms and applications:

anti-hero a protagonist or central figure who lacks the usual heroic qualities of an admirable person or leader, particularly skill, grace, honesty, courage, and truth. Patria exemplifies the behaviors of a non-hero because she kowtows to a demanding husband while fighting the urge to take action against political corruption. She redeems herself in part by allowing cell meetings on the family farm and by helping the revolutionaries bury weapons and ammunition in the cacao fields.

existentialism a loosely defined philosophy that contrasts the random nature of the universe with the inadequacy of human control or intelligence. The novel stresses that people like the Butterflies are incapable of overthrowing a political dictatorship as corrupt as that of Trujillo. The Mirabal sisters' choice of risking their lives to support revolution embraces the possibility of permanent imprisonment or assassination. Ironically, their ignoble deaths by gunshot and bludgeoning did more to unsettle Trujillo's despotism than burying guns in the cacao fields.

sociological novel reform literature that uses character and action to delineate a social problem. *In the Time of the Butterflies* turns the life stories of the Mirabal sisters into a study of grassroots plotting against a ruthless tyrant. By imagining the feelings of each sister and her intent to establish a new life for Dominicans, Julia Álvarez creates from the bare facts a character pattern shared by each rebel. The response of peasants to the Butterflies accounts for the legends that grew out of brave, desperate actions.

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Julia Álvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* should include these aspects:

Themes

- obedience
- piety
- innocence
- upheaval
- rebellion
- family
- imprisonment
- loss
- martyrdom
- legends

Motifs

- growing up in a Catholic family
- discovering and coping with adultery
- loving and losing
- assuming the role of rescuer
- comprehending the torturer
- coping with emotional trauma

The Importance of Setting

The milieu of Julia Álvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* describes much of the beauty and pageantry of the Dominican Republic that revolutionaries wanted to preserve. The Catholic ritual that dominates the sisters' lives in girlhood gives reasons for the naming of places like San Francisco, San José, Rio San Juan, Santo Domingo, Constanza, and Monte Cristi. The family cacao plantation, located at Ojo de Agua [Eye of Water], occupies pleasant territory around a spring, a suggestion of the bucolic life the girls enjoy at home. Removal of the four Mirabals to Inmaculada Concepción convent school and to La Victoria prison contrasts the



pleasant homeplace overseen by Mamá and Papá. Under the harsh regulations of the nuns and the paranoid behaviors of prison guards, the Butterflies develop a sisterhood marked by unity and loyalty, two qualities that follow them to the end of their foreshortened lives.

Moments of departure from home introduce significant aspects of island life. At the Discovery Day gathering at Trujillo's mansion, Minerva learns to protect herself from a coarse womanizer. The intervention of rain ends the party with her quick flight to the car and avoidance of possible rape. At the university, Minerva and Mate strengthen their sisterhood while granting each other the individual right to privacy. At worship services, Álvarez returns to the lewd, sacrilegious tactics of Trujillo's followers, who attempt to murder an archbishop, introduce prostitutes to the communion service to degrade the ritual, and defoul the church with excrement from local privies. In contrast, the retreat to the Maryknoll motherhouse in the mountains at Constanza offers a respite from paranoia and threats of capture and execution.

Even among the devout, the sounds of artillery shells and the sight of a young boy shot in the back prove that islanders have no way of avoiding a perilous situation.

For drama, Álvarez hones the visual effects of the final journey up hairpin turns to Puerto Plata, the Butterflies' last trip. Their enjoyment of shopping for handbags, drinking lemonade, and waving to local people builds tension toward the ambush and murder by gunshot and clubbing. Dedé's transformation into a defiant Butterfly erupts during the claiming, washing, and dressing of the bodies and their return in pine coffins in the farm truck. Building the climactic rise of the Butterflies to national legends are examples of mourning—the flowers tossed onto the coffins by peasants along the roadside and Dedé's return of the remains to Mamá, who receives her three girls once more into the family. In the absence of the legendary rebels, the Mirabal compound continues to draw the curious, who return each November 25 to visit the museum, view the monument, and question Dedé about the events that turned her sisters into martyrs.

Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about the Mirabal sisters, Trujillo, Julia Álvarez, the Dominican Republic, revolution, exile, the OAS, and other subjects and issues deriving from the novel, consult these sources:

Articles

Rohter, Larry. "The Three Sisters, Avenged: A Dominican Drama," *New York Times* (15 February 1997): 4.

Audiocassette

Before We Were Free, Listening Library
Concentrated Americans, National Asian American Telecommunications Association
Democracy and Human Rights in Contemporary Dominican Society, CUNY Dominican Studies Institute

Books

Breath, Eyes, Memory
The Farming of Bones

Filmstrip

Self-Fulfillment, Guidance Associates

Internet

History in a Mural
<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/43/index-i.html>
The Mirabal Sisters
<http://www.el-bohio.com/>
Organization of American States
<http://www.oas.org/>

Map

The Dominican Republic
<http://www.caribbeanonline.com/>
Nelles Dominican Republic Travel Map, Nelles Maps

Poems

"Barbara Frietchie," John Greenleaf Whittier
"Sanctuary," Donald Davidson

Reference Books

The Dictator Next Door
The Dominican Republic: A National History
Explore the Dominican Republic
Julia Álvarez: A Critical Companion

Short Story

"The Wall," Jean Paul Sartre

Slides

Characters in Crisis, Center for Humanities
An Inquiry into the Nature of Man: His Inhumanity and His Humanity, Center for the Humanities
No Man Is an Island, Center for the Humanities

Video

The House of the Spirits
Women of Hope, Bread and Roses Cultural Project
Words from the Sea: Caribbean Diaspora Voices in U. S. Literature, CUNY Dominican Studies Institute

