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## Meet the Author: Julia Álvarez

- Julia Álvarez was born in the United States, but her family returned to their native country, Dominican Republic, shortly after her birth.
- Álvarez grew up in the Dominican Republic until an unsafe political climate forced her family to flee to New York.
- Álvarez returned to the United States at ten years old without knowing how to speak English. As a young adult, she dealt with homesickness, prejudice, and isolation.
- Her experiences as an immigrant inspired much of her work as she found comfort in writing and exploring her identity.
- Today, Julia Álvarez is a renowned poet and novelist. Some of her most famous works include: *In the Time of Butterflies*, *The Secret Footprints*, *Before We Were Free*, *iYo!*, *Saving the World*, and *Once Upon A Quinceañera*.



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## Terms to Know

### Personal Essay

- form of nonfiction writing that expresses the author's thoughts and feelings on one subject



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## Terms to Know

Anecdote

- a short, interesting account of events

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## Terms to Know

### Ethnicity

- the state of belonging to a social group that has a common and distinctive culture, religion, language, or tradition

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## Terms to Know

Nombres

- Spanish for “names”

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## Terms to Know

### Alcatraz

- an island in San Francisco Bay that once was the location of a very notorious federal prison and housed some of America's most dangerous felons



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## Terms to Know

### Sancocho

- traditional Caribbean stew of meat and vegetables



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## Terms to Know

### Third World

- Refers to the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America
- “Third world country” is an outdated term that since has been changed to “developing nation” characterized by a population with low and middle incomes, and other socio-economic indicators



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## Terms to Know

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Rococo

- In a style or way that is very showy or ornate

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## Terms to Know

### Nuclear Family

- parents and their dependent children, regarded as a basic social unit without any extended family



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# Vocabulary

## Immigration

- noun
- the place at a country's border where government officials check the documents of people entering that country



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# Vocabulary

Declare

- verb
- acknowledge possession of taxable income or dutiable goods

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# Vocabulary

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Super

- noun
- a superintendent; the caretaker of a building

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# Vocabulary

## Forbade

- Verb
- Past tense of *forbid*
- to order (someone) not to do something



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# Vocabulary

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**Ironically**

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- adverb
- in an unexpected way

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# Vocabulary

## Sarapes

- noun
- a shawl or blanket worn as a cloak in Latin America



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# Vocabulary

## Bazaar

- noun
- a market in a Middle Eastern country that sells miscellaneous goods



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# Vocabulary

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Inevitably

- adverb
- as is certain to happen; unavoidably

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# Vocabulary

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- noun
- something that tests your patience or strength such as a difficult task or situation

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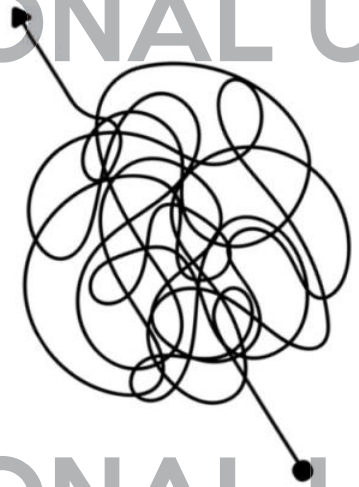
# Vocabulary

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Convoluted

- adjective
- complex and complicated



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Name:

Date:

### Before Reading Word Sort

Directions: Consider how the words below are related. Sort them into different categories by creating lists. Create a minimum of three lists in the empty box below.

Cash  
River  
Iris  
Crystal  
Hope  
Tiger

Meadow  
Pearl  
Phoenix  
Autumn  
Lily  
Austin

Summer  
Harmony  
Trip  
Storm  
May  
Rose

Georgia  
Rich  
Jet  
Sky  
Robin  
Winter

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Name:  
"Names/Nombres" by Julia Alvarez

Date:  
Before Reading Questions

1. Are nicknames harmful or playful? Explain.

2. Do you like your name? What would you change your name to if given the opportunity?

3. Is your name easy to pronounce? Easy to spell? Do you get frustrated if someone says your name incorrectly? Explain.

4. Do you have any nicknames? What do they mean? If you don't have any, think of a friend or family member that has a nickname and explain the meaning behind it.

5. Do you have any pets? What are their names and why? If you don't have a pet, what *would you name* a pet if you bought one today? Explain.

