

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.

**1994 AMERICAS BOOK AWARD WINNER**

THE MERMAID'S TWIN SISTER: MORE STORIES FROM TRINIDAD by Lynn Joseph.  
Illustrated by Donna Perrone. New York: Clarion Books, 1994. 63 pgs. ISBN 0-395-64365-1  
(young reader)

Tantie is the matriarchal griot (storyteller) who keeps the family history vibrantly alive by telling the children stories of the old times. Tantie passed on her bamboo beads to Amber, her niece, and is showing her how to find stories anywhere. This remarkable collection of African-Caribbean folktales reincarnates the best of the African grioterary tradition through the Caribbean vernacular of the Island of Trinidad. The characters are real, down-to-earth folk who take on legendary proportions as the magic of the stories unravels. Lynn Joseph's luscious prose invites the audience into a new world with the warm and enticing embrace of Tantie's tales. Donna Perrone's black and white illustrations, like dreamy apparitions, allow the reader to glimpse into this magical world.

## 1994 COMMENDED TITLES

ALEXANDRO'S GIFT by Richard E. Albert. Illustrated by Sylvia Long. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1994. 28 pgs. ISBN 0-8118-0436-4 (picture book)

Alejandro plants a garden to help pass the lonely hours in the desert. Through his garden he encounters desert companions and provides them with the gift of water. An engaging and thoughtful story, with sensitive, detailed illustrations. Information is provided on animals of the southwestern desert.

ANGEL'S KITE/LA ESTRELLA DE ANGEL by Alberto Blanco. Illustrated by Rodolfo Morales. Emeryville, CA: Children's Book Press, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-89239-121-9 (picture book)

In this bilingual story, a young boy makes a kite that mysteriously restores a long-missing bell to the town church. Nicely fanciful, with imaginative fabric illustrations, the book draws upon daily life in small towns. A sense of community is evident, and most especially the power of hopes and dreams.

BEYOND THE ANCIENT CITIES by Jos, Marja Merino. Translated by Helen Lane. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994 (originally published in Spain in 1987). 209 pgs. ISBN 0-374-34307-1 (young adult)

The mestizo son of a lost Spanish conquistador joins his godfather on a voyage to Panama where the godfather will take up a royal appointment. Full of drama and action, the story provides commentary on the impact of the Spanish presence in the New World, explores indigenous cultures, and highlights the role of chroniclers during the sixteenth century. Indigenous cultures are strikingly explored.

BILLY by Laura Roybal. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994. 236 pgs. ISBN 0-395-67649-5 (young adult)

Billy, a sixteen-year old boy, tries to sort out his identity after reuniting with the family from which he was kidnapped by his natural father six years earlier. This intriguing story offers a strong male protagonist and explores issues of family and self discovery.

THE BOSSY GALLITO: A TRADITIONAL CUBAN FOLKTALE retold by Lucja M. Gonz lez. Illustrated by Lulu Delacre. New York: Scholastic, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-590-46843-X (picture book)

In this bilingual cumulative folktale from Cuba, a chain of events results in the cleaning of a rooster's beak in time for his uncle's wedding. The setting of the illustrations is Little Havana in Miami (note the birds playing dominoes). The book provides extensive and welcome author and illustrator comments; the narrative should be fun for out-loud activities.

CARIBBEAN ALPHABET by Fran, Lessac. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1994 (first published in Great Britain in 1989). 32 pgs. ISBN 0-688-12953-6 (picture book)

With lively illustrations, Lessac presents an alphabet of images from the Caribbean (hibiscus, mangoes, reggae). The illustrations and vocabulary encourage a sense of place, and there is plenty to look for on each scenic page. The selections combine known and perhaps unfamiliar words (with a glossary), the latter specific to the Caribbean.

COOL SALSA: BILINGUAL POEMS ON GROWING UP LATINO IN THE UNITED STATES edited by Lori Carlson. Introduction by Oscar Hijuelos. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994. 123 pgs. ISBN 0-8050-3135-9 (poetry)

Growing up Latino in America means speaking two languages, living two lives, learning the rules of two cultures. This book celebrates the tones, rhythms, sounds and experiences of that double life.

A DAYS' WORK by Eve Bunting. Illustrated by Ronald Himler. New York: Clarion, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-395-67321-6 (picture book)

When Francisco, a young Mexican-American boy, tries to help his grandfather find work, he discovers that even though the old man cannot speak English, he has something even more valuable to teach Francisco. This is a story about grace, honor and hard work, and about the informal economy, language differences, and family.

