

Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP)

Américas Award
for
Children's and Young Adult Literature

The Américas Award is given in recognition of U.S. works of fiction, poetry, folklore, or selected non-fiction (from picture books to works for young adults) published in the previous year in English or Spanish that authentically and engagingly relate to Latin America, the Caribbean, or to 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 is sponsored by the national Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP).

The award winners and commended titles are selected for their 1) distinctive literary quality; 2) cultural contextualization; 3) exceptional integration of text, illustration and design; and 4) potential for classroom use. The winning books will be honored at a ceremony on June 29, 1998 at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. during the American Library Association (ALA) summer conference.

1997 AMERICAS BOOK AWARD WINNERS

Fiction:

THE CIRCUIT: STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF A MIGRANT CHILD by Francisco Jiménez. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997. 134 pgs. ISBN 0-8263-1797-9 (6-8)

The dream of this family from rural Jalisco, Mexico is to go north, cross *la frontera* and leave poverty behind. Papá, mamá and two young boys make the long journey and cross the barbed wire barricade without being spotted by *la migra*. In California, they join “the circuit” of migrant workers following the crops to be picked: strawberries, cotton, carrots. The author poignantly weaves the family’s customs, beliefs and hopes with the cruel reality of never ending migrant labor camps from which escape is nearly impossible. The family’s culture, rich in stories, love, and endurance nurtures its growth to ten members in the new environment where the dream is nearly lost. The independently told stories lend themselves to being read out loud to a wide range of audiences.

Picture Book:

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW by Regina Hanson. Illustrated by Linda Saport. New York: Clarion, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-395-78625-8 (K-3)

Coerced by her older friends, Dora, who just started school, hurled a stone at Miss Nella’s mango tree. Miss Nella’s face appeared at the window. “My mama say if you see Miss Nella’s face in de window, you in big trouble,” Trevor had said. Sensitively told, the story exposes the superstition surrounding mental illness in a small Jamaican community. Dora’s parents know Miss Nella and gently guide Dora to confront her own fears and her friends’ misconceptions about the woman. Another caring intimate story from the author of *The Tangerine Tree* brought to life by Saport’s striking illustrations.

1997 AMERICAS HONORABLE MENTIONS

FRUITS: A CARIBBEAN COUNTING POEM by Valerie Bloom. Illustrated by David Axtell. New York: Henry Holt, 1997. 28 pgs. ISBN 0-8050-5171-6 (K-3)

An outstanding alphabet book where language and illustrations form an enchanting rhythmic whole. While two sisters count fruits, from pawpaw to naseberry, the Caribbean environment comes to life in these pages. The verse for each fruit rhymes, enticing the reader to join in the song and delight in the colorful patterns created by the illustrations. An explosion of color in every page reveals characters and environment with accuracy and care. Valerie Bloom and David Axtell have created a memorable picture book for young readers to enjoy.

MAYEROS: A YUCATEC MAYA FAMILY by George Ancona. New York: William Morrow, 1997. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-688-13465-3 (3-5)

Armando, a young *Mayero* and his family, descendants of the 4,000 year old Mayan civilization, are the central characters in Ancona's color photographs and nonfiction narrative. The narration follows Armando and his family through a week of preparations for the town's fiesta, as it also provides descriptions and explanations of the family's daily work and play. Through references to his own Mayan heritage, historical information and ancient codices, Ancona shows readers the deep links between the past and present in Mayan culture.

1997 AMERICAS COMMENDED LIST

ANGELA WEAVES A DREAM by Michèle Solá. Photographs by Jeffrey Jay Foxx. New York: Hyperion, 1997. 48 pgs. ISBN 0-7868-0073-9 (3-5)

In Chiapas, southern Mexico, Angela, a young Mayan girl, learns to weave the sacred designs of the Mayan culture from the expert weavers in her village, while also learning the symbolic meaning of the designs. The writer provides rich information through texts and sub-texts. This rite of passage is illustrated with beautiful photographs. The lasting beauty of the Mayan culture is respectfully presented in an engaging and colorful way.

