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aliases Dedé edit descriptions of this character Jump to ratings and reviewsLibrarian's Note: an alternate cover for this ISBN can be found here.Set during the waning days of the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic in 1960, this extraordinary novel tells the story the Mirabal sisters, three young wives and mothers who are assassinated after visiting their jailed husbands.From the author of How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents comes this tale of courage and sisterhood set in the Dominican Republic during the rise of the Trujillo dictatorship. A skillful blend of fact and fiction, In the Time of the Butterflies is inspired by the true story of the three Mirabal sisters who, in 1960, were murdered for their part in an underground plot to overthrow the government. Alvarez breathes life into these historical figures--known as "las mariposas," or "the butterflies," in the underground--as she imagines their teenage years, their gradual involvement with the revolution, and their terror as their dissentience is uncovered.Alvarez's controlled writing perfectly captures the mounting tension as "the butterflies" near their horrific end. The novel begins with the recollections of Dede, the fourth and surviving sister, who fears abandoning her routines and her husband to join the movement. Alvarez also offers the perspectives of the other sisters: brave and outspoken Minerva, the family's political ringleader; pious Patria, who forsakes her faith to join her sisters after witnessing the atrocities of the tyranny; and the baby sister, sensitive Maria Teresa, who, in a series of diaries, chronicles her allegiance to Minerva and the physical and spiritual anguish of prison life.In the Time of the Butterflies is an American Library Association Notable Book and a 1995 National Book Critics Circle Award nominee. 3679 people are currently reading73390 people want to readJulia Alvarez left the Dominican Republic for the United States in 1960 at the age of ten. She is the author of six novels, three books of nonfiction, three collections of poetry, and eleven books for children and young adults. She has taught and mentored writers in schools and communities across America and, until her retirement in 2016, was a writer-in-residence at Middlebury College. Her work has garnered wide recognition, including a Latina Leader Award in Literature from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, the Hispanic Heritage Award in Literature, the Woman of the Year by Latina magazine, and inclusion in the New York Public Library's program "The Hand of the Poet: Original Manuscripts by 100 Masters, from John Donne to Julia Alvarez." In the Time of the Butterflies, with over one million copies in print, was selected by the National Endowment for the Arts for its national Big Read program, and in 2013 President Obama awarded Alvarez the National Medal of Arts in recognition of her extraordinary storytelling.Photo copyright by Brandon Cruz GonzálezEL VOCERO DE PUERTO RICODisplaying 1 - 30 of 6,144 reviewsNovember 19, 2024'It's about time we women had a voice in running our country.'Rafael Trujillo's 31 years of power in the Dominican Republic is considered one of the most violent reigns in the Americas. An estimated 9,000-20,000 Haitians were executed under his command and his heavy handed rule was known for frequent violations of civil rights and freedoms. In the Time of the Butterflies by Dominican-American author and poet Julia Alvarez is a fictionalized account of the Mirabal sisters—code-named mariposas—who famously organized against Trujillo and the assassination of three of the four sisters shocked the world and made them a symbol of feminist resistance. Told in the voices of each sister framed as a recounting from the surviving sister, Dedé, who bookends the novel, Alvarez chronicles them from childhood to active participants in the resistance, spanning from 1943 to 1960 with Dedé's portion set in the 90s. In the Time of the Butterflies is a deeply moving portrait of family, love and courage in the face of unspeakable horrors, beautifully told by Alvarez to highlight the cruelty and violence of dictatorships but to also shine a light of hope and give voice to the human spirit of resistance as was demonstrated by these young women even in the face of inevitable death. Mirabal sistersI'm lucky to live in a community where each year we have a community book reading and events for the NEA's Big Read. This was the novel chosen for 2019 and I was honored to help out with some of the planning for the art events in which the local schools participated in. I love this book and it was an excellent chance to have a hand in turning reading into visual expression to further examine the novel's ideas and messages. This is a great book for a community read, particularly how it emphasizes the role of women and demonstrates the strength of unity to make change even up against a violent powerhouse. Through being told in rotating voices of the sisters through their years, it also gives voice to a wide variety of ages and shows how children can have astute observations and ideas as they observe the world