Timeline of fictional and historical events

- 1844** The Dominican Republic gains its independence from Spain.
- Oct. 24, 1891** Rafael Leonidas Trujillo is born.
- 1930** He comes to power.
- 1937** He slays 20,000 Haitians.
- fall 1938** *Patria* and *Minerva* enter *Inmaculada Concepción* convent school in La Vega.
- January 1939** *Dedé* joins her sisters at school.
- 1942** Dominican women gain the vote.
- 1944** During a celebration of the island's centennial, *Sinita Perozo* pretends to shoot *Trujillo* with an arrow.
- Dec. 8, 1945** *María Teresa* begins keeping a diary.
- 1947** Virgilio "Lío" Morales returns from exile.
- summer** The United States launches a failed invasion on Cayo Confites from Cuba.
- Oct. 12, 1948** *Minerva* slaps *Trujillo*.
- October 14** *Papá* is arrested.
- next week** He suffers a heart attack.
- early Nov.** He exits the prison hospital.
- Jan. 19, 1949** A small invasion force fails to make a beachhead at Luperón Bay.
- 1957** Johnny Abbes García heads the newly formed Military Intelligence Service (SIM), which shanghais young men for service in the secret police.
- Jan. 1, 1959** Fidel Castro frees Cuba from Juan Batista.
- June 14** At a religious retreat at Constanza, *Patria* hears shelling and views the shooting death of a young boy.
- June 20** The second wave of the invasion begins.
- fall** When *Patria* asks *Dedé* for permission to bury armaments in the cacao fields, *Jaimito* refuses.

Feb. 1960	Agents arrest Leandro, Manolo, Pedrito, Nelson, Minerva, and Mate and seize their vehicles. Captain Peña buys Patria's farm.
March 18	Minerva leads prisoners in singing the national anthem.
April	Patria negotiates Nelson's release. Trujillo flirts with Noris.
April 2	Minerva returns to solitary confinement for three weeks.
April 7	After 77 days in prison, Mate sees Mamá, Patria, and Pedrito.
April 11	A report to the OAS describes the torture of a woman at La 40 prison.
later	Mate suffers a miscarriage.
Easter	Minerva returns to the cell.
June 24	A car bomb injures Betancourt, the president of Venezuela.
July 23	Leandro is transferred to La Victoria.
August 6	Mate represents the cell at a meeting with the OAS Peace Committee and smuggles in a note.
August 8	Minerva and Mate enter house arrest.
late Sept.	After a suspension, prison visits are reinstated.
mid-October	Minerva visits Dr. Viñas in Santiago.
Nov. 25	Gunmen murder María Teresa, Minerva, and Patria along with their driver.
Nov. 26	Mourners toss flowers on the pine coffins.
next week	The husbands learn of the assassinations.
May 30, 1961	Trujillo is shot.
1962	A moderate, Juan Bosch, wins election to the presidency.
Dec. 21, 1963	Manolo is murdered.
Jan. 1980	Mamá dies.
1984	After a divorce, Dedé begins selling life insurance.
1993	A Canadian man proposes to Dedé.
1994	A journalist interviews Dedé about the deaths of the Butterflies.

Meaning Study

Below are significant words, phrases, or sentences from the novel. Explain each in context. Chapter and page numbers pinpoint each entry so that you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. You see, most of the campesinos around here can't read, so it wouldn't do us any good to put names on the roads. (Chapter 1, p. 4)
(The relationship between the revolution and the campesinos (rural peasants) takes on increasing importance throughout the novel. It is the laboring class that supports the Butterflies and that turns the Mirabal sisters into legends.)
2. A daughter is a needle in the heart. (Chapter 1, p. 12)
(Enrique Mirabal's sexism toward his all-female household echoes the patriarchy of islanders. Traditionally, Hispanic men exult at the birth of male children, and feel free to take mistresses like Enrique's Carmen. He excuses his adultery with a cliché, Cosas de los hombres (Things a man does). Álvarez links his prejudice to the grotesque womanizing of Trujillo, who prefers young girls like Lina Lovatón as concubines.)
3. My theory is that the god of thunder Huracán always acts up around the holiday of the Conquistador, who killed off all his Taino devotees. (Chapter 6, p. 93)
(Conquest is an old story on Hispaniola, where the native Taino fought off the invasive Carib. Both nations lost out to Christopher Columbus, whose caravels arrived in September 1492 during hurricane season. The peaceloving Taino, numbering some two million, died off from bondage, disease, starvation, and brutality. By 1550, they were virtually extinct.)
4. Ours is the first university in the new world. (Chapter 6, p. 100)
(A decade after Columbus landed on Hispaniola, Spanish missionaries set up an island school system. In 1538, Hispaniola boasted the first university in the Western Hemisphere, Saint Thomas Aquinas University, built in a convent church in Santo Domingo. It offers free education for Dominicans.)

5. But sure enough, there it was, José Martí, dates and all. (Chapter 7, p. 122).
(A patriot and martyr, Cuban attorney and poet José Julián Martí established a reputation as a unifier and freedom fighter. As Cubans ousted the Spanish to attain liberty, he died in combat in 1895 at age 42. His legacy includes the newspaper La Patria Libre and, in exile, the Venezuelan Review and a column in La Nación.)
6. We'll call him Che for short. (Chapter 8, p. 151)
(The naming of Raúl Ernesto González reflects Patria's regard for Argentine physician and strategist Ernesto "Che" Guevara, a significant Communist leader of the Cuban Revolution. He intended to unify Latin America to relieve widespread poverty. In 1967, he was shot in Bolivia at age 39 while training guerilla forces.)
7. It was true Johnny Abbes and his SIM were dragging young men off the streets, and farms, and from offices, like Herod the boy babies in all of Judea. (Chapter 8, p. 153)
(Álvarez compares the forced enlistment of males in the secret police to the biblical slaughter of boy children to rid Herod's realm of a Hebrew messiah. Johnny Abbes García, leader of the Military Intelligence Service (SIM), superintended torture of subversives and suspects of anti-Trujillo activism. Abbes also hired an American mercenary to assassinate Castro.)
8. It was as if the three fates were approaching, their scissors poised to snip the knot that was keeping Dedé's life from falling apart. (Chapter 9, p. 175)
(Álvarez compares Patria, Minerva, and Mate to the three fates, the Greek trio of sisters—Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos—who symbolize the spinning of the thread of life, the measuring of its length, and the cutting at the time of death.)
9. He gave his old business partner un abrazo, addressing him as compadre even though neither one was godparent to the other's children. (Chapter 9, p. 187)
(Álvarez depicts the warmth and charm of Manolo Tavárez Justo, who wins converts to the revolutionary movement by becoming one with the people through physical contact and friendship.)