BASEBALL IN THE BARRIO by Henry Horenstein. New York: Gulliver/Harcourt Brace, 1997. 36 pgs. ISBN 0-15-200499-8 (K-3)

This photo essay is narrated by Hubaldo Antonio Romero Páez, a Venezuelan fifth grader who lives in Caracas. Readers learn about his love for his country's most popular sport--*béisbol*--and get glimpses of family and school life through the excellent photographs and a text that remains true to the voice of the young narrator.

BIRTHDAY SWAP/¿QUE SORPRESA DE CUMPLEAÑOS! by Loretta López. New York: Lee & Low, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 1-880000-47-4 (English edition) 1-880000-55-5 (Spanish edition) (K-3)

The author-illustrator, Loretta López, tells a personal story about a surprise birthday swap with her teenage sister when Loretta was six years old. The surprise allows her to have a memorable celebration in the summer instead of December. The text and the illustrations are well integrated and provide a warm re-telling of a birthday that is typical of the multi-generational events characteristic of Latino culture. This is a book of value for all elementary classrooms to provide authentic experiences about diverse cultures in the United States. Spanish and English editions available.

BURIED ONIONS by Gary Soto. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997. 149 pgs. ISBN 0-15-201333-4 (9-12)

When nineteen-year-old Eddie drops out of college he struggles to find a place for himself in an economically depressed inner-city environment offering few attainable or safe alternatives. Fresno, like many metropolitan areas, is plagued by the same under-employment and racism that characterize many of the places where Latinos live in the United States. Eddie works very hard to find a way to end this cycle and make his way differently. As he struggles to survive, it becomes clear that none of the choices available will open real possibilities for his development and satisfaction.

BUTTERFLY BOY by Virginia Kroll. Illustrated by Gerardo Suzán. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 1-56397-371-5 (K-3)

This beautifully illustrated and tender story portrays a young boy's vibrant relationship with his grandfather who is confined to a wheelchair and can no longer speak. Their daily routine includes watching butterflies gather in their backyard, attracted by the white garage door. The communication between the two is built on deep affection and mutual understanding that goes far beyond verbal interactions. When his father paints the garage door, the boy's response and intervention reflects his love for his grandfather and a healthy family relationships across generations.

CARLOS AND THE SKUNK/CARLOS Y EL ZORRILLO by Jan Romero Stevens. Illustrated by Jeanne Arnold. Flagstaff: Rising Moon, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-87358-591-7 (K-3)

In this bilingual book, Carlos tries to show off for his friend Gloria by catching a skunk, getting more than he bargained for. His less-than-wise decision does create an embarrassing and stinky predicament for him but his ability to remain level-headed and resourceful helps him solve his problem, at least temporarily. His father provides the more lasting resolution while also allowing Carlos the opportunity to acknowledge his mistake gracefully.

CELEBRATE IN CENTRAL AMERICA by Joe Viesti and Diane Hall. Photographs by Joe Viesti. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-688-15162-0 (3-5)

Throughout Central America, holiday festivities offer a rich blend of indigenous and European traditions. Stunning color photographs accompanied by a brief text provide details about the origins of eight holidays and how each one is celebrated in a specific Central American town.

Includes Día de los Muertos (Sacatepéquez, Guatemala); Baile de la Conquista (Chichicastenango, Guatemala); Semana Santa (Sonsonate, El Salvador); San José Fair (Copán Ruinas, Honduras); Virgin of Masaya Celebration (Masaya, Nicaragua); Columbus Day/Día de la Raza (Puerto Limón, Costa Rica) and two distinctive ways of celebrating Carnival (San Pedro, Belize, and Las Tablas, Panama).

COCOA ICE by Diana Appelbaum. Illustrated by Holly Meade. New York: Orchard, 1997. 52 pgs. ISBN 0-531-30040-4 (K-3)

Two young girls, one in Santo Domingo, the other one in Maine, tell stories cleverly linked by the author through “the cocoa ice trade” of schooners in the late 19th Century. Each dreams about the other’s place, “the island of always-summer, where giant pink seashells line the beaches and children pick chocolate from trees” and “the land where children walk on rivers of ice.” Excellently formatted for young readers, this book provides a wealth of information in text and illustrations.

