

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 portray Latin America, the Caribbean, or 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 18, 1999 at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**1998 AMERICAS AWARD WINNERS**

**BARRIO: JOSE'S NEIGHBORHOOD/BARRIO: EL BARRIO DE JOSE** (dual editions) by George Ancona. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1998. 48 pgs. ISBN 0-15-201049-1 English/ISBN 0-15-201808-5 Spanish

The Mission District of San Francisco, called affectionately *El barrio* by its residents, is home to young José Luis, an active, curious member of his Latino family and community. Through the artful use of photographic compositions, color, and point of view, and through clear, fluid prose, Ancona shows the reader José's daily interests and pathways through *El barrio*. At the same time we see his community's history, hopes, and gatherings through the images of people of the Americas who have shaped the lives of today's community. In murals, we see Rigoberta Menchú Tum, César Chávez, children, and refugees embellished with messages of strength and freedom; we see teachers assisting children and artists leading families in song and play. Across the pages, Ancona teaches readers to see the abiding commitment to a place and its people that makes *El barrio*, and every community, home. (Grades 1-5)

**MAMA & PAPA HAVE A STORE** by Amelia Lau Carling. New York: Dial, 1998. 32 pgs. ISBN 00-8037-2044-0

In the heart of Guatemala City, a Chinese immigrant family owns a specialty store where they sell fabric, buttons, thread, and ribbons, in addition to a small selection of Chinese imports. The events of a typical busy day are recounted as seen through the eyes of the family's youngest daughter who is not yet old enough to attend school. We hear the voice of a young child in her first-person narration and see what she sees in the delicately detailed watercolor paintings that accompany the story: the sounds, the colors, the anticipation of her older siblings' return at midday for the large family meal they'll share, and her interest in the Maya customers who have an affinity for the store owners due to a shared sense of style and color. Through the details of everyday life, we see how cultures peacefully co-exist and enrich each other in this dazzling autobiographical picture story. (Pre-K - grade 4)

**1998 AMERICAS HONORABLE MENTION**

**CENDRILLON: A CARIBBEAN CINDERELLA** by Robert D. San Souci. Illustrated by Brian Pinkney. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-689-80668-X

Set in Martinique, this version of Cinderella is told from the fairy godmother's point of view. As in the Perrault version, Cendrillon becomes the stepchild of a selfish woman whose only daughter was spoiled and demanding. Cendrillon in the end finds true love. The story is interspersed with French Creole words and phrases that are explained in a glossary. (K - grade 4)

**1998 AMERICAS COMMENDED LIST**

**BIG BUSHY MUSTACHE** by Gary Soto. Illustrated by Joe Cepeda. New York: Knopf, 1998. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-679-88030-5

Like many young boys, Ricky Sanchez wants to be just like his father. When Ricky is selected by his teacher to wear a big bushy mustache as part of the class's *Cinco de Mayo* play, he enthusiastically accepts the role, knowing that with his mustache, he will look just like his father. Unfortunately, the mustache is nowhere to be found when Ricky arrives home. His despair is turned into a moment of family unity when his father arrives at a solution that thoroughly satisfies everyone. Cepeda's bold color acrylic paintings compliment Soto's light-hearted story and characters. (K - grade 2)

**BIG MOON TORTILLA** by Joy Cowley. Illustrated by Dyanne Strongbow. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mill, 1998. 32 pgs. ISBN 1-56397-601-3

Set on a Tohona O'odham (Papago) reservation in southern Arizona, young Marta Enos' story unfolds across a watercolor desert landscape and in the warm, brown arms of her grandmother. Marta's problem is seemingly simple: her homework papers have blown away and her glasses have broken. Yet her grandmother helps her understand how to face these small disasters with a sense of possibility and choice. Marta's decision and her grandmother's affection and direction will inspire many children who have difficulty seeing their way forward. (Grades 2-5)

**CARIBBEAN DREAM** by Rachel Isadora. New York: Putnam, 1998. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-399-23230-3

Isadora's rhythmical text describes the places where people and land meet, as her illustrations follow many children from the beginning to the dream time of the day. Color watercolor paintings depict children swimming along the shore, laughing in the rain, and listening to stories. Her accompanying text captures each image: "Where sun meets water, we fish."/"Where rain meets earth, we splash." The format of the story can be shared and then recreated by children as they recount all the meeting places in their lives. (K - grade 3)

**THE CRAB MAN/EL HOMBRE DE LOS CANGREJOS** (dual editions) by Patricia E. Van West. Illustrated by Cedric Lucas. New York: Turtle Books, 1998. 32 pgs. ISBN 1-890515-08-6 English/1-890515-09-4 Spanish

