

Response Paper #2

Choose **one** of the following questions, and write two pages in response. We have included several topics that we have started to examine in class.

1. In *School Days*, Chamoiseau examines several power relationships. Choose **one relationship** (parent/child or teacher/student) and examine its meaning and complexity. Argue either that this power relationship is unique to the social, political or historical reality, or that this relationship reflects universal issues of power. Of course you can define it as a mix of both. How does the author use specific details to convey the tension in this relationship?
2. Each person's identity is inextricably linked to history and culture. Pick one or two major event(s) in the little black boy's life and argue about the universality of his situation or its specificity given the culture, history, economic situation in Martinique conveyed by the author.
3. Be creative. Choose one event from your childhood: one telling moment of a relationship between you and a parent, sibling, friend or teacher. Write about it for two pages as a short chapter that uses description, dialogue or various voices to convey the tension between the event and the surrounding culture. Make sure that you choose words carefully so that the reader can intuit the cultural differences your story reveals. Try to model it after Chamoiseau.
4. In the past, exiles could generally not return easily to their home countries. Today, and especially in the case of immigrants to the U.S. from Central and Latin America as well as the Caribbean, there is a constant flow of family and friends back and forth across borders. Argue that this exchange makes—or does not make—assimilation a more complicated process for Hispanics than for other minority groups. Examine the kinds of language problems this movement presents. Focus on how Alvarez represents this coming-and-going in the structure of her novel.
5. Because Alvarez has inverted the time sequence of her stories in the novel, it is difficult to refer to events as “earlier” or “later.” How does this technique add to the reader's understanding of the uncertainty and instability in the Garcia girls' own lives. How does it reflect their own ambiguities? Argue that this technique is useful or that it's a bothersome literary device.
6. Within the group of sisters, Fifi's lack of memory and her struggle to reconstruct her bilingual self make her the most rebellious against her circumstances. How does the intervention of her sisters in her relationship to Manuel Gustavo show the axes of Dominican Republic machismo and U.S. feminism?
7. Be creative: How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents has many moments of cultural dislocation, e.g., Yolanda with Rudy, Sandi and Doña Charito. Write a two page chapter that describes a moment of cultural dislocation you or someone

you know has experienced. Choose your words carefully so that the two cultures are easily identifiable to the reader. Model it after Alvarez.

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