Discussion for When I was PR by Esmeralda Santiago

1. Make a “reverse” outline.
2. Exmine the title. Does it work – WHY – or WHY NOT?
3. Examine the opening scene – does it “hook” the readers in? engage the reader from the start? HOW does the writer do this?
4. Examine the dialog between Mr. Grant and Esmeralda. What can you learn about her character, her personality? How does the writer SHOW you these character traits. ALSO look at how a writer formats the quotes. What does Esmeralda learn about herself in this interchange of words with Mr. Grant?
5. Examine Miss Brown and class 8-23. Look at the description of Miss Brown. Look at the details about the class. Define outcast. How was Miss Brown important in Esmeralda’s educational journey? Why did the writer devote so much space in the essay to Miss Brown?
6. What are the strategies Esmeralda used to improve her language. What was her process of learning English? Steps?
7. ENDING-CLOSE-CONCLUSION: what is the closing event and does this work?

WRITING PROMPTS:

Have you ever had a time when you had to overcome somebody’s mistaken perceptions of your ability?

“That’s not the way we do things here,” says Mr. Grant. Yet Esmeralda challenges the way things are done at this school. Have you had to prove yourself to someone or to yourself? How did you “save” yourself? What steps did you take?

Have you lived in two different worlds of language and had to navigate a difficult situation in your education?