10. With the OAS clamoring about all the jailings and executions, Trujillo was not going to murder a defenseless woman and dig his own grave. Silly rumors. (Chapter 9, p. 199)
(Álvarez toys with the terrible scenario of murdering women. Minerva and her cell depend on the world's denunciation of Trujillo and his secret police. The Organization of American States turned against the dictator after his attempt to assassinate President Betancourt of Venezuela on June 24, 1960. As global opinion soured, the OAS severed diplomatic ties with the Dominican Republic and imposed sanctions on island businesses, trade, construction, and travel. After the murder of the Butterflies, the CIA supplied ammunition for the assassination of Trujillo.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers with quotations from the novel.

Motivation

1. What causes dissension in the Dominican Republic?
(The 31-year dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo spreads terror throughout the island. When Minerva enters the Inmaculada Concepción convent school at La Vega, she learns from Sinita Perozo the sufferings of one family. Sinita grieves for the murders of her father, five uncles, and a brother, José Luis.

Gradually, Minerva collects eyewitness accounts and underground philosophy on Trujillo's crimes. He stalks tender young girls like Lina Lovatón to court and despoil and to install in his mansions as concubines. His secret police, SIM, and insiders like the Mirabal yardman, Prieto, spy on islanders for any evidence of political unrest. The massacre of Haitian immigrants escalates the dictator's sins to genocide.

For dissenters, life is a torment. Those who go to prison for violations, like Pedrito, lose their land and possessions to the government. Captain Peña, Trujillo's staff member, purchases Pedrito's heirloom farmland for a pittance. Lío's friend

Freddy is found hanging in a cell under suspicious circumstances. Those left in La Fortaleza, La Victoria, and the prison at Puerto Plata suffer malnutrition, daily abuse, coercion, poor sanitation, and torture. The government controls family behaviors by denying missing person reports, visitation rights, and parole requests. To conceal human rights violations from the rest of the world, Trujillo puts on a charade for the OAS investigators.)

Setting

2. Describe the Inmaculada Concepción convent school.
(In the Butterflies' girlhood, they attend a Catholic school in La Vega and wear the obligatory uniform of blue serge. Nuns like Sor Asunción welcome newcomers to school in the parlor and assembly hall, where sacred objects and holy art adorn the walls. Sor Milagros supervises occupancy of the dormitory, a large room where beds are lined up in rows for daily Rest & Silence and evening prayers and sleep. Friendships lasting a lifetime develop between Minerva, Sinita Perozo, and Elsa, who share morning wash-up at the washroom basins before attending Matins, the Virgin's feast day, Mass of the Rooster, and First Communion.

Piety overwhelms the school's atmosphere. The students eat silent dinners while Lina reads the daily lesson and models obedience and religiosity. Processions involve the carrying of the Virgencita by members of the Sodality of Mary. Outdoors, the girls play volleyball and walk on the grounds. Nuns supervise visitation and inspect gifts as well as counsel girls on the prospect of entering the holy life.)

Character Development

3. How does Minerva change over time?
(From an obedient, patriotic girl, Minerva develops a strong individualism. She conceals her suspicions about Trujillo and lurks with Hilda and other dissident girls in secret meetings and discussions of political tyranny at Elsa's grandfather's house. Concealing papers, studying Communism, and lying to the authorities about Hilda's whereabouts foreshadow Minerva's later admiration for Fidel Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevara. The study of Marxism in the Caribbean precedes her work with professional freedom fighters, whom she eventually leads.

For personal fulfillment, Minerva demands an education in law to ready herself for promoting better conditions in the Dominican Republic. At a time when her friends pursue beaux, get engaged, and marry, Minerva shows no interest in wedlock, home ownership, or motherhood. She makes friends with Virgilio "Lío" Morales, a Marxist who shares his ideals with her. After tricking Trujillo into allowing her to attend law school, Minerva grows bolder and more reckless about whom she consorts with and what she says in public about tyranny and persecution. Publicly, she lauds the speeches of Castro and the example of Che, both heroic revolutionaries. In her prison cell at La Victoria, she leads other prisoners in the singing of the national anthem.)

Historical Milieu

4. How does the novel depict world interest in the affairs of the Dominican Republic?
(Julia Álvarez uses fiction to explain how the Mirabal sisters became global heroines. Under Trujillo's dictatorship, the girls live the miseries of islanders who have no control over spying, disappearances, murder, extortion, media suppression, and SIM raids.

During the jailing of the Butterflies, the prison staff chooses Mate to appear before the OAS investigating committee to describe the treatment of inmates at La Victoria. To assure that truth reaches the outside world, she conceals a female victim's report on lewd treatment and torture with an electric charge and drops the paper on the floor for a committeeman to read. While Patria enjoys a retreat at the Maryknoll motherhouse at Constanza, she hears shelling and sees evidence of military opposition to the Trujillistas in the shooting death of a young boy. After the murder of the Butterflies, the legend of stalwart female rebels grows beyond Trujillo's power to contain it. Following his assassination, the United Nations chooses November 25th as the International Day Against Violence Against Women. Dedé Mirabal becomes the family matriarch and storykeeper, whom journalists interview. The media publish data about the sisters' defiance of a pedophile and despot.)

Theme

5. Why is obedience a controlling theme? *(In childhood, the Mirabal sisters grow up within a traditional Catholic household. They learn that their Papá is the head of the family and that they must follow his dictates concerning dress and behavior. After they wheedle their way into the convent school to chaperone Patria, Minerva, Mate, and Dedé come under the watchful nuns of the Inmaculada Concepción in La Vega. Obligatory piety fails to dim their enthusiasm for personal interests, particularly Minerva's mounting radicalism. To Trujillo's obscene behavior during the Discovery Day dance, she slaps his face and flees from his mansion.)*

After Minerva becomes an adult, she lives at home and protests her father's adultery with Carmen by ramming her Jeep into his Ford. In private, she promotes cell activity among revolutionaries called the Fourteenth of June Movement. Denied a license to practice law, she grows more vocal in her defiance of Trujillo, who, like Papá, attempts to conceal his vices through stealth. Both men purchase secret hideaways where Enrique keeps Carmen and her four daughters and where Trujillo conceals young concubines like Lina Lovatón. After the Butterflies' imprisonment at La Victoria, Minerva continues rebelling against institutional regulations and begins turning her little sister Mate into a fellow rebel. Under house arrest, the two sisters elude Captain Peña to consult with revolutionary physicians. The persistent disobedience of the Mirabals forces Trujillo to plot their assassinations.)

