

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.

1995 AMERICAS BOOK AWARD WINNER

TONIGHT BY SEA by Frances Temple. New York: Orchard Books, 1995. 152 pgs. ISBN 0-531-06899-4 (young adult)

As governmental brutality and poverty become unbearable, Paulie joins with others in her small Haitian village to help her uncle secretly build a boat they will use to escape to the United States. The story, told from Paulie's point of view, sensitively weaves political and economic issues into the cultural fabric of the characters. With a subtle touch, Temple gives a very real sense of life in Haiti before Aristide's return. Beyond the poverty, she shows the strength and community that media images often fail to capture.

1995 AMERICAS HONORABLE MENTIONS

AN ISLAND LIKE YOU: STORIES OF THE BARRIO by Judith Ortiz Cofer. New York: Orchard Books, 1995. 165 pgs ISBN 0-531-06897-8 (young adult)

Twelve interconnected stories portray young people within a Puerto Rican neighborhood in New Jersey as they deal with the conflicts, ambiguities and contradictions of living in two cultures. The stories, written with sensitivity and imagination (not to mention humor), cumulatively build and strengthen the overall narrative of life in the barrio.

CHATO'S KITCHEN by Gary Soto. Illustrated by Susan Guevara. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-399-22658-3 (picture book)

To get the little mice who have moved into the barrio to come to his house, Chato the cat prepares all kinds of savory food. Cultural elements are vividly expressed through text and illustration in this delightful, rhythmic story, full of attitude and good food.

HEART OF A JAGUAR by Marc Talbert. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. 197 pgs. ISBN 0-689-80282-X (young adult)

Balam, a Mayan boy struggling to achieve manhood, participates in community rituals to appease the gods and bring rain to his village. Talbert offers a non-romanticized view of Maya life in the Yucatan peninsula, rich with ethnographic detail. A bibliography draws upon diverse sources. Countless elements of daily life, relationship with the natural world, and the Maya belief system are well rendered in this unforgettable rite of passage story.

1995 AMERICAS COMMENDED LIST

CALLING THE DOVES/EL CANTO DE LAS PALOMAS by Juan Felipe Herrera. Illustrated by Elly Simmons. Emeryville, CA: Children's Book Press, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-89239-132-4 (picture book)

The author recalls his childhood in the mountains and valleys of California with his farmworker parents who inspired him with poetry and song. Through the poetics of memories and imagery, the story powerfully evokes good things remembered in a migrant childhood. Engaging illustrations echo of magical realism, and a strong sense of family and community suffuses the story.

CANTO FAMILIAR by Gary Soto. Illustrated by Annika Nelson. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1995. 79 pgs. ISBN 0-15-200067-4 (poetry, ages 8-12)

This collection of twenty-five poems celebrates everyday objects and occurrences in a Mexican American childhood. The poems are both imaginative and appealing, even perhaps for those not normally drawn to books of poetry. The inclusion of both male and female voices and the overall humor also mark this noteworthy collection.

A CARIBBEAN DOZEN: POEMS FROM CARIBBEAN POETS edited by John Agard and Grace Nichols. Illustrated by Cathie Felstead. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 1994 (first U.S. edition). 93 pgs. ISBN 1-56402-339-7 (poetry, ages 7-11)

Thirteen poets recount childhood experiences in poetry and prose. The voices of the contributors ring clear, and the first person statements convey much about growing up in the Caribbean.

CARLOS, LIGHT THE FAROLITO by Jean Ciavonne. Illustrated by Donna Clair. New York: Clarion, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-395-66759-3 (picture book)

When his parents and grandfather are late on Christmas eve, it's up to Carlos to take over his grandfather's role in the traditional Mexican re-enactment of the Nativity, Las Posadas. The story emphasizes respect and love for tradition, as well as family and community life. The illustrations match the mood of anticipation and wonder.

THE FAITHFUL FRIEND by Robert D. San Souci. Illustrated by Brian Pinkney. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-02-786131-7 (picture book)

This re-telling of a traditional tale from the French West Indies offers an intriguing story of friendship, blended with Afro-French Caribbean culture in late nineteenth century Martinique.

