

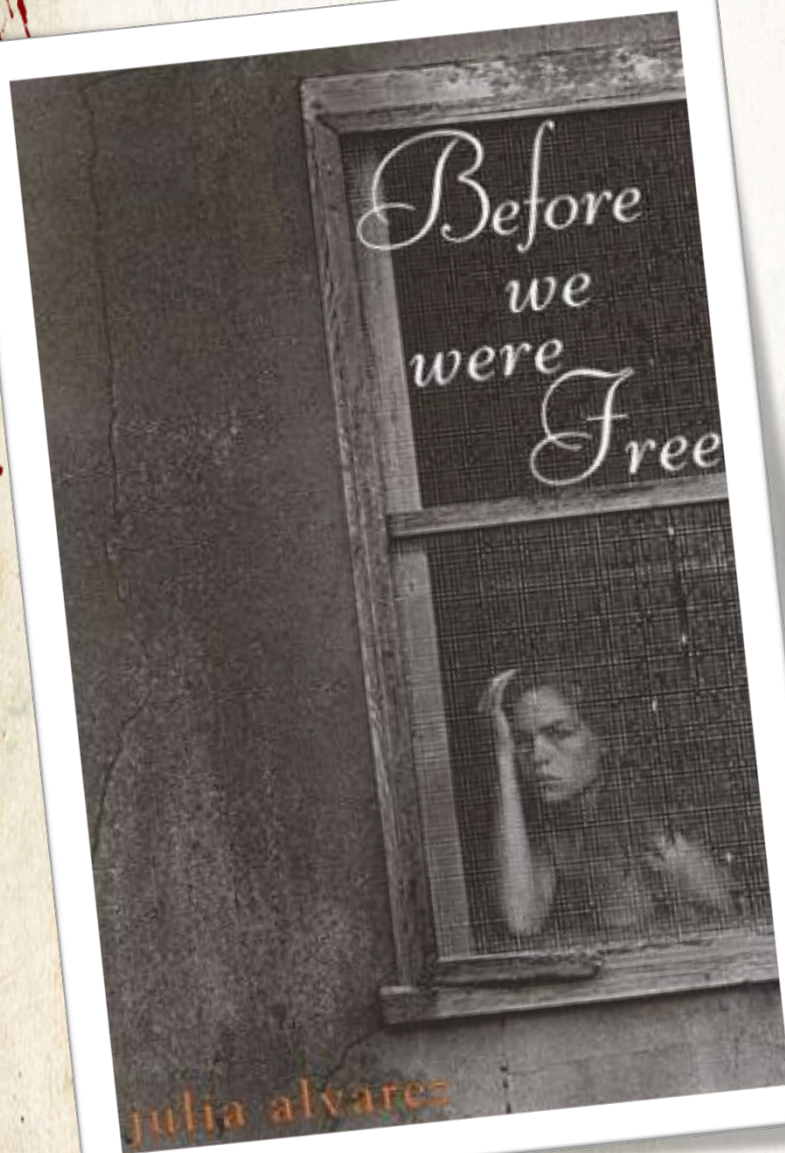
Before We Were Free

By Julia Alvarez

Program Guide

Created by Amy Myrick & Gretchen Schweers

University of Alabama - SLIS





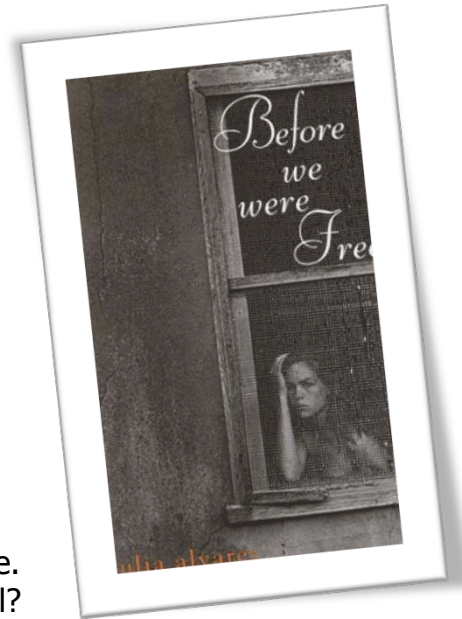
Before We Were Free

Alvarez, Julia. Before We Were Free. Laurel Leaf: New York. 2004. 167pps.
Grades 7-12.