Interpretation

6. Why do feminists praise *In the Time of the Butterflies*? *(By paralleling the patriarchy of Papá and Trujillo, Julia Álvarez exemplifies how androcentric behaviors escalate from adultery and bastardy to despotism. Because women are victims at home and under government control, heroines like Minerva perform dual duty as symbols of personal emancipation and as leaders of women in social and political change. Álvarez extends Minerva's value as a symbol of libertarian principles by contrasting her rebellion to the*

piety and meekness of Patria, the entrepreneurial skills of Dedé, and Mate's simple dedication to freedom. Contributing to the feminist thrust are the actions of Mamá against low self-esteem after her husband establishes a love nest for Carmen and their four girls. In vignettes, Sinita Perozo strikes out for justice with a toy bow and arrow in an historical skit, Magdalena narrates her willingness to commit murder to retrieve her daughter Amantina from kidnappers, and Dr. Delia Santos supports the Butterflies by introducing them to the next wave of revolutionaries.)

Conflict

7. How does conflict enliven the narrative? *(From the beginning, the Mirabal sisters reject the complacency of rural island plantations by involving themselves in Dominican life, religion, education, and politics. They demand a convent education and nurture individual talents to fulfill their promise. Minerva chooses revolution, Patria prefers home and family, and Mate mimics Minerva's daring with her own contributions to conspiracy. At the story's end, Dedé survives the island's upheaval to become the storykeeper and guardian of the Butterflies' legend. In addition to her career in life insurance, she rears her motherless niece Minou, tends to Mamá, and bears witness to the resilience of the Mirabals at a time when Dominicans had little hope of enjoying free and normal lives. Although nostalgia resurrects regret and sorrow each November 25, Dedé perpetuates the biography of Mirabal resilience and audacity.)*

Atmosphere

8. How does Álvarez enhance suspense? *(The novel indicates from the beginning that three of the Butterflies do not survive the underground rebellion against Trujillo. Nonetheless, Julia Álvarez builds suspense to a peak during the incarceration of the three women, Patria's son Nelson, and the husbands, Manolo, Pedrito, and Leandro. Within the walls of La Victoria, Minerva and her cellmates tap out messages of hope and current events to the men's cellblock. Maneuverings of contraband medicines, sewing supplies, toiletries, and personal items make imprisonment bearable, as do reports on the children the women leave behind.)*

After the women progress from jail to house arrest, their continued plottings inform them of the movement's advance and their husbands' safety. Álvarez stresses that rumors indicate that the men will be executed. As the Butterflies hurry to Puerto Plaza to visit, the text stresses the men's peril rather than the women's journey over curvy mountain roads near La Cumbre. Retrieval of the smashed bodies of Minerva, Patria, Mate, and the driver Rufino rapidly restores the Butterflies to center stage, leaving to the epilogue the fate of their husbands and children.)

Author Purpose

9. Why does the novel appeal to readers? (Álvarez strips her novel of cant and the burden of historical detail. In place of a complicated milieu, she focuses on heroic lives from girlhood to martyrdom. The transformation of the Mirabal sisters into public figures creates a chilling foreboding that rebels against Trujillo stand little chance of survival. Readers witness the choices the women make to live normal lives and to rear their families while they also defy tyranny. The interplay of public and private actions reveals the universality of heroism among people who view themselves not as symbols of democracy but as normal islanders seeking a better life for all. The extension of ideals and principles from the family homeplace to the island nation bears out Minerva's belief that, public and private, "It's all the same fight.")

Structure

10. Why does the novel require an epilogue? (After the final view of the Butterflies on the road to Puerto Plata, Dedé is left alive to correct false perceptions of her sisters' heroism. Over three decades, she faces the annual pilgrimage of news gatherers each November 25 to the monument, museum, assassination site, and Mirabal homeplace. She looks back on her duties as survivor and her collection of the four corpses from the morgue for burial. Her encounter with roadside mourning, gifts of flowers, and esteem for the Butterflies helps her and the surviving children to bear the multiple sorrows that Trujillo's regime heaps on the family. Uncertainty and regret alert the reader to Dedé's humanity and her unsettled issues with Minerva's radicalism.)

How Language Works

Julia Álvarez balances plain-spoken dialogue with passages rich in symbol and metaphor.

1. Patria experiences an epiphany at the Maryknoll motherhouse at Constanza, where offshore shelling introduces her to violent protest. The shooting of a boy changes her: "His eyes found mine just as the shot hit him square in the back. I saw the wonder on his young face as the life drained out of him, and I thought, Oh my God, he's one of mine! Coming down the mountain, I was a changed woman. I may have worn the same sweet face, but now I was carrying not just my child but that dead boy as well."
2. In prison, Minerva experiences a psychological shift: "I had put on too good a show for Manolo as well. He didn't know the double life I was leading. Outwardly, I was still his calm, courageous compañera. Inside, the woman had got the upper hand. And so the struggle with her began. The struggle to get my old self back from her."
3. Less philosophical is the dramatic Mate. After she joins Minerva's cell and lives unchaperoned in Monte Christi, Mate allows herself the freedom to love the messenger Palomino. When he arrives in the night, "I thought THIS IS IT! I was ready to escape out the back window. . . . It was him! I took the stairs two at a time and rushed into the street and hugged and kissed him like the kind of woman the neighbors think I am."
4. Dedé, who outlives the other family members by decades, reflects on the family's beliefs: "Looking back, she thinks, Ay, Mamá, ease up a little on those commandments. Work out the Christian math of how you give a little and you get it back a hundredfold. But thinking about her own divorce, Dedé admits the math doesn't always work out. If you multiply by zero, you still get zero, and a thousand heartaches."

Across the Curriculum

Composition

1. Write a paragraph summarizing the importance of martyrdom to the three Mirabal sisters and to Manolo. Why does legend strip biography of truth and replace it with romanticism? How does Lina Lovatón's story refute romantic notions of affection from Trujillo?
2. Compose an extended definition of oral tradition to explain how Dedé becomes the Mirabal family oracle.
3. List rules for investigatory visits by the Organization of American States. Propose methods of gaining the truth from terrified prisoners and from guards through private visits, such as offshore on boats or in sound-proof rooms.
4. Write a paragraph that contrasts exile and asylum. Use as examples the lives of Sinita Perozo, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Fidel Castro, and Virgilio "Lío" Morales.