THE FAROLITOS OF CHRISTMAS by Rudolfo Anaya. Illustrated by Edward Gonzales. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1995. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-7868-0060-7 (picture book)

With her father away fighting in World War II and her grandfather too sick to create the traditional *luminarias*, Luz helps create *farolitos*, little lanterns, for their Christmas celebration instead. The sharing and creation of tradition within a family are presented within the warm glow of the illustrations.

FERNANDO'S GIFT/EL REGALO DE FERNANDO by Douglas Keister. Photographs by Douglas Keister. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books for Children, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-87156-414-9 (picture book)

Young Fernando, who lives in the rainforest of Costa Rica with his family, goes with his friend Carmina to look for her favorite climbing tree only to find it cut down. As a result, he decides to give her a gift for the future. The photographs particularly give a sense of rural family life and of the rainforest environment.

FIESTA U.S.A. (Spanish and English editions) by George Ancona. New York: Lodestar, 1995. 48 pgs. ISBN 0-525-67498-5 (photo essay, ages 7-10)

These outstanding photographs and text include an interesting cross-section of celebrations, with both widely known and regional celebrations. The reader learns about traditions both brought and adopted, and closes the book with a sense of having participated in the celebration.

THE GULLYWASHER by Joyce Rossi. Flagstaff: Northland Publishing, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-87358-607-7 (picture book)

Leticia's grandfather, once a vaquero, provides fanciful explanations for how he got his wrinkles, white hair, round belly, and stooped frame. In this clever and culturally diverse tall tale, the loving relationship between Leticia and her abuelito is well conveyed in text and light-filled illustrations.

HI by Ann Herbert Scott. Illustrated by Glo Coalson. New York: Philomel, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-399-21964-11 (picture book)

While waiting in line with her mother at the post office, Margarita greets the patrons who come in, hoping someone will say hi back. This is a pleasant, expressive story of every child, developed around a simple theme, that all-important wish to be noticed.

HOW IWARIWA THE CAYMAN LEARNED TO SHARE: A YANOMAMI MYTH retold and illustrated by George Crespo. New York: Clarion, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-395-67162-0 (picture book)

The animals in the Amazon rainforest find a way to trick Iwariwa into sharing the fire he uses to cook his food. It's very welcome to see a broadening of myth offerings from diverse indigenous cultures, particularly one such as the Yanomami whose very existence is gravely endangered. The author's note is well-done, particularly in explaining how the story was "re-told." Crespo grew up in Puerto Rico.

INDIO by Sherry Garland. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1995. 292 pgs. ISBN 0-15-238631-9/0-15-200021-6 (paper) (young adult)

Ipa struggles to survive a brutal time of change as the Spanish begin the conquest of the native people along the Texas border. This historical novel gives a sense of indigenous life both pre- and post- conquest. Ipa herself becomes an agent of change when she returns to her village, bringing Spanish language and religion.

ISLA/LA ISLA (English and Spanish editions) by Arthur Dorros. Illustrated by Elisa Kleven. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1995. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-525-45422-5 (Spanish) 0-525-45149-8 (English) (picture book)

In this sequel to *Abuela*, Rosalba and her grandmother take an imaginary journey to the Caribbean island where her mother grew up and where some of her family still live. They have

another adventure, this one full of island life detail. Overall, this is a warm presentation of family and the magic power of imagination and storytelling.

JUAN BOBO AND THE HORSE OF SEVEN COLORS: A PUERTO RICAN LEGEND retold by Jan Mike. Illustrated by Charles Reasoner. Mahwah, NJ: Troll Associates, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-8167-3746-0 pbk (picture book)

After winning seven wishes from a magical horse, the foolish Juan Bobo quickly uses six of them on his way to try to make the King's daughter laugh. Perhaps Juan Bobo is wiser than we thought.