around them and recognize problems. Far too often through history and even the present does society overlook the voices of women and children who are just as oppressed, if not more, by the forces they speak out against as anyone else. This is a powerful book with a powerful message and Alvarez makes it so engaging as to truly grab hold of your heart and mind to inspire and uplift.'And that's how I got free ... and realized that I'd just left a small cage to go into a bigger one, the size of our whole country.'The Mirabal sisters are well known for their actions and Alvarez has created a loving tribute to them here. Daughters of a landowner who fell into a great deal of money, it also is a reminder that those who have must make sacrifices for those who do not or there can never be real change. This is mirrored by the actual direction shift of the Catholic Church, as is covered in the book, when the Catholic Church having moved from being supporting of Trujillo to denouncing him as resistance to him increased. It is casually observed that the church's former silence was also what allowed so many atrocities to continue unchecked thus far, with the mariposas also recognizing their silence would also imply complicity. Several of the sisters initially wish to cast a blind eye over the problems facing their country, knowing they are secure, but the heavy amalgamation of injustices and the urging of Minerva, the third and most headstrong of the sisters, open their eyes and they look inwards to ask what can they possibly do. The shifting perspective allows multiple vantage points for the main events of the novel, offering a variety of opinions on them. The voices could perhaps have been a bit more varied, but having the Maria sections written as her diary is a nice touch and each sister is well nuanced and fully realized with personality, opinion, desires and dreams. It is clear Alvarez cares for these characters and her heartfelt treatment ensures you certainly will too.'Everything is for sale here, everything but your freedom.'Minerva comes of age watching the horrors of the regime all around her, seeing her history books replaced with false history, knowing schoolmates' parents have been detained or executed by Trujillo, and absorbs a deep sense of resistance in her heart. 'Sometimes, watching the rabbits in their pens,' she thinks early in the novel, 'I'm no different from you, poor things.' She attempts to liberate them but finds she is hurting them in the process. She learns early that not everyone wants to be free, and that sometimes harm can come from fighting for freedom, something she is wary of throughout the novel but made more keenly aware of the costs and consequences she must have courage against. When she meets Trujillo at an event she attempts to convince him to let her into lawschool but resists his advances (having learned Trujillo has a lust for young girls who are raped and kept in private homes for his pleasure, such as happens to her classmate Lina), and this lands her father in prison. This becomes the spark for her activism and the novel really takes off from here. '. No one had to tell me to believe in God or to love everything that lives. I did it automatically like a shoot inching its way towards the light.'Religion is a theme that threads throughout the novel, being shown as an important part of the community and also appearing through religious symbolism and allusions, such as the aformentioned parallels between the sisters and the Church. For Patria, religion takes a deeper purpose in her character. Having refused to participate in her sister's resistance efforts, she turns all her attention to religion and family but begins to lose faith after repeatedly having stillborne children. 'After I lost the baby, I felt a strange vacancy,' she says, 'I was an empty house with a sign in front, Se Vende, For Sale. Any vagrant thought could take me.' However, when she is able to have a child it renews her faith, ('My faith stirred') and this rebirth leads her into joining her sisters in the resistance through a priest-organized sector of advocacy.The novel covers a lot of ground, but does so in very unique ways. While this is a novel full of violence, much of it takes place off-stage and the character's minds are often on daily life as much as they are the Cause. Alvarez keeps the perspective very close to the issues of the family, thus demonstrating that the resistance is not just something you do in the streets or in moments of action, but an ongoing commitment that breathes in every aspect of your life. The novel is darkest when the sister's are separated, with husbands and Minerva stuck in prison but also is a key look at the importance of community. Those outside support each other while their family members are incarcerated while on the inside Minerva gives all she has to everyone else in the prison. Even those who were not part of the cause, always finding new ways to help, heal, and hopefully recruit towards resisting the dictatorship.As one would expect from the sad history of these women, this is a novel about an assassination (not a spoiler, you know from page 1). In reality, the men who murdered the three sisters were eventually