

In The Time of the Butterflies by Julia Alvarez

Teaching objectives, activities, and suggestions

Overview & Purpose:

Students will undertake a careful analysis of the main characters of *In the Time of the Butterflies* to see how each individually demonstrates courage in the course of her family's turbulent life events. Additionally, students will interpret historical context of the novel and connect it to modern day understandings of power and politics.

Common Core State Standards:

9th and 10th grades:

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3](#)

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6](#)

Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Learning objectives and justifications:

Students Will Be Able To:

- 1) Understand characters and their attributes
 - a) Through reading the novel and learning how to understand the different qualities of the characters, students will approach the first level of Bloom's taxonomy in terms of understanding the meanings of different figures in texts. Understanding characters can help them relate themselves as students to the figures and gain traction and invest in the text.
- 2) Analyze characters' significance in a literary text
 - a) Moving up Bloom's taxonomy, students will use their understanding of the characters attributes to place them and their role in the text. They will use

knowledge of the people they read about and begin to understand why characters in literature are significant in general. By analyzing character roles, they will begin to appreciate literature and plot significance.

- 3) Compare modern current events and literary events
 - a) Taking literary plot lines and comparing them to modern occurrences in the government and international relations will give students context into the way that history repeats itself and teach them how to find connections between fiction and real life experiences.
- 4) Apply knowledge of immigration policy to create writing and discussion
 - a) Using the aforementioned knowledge of connections between literature and real life will allow them to extend their understanding to a written or spoken discussion of the important themes of the novel.
- 5) Evaluate immigration debates and their relevance to students' lives
 - a) In addition to understanding connections between fictional lives and real lives of figures in politics and international conflict, students will be able to connect themselves to the text and root their understanding to a wider world context as well.

Activities:

- 1) After reading a chapter at home, have students do a close reading in groups during class time in order to pull out quotes and main ideas based on reading from a specific lens. The lenses can include political/communist reading, feminist reading, psychological reading, racial reading, and historical reading. After the students have done their close readings in groups and filled out a worksheet of important quotes, turning points, and character developments related to their lenses, have the students come together in a Socratic seminar in order to debate and discuss the different perspectives of the novel.
- 2) Students will perform a study of the Stanford Prison Experiment, conducted by Phil Zimbardo. After watching an assigned video, students will be asked to meet and groups to discuss their opinions of the psychological experiment. After choosing one of the prison chapters and either Minerva or Mate as a character to focus on, they will be able to draw a timeline of that character's mindset before and after prison. This activity is intended to help students identify causes and symptoms of PTSD and have discussion around human's abilities to hurt other humans.
<https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat/behavior/social-psychology/v/zimbardo-prison-study-the-stanford-prison-experiment>
- 3) Prior to class, students will come up with the 3 most salient attributes of the character of Trujillo. This may include some outside research on their own about his historical significance in addition to his fictional persona. Students will read an assigned article in class about the Trump administration's actions against immigrants. Upon completion

of the reading, students will complete the same 3 attribute activity for Trump. They will then be given an open forum to talk within groups about what they think a leader is. As a class, the teacher will lead the students in creating a big picture outline of what a leader's role is and how they should act. Together, they will compare the two leaders and what the role of dehumanization is in politics.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-administration-to-deny-visas-to-immigrants-who-cant-prove-they-can-pay-for-health-care/>

Summative Assessment:

- Have students write a character analysis using materials already generated in the lesson.
 - Students will synthesize information from the novel, class discussions, and activities to write a cohesive study of one character using courage as an organizing theme.

Teaching Strategies:

1. Engage students in question and answer
2. Engage students in collaborative group work
3. Provide opportunities for exploration
4. Provide opportunities for open discussion
5. Allow students to relate context to current events and real life examples

Further resources:

- *In The Time of The Butterflies*, Julia Alvarez
- <https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/courage-time-butterflies>
- <https://support.thinkcerca.com/hc/en-us/articles/230882308-Differentiated-Lessons-for-Teaching-In-the-Time-of-the-Butterflies-by-Julia-Alvarez>
- <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Teachers-Guide-Alvarez.pdf>
- https://www.tes.com/lessons/h1TvzR98_KkCqg/in-the-time-of-the-butterflies
- <https://www.varsitytutors.com/englishteacher/alvarez>