

Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP)

**Américas Award**  
for  
Children's and Young Adult Literature

In 1993, the national Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP) initiated a yearly children's and young adult book award with a commended list of titles. Beginning in 1995, a new category of "Honorable Mention" was added, to properly recognize the books that contended as finalists for the award.

The award is given in recognition of a U.S. work (picture books, poetry, fiction, folklore) published in the previous year in English or Spanish which authentically and engagingly presents the experience of individuals in Latin America or the Caribbean, or of Latinos in the United States.\* By combining both and linking the Americas, the award reaches beyond geographic borders, as well as multicultural-international boundaries, focusing instead upon cultural heritages within the hemisphere.

The award winner and the other commended books were selected for their quality of story, cultural authenticity/sensitivity, and potential for classroom use.

**1993 CLASP BOOK AWARD WINNER**

VEJIGANTE MASQUERADER by Lulu Delacre. New York: Scholastic, 1993. 40 pgs.  
ISBN 0-590-45776-4 (picture book)

Ramón longs to participate in Carnival. He works hard to make a costume and buy a mask, so he can join in the pranks with all the other masqueraders. Inspired by Carnival in Ponce, Puerto Rico where the author grew up, this bilingual story overflows with plentiful detail, and offers marvelous possibilities for sharing both language and culture, including an introductory description, glossary of chants, vocabulary, and instructions on mask making. The closeness of family and community threads throughout; the joy and color of Carnival abound. Searching for the twenty-eight hidden lizards (one for each day of February) draws the reader even more deeply into the illustrations.

## 1993 CLASP COMMENDED CHILDREN'S BOOK LIST

ABUELA'S WEAVE by Omar Castañeda. Illustrated by Enrique O. Sánchez. New York: Lee & Low, 1993. 32 pgs. ISBN 1-880000-00-8 (picture book)

Esperanza, a young Guatemalan girl, learns traditional weaving alongside her grandmother. Taking their work to market, Esperanza worries when she sees the machine-made weaving that no one will buy their handmade cloth. Rich in Guatemalan details, this gentle story interweaves themes of individual resourcefulness and strength through family, and promotes discussion of maintaining cultural traditions.

CELEBRATING THE HERO by Lyll Becerra de Jenkins. New York: Lodestar Books, 1993. 179 pgs. ISBN 0-525-67399-7 (young adult)

After her mother's death, seventeen-year-old Camila Draper travels to Colombia to attend a ceremony honoring her late grandfather. While trying to learn more about her mother's family, she discovers some disturbing truths. The story explores cross-cultural and cross-generational understanding, the power of family ties and issues of machismo and gender roles, both historically and present day.

FOR THE LIFE OF LAETITIA by Merle Hodge. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1993. 214 pgs. ISBN 0-374-32447-6 (young adult)

Set in the English-speaking Caribbean, twelve-year old Laetitia is being raised by her grandmother. When she gains a place in the government secondary school, she moves to town with her father and encounters pressures that call for a new maturity. Rural village life is described vividly, with the themes of friendship, racial and social prejudice amply developed.

HUE BOY by Rita Phillips Mitchell. Illustrated by Caroline Binch. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1993. 25 pgs. ISBN 0-8037-1448-3 (picture book)

Everyone in Hue Boy's Caribbean village has suggestions on how to help him grow, everything from eating the right tropical fruits to visiting the curandera for special herbs. But when Hue Boy's father returns from the sea, Hue Boy needs nothing else to make him stand very tall. The rhythm of the dialogue is engaging. The universal theme of wanting to grow bigger combines with some striking cultural differences, all incredibly illustrated. The author grew up in Belize; the illustrator has travelled widely in the Caribbean.

THE LITTLE PAINTER OF SABANA GRANDE by Patricia Maloney Markun. Illustrated by Robert Casilla. New York: Bradbury, 1993. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-02-762205-3 (picture book)

Fernando longs to paint during the dry season vacation from school. Only after making his own colors does he realize he has no paper on which to paint. His resourceful solution to the problem, with family and community support, is to paint on the adobe houses of his village. Cultural details abound in the presentation of home life, and the flora and fauna he paints. The story, based on a memory of the author while living in Panama, includes a glossary.

RADIO MAN, a story in English and Spanish by Arthur Dorros. Spanish translation by Sandra Marulanda Dorros. New York: Harper Collins. 1993. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-06-021547-X (picture book)

Diego listens to the local radio stations in each of the small towns where his family finds migrant farm work. His radio provides him with companionship and a sense of place, wherever he is. This very original bilingual story emphasizes family, friendship and community, with nice touches of humor and a positive perspective. Diego proves himself to be a very resourceful protagonist.

**1993 CLASP Children's and Young Adult Book Award Committee**

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