Neville sells crabs to the crab man in order to buy his mother a new dress. His father, who works in the cane plantation, brings home very little money and the dollar that Neville earns is essential for his project. When Neville sees his crabs mistreated by the crab man at a Jamaican hotel, he has to decide whether to forfeit his income or buy his mother the much-needed dress. (Pre-K - older)

**DOCTOR BIRD: THREE LOOKIN' UP TALES FROM JAMAICA** by Gerald Hausman and Ashley Wolff. New York: Philomel, 1998. 36 pgs. ISBN 0-399-22744-X

This folktale is based on the positive thinking of a hummingbird, the national bird of Jamaica. In this story Doctor Bird, as he is called, changes the lives of three animals: Mongoose, Mouse and Owl. Without using dialect, the author enhances the rhythm of the Jamaican language by the conversational flow of the words. Mention is made of hibiscus tea, yellow yam and mango, all of which give the story a colourful local setting. (Pre-K - older)

**FIESTA FIREWORKS** by George Ancona. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1998. 24 pgs. ISBN 0-688-14817

In a burst of colourful photographs, George Ancona has brought to life the festival honouring the patron saint of Tultepec, Mexico, San Juan de Dios. The story centers on Caren Rayes Urbán, the daughter and niece of pyrotechnists who is swept up into the activities of preparing for the fiesta. Step by step, the author describes, with vivid photographs and text, all that is involved in making the fireworks and participating in the dramatic event. (K - older)

**FROM THE BELLYBUTTON OF THE MOON AND OTHER SUMMER POEMS/DEL OMBLIGO DE LA LUNA Y OTROS POEMAS DE VERANO** by Francisco X. Alarcón. Illustrated by Maya Christina González. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1998. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-89239-153-7

As summer comes, you feel the warmth and growth, and it invites you to come out and play. This bilingual collection of poems, told from the perspective of children, is a delight to read on your own or out loud. The author has captured the essence of summer, family, and children at play in his poems. High interest, whimsical, fun-filled illustrations, and playful language help us enjoy

summer in Jalisco, Mexico. Classroom teachers are privy to a rich cultural context in which to introduce a Mexican family. This book is pure entertainment! (Grades 1-3)

**A GIFT FOR ABUELITA: CELEBRATING THE DAY OF THE DEAD/UN REGALO PARA ABUELITA: EN CELEBRACION DEL DIA DO LOS MUERTOS** by Nancy Luenn. Illustrated by Robert Chapman. Flagstaff: Rising Moon, 1998. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-87358-688-3

Rosita wishes that her grandmother, whom she adored, could be remembered in a very special way. She uses the occasion of *el Día de los Muertos* to make a gift that is just right to celebrate Abuelita. This is an exceptional book to use in a classroom to discuss the loss of loved ones. The Mexican culture provides many children and adults with a joyful, family festivity in which all remember those family members who have passed away. This bilingual version, culturally enriched illustrations, and poignant story will appeal to children in a personal way. (Grades 2-5)

**GREETINGS, SUN** by Phillis and David Gershator. Illustrated by Synthia Saint James. New York: DK Ink, 1998. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-7894-2482-7

Two young children greet their sunny day and take us along on their wonderful island in the Caribbean. As we roam, we encounter palm trees, beaches, white clouds, ocean, ants, and bees...We meet their friends in school as well as their parents at home. The vibrant colors and simple text makes this the perfect choice for a very young child wanting to explore the wonders of life in the Caribbean. This is a story to be read aloud and to observe the many things children in Caribbean have in common with children in the United States. (Pre-K - grade 1)

**LILIANA'S GRANDMOTHERS** by Leyla Torres. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1998. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-374-35105-8

Liliana has two grandmothers who are from different countries, have different interests, and even speak different languages. Liliana's grandmother, Mima, lives on the same street as Liliana in a climate where it is cold and snowy half of the year. Her other grandmother, Mama Gabina, lives in another country where it is always warm, and Liliana has to take a plane to get there. This story presents the common differences in North American and Latin American cultures through a figure that is very important to both: the grandmother. The simplicity of the story allows children to see cultural contrasts in a positive, appreciative way. (Pre-K- grade 2)

**LOLO AND RED-LEGS** by Kirk Reeve. Flagstaff: Rising Moon, 1998. 112 pgs. ISBN 0-87358-683-2

When an eleven year-old boy, Lolo, captures a tarantula, it turns an ordinary summer into a series of adventures that take him and his friends beyond their Mexican-American neighborhood in East Los Angeles. It is refreshing to read that girls enjoy having a tarantula as a pet and contribute much of the information on its care and behavior to a group of astonished boys. Teachers will find this chapter book quite accessible, particularly to those students who are reluctant to read. The story line moves quickly, and its readability level does not intimidate students, making the reading process one of pleasure. (Grades 3-5)

**THE MAGIC BEAN TREE: A LEGEND FROM ARGENTINA** by Nancy Van Laan. Illustrated by Beatriz Vidal. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-395-82746-9