LA CUCARACHA MARTINA: A CARIBBEAN FOLKTALE/LA CUCARACHA MARTINA: UN CUENTO FOLKLORICO DEL CARIBE by Daniel Moretón. Illustrated by Daniel Moretón. New York: Turtle, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 1-890515-03-5 (English edition) 1-890515-04-3 (Spanish edition) (K-3)

Moretón’s version of this traditional Caribbean folktale about “La Cucaracha Martina, who didn’t care much for life in the big city...” is freshly retold and cleverly illustrated. The noise of the big city is what Martina liked the least so on Monday morning she fixed herself all up and went out in search of the beautiful noise that “made her feel all funny inside.” Vivacious and witty, Martina encountered all kinds of animals that made terrifying noises before she found what she was looking for. Bright illustrations of contemporary looking animals and onomatopoeic text are integrated in the design of each page. Both language versions maintain the humor while accurately translating animal sounds. Delightful for reading aloud to young audiences. Spanish and English editions available.

CUCKOO/CUCU by Lois Ehlert. Translated by Gloria de Aragón Andújar. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997. 36 pgs. ISBN 0-15-200274-X (K-3)

Ehlert’s bilingual version of this traditional Mayan tale about the courage of the cuckoo is exquisitely illustrated with designs inspired by traditional Mexican crafts. From trees of life to papercuts, the illustrations create a culturally authentic visual setting that masterfully synthesizes many elements of Mexican folk art. Equally poetic in Spanish and English this story is ideal for introducing very young children to Mexican craft motifs within the context of a very well told folktale.

DAY OF THE DEAD by Tony Johnston and Jeanette Winter. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997. 52 pgs. ISBN 0-15-222863-2 (K-3)

This delightfully intimate book about one of Mexico’s most important holidays deserves to be added to any collection for young readers. Text and illustrations synergize to create a jewel-like account of a family making all the preparations to honor the spirits of their dead. Papá, mamá, las tías, and the children, all take part in baking bread, making tamales and empanadas, buying marigolds and finally going to the cemetery to welcome and celebrate with their dead. At the end of the night, “They gather their sleeping children. Upon the graves they leave the marigolds. Then they go walking, walking home, carrying candles like stars.” Poetically written and colorfully illustrated this is a great book to share with young readers one-on-one.

DEAR ABUELITA/QUERIDA ABUELITA by Sofía Meza Keane. Illustrated by Enrique O. Sánchez. Crystal Lake, IL: Rigby, 1997. 24 pgs. ISBN 0-7635-3156-1 (English edition) 0-7635-3155-3 (Spanish edition) (K-3)

Marco's family moves from Yucatán, Mexico to San José, California a few days before his eighth birthday. Marco writes to his Abuelita telling her about his new house, school, and the city's big buildings. He also tells her he misses the happiness and noise of the farm, his horse, and his dog, Pinto. But what he misses most are the stories his grandma would tell him before he went to bed. The illustrations extend the text with details of life in both worlds which are "as different as night and day." Spanish and English editions available.

DIEZ DEDITOS/TEN LITTLE FINGERS AND OTHER PLAY RHYMES AND ACTION SONGS FROM LATIN AMERICA selected by Jose-Luis Orozco. Illustrated by Elisa Kleven. New York: Dutton, 1997. 56 pgs. ISBN 0-525-45736-4 (K-3)

This bilingual collection of finger rhymes and action songs from many Spanish-speaking countries includes lyrics in Spanish and English, music scores and bright and colorful illustrations. The background notes and simple pictographs showing body movements will aid adults in presenting these playful rhymes to young children. Songs and games from Mexico, the Caribbean, several South American countries, and Spain are included. Kleven's illustrations capture the imagination and create a rich visual setting to share with children.

FROM FATHER TO SON/DE PADRE A HIJO by Patricia Almada. Photographs by Marianno de López. Crystal Lake, IL: Rigby, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-7635-3133-2 (English edition) 0-7635-3132-4 (Spanish edition) (K-3)

A family of bakers, *panaderos*, going all the way back to Nayarit, Mexico and now established in Los Angeles, shares their tradition in this wonderfully simple book. Photographs of father and son showing the different steps in the preparation of the dough and a variety of different kinds of breads add valuable information to the text. A map and a page of sweet bread riddles create opportunities for discussion and fun. Spanish and English editions available.