DE COLORES AND OTHER LATIN AMERICA FOLK SONGS FOR CHILDREN selected, arranged and translated by Jose-Luis Orozco. Illustrated by Elisa Kleven. New York: Dutton, 1994. 56 pgs. ISBN 0-525-45260-5 (picture music book)

A fine collection of songs with Spanish lyrics, English translation, and background on the song's origin and description of related games (so children can actually do the appropriate gestures or games). Rich in color and life, the illustrations are marvelous, culturally full of artifacts, diverse faces, and beautiful borders.

FELIZ NOCHEBUENA, FELIZ NAVIDAD by Maricel E. Presilla. Pictures by Ismael Espinosa Ferrer. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-8050-2512-X (picture book)

Combining history and her own memories, the author takes readers on a culinary journey to the Caribbean (especially Cuba) at Christmas time. The book combines history with memory, and food as it connects people in Miami and in the Caribbean. Emphasis is placed upon family and the sharing of traditions. Recipes are incorporated throughout.

GRANDMOTHER'S NURSERY RHYMES/LAS NANAS DE ABUELITA by Nelly Palacio Jaramillo. Illustrated by Elivia Savadier. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-8050-2555-3 (picture book)

The author, who was born in Colombia, collected these lullabies, tongue twisters and riddles from South America, to share after her grandchild was born. The collection is noteworthy for its efforts to include English versions which become wholly different but often play just as strongly in translation.

**HOW MUSIC CAME TO THE WORLD: AN ANCIENT MEXICAN MYTH** retold by Hal Ober. Illustrated by Carol Ober. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-395-67523-5 (picture book)

Ober retells a Mexican legend in which the sky god and the wind god bring music from Sun's house to the earth. Vibrant illustrations accompany the story, as do author and illustrators' notes.

**HOW NIGHT CAME FROM THE SEA: A STORY FROM BRAZIL.** Retold by Mary-Joan Gerson. Illustrated by Carla Golembe. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-316-30855-2 (picture book)

An African sea goddess, Iemanj , brings the gift of night to the land of daylight, thus permitting rest under Brazil's hot sun. Author's note discusses the African Diaspora in Brazil, and the religion of Candomblé.

**THE HUMMINGBIRD'S GIFT** by Stefan Czernecki and Timothy Rhodes. Straw weavings by Juliana Reyes de Silva and Juan Hilario Silva. New York: Hyperion, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 1-56282-604-2 (picture book)

When Consuelo saves the hummingbirds' lives they, in return, show her how to save her family from the drought. Between the color, folk art illustrations and the woven straw figures, the illustration manages to convey two angles on the story with every turn of the page. Rural life and Day of the Dead is presented (an author's note is also included).

**I HAVE A NEWS** collected by Walter Jekyll. Rhymes chosen by Neil Philip. Illustrated by Jacqueline Mair. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1994. 26 pgs. ISBN 0-688-13367-3 (picture book)

This collection of traditional verses from the Caribbean, originally published in Walter Jekyll's *Jamaican Song and Story* in 1907, should be commended for being introduced to a young, contemporary audience. Illustrations are phenomenal--bright, swirling, full of detail. It is a book to work with, adult and child together, because of dialect and music potential.

**IMAGINING ISABEL** by Omar S. Castañeda. New York: Lodestar Books, 1994. 200 pgs. ISBN 0-525-67431-4 (young adult)

In this sequel to *Among the Volcanoes*, Isabel, a newly married sixteen year-old who lives in a traditional Mayan village, is invited to join a government-run teacher training program, and is thrown into the turbulent reality of contemporary Guatemala. The author, born in Guatemala, offers an enthralling, well-written story, which presents extensive information on Mayan culture

and the social and political climate of Guatemala.

**JUAN BOBO: FOUR FOLKTALES FROM PUERTO RICO** retold by Carmen T. Bernier-Grand. Illustrated by Ernesto Ramos Nieves. New York: Harper Collins, 1994. 64 pgs. ISBN 0-06-023389-3 (young readers, ages 4-8)

This "I Can Read Book" offers nice diversity for the new reader. The author and illustrator are both from Puerto Rico; the illustrations, with their bright color, simple shapes and folk art fit well with the lighthearted foolishness of the stories. Good forewords from the author and illustrator are provided. The stories capture elements of rural life and community.

**THE LEGEND OF THE POINSETTIA** retold and illustrated by Tomie de Paola. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-399-21692-8 (picture book)

When Lucida is unable to finish her gift for the baby Jesus in time for the Christmas procession, a miracle enables her to offer the beautiful flower we now call the poinsettia. Also available in Spanish. the story emphasizes family, community and tradition.