An Argentine version of a Quechua story tells how young Topec saved his people from drought by going out in search of rain, aided by the advice of a wise old carob tree. Argentine-born illustrator Beatriz Vidal uses rich colors and a naive style to enhance the mood and setting of this ancient story. (Pre-K - grade 3)

**LA MARIPOSA** by Francisco Jiménez. Illustrated by Simón Silva. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-395-81663-7 (English edition)

Francisco, the son of migrant workers, has difficulty adjusting to a new school because he doesn't speak or understand English and, to make matters worse, the class bully seems to have it in for him. Simón Silva's use of orange and black in his paintings underscores the author's subtle use of a monarch butterfly to symbolize Francisco's metamorphosis. Adapted from a chapter in Jiménez's *The Circuit*, winner of the 1997 Américas Award. (Grades 3-7)

**MARISOL AND MAGDALENA: THE SOUND OF OUR SISTERHOOD** by Veronica Chambers. New York: Hyperion, 1998. 141 pgs. ISBN not listed

Best friends Marisol and Magdalena have a lot in common: they're both 13, of Panamanian heritage, living in New York City in the midst of a close-knit Latino community. But unlike Magdalena, Marisol has never known her father. When her mother sends her to spend a year with her *abuela* in Panama, Marisol hopes to finally meet him face to face, but ends up instead learning more about herself and her heritage through day-to-day life with Abuela. (Grades 5-8)

**MOMENTOS MAGICOS: TALES FROM LATIN AMERICA TOLD IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH** by Olga Loya. Little Rock, AK: August House, 1998. 188 pgs. ISBN 0-87483-497-X

A bilingual (Spanish/English) collection of fifteen traditional tales from Latin America arranged into four sections: Scary Stories; Trickster Tales; Strong Women; and Myths. Extensive notes about sources and variants make this particularly useful in classrooms. (Grades 4-8, younger for reading aloud)

**PETTY CRIMES** by Gary Soto. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1998. 157 pgs. ISBN 0-15-201658-9

In this collection of stories, Soto displays his gift for relating stories that compassionately describe the emotional turmoil and conundrums that early adolescents sometimes create for themselves, or that life simply presents. For example, La Güera's insistence that she is a *chola*--a tough girl who steals stuff and even boyfriends; or dealing with your mother's early death and your father's attempts to help you cope by getting rid of all traces of your mom as soon as possible; or the complications resulting from adopting a rooster for a pet. Young adolescents will see themselves in these stories and be able to share their own stories. Soto's writing will encourage and support the readers' reflection and evaluation about the options available--the reflection that is so critical to coming through this early stage of development in healthy and successful ways. (Grades 5-8)

**THE SECRET STARS** by Joseph Slate. Illustrated by Felipe Dávalos. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 1998. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-7614-5027-0

This story adds detail, warmth, and meaning to the "Three Kings" traditions and celebrations experienced by many Latinos throughout the United States. It takes place in New Mexico and the

dream-like quality of both the text and the illustrations contributes to the magic of the arrival of the Three Kings in spite of an ice storm and bitter cold. The children's adventures over the landscape under the protection of Grandmother's star-burst quilt will touch the hearts of every grandparent and grandchild who has known the special relationship that's possible between those two generations. (Grades 1-3)

**TIO ARMANDO** by Florence Parry Heide and Roxanne Heide Pierce. Illustrated by Ann Grifalconi. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1998. 28 pgs. ISBN 0-688-12107-1

Tio Armando comes to live with Lucitita's family in the month of May, and everyone feels closer and more connected since his arrival. During the eleven months that Tio Armando shares his life with the family, he contributes to the rich experiences often typical within an extended family, and especially typical of Latino families all over the United States. He also models and articulates, in terms that his young niece can understand, the interdependence among family members that characterizes healthy family relationships--peoples' lives are twined together and one life is part of another life. It is only after he is dead that Lucitita understands his promise never to leave them, and this helps her to appreciate her favorite uncle even more and develop strength after her loss. (Grades 1-3)

**UNDER THE ROYAL PALMS: A CHILDHOOD IN CUBA** by Alma Flor Ada. New York: Atheneum, 1998. 88 pgs. ISBN 0-689-80631-0

Alma Flor Ada offers stories about Cuba that would not otherwise be available to those of us living in the United States. This collection provides the reader with a close look at an active and loving extended family. It chronicles events that would probably stand out for lots of children growing up throughout history and across geographical boundaries: living in different houses, in the city and in the country; the stormy night her father carried a newborn calf on his shoulder into their house and the cow following closely behind; and the tragic death of a beloved young uncle. This volume provides information on a prolific author that is accessible and helpful to readers studying Latino writers. (Grades 3-5)

1998 Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature  
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