A block:

* We know it’s a tragedy; we know the thread is going to be cut in front of us
* It isn’t a tragedy if you don’t know the person, so as we get to know them, the tragedy’s impact grows
* Do the dreams parallel reality?
* What are the themes? How are the motifs in support of that?
  + Loss of innocence…maybe oppression and innocence can’t coexist?
* Politics and relationships reflect each other
* Happy moments seem somehow “off” given that we know the ending
* The first chapter sets the fate of Mirabal sisters similarly to how the fate is set in *Antigone*
* As the girls get older and more involved, they see how bad the police state is – was it always that way and they were too naïve or did it change?
* The nature of a dictator, similar to Hitler’s time – speaking out = death
* Because the sisters are such a national legend, everyone already knows what happened, the book immerses us in the culture, and Alvarez wanted us to feel included in the cultural experience of characters & DR
* Trujillo’s tactics become more obvious, overt – financial stuff, parties, farm starts to fall out of favor and financial situation decays along with it, we experience the escalation of Trujillo’s tactics throughout the novel
* It feels unfinished given that Trujillo isn’t dead – their cause isn’t won
* Storytelling & art matters – brings exposure to conflicts/problems that not everyone knows about, doesn’t just show what’s happening but adds human element & can inspire change/action
* Mate’s recurring dream re: wedding dress in coffin, etc. – foreshadows her fate
* Events escalate throughout the book – oppression is subtle at first, and the people are slightly scared, but they still go about daily lives, but as the book goes on & as the sisters become more involve, people are more affected by police state, conflict becomes more active
* Each of the sisters get pulled into the revolution by a personal connection/person they care about
* A reoccurring theme – fates cutting the thread in front of you – you or someone near you is going to die
* Even though the Mirabal sisters lived through tyranny, it did bring about their legacy = resistance literature
* Citizen’s opinions have little power, police state gets harsher, power is limited increasingly
* Minerva & Patria have a dramatic event that sets them off – Mate falls in love… Dedé is afraid
* Would any of the girls have joined without Minerva?
* Mate’s recurring dreams are like a timeline – wedding, husbands, dead father –
* Anacahuita tree – father predicting futures, Dedé is only one who can reflect on it, that one night specifically is one of the last time they are all together in the book and the tree is their family tree – symbol of their unity
* How the sisters react to bad things that happen to them – Alvarez characterizes them well as they react

G block:

* They all have a fear of the commitment to political activism – they all share that at least
* Dreams are important in the novel because they foreshadow the actual future
* Storytelling is probably one of the most important components of a culture, and it can’t be controlled by the government so might be a better reflection of reality in some times/places & could help fuel revolution
* Knowing the tragedy at first helps create tension
* Trujillo controlled his country with fear, punishment & censorship – at first he’s secretive, but by the end it’s in the open
* If we hadn’t known about Antigone’s death we would have read it differently, and so goes for Butterflies – there is more of a clear line between good and bad in butterflies, knowing the sisters’ fates changes our opinion of them
* Repetition of the tree image reflects family tree, and book starts by separating it from the roots
* Moon imagery – every time they are under the moon the future gets predicted or foreshadowed – the night/moon reveals rather than hides
* No matter what the girls do in the story the outcome won’t change, and we know it from the start
* Establishing a clear ultimatum creates a difference between the story as a novel vs. art piece – more character driven and clarifies the universe as we aren’t as attached to the story – the story is a device to say more than just the facts of the actual history
* Maria Teresa’s reoccurring dream = her relationship with her father, issues with trust, represents her insecurity around men, that all men are considered bad (potentially) by her
* Wedding theme in Mate’s dreams, father can’t give her away, she’ll never have the perfect ideal wedding, everything has already been tainted
* It is ironic because Dedé is not involved in the revolution and because of this she has survivor’s guilt
* Dedé experiences sudden separation or loss repeatedly in the book, Mate and Minerva however experience loss of innocence, Patria loses faith in Trujillo & God/Jesus at same time
* Revolution will always have many different views/opinions and the novel ties in with that by showing all different points of view – those involved, not involved and partially involved – political reflects the personal and vice versa
* Having Dedé act as “reflector” and Maria Teresa’s journal as “primary source” offer the reader a more intimate view of the story/characters
* Knowing that they die creates dramatic irony in many cases (e.g. when Minerva says to Dedé “you’d feel bad if we died and you didn’t say goodbye”)
* The structure of the book is similar to Antigone, but it also adds the present day – the use of time in this novel contributes to the story…but how??

Figurative language

Characterization