**LIGHTS ON THE RIVER** by Jane Resh Thomas. Illustrated by Michael Dooling. New York: Hyperion, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-7868-0004-6 (picture book)

Teresa, the young daughter of Mexican-American migrant workers, keeps memories of her grandmother and Mexico alive in her heart. A feeling of place or rather a lack of place is evident; the focus is on extended family and community. Luminous illustrations combine with Teresa's dreams which are childlike and appealing.

**NOT A COPPER PENNY IN ME HOUSE: POEMS FROM THE CARIBBEAN** by Monica Gunning. Illustrated by Fran, Lessac. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mill Press, 1993. 32 pgs. ISBN 1-56397-050-3 (picture book)

This collection of poetry portraying one child's life in the Caribbean offers plentiful cultural capsules: carrying Sunday shoes to church, buying on credit at the local store, roadside sellers, etc. The focus is on festivals and daily life, including the life of extended family. The author was born and grew up in Jamaica; the illustrator lived in the Caribbean for several years. Folk art paintings also provide lots of cultural content.

**MY TWO WORLDS** by Ginger Gordon. Photographs by Martha Cooper. New York: Clarion Books, 1993. ISBN 0-395-58704-2 (non-fiction)

Eight-year old Kirsey Rodriguez calls two places home: New York City and Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic. She has the opportunity to travel back and forth regularly, visiting friends and extended family on the island. Happy not to choose one place over the other, she lives and enjoys what her different cultures have to offer.

**OVER HERE IT'S DIFFERENT: CAROLINA'S STORY** by Mildred Leinweber Dawson. Photographs by Geroge Ancona. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1993. 48 pgs. ISBN 0-02-

726328-2 (non-fiction)

In text and black-and-white photographs, this book relates the experiences of eleven-year old Carolina who emigrated from the Dominican Republic at age seven, and describes the two worlds in which she lives, trying to preserve her heritage.

PABLO'S TREE by Pat Mora. Illustrated by Cecily Lang. New York: Macmillan, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-02-767401-0 (picture book)

Each year on his birthday, a young Mexican-American boy looks forward to seeing how his grandfather has decorated the tree he planted on the day the boy was adopted. Striking features include fun, papercut illustrations and a lovely extended family relationship. Best of all, it's a story about how one person can help another person feel special.

PLATERO Y YO/PLATERO AND I by Juan Ramón Jiménez. Selected, translated and adapted from the Spanish by Myra Cohn Livingston and Joseph F. Dominguez. Illustrated by Antonio Frasconi. New York: Clarion Books, 1994. 47 pgs. ISBN 0-395-62365-0 (young reader, ages 8-12)

With text in English and Spanish, this classic of Spanish literature presents a picture of life in the town of Moguer, in Andalusia, as seen through the eyes of a wandering poet and his faithful donkey. Selections are well chosen and lyrical; this book joins the commended list, in part, because of its role in the early education of many Latin Americans.

RANSOM FOR A RIVER DOLPHIN by Sarita Kendall. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company, 1993. 123 pgs. ISBN 0-8225-0735-8 (young adult)

Finding a seriously hurt dolphin in the Amazon near her small Colombian village and suspecting her stepfather of having wounded it, Carmenza nurses the dolphin back to health and turns to the wise Omar to appease its spirit. River life is well described; additional elements include cultural conflict and rainforest/land concerns. Most notably, an indigenous world view is both accepted and recognized.

RATA, PATA, SCATA, FATA: A CARIBBEAN STORY by Phyllis Gershator. Illustrated by Holly Meade. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1994. 29 pgs. ISBN 0-316-30470-0 (picture book)

Preferring to dream away the days on his Caribbean island, little Junjun tries saying magic words to get his chores done. This original and fun story references the origins of the title phrase (nonsense words with perhaps Creole influences on West African language), and includes cultural elements of food, daily life and family. The theme is something a child of any age could relate to (getting out of chores!). The author lives in St. Thomas. Bright, tropical torn paper collages make up the illustrations.

THE RED COMB by Fernando Picó. Illustrated by María Antonia Ordóñez. (Originally published in Spanish by Ediciones Huracán, Puerto Rico and Ediciones Ekar, Venezuela)

BridgeWater Books, 1994. 46 pgs. ISBN not listed (picture book)

Set in 19th century Puerto Rico, a young girl, together with an elderly neighborhood, work to help a runaway slave. This welcome translation which keeps the original illustrations is based upon historical events. Themes include slavery, community, and the roles of women.

RIO GRANDE STORIES by Carolyn Meyer. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1994. 257 pgs. ISBN 0-15-200548-X young adult

While preparing a book which highlights the people and traditions of the diverse culture of Albuquerque, seventh-graders discover interesting things about their city and families. A charming book, in terms of content, as well as the physical production. A strong sense of place is established through the exploration of different past and present cultural influences.