6. Do you think a person's name can influence his/her life or character? Give examples.

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7. Why do women change their name after marriage? What do you think about it?

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8. Who chose your name? Why did they choose this name for you?

9. Would you rather have an extremely common/popular name or an extremely rare name? Explain.

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Name:  
"Names/Nombres" by Julia Alvarez

Date:  
Vocabulary

Terms to Know	Definition
personal essay	
anecdote	
ethnicity	
nombres	
Alcatraz	
sancocho	
third world	
rococo	
nuclear family	

Vocabulary Word	Part of Speech	Definition
immigration	noun	
declare	verb	
super	noun	
forbade	verb	
ironically	adverb	
sarapes	noun	
bazaar	noun	
inevitably	adverb	
trial	noun	
convoluted	adjective	



Name:  
"Names/Nombres" by Julia Alvarez

Date:  
Reading Questions

1) How does Julia feel about her new names when she first arrives in America?

2) Why doesn't Julia correct those who mispronounce her name?

3) Julia was given her first name in honor of who?

4) Why does Julia's mother reference the quote "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet," by Shakespeare?

5) How does Julia feel about her new nicknames in high school? Explain.

6) Why is Julia reluctant to tell the others she is from the Dominican Republic?

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7) Explain the meaning of the following simile: "Julia Altagracia Maria Teresa Alvarez Tavarez Perello Espiaillat Julia Perez Rochet Gonzalez. *I pronounced it slowly, a name as chaotic with sounds as a Middle Eastern bazaar or market day in a South American village.*"

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8) Why is Julia nervous to introduce her friends to her family at graduation?

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9) What is the tone of the last line in the story? Explain its significance.

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10) How has views on ethnicity and culture changed today?

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11) What is the author's message or theme of the story?

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12) What does the typewriter symbolize?

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13) How did names cause conflict for Julia and her family?

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14) How do Julia's feelings about her name change over time?

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15) Why did Julia Alvarez choose the title "Names/Nombres"?

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16) How important is point of view in this story?

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17) How might Alvarez's experiences influenced her to become a writer?

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18) What are three questions you have for Julia Alvarez?

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19) Why does being different make people feel insecure? Describe a time when you felt like an outsider or you didn't fit in with your peers.

Name:  
"Names/Nombres" by Julia Alvarez

Date:  
After Reading Journal

The following speech is spoken by Juliet in Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* (Act II, Scene II). The Montague and Capulet families are at war and Juliet is not allowed to associate with Romeo because he is a Montague; however, she has fallen deeply in love with him. Shakespeare conveys the message that the naming of things is irrelevant.

Tis but thy name that is my enemy;  
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.  
What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,  
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!  
**What's in a name? that which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet;**  
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,  
Retain that dear perfection which he owes  
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,  
And for that name which is no part of thee  
Take all myself.

**Directions: Answer the following questions in a minimum of ten fully developed sentences. Use details and examples to support your response.**

Do you agree with the following quote "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Why or why not? How valuable is a name?

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## "Names/Nombres" By Julia Alvarez — Suggested Lesson Procedure

1) Assign students the before reading word sort, but avoid telling students that they will be reading a story titled "Names/Nombres" if possible.

Pass out the worksheets to each student and direct students to work in groups of 2-4. Have groups identify the meaning and properties of each word and then "sort" the words into any categories they see similarities between. There are no right answers. This "sorting" process allows students to recognize how words have multiple meanings and it builds anticipation for the upcoming story. Students can sort the words in as many lists as they see fit and categorize the words however they feel the words are connected. For example: Winter, Summer, and Autumn are all seasons. Tiger, Robin, and Phoenix are all animals.

For this particular word sort, all the terms are NAMES! **Make sure you bring this fun fact to the attention of the whole class once the activity is done. Spark a discussion about where names come from and how most names have other multiple meanings in the world.**

2) Have students answer the before reading questions either in pairs or independently. Ask for volunteers to share some responses.

3) Review the vocabulary terms and author's background with students using the Powerpoint presentation. Students should copy the definitions into their graphic organizers.

4) Read the short story "Names/Nombres" by Julia Alvarez. (This takes about 10 minutes without stopping.)

5) Assign the reading comprehension questions. Students may complete this independently or in pairs. Review the answers as a class once completed.

