# Julia Alvarez’s “My English”

Date of birth: 1950

Country of Origin: (trick!) NY Cultural background: Dominican Republic, Caribbean

Most famous books:

How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents

In the Time of the Butterflies

Historical Context: oppression / multiculturalism

Dictator: Rafael Trujillo Year of control: 1930 Year of assassination: 1961

Do you know the name of another dictator or two? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Recall Maya Angelou’s timeline parallel to these years……

Use these words to fill in the blanks: deprive, debate, rebel, demonstrate, dictate

1. Under Trujillo, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about democracy versus dictatorship was prohibited.
2. In a democracy, citizens can \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ against government policies.
3. A dictator can \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ you of fundamental rights.
4. Trujillo tried to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ how people lived.
5. Alvarez’s father and many others decided to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ against the dictator.

Name 5 countries near Julia Alvarez’s home in her childhood.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Based on the distance between the Dominican Republic and the US, why do you think knowing both English and Spanish would be useful?

1.

2.

3.

What did the English language represent to her at first?

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What is the difference between Spanglish and bilingualism?

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How did the parents and teachers make her feel about her native language?

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Describe her mother’s countenance (\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) when she was amused.

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What is **voice** (as a literary term)? How the writer sounds, created by word choice, attitude, and sentence length and structure.

How would you characterize Alvarez’s voice in the second paragraph of pg. 110? What changes does it show in the learning process? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Idiomatic expressions: Slang, clichés, sayings such as “a grain of salt”

**Conundrum** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Do you remember **euphemism**? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What does **ponderously** mean? ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What can you infer from several clues about Alvarez’s family?

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What is an allusion? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What does Alvarez allude to? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Why is Sister Maria special? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Pay careful attention to the second to last paragraph. Examine the details that provide a clear snapshot of this character in the reader’s mind. List 3 phrases that give the voice a more poetic quality.

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**Etymology:** the origin and history of how a word has changed. Homework: Identify ten English words derived from the same root as Spanish words. (….Latin!) List the date of origin, meaning, and a different modern meaning. There are many words because of political history between France and England (year 1066). The aristocrats spoke French and the commoners spoke English, so the language represented one’s culture and education. Eventually many words were adopted and integrated, highly influenced by the work of Shakespeare.

As extra credit, you may create another list of words whose roots are in a different language that is NOT Latin-based (Spanish, French, and Italian… Even Latin is related to Sanskrit!).