Book Summary:

During the year 1969, there were many of challenges and changes for one family. Before she was free, Anita and her family lived in the Dominican Republic. General Trujillo rules with fear and cruelty. Anita goes to school to learn to speak English, and to be a good citizen. Plus, she's beginning to grow up, and two very different boys begin to notice her. It's a time when everyone speaks in whispers, and girls are afraid to be seen. It's unsafe to be heard or noticed by the Presidente. People are starting to disappear, and rumors are heard of them being put in prison and tortured. Then when Anita's father begins to meet other men to plan a way to remove Presidente Trujillo, Anita's fears come true. Could her father really be planning to murder the General?

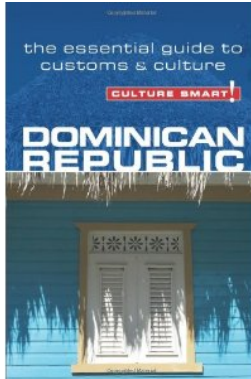
Then, Anita's father is taken, and she is forced to hide in a neighbor's closet. The General's Secret Police are watching and waiting! Hopefully, it can soon be arranged for her to escape to America. Julia Alvarez tells a wonderful coming of age story in a trying time. This would be a great book to compare with The Diary of Anne Frank. Alvarez's book is better suited to teen readers in grades 7-12. Some of the content might be disturbing to younger readers.



Meet the Author Julia Alvarez:

Sites: <http://www.juliaalvarez.com/>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julia_Alvarez
<http://www.notablebiographies.com/A-An/Alvarez-Julia.html>

More Great Books:



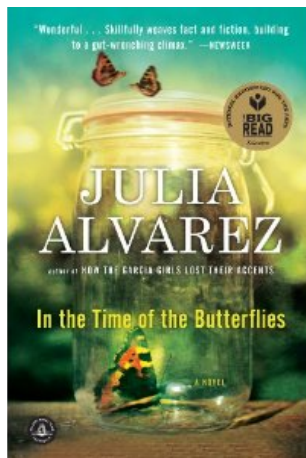
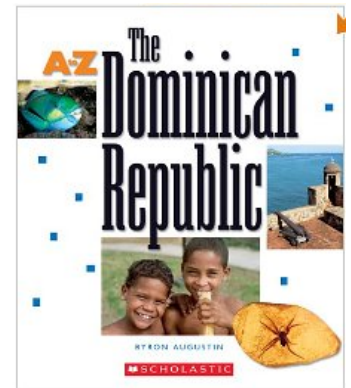
Bedgood, Ginnie and Ilana Benady. Dominican Republic Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs and Culture. Kuperard: New York. 2010. 168pps. Grades 3-12.

Summary: Learn all about the land, history, people, and customs of the Dominican Republic.

Augustin, Byron. The Dominican Republic A-Z. Children's Press: New York. 2006. 40 pps. Grades 2-7

Summary:

Provides readers with information related to the geography, history, culture, and people of the Dominican Republic.



Alvarez, Julia. In the Time of the Butterflies. Algonquin Books: New York. 2010. 352 pps. Grades 7-12.

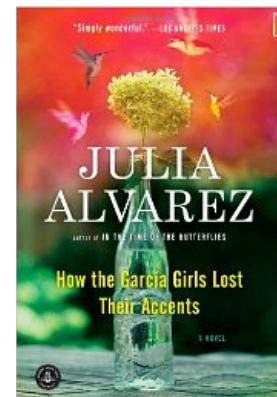
Summary:

Expanded from one of the stories in How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, this novel set in the Dominican Republic during the rise of the Trujillo dictatorship describes the three Mirabel sisters (las tres mariposas) who were murdered for their participation in an underground movement to overthrow the government.

Alvarez, Julia. How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents. Laurel Leaf: New York. 2006. 288 pps. Grades 7-12.

