

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

In the Time of the Butterflies by Julia Alvarez

- How much is the Dominican Republic itself a character in this book? Do we know much about the lives of the “campesinos”? Consider communications in the 1950s and 1960s and the size of the island.
- How does the “police state” control its citizens? How do the methods develop over the course of the book?
- How are men portrayed? Particularly Papa, Trujillo and the husbands of the girls.
- The sisters are fully developed characters – both revolutionaries and “girls/women.” Consider the importance throughout the book of feminine accessories, and the importance of purses in particular.
- How does the bickering/rivalry over Lio affect the relationship between Dede and Minerva? Why does Dede really burn Lio’s letters to Minerva? To protect her, or out of jealousy?
- What is the significance of the party at Trujillo’s country house? In what ways will Minerva’s actions affect the family?
- What does it mean to Dede to be the only sister left? Does she regret that she didn’t join the revolution? Does she appreciate the value of keeping the story alive?
- Both in the story and in reality, the Dominican people stood behind the Mirabal sisters and saw them as heroes and martyrs. Why are the people so taken with the sisters? What is so captivating about them? Why do they endure?



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