THE MAGIC FEATHER: A JAMAICAN LEGEND retold by Lisa Rojany. Illustrated by Philip Kuznicki. Mahwah, NJ: Troll Associates, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-8167-3752-5 pbk (picture book)

Solidae must pull a feather from the dreaded Mancrow to bring color and light back to the island of Jamaica. Simple illustrations accompany the text of this tale which highlights the wit and intelligence of a girl child. The author includes background notes on Jamaica.

MEDIOPOLLITO/HALF-CHICKEN by Alma Flor Ada. Illustrated by Kim Howard. New York: Doubleday, 1995. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-385-32044-2 (picture book)

This well-done bilingual folktale explains why the weather vane has a little rooster on one end that spins around to show which way the wind is blowing. In contrast to the Ugly Duckling, here the unique and unlike-others chicken becomes vain from all the attention! Readers will find themselves exploring the unusual and brilliant illustrations.

MY FIRST BOOK OF PROVERBS/MI PRIMER LIBRO DE DICHOS by Ralfka González and Ana Ruiz. Emeryville, CA: Children's Book Press, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-89239-134-0 (picture book)

With humorous, contemporary illustrations of traditional Mexican American proverbs, this bilingual collection gives a sense of the commonalities in speech across languages and cultures.

PEDRO FOOLS THE GRINGO, AND OTHER TALES OF A LATIN AMERICAN TRICKSTER by María Cristina Brusca and Tona Wilson. Illustrated by María Cristina Brusca. New York: Henry Holt, 1995. 52 pgs. ISBN 0-8050-3827-2 (easy fiction)

Perhaps to read along with recently published stories about the fool, Juan Bobo, along come these twelve enjoyable stories about Pedro Urdemales, the popular trickster figure. The introduction provides welcome context to the character.

PEOPLE OF CORN: A MAYAN STORY retold by Mary-Joan Gerson. Pictures by Carla Golembe. New York: Little, Brown and Company. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-316-30854-4 (picture book)

After several unsuccessful attempts to create grateful creatures, the Maya gods use sacred corn to fashion a people who will thank and praise their creators. Gerson sensitively presents this story from the Popol Vuh, the creation myth of the Maya. Engaging illustrations and the clear narrative express the Maya relationship to the natural world and why they are the “people of corn.”

RABBIT WISHES by Linda Shute. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1995. 26 pgs. ISBN 0-688-13180-1 (picture book)

Elements of culture can be found throughout this Afro-Cuban tale which explains why rabbits have long ears. The story offers the opportunity to compare stories featuring the rabbit in folklore and also offers the message “be pleased with who you are.”

SATURDAY SANCOCHO by Leyla Torres. New York, Farrar Straus Giroux, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN not given (picture book)

Every Saturday Maria Lili looks forward to making chicken sancocho with her grandparents. One Saturday, she learns how to make it with only eggs in the house! The story is built around the art of bartering at the marketplace. The illustrations include some nice cultural detail of the home and market, and learning from elders is a dominant theme.

THE SECRET OF TWO BROTHERS by Irene Beltrán Hernández. Houston: Piñata Books, 1995. 181 pgs. ISBN 1-55885-142-9 (paper) (young adult)

Beaver tries to create a decent life for himself and his brother following his mother's death and his own stint in prison. The story explores maintaining a family against difficult odds and trying to live an honorable life.

THE SONG OF EL COQUI: AND OTHER TALES OF PUERTO RICO by Nicholasa Mohr and Antonio Martorell. New York: Viking, 1995. 41 pgs. ISBN 0-670-85837-4 (picture book)

This collection of three folktales reflects the diverse heritage of Spanish, African and indigenous influences within Puerto Rican culture. Just as the introduction describes, the book presents Puerto Rico as a tapestry, both narratively and visually, with swirling, rich illustrations. The author and illustrator are Puerto Rican by birth.