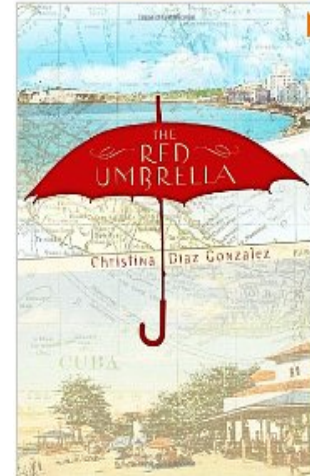
Summary:

Based upon the experiences of Alvarez and her sisters, this coming of age novel follows the four Garcia sisters as they move from the Dominican Republic to the United States and attempt to acculturate. This sensitive novel successfully captures the immigrant experience of teens from a variety of cultures.



Gonzalez, Christina Diaz. The Red Umbrella. Knopf Books for Young Readers: New York. 2010. 299pps. Grades 3-12

Summary: Following the events that led up to Operation Pedro Pan, this coming of age novel depicts a teenaged Lucia and her young brother as they watch their beloved Cuba change under the Castro regime. Daily Lucia watches as her life crumbles and becomes more dangerous until her parents ship her and her brother to the United States. Gonzalez successfully captures the experience of family separation and the ultimate sacrifice that parents will make to save their children.



Activities:



Introductory game/activity (ice-breaker)

Sample Card:

Materials: Printed Bingo Cards

Pen or Pencil

Directions: Print Bingo cards on cardstock. Participants mix and mingle to locate as many people to sign their cards as possible. Once a person gets 5 signatures in a row they shout "Bingo"! A small prize can be awarded to the first person who wins. This is a wonderful way to get to know people!

Find someone who...

HAS BEEN TO A DISNEY THEME PARK	HAS WORN A CAST	DISLIKES CHOCOLATE	HAS MORE THAN 2 BROTHERS	IS LEFT HANDED
IS A VEGETARIAN	PLANTED THEIR OWN GARDEN	NAME BEGINS WITH M	HAS BEEN TO THE OCEAN	SPEAKS MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE
IS WEARING GLASSES	HAS A RED CAR	<p>FREE SPACE</p> 	LIKES COUNTRY MUSIC	HAS NEVER WATCHED AMERICAN IDOL
PLAYS A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT	HAS A CELLPHONE ON THEM	HAS A DECEMBER BIRTHDAY	HAS CHICKENS	LIKES TO EAT BROCCOLI
HAS EATEN CALAMARI	PLAYS A TEAM SPORT	HAS WON A CONTEST	IS AN ONLY CHILD/NO SIBLINGS	WATCHES PBS REGULARLY

Source: <http://www.group-games.com/ice-breakers/autograph-bingo-game.html>

Games:



Stick and Tire Race: From the Dominican Republic:

The objective of this game is to race your opponent to cross the finish line. (Dominican children use a row of banana trees, or "over where the vendor is selling coconut water," as a finish line.)

Materials needed:

Two or more old rubber tires, depending on how many people play. These can be bicycle, motorcycle, or car tires, depending on your skill level.

Two sticks, 3 to 4 feet long

Plastic Coke or mineral water bottles

Scissors

Playing the game:

1. For each player, cut the bottom off of a plastic bottle.
2. Then cut the body of the bottle in half, leaving the bottle's neck whole.
3. Insert a stick through the neck of the bottle.
4. When each stick and tire is ready, players line up at the starting line. They lay their bottles gently against their tires.
5. At the shout of "Go," players push the tires with their hands to get them moving. They use the sticks to push and guide the tires, keeping them in a straight line while hurrying to the finish line.

Source: <http://www.childfun.com>



Image Source: filipinolifeinpictures.blogspot.com



Plays:

Create a Radio Drama:

Sometimes the radio was the only source of information to the outside world that Anita and her family had during the Trujillo regime.

Directions: Teens will create their own character and develop parts to read. They can work in groups or in pairs to develop their own scene. Teens will create news briefs similar to those portrayed in the book that show both the underground radio, and the distorted national news presentations of the Trujillo Regime.



Sources:

Write your own Radio Serial Script: <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Radio-Play>

Old Time Radio Sound Effects: <http://www.old-time.com/sfx.html>

Radio Drama: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio_drama

Food:

Before We Were Free: Pastelitos (Savory Turnovers)

Pastelitos are stuffed pastries. They are popular in the Dominican Republic. Fillings can include poultry, beef, pork, seafood, fruits, and cheeses depending on regional preferences.