6) Assign the after reading journal prompt. This prompt asks students to consider an excerpt from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* regarding the value of a name.

Note to teachers: Due to copyright law, I am unable to offer a full text version of the story. If you enter "Names/Nombres by Julia Alvarez" into any search engine, you will find a copy of the story available for you to print and use in class. Here is the link I used: [Names Nombres Full Text](#)

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at

[chompingatthelit@gmail.com](mailto:chompingatthelit@gmail.com)

Name:

Date:

### Before Reading Word Sort

Directions: Consider how the words below are related. Sort all of the words into different categories by creating lists. Create a minimum of 3 lists in the empty box below.

Cash  
River  
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Meadow  
Pearl  
Phoenix  
Autumn  
Lily  
Austin

Summer  
Harmony  
Trip  
Storm  
May  
Rose

Georgia  
Rich  
Jet  
Sky  
Robin  
Winter

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Name:  
"Names/Nombres" by Julia Alvarez

Date:  
Before Reading Questions

Answers will vary for all.

1. Are nicknames harmful or playful? Explain.

2. Do you like your name? What would you change your name to if given the opportunity?

3. Is your name easy to pronounce? Easy to spell? Do you get frustrated if someone says your name incorrectly? Explain.

4. Do you have any nicknames? What do they mean? If you don't have any, think of a friend or family member that has a nickname and explain the meaning behind it.

5. Do you have any pets? What are their names and why? If you don't have a pet, what would you name a pet if you bought one today? Explain.

6. Do you think a person's name can influence his/her life or character? Give examples.

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7. Why do women change their name after marriage? What do you think about it?

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8. Who chose your name? Why did they choose this name for you?

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9. Would you rather have: an extremely common/popular name or an extremely rare name? Explain.

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Name:

"Names/Nombres" by Julia Alvarez

Date:

Vocabulary

Terms to Know	Definition
personal essay	form of nonfiction writing that expresses the author's thoughts and feelings on one subject
anecdote	a short, interesting account of events
ethnicity	the state of belonging to a social group that has a common and distinctive culture, religion, language, or tradition
nombres	Spanish for "names"
Alcatraz	an island in San Francisco Bay that once was the location of a very notorious federal prison and housed some of America's most dangerous felons
sancocho	traditional Caribbean stew of meat and vegetables
third world	Refers to the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America—"Third world country" is an outdated term that since has been changed to "developing nation" characterized by a population with low and middle incomes, and other socio-economic indicators
rococo	In a style or way that is very showy or ornate
nuclear family	parents and their dependent children, regarded as a basic social unit without any extended family



Vocabulary Word	Part of Speech	Definition
immigration	noun	the place at a country's border where government officials check the documents of people entering that country
declare	verb	acknowledge possession of taxable income or dutiable goods
super	noun	a superintendent; the caretaker of a building
forbade	verb	to order (someone) not to do something
ironically	adverb	in an unexpected way
sarapes	noun	a shawl or blanket worn as a cloak in Latin America
bazaar	noun	a market in a Middle Eastern country that sells miscellaneous goods
inevitably	adverb	as is certain to happen; unavoidably
trial	noun	something that tests your patience or strength such as a difficult task or situation
convoluted	adjective	complex or complicated

Name:  
"Names/Nombres" by Julia Alvarez

Date:  
Reading Questions

## PREVIEW ANSWER KEY

1) How does Julia feel about her new names when she first arrives in America?

Julia feels offended, annoyed, and frustrated. She also feels protective over her name and disrespected that people are not trying to pronounce her family's name.

2) Why doesn't Julia correct those who mispronounce her name?

Julia was afraid her family would not be let into the country if she corrected the officer's pronunciation at immigration. She also does not correct her teacher because her mother advises her not to. Her mother told her that it didn't matter.

3) Julia was given her first name in honor of who?

Her mother is her namesake.

4) Why does Julia's mother reference the quote "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet," by Shakespeare?

Julia's mother emphasizes that a name does not influence who you truly are. Julia's name didn't change who she was; Julia's mother wanted to protect her from feeling hurt and disappointed by those who mispronounce her name.

5) How does Julia feel about her new nicknames in high school? Explain.

