

ACTIVITY 1.11 continued

7 After reading “I, Too” for the first time, guide the class in a discussion by asking the Making Observations questions. Check students’ general comprehension of the text based on their observations, asking follow-up questions if needed.

8 Have students read the About the Author section describing Julia Alvarez. Based on her experience and the previous poems, what expectations or predictions do students have for this poem?

9 Conduct a shared reading of Julia Alvarez’s “I, Too, Sing América.” Note in particular the spelling of *América* in the poem’s title. Discuss how it both references and comments upon the title of Whitman’s poem. You also may want to say aloud the Spanish spelling with an accent on the second syllable (or ask a volunteer to do so) to help students appreciate how the word is recognizable but pronounced somewhat differently in Spanish than in English.

10 As students are reading, monitor their progress. Be sure they are engaged with the text. Remind them to mentally evoke the poem’s sights, smells, and sounds as they read.

11 Tell students to pause after line 8. Discuss what Alvarez means when she writes, “I know it’s been said before / but not in this voice” and then follows that statement with words that reflect her own heritage.

1.11

My Notes

Poetry

I, Too, Sing América

by Julia Alvarez

I know it’s been said before
but not in this voice
of the plátano¹
and the mango,

5 marimba y bongó,²
not in this sancocho
of inglés
con español.³

Ay sí,⁴

10 it’s my turn
to oh say
what I see,
I’m going to sing America!
with all América

15 inside me:
from the soles
of Tierra del Fuego⁵
to the thin waist
of Chiriquí⁶

20 up the spine of the Mississippi
through the heartland
of the Yanquis⁷
to the great plain face of Canada —
all of us



¹ *plátano*: a plantain, starchier and less sweet than a banana and often cooked before eating
² *marimba y bongó*: The marimba and the bongo are musical instruments often heard in Latin American music.
³ *sancocho of inglés con español*: a mixture (*sancocho* = “stew”) of English with Spanish
⁴ *Ay sí*: “Oh, yes!”
⁵ *Tierra del Fuego*: an archipelago at the very southern tip of South America.
⁶ *Chiriquí*: a province in Panama
⁷ *Yanquis*: white Americans (“Yankees”)

Scaffolding the Text-Dependent Questions

4. Who is the intended audience for Julia Alvarez’s “I, Too, Sing América”? Locate both Spanish and English words throughout the poem, starting in lines 1–3. What subculture is celebrated throughout Alvarez’s poem? What language do people of that subculture speak? What separates them from the majority people of the nation? [RL11.12.1](#)

5. In lines 16–27, what imagery does Alvarez use to reference the history and heritage of those who live in “América”? What is that imagery’s purpose? Explain. Reread lines 16–27. What sort of figure is being described? What is that figure doing? What do the figure’s actions represent? [RL11.12.4](#)