Religion

1. Make a wall chart of significant religious holidays that permeate the story, particularly Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Christmas, washing of the feet on Holy Thursday, Three Kings Day, and the feasts of the Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception, and Santa Lucia.
2. Compose a speech explaining why the archbishop and Catholic priests have a difficult choice in supporting a revolution to free the Dominican peasants. Use Padre de Jesús and Padre Gabriel as examples of courage.
3. Summarize the purpose of a religious pilgrimage and a religious retreat. Explain what the Mirabal women learn from each other during the pilgrimage to Higüey and during their week in the mountains at the Maryknoll motherhouse.

Drama

1. Draw stage settings for a dramatization of burying boxes of ammunition in the cacao fields, placing four pine caskets on the truck, suspending a black towel from a window in La Victoria, slapping El Jefe at the Discovery Day dance, tricking SIM agents on the other side of the hedge, sending packages by Santicló, aiming a bow and arrow at Trujillo,

braiding a note in hair, concealing a miscarriage at La Victoria, burying incriminating letters and papers, and stealing a replica of one of Christopher Columbus's caravels. Supply sketches of costumes and props, such as costumes for the skit, a black towel, four caskets, note paper and pen, flowers, miniature ship, tray and glass of water, sheets, blanket, toilet articles, medicine, sewing supplies, boxes of rifles, and blue ribbon.

2. Create a storyboard account of life in a cell at La Victoria in Santo Domingo. Indicate the location of men's and women's cells, the rod that divides the women's cell, bunks, sink, bucket and windows looking out on the street.
3. Perform a shadow tableau or bag puppet performance of acts of heroism. Choose from singing the national anthem in prison, calling SIM guards assassins, aiming an arrow at Trujillo, bribing Santicló, organizing cell meetings out of doors on Patria and Jaimito's property, deceiving spies by hiding in the back seat of the car, casting dice for the opportunity to go to law school, refusing pardon, demanding Nelson's release, making an appointment with a rebel urologist, and creeping to the garden shed to listen to contraband stations broadcasting Fidel Castro's speeches.

Education

1. Role-play the training of Mamá, Magdalena, and other female cellmates in basic education. Include reading, writing, and discussion of current events.
2. Propose curriculum for a class to teach Jaimito Fernandez about working in an American factory. Include details about immigration papers, seeking a job, preparing for citizenship, banking, securing a Social Security number, providing identification for check cashing, and mailing money home to Dedé to save the farm from loss.
3. Compose a newspaper feature or memorial website on the value of heroes in difficult times. Explain how Manolo and Minerva lead a cell toward positive action against Trujillo's corrupt dictatorship. Insert data about the contributions of Leandro, Pedrito, Nelson,

Patria, Virgilio Morales, Sinita Perozo, and Mate.

4. Compile a parallel list of advantages and disadvantages to attending a girls' convent school. Include constant surveillance by nuns, supervised visitation, regular religious observances, and protection from the outside world.

Speech

1. Brainstorm ways of preparing Dedé for the role of Mirabal family oracle. Suggest ways to tell the stories of the Butterflies without revealing personal grief and regrets.
2. Organize a discussion of persecution, bribery, and political corruption. Answer these basic questions: What makes islanders and priests susceptible to a tyrant like Trujillo? How does the example of the Butterflies restore courage? How do editorials, speeches, books, skits and plays, monuments, music, murals, sports, and holiday celebrations help restore individual pride in self and country?
3. Compose a verbal tour guide of significant places in the Dominican Republic. Express the importance of the Butterflies to peasant life and customs at Ojo de Agua and Monte Cristi. Contrast the current status of buildings and prisons, Trujillo's mansions, colleges, hospitals, and public squares with the area's transformation in the late 1950s and early 1960s.
4. Outline a speech honoring the example of revolutionaries like Minerva Mirabal Mirabal, Sinita Perozo, María Teresa Mirabal, Manolo Tavárez Justo, Leandro Guzman, Pedrito González, Nelson González, Patria Mirabal, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and Virgilio Morales.

Cinema

1. View films about revolution, such as *Dr. Zhivago*, *Reds*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Sarafina*, *The House of the Spirits*, *Like Water for Chocolate*, *War and Peace*, *The Joy Luck Club*, *Lord Jim*, *Gone with the Wind*, *The Patriot*, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Compare the movies' settings, themes, and dialogue to those of *In the Time of the Butterflies*. Comment on the interplay of authorities with campesinos, priests, prisoners, suppliers of ammunition and explosives, guards, spies, messengers, drivers, and cell leaders and their families.

Science and Health

1. Compose a lecture on tuberculosis, malnutrition, severe trauma, terror, electric shock, and emotional collapse as examples of prison mistreatment. List first aid, treatment, and complications for a variety of bone and soft tissue wounds incurred by prisoners under torture. Account for the importance to the story of Minerva's valor and example, especially after Papá's heart attack, Mamá's hysteria, Mate's miscarriage, Manolo's despair, and Patria and Mate's collapse.
2. Discuss immediate needs of terror victims, particularly young children and the elderly. Project long-term care for a traumatized family like the Mirabals, beginning with medical intervention by the Red Cross, UNICEF, or Doctors Without Borders.

Geography and Culture

1. Create a mural or web site on the Dominican Republic. Note the shared border with Haiti and the availability of cheap labor to Dominican work projects. Account for Trujillo's pogroms that slew 20,000 Haitian workers.
2. Make a web site or bulletin board characterizing the danger to the Mirabal sisters after the two husbands are transferred from La Victoria to a prison in Puerto Plata. Include a map of the terrain and the nearness of Trujillo's mansion.

