

# Before We Were Free (Laurel-Leaf Books Readers Circle)

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Anita de la Torre never questioned her freedom living in the Dominican Republic. But by her 12th birthday in 1960, most of her relatives have emigrated to the United States, her brother Toni has disappeared without a trace, and the government's secret police terrorize her remaining family because of their suspected opposition of el Trujillo's dictatorship.

Using the strength and courage of her family, Anita must overcome her fears and fly to freedom, leaving all that she once knew behind.

From renowned author Julia Alvarez comes an unforgettable story about adolescence, perseverance, and one girl's struggle to be free.

What would life be like for a teen living under a dictatorship? Afraid to go to school or to talk freely? Knowing that, at the least suspicion, the secret police could invade your house, even search and destroy your private treasures? Or worse, that your father or uncles or brothers could be suddenly taken away to be jailed or tortured or killed? Such experiences have been all too common in the many Latin American dictatorships of the last 50 years. Author Julia Alvarez (*How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*) and her family escaped from the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic when she was 10, but in *Before We Were Free* she imagines, through the stories of her cousins and friends, how it was for those who stayed behind.

Twelve-year-old Anita de la Torre is too involved with her own life to be more than dimly aware of the growing menace all around her, until her last cousins and uncles and aunts have fled to America and a fleet of black Volkswagens comes up the drive, bringing the secret police to the family compound to search their houses. Gradually, through overheard conversations and the explanations of her older sister, Lucinda, she comes to understand that her father and uncles are involved in a plot to kill El Jefe, the dictator, and that they are all in deadly peril. Anita's story is universal in its implications--she even keeps an Anne Frank-like diary when she and her mother must hide in a friend's house--and a tribute to those brave souls who feel, like Anita's father, that "life without freedom is no life at all." (Ages 10 to 14) --Patty Campbell

Julia Alvarez grew up in the Dominican Republic before emigrating to the United States at the age of 10. She now lives in Vermont, where she is a writer-in-residence at Middlebury College.

Other Books

Moore's Rural New-Yorker,

"We have always He wished she'd make the biscuit that his mother used to make ; considered the story of Pitcairn Island a During the Summer , the public - school pupils in New South Wales receive is the prince of good foodsShe didn't ..."