Recipe:

Ingredients:

- ~For the filling
- 1 lb of chicken breasts
- 1 tablespoon of oil
- 2 leaves of coriander chopped finely
- 1 tablespoon of tomato paste
- 1 cube of chicken bouillon
- 2 teaspoons of salt
- 1 small red onion
- 1 green pepper
- Ground black pepper
- ~For the dough
- 2 cups of all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon of baking soda
- 3 tablespoons of cold water
- Salt
- 2 cups of oil for frying



Preparation:

1. Shred the chicken very finely. Chop the onion and the green pepper into very small cubes. In a shallow pan heat two teaspoons of oil, add the onion, chicken and the green pepper, stir. Add the black pepper, the coriander and the tomato paste. Let simmer at very low heat until all the liquid has evaporated. Reserve.
2. Mix the baking soda, a teaspoon of salt and the flour, add the water, and mix well. Mix everything with your hands on a lightly floured surface until everything is well mixed, don't knead the dough (add some flour if it is too sticky). Let dough rest for ten minutes covered in plastic film.
3. On a lightly floured surface roll out the dough. Cut out circles of about 4 inches in diameter. Put a teaspoon of the chicken in the center, double over in a semi-circle and seal the border pressing it with a fork. Deep fry the pasties and drain excess oil on a paper towel before serving.

Source: <http://www.dominicancooking.com/21-recipe-empanaditas-pastelitos-savoury-turnovers.html>

Before We Were Free: Sancocho (Hearty Meat Stew)

Sancocho is a staple dish in the Dominican Republic. This is a hearty meat stew; traditionally made with beef. The recipe below is the more complicated "celebration" version which includes; not only beef, but chicken and pork as well. This is a recipe that takes time to prepare.

Sources: <http://www.visiting-the-dominican-republic.com/sancocho-recipe.html>
<http://www.dominicancooking.com/125-sancocho-de-7-carnes-7-meat-hearty-stew.html>

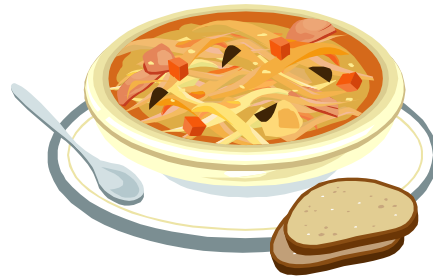
Equipment:

You will need a large bowl; 2 good sized cooking pots; a chopping board; a large, sharp cook's knife, and a traditional wooden or stone mortar and pestle...

Ingredients:

Meats:

- 1lb of beef, preferably with bones.
- 1 1/2 lb of fresh chicken
- 1 lb of fresh pork



Other ingredients:

(...and here we include all the typical local vegetables used - you may need to hunt around in some places to get hold of these, but it is worth the trouble, if you can get them, to achieve an authentic result)

- 2 green plantains
- 1 lb of cassava or yucca*
- 1 lb of white yam*
- 1 lb of eddoes or yautia*
- 1/2 lb of potatoes
- 3 large onions
- Small bunch of coriander or cilantro
- 2 large naranja agria** or lemon fruits
- 1 tablespoon of vinegar (optional)
- 2 stock cubes of beef or chicken
- Vegetable oil at your discretion
- 5 cloves of garlic
- 1 small portion of oregano
- 2 small or 1 large green peppers
- 1 lb of American rice
- 1 1/2 lbs of Spanish pumpkin



- 5 liters of water
- Salt (to taste - usually about 1-2 teaspoons)

Side Notes:

* - You need about 3lbs in total of staple vegetables like yams or yucca, use a mix of the three listed if you can get them, or make up the total amount from what you can get.

** - 'naranja agria' are very sour oranges widely use for cooking in the Dominican Republic. But don't panic if you don't have 'naranja agria', you can always use lemon as a substitute.

Preparation:

Peel your garlic cloves and place them into the mortar together with the oregano and salt, then mash them together well.

If you don't have a mortar, just crush all the above ingredients with the side of a heavy knife on a chopping board (remember to flush your board well with cold water immediately after doing this to avoid transfer of garlic flavor to things you might not want to taint, later on!)

Peel and chop the onions in quarters.