THE SAD NIGHT: THE STORY OF AN AZTEC VICTORY AND A SPANISH LOSS  
written and illustrated by Sally Schofer Mathews. New York: Clarion Books, 1994. 36 pgs. ISBN 0-395-63035-5 (picture book)

The story details how the Aztecs established an empire in Mexico and what happened when they, led by Montezuma, encountered Cortés and the Spanish in the early sixteenth century. Illustrations are in the style of Aztec codices, and the book includes an introductory note about codices as narratives, and additional information on the Aztecs and Cortés. The author/artist works extensively in San Miguel de Allende.

SATURDAY MARKET by Patricia Grossman. Illustrated by Enrique O. Sanchez. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1994. 30 pgs. ISBN 0-688-12176-4 (picture book)

Individual stories of the vendors enliven this story of the community and activity of a Saturday market in Mexico. The author has traveled extensively in Mexico; the illustrator is from the Dominican Republic. Also includes a glossary of Spanish words.

THE TALE OF RABBIT AND COYOTE by Tony Johnston. Illustrations by Tomie dePaola. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-399-22258-8 (picture book)

In this lively Zapotec story with equally lively southwestern style illustrations (and an informative author's note), Rabbit outwits Coyote, which explains why coyotes howl at the moon. With mischievous humor, this makes for good reading in combination with other trickster tales.

TAP-TAP by Karen Lynn Williams. Illustrated by Catherine Stock. New York: Clarion Books, 1994. 34 pgs. ISBN 0-395-65617-6 (young reader)

After selling oranges in the market, a Haitian mother and daughter have enough money to ride the tap-tap, a truck that picks up passengers and lets them off when they bang on the side of the vehicle. An engaging story in which the market and the tap-tap ride are quite vivid; also striking is the strong mother-daughter relationship. Watercolor illustrations beautifully blend

with the text.

**THE TREE THAT RAINS: THE FLOOD MYTH OF THE HUICHOL INDIANS OF MEXICO** by Emery and Durga Bernhard. New York: Holiday House, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-8234-1108-7 (picture book)

With the help of Great-Grandmother Earth, Watakame survives a great flood and begins a new life. The story includes an author's note about the Huichol of western Mexico and the present day festival and its celebration of cultural beliefs.

**TUKAMA TOOTLES THE FLUTE: A TALE FROM THE ANTILLES** retold by Phillis Gershator. Paintings by Synthia Saint James. New York: Orchard Books, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-531-06811-0 (picture book)

In this universal story with strikingly simply artwork, Tukama is captured by a two-headed giant, and uses his flute to escape. Also included is a note about this particular retelling, its source, and the cultural elements within. The author lives in St. Thomas; the illustrator is of Haitian background.

**VOICES FROM THE FIELD: CHILDREN OF MIGRANT FARMWORKERS TELL THEIR STORIES.** Interviews and Photographs by S. Beth Atkin. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993. 95 pgs. ISBN 0-316-05633-2 (young adult, non-fiction)

Photographs, poems and interviews with nine children reveal the hardships and hopes of Mexican American migrant farm workers and their families. These testimonies present the diversity of migrant family situations. Other topics include gangs, inter-Mexican racism, teen pregnancy, graduating high school; all ages of children and young adults are included.

**WALKING STARS: STORIES OF MAGIC AND POWER** by Victor Villaseñor. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1994. 202 pgs. ISBN 1-55885-118-6 (young adult)

These autobiographical stories about growing up as the son of Mexican immigrants in California include the parents' stories of growing up at the time of the Mexican Revolution. First-hand accounts, in English, of this place and time period, especially for young adults, are rare. The author emphasizes family and cultural heritage, and positive messages of individual strength, confidence and uniqueness throughout.

**WHEN THE MONKEYS CAME BACK** by Kristine L. Franklin. Illustrated by Robert Roth. New York: Atheneum, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-689-31807-3 (picture book)

Always remembering how the monkeys in her Costa Rican village disappeared when all the trees were cut down, Marta grows up, plants more trees, and sees the monkeys come back. Original illustrations combine with a simple story about the enormous changes caused by deforestation, and the role of a single individual in bringing about change. The author spent a year in Costa Rica and currently lives in Guatemala.

**WHERE THE FLAME TREES BLOOM** by Alma Flor Ada. Illustrated by Antonio

Martorell. New York: Atheneum, 1994. 75 pgs. ISBN 0-689-31900-2 (young reader)

The author shares stories of her childhood in Cuba. With those memories are conveyed a strong sense of daily life, extended family, and the rural setting.

**1994 CLASP Children's and Young Adult Book Award Committee**

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