held accountable, and it was confirmed that the orders had come from Trujillo himself. During his trial, one of the killers said that 'Trujillo would have killed us all,' had they not followed the orders, demonstrating just how much Trujillo ruled by fear and violence. In 1999, the UN designated the day of their murder, November 25th, to be the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women to honor them and raise awareness. In the Time of Butterflies is an affecting tale of courage and community that gives a much needed voice to these brave women who had theirs silenced far too early. In the afterword, Alvarez writes 'I believe in the power of stories to change the world,' and her work here is certainly an excellent addition to the sparks of change that can be found in great literature.4.5/5coming-of-age latin_american_lit resistanceDecember 2, 2016Julia Alvarez has been one of my favorite authors for the past twenty years. Her memoirs, both fictional and nonfiction, are laced with poetic humor and often leave me with a smile on my face. Alvarez' family left the Dominican Republic in 1960 in the middle of the revolution to overthrow the dictatorial president Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. Because her father had connections, the family was able to escape. Yet, what of those left on the island? In this fictional yet poignant account of the Mirabal sisters who came to be known as the symbol of the revolution, Alvarez reveals the fate of those left behind. Minerva Mirabal always wanted more than to be a simple country woman like her mother. In a machismo culture where few women learned to read and write, she did not have a future although her dream was to go to law school. Her older sister Patria Mercedes believed to have a religious calling, and their middle sister Dede was the obedient one who went along with the other two. By age ten, the three sisters entered the La Escuela de Imaculada Concepcion and started down the path to both a higher education and to learning revolutionary ideals. Using poetic prose, Alvarez writes how the three older Mirabal sisters and their youngest sister Maria Teresa "Mate" came of age to be modern women. No longer would they be subservient members of a machismo culture but productive members of society who would make a difference going forward. Alternating chapters from the point of view of each sister, Alvarez expresses how each came to be a revolutionary from a unique place. Especially powerful, were the diary entries written by Mate throughout her life as she grasps what joining the movement would do to herself and her family. The sisters either married a cousin as was expected or for love, and all four couples played a role in the revolution that would take down Trujillo and bring democracy to the island. Known as the mariposas and meeting clandestinely outside the home of Patria and her husband Pedrito, the guerilla movement took root. Even their young children wanted to participate despite the danger involved. Trujillo's spies planted themselves on Mirabal land, equally determined to squash the masterminds behind the rebellion. This lead the extended family to live in constant fear and had me as a reader mesmerized by Alvarez' writing, showing she is gifted in relating powerful emotions across more than one genre. November 25, 1960, the day of the real life Mirabal sisters abduction and murder, is now the International Day Toward Violence Against Women. Through the courage and unwavering attitude of the Mirabal sisters and their families, the revolution occurred less than a year later. Alvarez points out in her postscript that even Dominicans living in the United States knew of the bravery of the Mirabal girls. In this powerful book which I rate 4.5 bright stars, Julia Alvarez tells her readers "Vivan las mariposas" so that we never forget these courageous Mirabals.coming-of-age hispanic-culture historical-fiction December 7, 2019"I believe in the power of stories to change the world." Julia Alvarez says this in the opening of her note at the end of this compelling, all encompassing novel. It's based on the true story of three sisters who lost their lives because they bravely stood up for their ideals of a better life for themselves, their family and the people of the Dominican Republic as part of the revolutionary movement against a dictator, Rafael Trujillo. I already believed in the power of stories, but this beautifully written, heart breaking and ultimately uplifting book drove home for me just how impactful and important well done historical fiction can be. In alternating narratives, spanning several decades, the Mirabal sisters, Patria, Minerva, Maria Teresa and Dede, the fourth sister who survives, come to life in these pages. It was easy to love them as young girls and see how they developed through the years, becoming privy to their individualities as well as their bonds with each other, the men in their lives. This is an engrossing story of a family in a place and time of political upheaval, of which I knew next to nothing about. How these women in a place and time when these are not things that women do, become involved in a political revolution, as resistors to Trujillo's