Now take all the meat and cut it into fairly equally sized pieces (for beef and pork, 4cm or 1 1/2 inch cubes - for chicken 'small joints'), if using meat on the bone, leave it on the bone for extra flavor, wash the meat well with plenty of water. It is also better if you remove the skin of the chicken and any excess fat from the other meats.

Once you have done this, place all the meat in a large bowl and 'wash' the meat again with the naranja agria or lemon juice, and drain about half the liquid off.

Once the meat is washed and ready, add the mashed combination of garlic and herbs you have in the mortar. At this stage you can add a bit of vinegar (say a good teaspoon full), some vegetable oil and half of the chopped onions (leaving the rest for later).

Now stir the meat and these ingredients well and let it rest to develop the flavor for about half an hour, while you prepare the other items.

Whilst the meat is resting, peel the plantain, yucca, yam, potatoes, Spanish pumpkin and eddoes. Then cut them into pieces roughly the same size as the meat 'chunks'.

Cooking the meat:

Place a large pan (ideally one that's not too deep - a wide bottomed, heavy lidded, braising pan is best) on the heat with some vegetable oil, say about half a cup.

Once the oil is reasonably hot you can add the meat (The meat should sizzle appetizingly when it goes into the pan, BUT be careful the hot oil doesn't splash you...or anyone else!!). Don't add too much meat in one go, and let the heat come back into the oil as add each 'batch'. Make sure all the meat is 'seized', or 'browned' on all sides...this will help keep it moist and reduce the chance of it flaking to bits during the cooking process.

Once all the meat is browned, immediately add about a teaspoon of salt and a pint of stock. Stir well.

Let the pot just come to the boil then turn down the heat and let the meat simmer, with a good heavy lid on the pot, for at around 40 minutes before starting the rest of the cooking.

After this time the meat will be more than half cooked, turn it off for the time being. Now you can start the second step.

Take another big cooking pot, quite deep this time, put it onto the heat and add three liters of water.

Add all your plantain, yucca and the other vegetables to the cooking pot together with the coriander, the rest of chopped onion and the chopped green peppers. Also crumble into the pot the other stock cube, and stir.

After heating the pot for 15 minutes, by which time it should be coming to the boil (if not already turned to simmer) carefully mix in all the contents of the meat pan. Add more water if necessary, so that all contents of the pan are just covered, and bring back to the boil before turning down to a simmering heat again.

From now on the Sancocho will start developing a good color and thickening. You need to check it every ten minutes to ensure it doesn't get too dry; it will have the tendency to do this as moisture evaporates and stock is absorbed by vegetables. You should add a little more water if necessary.

Now you can start to cook the rice using your preferred method. We tend to wash the rice well (until water runs quite clear - which means sticky starches have been removed) and allow a fairly generous 75 grams/3 ounces of uncooked rice per person. We bring the rice to the boil with twice the amount of water to rice and a little oil, and let it simmer for about 10 minutes until the water is absorbed.

After about one hour or so of total cooking time your Sancocho sauce should be nicely thickened by the starchy vegetables (but not too dry) and the meats should be lovely

and juicily tender (try them before you turn off the heat, and give another 10 minutes if necessary). Your typical Dominican dish should be ready to serve and enjoy.

Poetry

Anita discovers the importance of writing in her diary. Through her writings, we can see her inner strength and bravery. We all have beauty and strength inside us. This is your opportunity to share who you are by creating your own poem.

Materials: Poem Formula, paper, assorted arts and crafts for decorating the finished poems.

Directions: Using the formula provided create your own "I Am" Poem. Decorate your poem for display using any arts or craft supplies available.

Poem Formula:

"I Am Poem"

1st Stanza

I am (two special characteristics you have).
I wonder (something you are actually curious about).
I hear (an imaginary sound).
I see (an imaginary sight)
I want (an actual desire).
I am (the first line of the poem repeated).

2nd Stanza

I pretend (something you actually pretend to do).
I feel (a feeling about something imaginary).
I touch (an imaginary touch).
I worry (something that really bothers you)
I cry (something that makes you very sad).
I am (the first line of the poem repeated).

3rd Stanza

I understand (something you know is true).
I say (something you believe in).
I dream (something you actually dream about).
I try (something you really make an effort about).



I hope (something you actually hope for).
I am (the first line of the poem repeated).