GATHERING THE SUN: AN ALPHABET IN SPANISH AND ENGLISH by Alma Flor Ada. Illustrated by Simón Silva. New York: Lothrop, 1997. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-688-13903-5 (K-3)

The rich and deep hues of reds, greens and blacks with splashes of yellows, blues and browns adorn the pages of this bilingual alphabet book. The life of the migrant family working in the fields is told with great sensitivity as one reads and explores the alphabet. The twenty-eight poems in Spanish and English are carefully superimposed on the art work. The continuity of culture, family and friends is articulately woven into the text and illustrations.

GRANNIE JUS' COME by Ana Sisnett. Illustrated by Karen Lusebrink. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-89239-150-2 (K-3)

Joy, rhythm, regional dialect and family love are embodied in the spirit of this book set in Panama. A little girl anxiously awaits her grandmother's arrival. The family has prepared for Granny, and all share in the excitement of her visit. The colorful illustrations depict the landscape of Panama with its tropical flora and fauna. Children will enjoy searching for a playful

blue monkey and several other animals found on all the pages. The simple text is told from the granddaughter's point of view.

I AM OF TWO PLACES/SOY DE DOS LUGARES edited by Mary Carden and Mary Cappellini. Illustrated by Christina González. Crystal Lake, IL: Rigby, 1997. 16 pgs. ISBN 0-7635-3161-8 (English edition) 0-7635-3160-X (Spanish edition) (K-3)

This collection of poetry is composed by five Latino/a children, ages eight to eleven who describe their pride and frustrations in speaking two languages and loving the people and places of two cultures. Their metaphors and experiences provide compelling images and ideas for engaging children in discussion and writing. González' illustrations combine bold symbols and bright, warm images of children and adults that could inspire children to illustrate their own poetry. Spanish and English editions available.

LAUGHING TOMATOES AND OTHER SPRING POEMS/JITOMATES RISUEÑOS Y OTROS POEMAS DE PRIMAVERA by Francisco X. Alarcón. Illustrated by Maya Christina González. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-89239-139-1 (3-5)

Alarcon's bilingual poetry captures the joy of living closely with the land and with the people who nurture earth's life. With fresh metaphors based on the bounty of a spring planting, we see old and young people committed to the land and to the well-being of farm workers. Gonzalez' illustrations complement and extend the high spirits and deep connections Alarcón expresses throughout this collection.

A LITTLE SALMON FOR WITNESS: A STORY FROM TRINIDAD by Vashanti Rahaman. Illustrated by Sandra Speidel. New York: Lodestar, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-525-67521-3 (K-3)

People from all over the world have settled in Trinidad, the home of Rajiv, a young boy who goes from one neighbor to the next seeking "a little salmon for witness" as a gift for his grandmother's birthday. Through dialect and well-rendered, pastel illustrations, we see the Trinidadian community where Rajiv plays, works, and celebrates. A wonderful companion to *Vejigante Masquerader*, the 1993 Américas Award winner.

THE LIZARD AND THE SUN/LA LARGARTIJA Y EL SOL by Alma Flor Ada. Illustrated by Felipe Dávalos. New York: Doubleday Dell, 1997. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-385-32121-X (K-3)

This porquoi tale, set in ancient Mexico, uses playful repetition in language and plot, to engage readers in the story of a tenacious lizard who continues her search for the sun while all other animals gradually stop looking. Lizard finds the sun but must make several journeys into the city to confer with the emperor who eventually assists the lizard in awakening a very sleepy sun. The richly-colored, detailed illustrations depict Aztec people and the central Mexican landscape with respect and warmth. Dávalos' rendering of the emperor is especially gentle and wry. Spanish and English narratives appear side by side throughout the book.

