

### **Rebecca Juntiniano's abstract**

Ester, a young domestic servant working to support her family in the highlands of Utuado, Puerto Rico, navigates sexism, classism and a turbulent home life. As she becomes torn between family and identity, she faces what her life looks like in the wake of Hurricane San Felipe

When I first began writing *El Puente*, it had always been with the intention that the story would be a work of historical fiction. I knew that the thesis would be centered around San Felipe Segundo, the worst ever hurricane to ever pass over Puerto Rico until 2017, when Hurricane Maria devastated the island socially, economically and physically. After 2017, after seeing Maria's effect on the Puerto Rican populace, on my family members still on the island, and the new wave of the diaspora that the storm spurred, the story felt timelier than ever. In 1928, the effects of San Felipe Segundo were not all that different. I first began the lengthy process of world building, which required a few weeks of historical research, specifically about daily life and the effects of the storm.