Source: <http://homepage.mac.com/mseffie/handouts/formulapoems.html>

Music, Songs, & Dance

Music: The most popular native music of the Dominican Republic is Merengue. Play Merengue music for everyone to enjoy. Then play other music for comparison.

Music Types:

Bachata

Merengue

Salsa

Source: http://www.colonialzone-dr.com/music-Musica_Tipica.html

Song: A song about the Mirabal Sisters who were the “Butterflies” mentioned in the book:

Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQyLiD95kV0>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8R59bGgGFs>

Dance: Merengue was declared the official dance of the Dominican Republic by Trujillo. Learning to Merengue might be a good activity for tweens/teens and adults. This can be tied to the Quincenara.

Source: http://www.ehow.com/videos-on_3065_dance-merengue.html
http://www.ehow.com/video_6191332_merengue-dance.html



Discussion Questions:

1. If you were living under a dictator like General Trujillo, would you fight his tyranny or flee to safety?
2. Have you ever had to keep an important secret? How was your situation similar/different than Anita's circumstances?
3. Would you consider Anita a strong or weak person? Why?
4. How did the radio stations from the government report differently from the news briefs from the underground radio stations? Do you think that our news reports tell the entire story? How do you know you can believe what you read or hear on the news?
5. How is Julia Alvarez Before We Were Free by Julia Alvarez similar to Anne Frank's Diary of a Young Girl? How are they different?
6. What role does America play in Before We Were Free?
7. Anita begins to lose her voice. Have you ever been in a situation when you couldn't speak up? What did you do?
8. How is writing in her diary important to Anita? How can writing help you in a stressful situation?
9. Family plays an important role in this story. How does Anita's family change?
10. Why was it important for Anita to learn about her family's secrets? How did she deal with what she heard outside her window?
11. What are the men meeting outside Anita's window planning? Are they heroes?
12. What is bravery? Were Anita's father and mother brave?
13. Anita cares for two very different boys. Compare Sam to Oscar.
14. Anita's family, including her grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, used to all live together in the family compound. Who lives with you in your house? Do you have a lot of family members nearby, or do many of your family members live far away? Think about what is different about how your family lives and what is the same. Are you able to relate to the way Anita feels when she is separated from her family?
15. Initially, Anita doesn't understand what is happening to her family. Do you think that the adults in her life should have explained what was happening? Do you think that events in the book would have happened differently (for better or worse) if the adults around her had told her what was going on? (Optional part: Have you ever been in a situation that you didn't understand because you weren't given enough information? What did you do in that situation?)
16. On page 29, Sammy shares an American expression, "Very fishy" and says that it means something strange is going on. Anita then states that "the compound is crawling with fish." What are some of your favorite expressions? Would it be difficult for you to explain these expressions to a non-native speaker of your language? How do you think expressions, idioms, and slang in languages affect people's ability to learn and understand a language different from their native one?

Craft Ideas:



Create a "Family Heritage Quilt"

Materials:

Carefully measured square piece of fabric.
Fabric paints

Directions: Draw and color a picture showing a scene from your family!

Possible Topics to consider:

What is your favorite memory?

What was your favorite family vacation?

How do you celebrate your favorite holiday?

Source: <http://www.crayola.com/lesson-plans/detail/my-friends%E2%80%99-heritage-quilt-lesson-plan/>

Create an "Origami Butterfly"

Materials:

Paper
Printed directions

Directions:

Demonstrate each of the folds slowly so everyone can follow.

When completed, display all butterflies on a *Before We Were Free* bulletin board.

Source: http://dev.origami.com/images_pdf/butterfly-donachie.pdf
http://dev.origami.com/images_pdf/butterfly_mk.pdf



Take Home Crafts:

Macramé Butterfly Pin

Macramé is a craft that uses tied knots and beads to create decorative items. This craft will create a Macramé butterfly.

Learn about Macramé: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macram%C3%A9>

Materials:

Printed Directions including source sites

Pre-measured Hemp/string

Zip top bags

Optional: Assorted beads

Make Take Home Kits:

Provide each participant with a zip top bag that includes: printed directions and pre-measured hemp. Allow participants to either provide their own beads or include them in your kit. Offer assorted completed project samples for viewing.