Art and Music

1. Make an illustrated notebook of touches of Catholicism in Dominican art, music, and daily customs. Include wall decorations, statues of the Virgin Mary, scapulas, "Gloria," "Regina Coeli," crucifixes, St. Christopher medals, processions featuring the Virgencita, meatless menus during Lent, Hail Marys and Our Fathers, and framed images of saints and the Sacred Heart.
2. Contrast the words and music of the Dominican national anthem with those of another country, for example, "La Marseillaise," "O Canada," "The Internationale," "Deutschland Über Alles," "God Save the Queen," or "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Law

1. Read aloud of the right of the OAS to intervene in dictatorships and to apply sanctions to inhumane persecutors like Trujillo. Determine how the organization has altered since its beginnings in 1889. Suggest additional initiatives for the group—relieve hunger in Haiti and Guatemala, improve medical conditions throughout the Caribbean, create crisis relief from hurricanes and droughts, release political prisoners from unjust sentences, and supervise oil refineries and fishing routes that threaten ecological stability.
2. Make a chart of advice to Minerva about international laws regarding prisons. Explain how outside advice and inspection could relieve families of worry about inmates by guaranteeing visitation, medical care, nutrition, sanitation, and personal hygiene.

Social Studies and Economics

1. Discuss with a small group the Mirabal family behaviors and expectations after serious financial setbacks, such as the receipt of clothing from Elsa, Mamá's supervision of the plantation store, and the creation of a cottage industry in sewing confirmation dresses for sale. Explain why feminists laud *In the Time of the Butterflies* as an example of resolute, self-determined women.
2. Report orally on the physical and psychological effects of imprisonment on Minerva, Magdalena, and Mate. Explain why coded messages from the men's cell, a silent miscarriage, and Magdalena's friendship unsettle Mate.
3. Divide the class into small groups to brainstorm ways to retain the example of the Mirabals in the Dominican Republic, for example, by enlarging the museum with a bookshop, placing monuments on the sisters' graves, encouraging religious pilgrimages, and adding biography and historical accounts to island history books.
4. Compose an extended definition of social and emotional isolation. Explain why the term describes Dedé. Explain why the prospect of interviews each November rekindles her grief and regret.

Psychology

1. Describe aloud the effect of rumors and propaganda during times of terror. Explain why Mate and Minerva exchange coded messages with male prisoners and why they value Santicló as a go-between and bearer of news from the outside world.
2. List aspects of Patria's life that indicate a profound change of heart. Discuss how she shifts from would-be nun to wife, mother, and revolutionary. Comment on her religiosity and dread at the thought of wrongdoing. Why does she begin to support Minerva's outrageous activities? How does the shift in philosophy affect Patria's relationships with Pedrito and Nelson? How do memories of a stillborn son and the shooting death of a young boy alter her focus to Nelson above other family members?
3. Using incidents from the book, comment on gradual changes in Mamá, Mate, Patria, and Dedé toward Minerva's radicalism. Discuss how the Mirabal women cope with family crises and spying, how they protect their children from persecution, and why the triple murder of the three sisters is not a complete surprise to the husbands, Dedé, and Mamá.
4. Characterize the moral integrity and influence of supporters like Don Bernardo, Dr. Delia Santos, Dr. Pedro Viñas, Rufino, Santicló, Sinita Perozo, Elsa, and Margarita. Summarize the personal traits that make these people reliable. Explain why Mate hesitates to testify to the OAS about cruel treatment from prison guards.
5. Write an encyclopedia entry on terror. Add details that explain why innocent visits, dreams, sounds in the night, telegrams and telephone calls, and cars passing by disturb the peace of the Mirabal women.

Mathematics and Computers

1. Using desktop publishing, make a web site or bulletin board that identifies these terms: cédula, La Fortaleza, barrio, Taino, caravel, bolero, SIM, Santo Tomás de Aquino, pastoral letter, pinkeye, desecrating, fabricated, El Jefe, epilogue, José Martí, interrogate, reinstate, regime, three fates, "Regina Coeli," scapular, sodality, exile, novio, Gabriela Mistral, Yanquis, campesinos, Maryknoll motherhouse, Che,

arraign, the goat, OAS, confiscation, guayabera, mortification, oracle, migraine, paseo, Tía and Tío, in absentia, contraband, checkpoint, and asylum.

2. Based on your understanding of the novel, lead a panel discussion of the effects of war, deaths, debt, displacement, low-paying jobs, thwarted ambition, illness, suspicion, persecution, and homesickness on Mirabal family life. Support your opinions with facts from census reports, sociological surveys, and statistics obtained from almanacs and economic and employment surveys.

Language and Speech

1. Contrast news releases for radio, television, the Internet, or print announcing the deaths of the Butterflies. Typify coverage of each event within and outside of governmental control, including the regime's publication of an anti-Mirabal book, a daily gossip column about islanders out of favor with Trujillo, and the broadcasts that Elsa and Roberto hear on their boat offshore via banned radio stations from Cuba and Venezuela.
2. Prepare a dialogue dramatizing Dedé's explanation to her nieces and nephews why their parents are absent in prison, why Jaimito has gone to the United States to work, why SIM agents confiscate family vehicles and Pedrito's farm, and why Patria, Minerva, and Mate will not be returning from Puerto Plata.
3. Using history and data from a variety of sources, improve on Sinita, Virgilio, and Minerva's angry speeches about the cruelty of Trujillo and the corruption of his regime.
4. Lead a debate about Mamá's success as head of the Mirabal family. Explain how she copes with problems with the cacao harvest, supervision of the store, and Papá's adultery and his hidden family consisting of four unacknowledged daughters.

Literature

1. Read aloud from nonfiction, novels, plays, speeches, and stories that describe incidents of injustice and revolution similar to that suffered by the Mirabal family. Include Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death," Charles

Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*, John Greenleaf Whittier's "Barbara Frietchie," Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, Mario Azuela's *The Underdogs*, Yoko Kawashima Watkins's *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*, Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*, Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* and *Animal Dreams*, Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream," Chris Collier and James Collier's *My Brother Sam Is Dead*, and Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

2. Explain in a theme the significance of the sobriquet mariposa, particularly as it applies to the four Mirabal sisters and their bravery. Propose reasons why the term suits each sister in a different way, particularly Dedé, the family oracle. Discuss why admiring peasants choose a fragile insect as a symbol of valor.
3. Write a theme in which you explain the role of a minor character, such as Sor Milagros, Padre de Jesús, Magdalena, Sinita Perozo, Hilda, Colonel Ramfis, Rufino, Margarita, Santicló, Minou, Don Bernardo, Sor Asunción, Manolo de Moya, Nelson, Elsa, Tío Pepe, Dr. Delia Santos, and Virgilio Morales. Determine which characters interact humanely with people of other social classes and backgrounds.
4. Explain in an impromptu chalk talk why the poems of Gabriela Mistral and of José Martí are favorites of the Mirabal sisters. Cite verses as models of mood, rhythm, and theme, such as Mistral's "I Am Not Alone" (1925).
5. Comment on the use of "time" in the title. What is significant about the Mirabal sisters' short lives and their influence on radical reform of the Dominican political situation?