Julia didn't mind at all when she was given nicknames in high school because at that stage of life, if you had nicknames, it meant people liked you or thought you were cool. She wanted to fit in and nicknames were a form of affection and showed her popularity.

6) Why is Julia reluctant to tell the others she is from the Dominican Republic?

Being called out as a foreigner made her feel like an outsider. Plus, she was born in NYC so that is actually where she is *from*. Julia's reluctance to admit her heritage highlights her struggle to fit into her new identity. She also didn't believe that anyone would really know where the Dominican is, so she vaguely says she is from the Caribbean.

7) Explain the meaning of the following simile: "Julia Altagracia Maria Teresa Alvarez Tavarez Perello Espiaillat Julia Perez Rochet Gonzalez. *I pronounced it slowly, a name as chaotic with sounds as a Middle Eastern bazaar or market day in a South American village.*"

Julia is saying her name is very busy, full, noisy, or loud, just like a bazaar or market.

8) Why is Julia nervous to introduce her friends to her family at graduation?

Julia was self-conscious about her relatives at the graduation because there was so many of them—unlike other students who only had their immediate family attend. In addition, some of her family members were sneaking in without tickets, sitting in the front row, and talking throughout the ceremony. She was also embarrassed when introducing them to friends because they had complicated names and convoluted relationships.

9) What is the tone of the last line in the story? Explain its significance.

Julia's tone is content and humorous, as she jokes about which name she will end up being famous for. It is significant because it shows that Julia finally accepts who she is: both Dominican and American.

10) How has views on ethnicity and culture changed today?

Answers will vary.

11) What is the author's message or theme of the story?

Names can be used to express our identities, but they do not define us.



12) What does the typewriter symbolize?

Julia's parents support her and her ambitions to be a writer. Her parents are confident in Julia's ability and want her to pursue her interests in literature.

13) How did names cause conflict for Julia and her family?

Julia felt uncomfortable around people who mispronounced her name. Her name made it difficult to blend in with her peers. The entire family had to adapt to American culture and sometimes that meant letting people pronounce their names incorrectly.

14) How do Julia's feelings about her name change over time? Use textual evidence.

At first, Julia was very upset that no one could say her name, and felt like no one cared about her, she states "it took me a while to get used to my new names." Once she was in high school and students starting calling her names like "Alcatraz" and "Hey Jude," she felt like she was popular and accepted by her American peers. By the end of the story, Julia realizes that being true to one's self is more important than worrying about people's thoughts on one's name.

15) Why did Julia Alvarez choose the title "Names/Nombres"?

Julia Alvarez wants to emphasize the importance of adapting to a new culture while keeping your heritage. She is part of a Spanish speaking culture as well as an American culture, so the title is representative of her two identities.

16) How important is point of view in this story? Explain.

Julia's first person point of view is imperative in this story because readers would not fully understand how difficult it was for her to adapt to a new culture, especially when it comes to the seemingly "harmless" actions of others. When Julia talks about the shame and embarrassment she felt from being an outsider, she discusses how she suffered from being the "exotic" friend. People often asked her about her name and heritage out of curiosity, but for Julia, it made her feel shame and it was unwanted attention.

17) How might Alvarez's experiences influenced her to become a writer?

Julia's experiences growing up, learning a new language and culture, shape her identity as a writer. Writing probably helped Julia feel less isolated in the world. Her experiences gave her a fascination with language and a great deal to write about.

18) What are three questions you have for Julia Alvarez?

Answers will vary.

19) Why does being different make people feel insecure? Describe a time when you felt like an outsider or you didn't fit in with your peers.

Answers will vary.

Name:  
"Names/Nombres" by Julia Alvarez

Date:  
After Reading Journal

The following speech is spoken by Juliet in Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* (Act II, Scene II). The Montague and Capulet families are at war and Juliet is not allowed to associate with Romeo because he is a Montague; however, she has fallen deeply in love with him. Shakespeare conveys the message that the naming of things is irrelevant.

Tis but thy name that is my enemy;  
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.  
What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,  
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!  
**What's in a name? that which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet;**  
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,  
Retain that dear perfection which he owes  
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,  
And for that name which is no part of thee  
Take all myself.

**Directions: Answer the following questions in a minimum of ten fully developed sentences. Use details and examples to support your response.**

Do you agree with the following quote "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Why or why not? How valuable is a name?

**Answers will vary.**