Source: http://www.makingfriends.com/macrame_butterfly.htm

Program Resources:

Dominican Republic Tourist Sites:

Carnival Masks in the Dominican Republic:

<http://www.dominicanmasks.com/>

Countries & Customs:

<http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Dominican-Republic.html>

Dominican Republic Home:

<http://dominicanrepublic.com/index.php>

Go Dominican Republic:

<http://www.godominicanrepublic.com/rd/>

Hispaniola:

http://www.hispaniola.com/dominican_republic/info/history.php

How Stuff Works:

<http://geography.howstuffworks.com/caribbean/geography-of-the-dominican-republic.htm>

Infoplease:

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107475.html>

US Department of State:

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35639.htm>

Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominican_Republic

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Dominican_Republic

Before We Were Free Lesson Plans:

Reading Guide: http://www.teenreads.com/guides/before_we_were_free1.asp

Study Guide:

<http://mysite.verizon.net/vzexvjgj/languageartsliteracyresourceroom/id2.html>

Random House Book Guide:

<http://www4.uwm.edu/clacs/aa/book/pdf/beforefree.pdf>



Optional Ice Breaker Activities:

Sorts and Mingle:

Source: <http://www.group-games.com/ice-breakers/sorts-and-mingle.html>

Whose Story Is It?

Source: <http://www.group-games.com/ice-breakers/whose-story-is-it.html>

Optional Crafts:

Butterflies Egg Carton Craft:

<http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/carton-cuties-858372/>

Butterflies Mobile Craft:

http://www.firstpalette.com/Craft_themes/Animals/Filter_Paper_Butterfly_Mobile/Filter_Paper_Butterfly_Mobile.html

Dominican Republic Pan Pipe Craft:

http://simpleanalogy.typepad.com/simple_analogy/2011/03/multicultural-crafts-for-kids-dominican-republic.html

My Cultures of the World Book

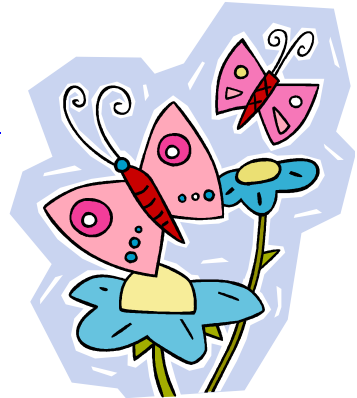
<http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/family/book-crafts3.htm>

Hispaniola Decorative Plate Craft by Mary Ayres

http://www.craftsforkids.com/projects/900/910_2.htm

Neighborhood Quilt:

<http://www.crayola.com/crafts/detail/neighborhood-quilt-craft/>



Optional Songs:

Butterfly Songs:

Source:

http://www.perpetualpreschool.com/preschool_themes/butterflies/butterfly_songs.htm

Source: <http://www.mamalisa.com/?p=952&t=ec&c=135>

"The Little Caterpillar"

Sung to (Itsy, Bitsy Spider)

The little caterpillar crawled up into a tree,

Spun his cocoon and slept so quietly,
All through the winter he didn't make a sound,

He dreamt of his new life when he'd be flying all around.

While he was sleeping the snow did gently fall,

Winter came and went, then he heard the robin's call,

"Come on Mr. Butterfly, out of your cocoon

Spread your wings and fly for me, while I sing my tune.

"Caterpillar"

(sung to Row, row your boat)

One caterpillar, two caterpillars, three caterpillars today.

Four caterpillars, five caterpillars eating all the day.

One cocoon, two cocoons, three cocoons today.

Four cocoons, five cocoons sleeping all the day.

One butterfly, two butterflies, three butterflies today.

Four butterflies, five butterflies, flying, fly away.

**Chucha was from Haiti, so included here is a Haitian song.

Ti Zwazo kape koute/Listening Bird

Children's Song (Haitian Creole)

Ti Zwazo nan bwa ki tape koute
Ti Zwazo nan bwa ki tape koute
Le mwen tande sa mwen ginyin lapen
Le mwen tande sa mwen ginyin lapen
Kan depi jou sa depi mwen nan shen

Children's Song (English)

Little bird in the wood listening
Little bird in the wood listening
When I heard all this overcome with grief
When I heard all this overcome with grief
Since that day have been in shackles