Alternate Assessment

1. List examples of violence in the lives of the characters, for example, El Jefe's sexual assaults on young girls, shells falling on the Maryknoll motherhouse at Constanza, the shooting death of a young man, the report to the OAS committee of female torture with an electric charge, Trujillo's attempted assassination of President Betancourt of Venezuela, Papá's slapping of Minerva, the ambush on the mountain road to Puerto Plata, the murders of Sinita Perozo's relatives, Freddy's hanging in a jail cell, and Minerva's wrecking of the Ford with her Jeep.
2. Compile a list of actions and statements that demonstrate repression at the Mirabal home, at the Inmaculada Concepción convent school, in La Fortaleza and La Victoria, among the campesinos, between Patria and her husband, between Dedé and Jaimito, among protesters, at the roadblock, during house arrest, and from Trujillo and the SIM.
3. Compose a scene in which the grandchildren honor Mamá and her three deceased daughters.
4. Make a character list and explain the character flaws of each, including:
Captain Peña's snooping, Patria's repressed sexuality, Papá's adultery, Manolo de Moya's support of Trujillo's womanizing, Dedé's regrets, Nelson's risky behavior, Minerva's rude laughter, the priests' complicity with graft, Magdalena's anger, Colonel Ramfis's protection of his evil father, Mate's girlish conceit, Jaimito's need to control his family, Manolo's depression, and Sinita Perozo's vengeance.
5. Account for the betrayals that lead to the deaths of the Butterflies, including the complicity of Captain Peña and the SIM in moving the husbands to the prison in Puerto Plata.

Vocabulary Test

Complete each of the following sentences with an appropriate word from the list below. You will have answers left over when you finish.

absolve, anteroom, arraign, asylum, barrio, camouflage, campesinos, caravel, confiscated, contempt, contraband, desecrating, epilogue, Fortaleza, gout, gurneys, mortify, motherhouse, OAS, obscenity, oracle, paseo, pastoral, petition, regime, sacrificial, scapular, SIM, sodality, treasonous, Virgencita

1. Rufino and Minerva were on _____, Patria and Mate on mats on the floor.
2. The judge told Minerva if she tried one more time, she would be in _____, and the sentence and fine would be increased.
3. You must pray to the _____ for guidance.
4. This retreat was our first, and Brother Daniel had managed to get the Maryknolls to let us use their _____ up in the mountains.
5. The _____ had broken down the door of their apartment, stormed inside, roughed up Leandro and carried him away.
6. The _____ Peace Committee comes this Friday.
7. Patria blushed at the _____.
8. I wasn't involved in any _____ activity if that's what you're asking.
9. His heart was weak and his _____ made it painful sometimes for him to move around.
10. Fidel would never have won over in Cuba if the _____ hadn't fed him.
11. It was the only transportation left us, now that all the cars had been _____.
12. Tomorrow early, they would drive down to the capital and _____ for the girls, not that it would do any good.
13. It shone on the barracks, painted a pea-green, amoeba-shaped _____ that looked almost playful.
14. Before long we were waiting in an _____ of the palace alongside other girls from schools all over the country.
15. History will _____ me!

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Quotation Identification (30 points)

Identify the speaker of each of the following quotations from the novel and explain the significance.

_____ 1. You start with a line from a song or a poem. Then you just say it over until you feel yourself calming down.

_____ 2. I don't want to be babied anymore. I want to be worthy of Palomino.

_____ 3. Too busy chasing ... to ... your own daughter.

_____ 4. It's a dirty business, you're right. That's why we women shouldn't get involved.

_____ 5. Ay, m'ijta... You're going to fight everyone's fight, aren't you?

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- _____ 1. The Butterflies trust Manolo de Moya, Santicló, and Rufino.
- _____ 2. The interviewer questions Dedé about how it feels to survive three sisters' deaths.
- _____ 3. On the day of the assassinations, the Butterflies are visiting the prison at Puerto Plata.
- _____ 4. Mate shares lodgings at the university with her older sister, but disappoints her by transferring out of law courses.
- _____ 5. Lío's disappearance confuses Mate until she discovers that Papá hides Lío's letters.
- _____ 6. Margarita arranges for the smuggling of packets into La Victoria.
- _____ 7. Trujillo's agents hire prostitutes to humiliate Padre de Jesús during mass.
- _____ 8. The Mirabal women support themselves by sewing confirmation dresses.
- _____ 9. Magdalena wields a knife at the SIM agents who kidnap her daughter Amantina.
- _____ 10. Peña becomes a friend of the Mirabal family and arranges for the transfer of the husbands to a nearby prison.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Completion (20 points)

Fill each blank below with a word or phrase that completes the sentence.

1. Because Patria wants to be a _____, _____ lets her attend Inmaculada Concepción in La Vega under the chaperonage of Minerva and Dedé.
2. Sinita Perozo, a charity student who sleeps next to Minerva in the dormitory, offers to tell _____'s secret, which impacted her family with the shooting of her five uncles, father, and _____ José Luis.
3. In 1941, Trujillo catches sight of _____ and begins visiting and bringing gifts before making her his _____.
4. When _____ pretends to aim her bow at the dictator, _____ intervenes and breaks it.
5. _____ is annoyed to find _____ and "Lío" in the bushes.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences on the essay response page.