THE SPIRIT OF TIO FERNANDO: A DAY OF THE DEAD STORY by Janice Levy. Illustrated by Morella Fuenmayor. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-8075-7586-0 pbk (picture book)

As he prepares to celebrate the Day of the Dead, a young boy remembers all the things he liked about his favorite uncle. Bilingual, the story is full of memory, not in a melancholy sense, but remembering with fondness and humor. Morella Fuenmayor has often illustrated books for the Venezuelan publisher, Ekaré.

THE STOWAWAY: A TALE OF CALIFORNIA PIRATES by Kristiana Gregory. New York: Scholastic, 1995. 126 pgs. ISBN 0-590-48822-8 (young adult)

In 1818 Carlito, an eleven-year old boy in the Spanish town of Monterey, California, sees his quiet life threatened when the Argentine privateer Hippolyte de Bouchard attacks with his pirate ships. This tale should capture adventurous spirits through its action, vivid details of ship life,

and by providing a historical lens by which to view the formally Spanish United States.

SUMMER ON WHEELS by Gary Soto. New York: Scholastic, 1995. 163 pgs. ISBN 0-590-48365-X (fiction for children)

Hector and his best friend Mando enjoy episodic adventures when they take a six-day bike trip from their East Los Angeles neighborhood to the Santa Monica beach during summer vacation. Full of exuberance, the boys are a good mix of mischief and manners, adventurous yet family-oriented.

A SUNBURNED PRAYER by Marc Talbert. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. 105 pgs. ISBN 0-689-80125-4 (young adult)

As he makes a seventeen-mile pilgrimage to the Santuario de Chimayó that he hopes will save his beloved grandmother from cancer, eleven-year old Eloy is joined by a dog whose companionship helps him keep going. The story examines the meanings of both love and faith and a young boy's rite of passage.

SWEET FIFTEEN by Diane Gonzales Bertrand. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1995. 296 pgs. ISBN 1-55885-122-4 (young adult)

When seamstress Rita Navarro makes a quinceañera dress for Stephanie, she finds herself becoming involved with the girl's family and attracted to Stefanie's uncle. Themes include the importance of women developing their identity and independence, as well as the value of family and tradition.

THE TANGERINE TREE by Regina Hanson. Illustrated by Harvey Stevenson. New York: Clarion, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-395-68963-5 (picture book)

When Papa announces that he must leave Jamaica to work in the United States, Ida is heartbroken until she finds a way to send her love and Jamaica with him. In this freshly presented story, the father's migration, an important social pattern in the Caribbean, is seen from the perspective of the family left behind. The illustrations also convey the emotions of sadness and loss at the separation, yet, at the same time, glow with tenderness.

THE TORTILLA FACTORY/LA TORTILLERIA (Spanish and English editions) by Gary Paulsen. Paintings by Ruth Wright Paulsen. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-15-292876-6 (English) 0-15-200237-5 (Spanish) (picture book)

With simple, appealing text, the story of corn, from seed to plant to tortilla, is illustrated. The book, graced by Wright Paulsen's paintings, emphasizes the never-ending quality of the story throughout time.

THE TREE IS OLDER THAN YOU ARE: A BILINGUAL GATHERING OF POEMS AND STORIES FROM MEXICO WITH PAINTINGS BY MEXICAN ARTISTS selected by Naomi Shihab Nye. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. 101 pgs. ISBN 0-689-80297-8

(poetry, ages 8-adult)

This bilingual collection is remarkable, both in terms of the poetry and the illustration. Works of all lengths for all ages are included. Shihab Nye has done a commendable service to Mexican culture and U.S. readers by producing such a book.

WHEN JAGUARS ATE THE MOON AND OTHER STORIES ABOUT ANIMALS AND PLANTS OF THE AMERICAS by María Cristina Brusca and Tona Wilson. Illustrated by María Cristina Brusca. New York: Henry Holt, 1995. 41 pgs. ISBN 0-8050-2797-1 (picture book)

This collection of short, one-page stories represents the rich and varied folklore of twenty-five indigenous cultures of the Americas. Animal and plant illustrations, organized alphabetically, surround the text. The map, notes and bibliography are welcome.

1995 CLASP Children's and Young Adult Book Award Committee

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