



# Colorado Book Club Resource

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR HOW THE GARCIA GIRLS LOST THEIR ACCENTS BY JULIA ALVAREZ

1. Discuss the title of the novel. What steps do the Garcia girls take to "lose their accents"? In what ways does each girl try to become more American? In turn, what steps does each girl take to define herself as an individual?
2. In the first chapter, Yolanda has returned to the Island to try living her life there. What do we learn during the course of the novel that explains why she would want to leave America? What difficulties does she encounter in trying to reassimilate to Island life? After experiencing the freedoms of America, can Yolanda be happy back in the rigid structure of Island life?
3. Why do her older sisters intervene when Sofia becomes involved with Manuel? Are they more upset by the way Manuel treats Sofia, or that Sofia might stay on the Island indefinitely to be with her boyfriend? What about Sofia's transformation during her time on the Island troubles the sisters so much? In the end, were they right to ensure Sofia's return to America?
4. What is the significance of the García girls' nicknames? Why, when she gets older, is Yolanda so opposed to her many nicknames?
5. What attempts does Mami make to keep the family as a tight unit? What are the long-term effects of Mami's refusal to see her daughters as individuals? How does this effect the girls (consider Sandra's art lessons and Yolanda's writing)?
6. As children, the girls are fascinated by the presents that are brought back for them from New York. What do the toys from FAO Schwartz represent to them? In what ways are they given an unrealistic impression of America? How are they effected when the steady flow of toys and presents they received on the Island is cut off?
7. How does each character change when they are forced to leave the Island? Is America responsible for the adults that each girl becomes? Are they torn between their childhood on the Island and their adulthood in New York? Also consider how Mami and Papi change. What effect does the emigration have on Papi? How is his older self different from the way we see him when the children are young?

***Discussion questions provided by the Penguin Group USA.***



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