MEXICO'S MARVELOUS CORN/EL MARAVILLOSO MAIZ DE MEXICO by Margarita González-Jensen. Crystal Lake, IL: Rigby, 1997. 16 pgs. ISBN 0-7635-3182-0 (English edition) 0-7635-3181-2 (Spanish edition) (K-3)

Maiz, a staple of Mexican meals and snacks, is described in all its variety and flavors in this easy to read book. Readers will find a feast of corn, from *atole* to *tortillas*, with brief, accurate descriptions of traditional and contemporary forms of preparation. A wonderful companion to

Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems.

NOVIO BOY, a play by Gary Soto. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997. 78 pgs. ISBN 0-15-201531-0 (6-8)

This play humorously relates a boy's first date with an attractive girl who is older than he is. Soto creates a play that secondary students and their teachers will enjoy and be able to use to address some of the more serious issues we all faced in adolescence. The extended Latino family, aunts, uncles, etc., are interwoven into a context that resonates true and authentic for Latino youth. This play will fill a large need in secondary classrooms.

PEDRITO'S DAY by Luis Garay. New York: Orchard, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-531-09522-3 (K-3)

When his father goes North to work, Pedrito stays behind with his mother and grandmother, working every day as a shoeshine boy to help earn money for his family. His mature response in a time of crisis convinces his mother that he is finally old enough for the thing he most wants: his own bicycle. Luis Garay's detailed, luminous paintings give readers a strong sense of place, although his portrait of working children is somewhat romanticized.

SEÑOR CAT'S ROMANCE AND OTHER FAVORITE STORIES FROM LATIN AMERICA by Lucía M. González. Illustrated by Lulu Delacre. New York: Scholastic, 1997. 48 pgs. ISBN 0-590-48537-7 (3-5)

This collection of six folktales familiar to children throughout Latin America will serve as a good introduction for children living in the United States, who are likely unfamiliar with the tales. Each story is engagingly told and generously illustrated with lighthearted watercolor paintings. A brief author's note and a glossary with a pronunciation guide to Spanish words follow each story.

SPIRITS OF THE HIGH MESA by Floyd Martínez. Houston: Arte Público, 1997. 192 pgs. ISBN 1-55885-198-4 (6-8)

Growing up in a small town in New Mexico in the 1930s, young Flavio is caught between two cultures when outsiders come to wire the town for electricity. Flavio's grandfather, a community leader, is strongly opposed to the change because he knows it spells the loss of traditional culture. Sensitive Flavio is able to appreciate both old and new ways, making his life all the more difficult.

THE STORY OF DOÑA CHILA/EL CUENTO DE DOÑA CHILA by Mary Capellini. Illustrated by Gershom Griffith. Crystal Lake, IL: Rigby, 1997. 24 pgs. ISBN 0-7635-3267-3 (English edition) 0-7635-3266-5 (Spanish edition) (K-3)

In an unusual picture story set in Honduras, Oscar's mother must decide whether to have him treated by a doctor or by the local *curandera* after he is bitten by a scorpion. The conflict between two cultures is realistically shown in this engaging story. Spanish and English editions available.

TOMAS AND THE LIBRARY LADY by Pat Mora. Illustrated by Raul Colón. New York: Knopf, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-679-80401-3 (K-3)

During a summer his family spends as migrant workers in the fields of Iowa, young Tomás makes

friends with the local public librarian who shares his appreciation for good stories. Raul Colón's shimmering paintings capture small-town Iowa in the 1930s, as well as scenes from Tomás' vivid imagination.

WHERE FIREFLIES DANCE/AHI, DONDE BAILAN LAS LUCIERNAGAS by Lucha Corpi. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-89239-145-6 (K-3)

A bilingual text recounts the author's childhood memories of growing up in a small town on the Caribbean coast of Mexico. Lucha and her brother Victor especially love to listen to their grandmother tell stories about the ghost of San Sebastián, who is said to haunt a local house.

WHITE BREAD COMPETITION by Jo Ann Yolanda Hernández. Houston: Piñata Books, 1997. 208 pgs. ISBN 1-55885-210-7 (8-10)

When Luz, a ninth-grade Chicana student in San Antonio, Texas, wins a spelling competition, her success triggers a variety of emotions among family, friends, and the broader community. Multiple points of view and recurring metaphors add to the richness and complexity of a story that can be read either as a single narrative or as a collection of short stories.

1997 Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Book Award
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