regime, smuggling arms, building bombs depicts the conviction and bravery of the real sisters. This is evident in the meticulous research that Alvarez must have done as the numerous articles I read online showed.It's about family, country, culture and a revolution. The Mirabal sister were three among many who were killed under Trujillo's rule, but they became a symbol of the revolution and the inspiration behind the United Nation declaring November 25th, the day on which they were killed as "an international day to eliminate all violence against women." It's a personal story for Alvarez, whose family escaped the regime for New York just months before the sisters were murdered. It's a beautifully written, gripping story. I will most definitely read other books by her. Thanks so much to Algonquin Books for sending me a copy of this 25th Anniversary edition.April 27, 2020Favorite novel so far this year (2018). The last twentyfive pages are all outbursts of sobs & of the truly ugly kind, by an inconsolable reader. Oh this one is GREAT! Smudgy words of a wounded family tree, the very human lasting lamentation...There are 2 novels* in existence (that I'm wholly aware of) that put the D.R. under the Trujillo regime under a magnifying glass that illuminates the complexities, the ugliness, of absolute dictatorships (to be deftly simplistic) and fraught societal norms (to say the least). But we Americans don't know nothing of such tyrannical totalitarianisms, right?The Mirabal sisters are heroes, martyrs. Wealthier than other families, they all have the Revolutionary Heart that goes well with legend and can be displayed in almost majestic light in literature, as occurs here. How they get to this place of public adulation, or near-Sainthood, it is your absolute pleasure to read about in Alvarez's stunner. Definitely a major work of Latin American Historical fiction (the other perfect novel that is a companion piece in many respects to this is Mario Vargas Llosa's opus "The Feast of the Goat"*).Basically, it's "Little Women" in hell.September 26, 2019I hate reviewing books that I only found mediocre. I really, really wanted to like this one. I thought the plot was very promising. Frankly, I really didn't know much about Trujillo's dictatorship in the Dominican Republic and I thought by reading this I would learn a lot.. and I did. I just wasn't captivated by the story or the characters. However, this book was based on fact and that should count for something. I also think that in this case, it was me, not the book. Just like when a boyfriend breaks up with his girlfriend and says "Its me, not you." I did however appreciate it for what it was: An enlightening story about a dark time in Latin American history. I also am grateful that I completed it and learned more about this time period.April 6, 2014The first time I traveled through Mexico, I found this book... and read it in three days. Towards the end of the story, before the impending tragedy strikes, the oldest (and easily the bravest) sister is remembering a moment from her youth... she and her sisters are playing this game, in the dark, behind their parents' farm house: the idea was to walk off the porch, into the pitch black of the night, and to go as far as they could before turning back. What she remembers, is how everyone always thought she was fearless... and on the contrary, how much fear she did feel, how she couldn't breathe, how she didn't know if she could do it... and how she just stepped forward anyway. Feeling the fear, and walking right into it. It really spoke to me at the time: I'd leapt into this crazy adventure, all by myself, with a backpack and a map, in the middle of nowhere, at a young age... and no one could understand what I was doing... really, neither could I, but somehow I knew that I needed to do it; I needed to conquer this thing. I had never read such an apt description of what that feels like. November 14, 2020In the Time of the Butterflies, Julia Alvarezin the Time of the Butterflies is a historical fiction novel by Julia Alvarez, relating a fictionalized account of the Mirabal sisters during the time of the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic. The book is written in the first and third person, by and about the Mirabal sisters. First published in 1994, the story was adapted into a feature film in 2001. The story of the four Mirabal sisters, during the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic. At school, one of the sisters, Minerva, meets a girl, Sinita, who later became one of her best friends. Sinita eventually confided in Minerva the truth about Trujillo - that their "glorious" leader was a killer. The sisters make a political commitment to overthrow the Trujillo regime. They are harassed, persecuted, and imprisoned, all while their family suffers retaliation from the Military Intelligence Service (SIM). As vengeance for their political activities, Trujillo orders three of the sisters be killed on Puerto Plata Road, with their driver Rufino, while returning from visiting their husbands in jail. The women and driver are beaten to death and later their vehicle and bodies are dumped off a cliff in order to make their deaths look like an accident. ... ...