1. Describe the influence of Catholicism on the Butterflies' beliefs and actions.
2. Explain how Minerva antagonizes Trujillo and Peña.
3. Discuss the influence of the Butterflies on fellow prisoners.
4. Account for Dedé's sadness each November 25.
5. Summarize events that precede Patria's acceptance of Minerva's cell.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (30 points)

Match the following descriptions with names of characters from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left. You will use some answers more than once and some not at all.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| _____ 1. witnesses the shooting death of a young man | A. Margarita |
| _____ 2. becomes a pharmacist | B. Dedé |
| _____ 3. hides Lío's letters | C. Papá |
| _____ 4. scolds the Butterflies for going to the doctor | D. Minerva |
| _____ 5. slaps El Jefe | E. Mate |
| _____ 6. harbors no hatred after the martyrdom of both parents | F. Peña |
| _____ 7. disobeys by joining his father and the conspirators | G. Patria |
| _____ 8. lives with Minerva during a difficult time in her marriage to Manolo | H. Nelson |
| _____ 9. welcomes Carmen's four daughters to the family | I. Jaimito |
| _____ 10. insults Minerva with coarse behavior on the dance floor | J. Magdalena |
| _____ 11. threatens to leave her husband | K. Trujillo |
| _____ 12. is imprisoned for pulling a knife on a kidnapper | L. Lío |
| _____ 13. hangs a black towel from the window | M. Enrique |
| _____ 14. suffers a heart attack | N. Pedrito |
| _____ 15. attends seminary | O. Minou |

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to the following questions. Place your response in the blank provided.

- _____ 1. Who does prison repairs for the guards?
- _____ 2. Who flees the island to sanctuary?
- _____ 3. What crop does Papá harvest?
- _____ 4. Who meets a man while washing feet on Holy Thursday?
- _____ 5. What do prisoners wear as a sign of solidarity?
- _____ 6. Who supervises house arrest?
- _____ 7. Which character dies with the Butterflies?
- _____ 8. What does Minerva steal from Trujillo's table decorations?
- _____ 9. Who grows weary of storytelling?
- _____ 10. What does Minerva's cell name their movement?

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Select the phrase that completes each of the following sentences. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. Trujillo invites
- A. Papá to La Fortaleza.
 - B. Minerva to a Discovery Day dance.
 - C. SIM agents to his mansion at El Cumbre.
 - D. the OAS to investigate complaints about the prison at Puerto Plata.
- _____ 2. The nuns urge
- A. Hilda to give up atheism.
 - B. Sinita Perozo to accept comfort for Trujillo's murder of her family.
 - C. Patria to wait for a call.
 - D. Lina Lovatón to reject gifts from Trujillo.
- _____ 3. Dedé offers
- A. herself as the next victim of SIM assassins.
 - B. Minou an opportunity to be interviewed and photographed.
 - C. property for a monument to the Butterflies.
 - D. a bribe to the morgue attendant.
- _____ 4. Minerva's family pretends
- A. that the note falls from Mate's braid by accident.
 - B. to need Peña's help in securing an appointment with Dr. Delia Santos.
 - C. that the radio in the shed is unable to receive Cuban stations.
 - D. to send their child to the country for her health.
- _____ 5. The OAS committee learns
- A. about female torture with an electric charge.
 - B. the whereabouts of Manolo and Nelson.
 - C. the intent of the Fourteenth of June Movement.
 - D. why shells fall on the Maryknoll motherhouse at Constanza.
- _____ 6. Mate fears that the note will
- A. incriminate Margarita.
 - B. bring harm to Santiclío.
 - C. end her Thursday visitation privileges.
 - D. reveal the cell-to-cell code.

- _____ 7. Minerva deliberately
- A. withholds information about Mate's miscarriage.
 - B. reveals Hilda's hiding place.
 - C. aims an arrow at El Jefe.
 - D. crashes the Jeep into the Ford.
- _____ 8. On the pilgrimage to Higüey,
- A. Padre Gabriel is arrested by SIM agents.
 - B. the Mirabals decide to make money by sewing confirmation dresses.
 - C. Mamá reveals Papá's adultery.
 - D. Minerva recognizes Margarita's family resemblance.
- _____ 9. Papá reveals to Minerva that
- A. Lino Lovatón is one of Trujillo's kept women.
 - B. Mamá knows nothing about Carmen and the four girls.
 - C. Manolo de Moya is more dangerous than El Jefe.
 - D. the SIM may seize the family cacao plantation.
- _____ 10. Each weekday morning,
- A. Santiclío brings news of Manolo, Pedrito, Leandro, and Nelson.
 - B. Dedé kneels before the Virgencita to atone for remaining alive.
 - C. Mamá practices her writing to prepare for the apology letter to Trujillo.
 - D. Minerva holds classes for her cellmates.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences on the essay response page.

1. Explain why Minerva anticipates death.
2. Contrast Enrique, Jaimito, Manolo, Leandro, and Pedrito as husbands.
3. Describe comic encounters with spies.
4. Account for Trujillo's anger at the church.
5. How do the Butterflies build a reputation for daring?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. gurneys | 6. OAS | 11. confiscated |
| 2. contempt | 7. obscenity | 12. petition |
| 3. Virgencita | 8. treasonous | 13. camouflage |
| 4. motherhouse | 9. gout | 14. anteroom |
| 5. SIM | 10. campesinos | 15. absolve |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Quotation Identification (30 points)

1. Minerva
2. Mate
3. Mamá
4. Patria
5. Mamá

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T |
| 2. T | 7. F |
| 3. T | 8. T |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. F | 10. F |

Part III: Completion (20 points)

1. nun, Papá
2. Trujillo, brother
3. Lina, concubine
4. Sinita, Ramfis
5. Dedé, Minerva

Part IV: Essay (30 Points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. O | 11. B |
| 2. A | 7. H | 12. J |
| 3. M | 8. E | 13. E |
| 4. F | 9. D | 14. C |
| 5. D | 10. K | 15. H |

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

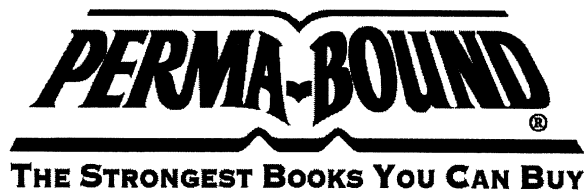
- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Minerva and her cellmates | 6. Peña |
| 2. Lío and Sinita | 7. Rufino |
| 3. cacao | 8. caravel |
| 4. Patria | 9. Dedé |
| 5. crucifixes | 10. Fourteenth of June |

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. B |
| 2. C | 7. D |
| 3. A | 8. C |
| 4. D | 9. A |
| 5. A | 10. D |

Part IV: Essay (30 Points)

Answers will vary.



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