

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 29, 2001 at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

2000 AMERICAS AWARD WINNERS

Picture Book Category

THE COMPOSITION by Antonio Skármeta. Illustrated by Alfonso Ruano. Translated from the Spanish by Elisa Amado. Groundwood, 2000. 32 pages. ISBN 0-88899-390-0 \$16.95

The Chilean author's short story, first published as an illustrated children's book in Venezuela, provides a chilling portrait of a young boy's political awakening. At age nine, Pedro is most concerned about acquiring a new soccer ball, just like the ones the professional players use. Only after he witnesses a friend's father being arrested and taken away by soldiers does Pedro begin to wonder about his own parents' political leanings. He notices, for example, that they spend a lot of time huddled around the radio with the volume turned low, and they converse with friends in hushed tones. But when he asks his mother if he is for or against the dictatorship, she answers that children aren't for or against anything. So what will Pedro write about when a government official comes to his school and announces there will be a cash prize for best composition with the title "What My Family Does at Night?" Suspense is built through a skillful use of dialogue and subtle detail, as well as visual foreshadowing in the realistic illustrations, to keep readers on the edges of their seats until the very last sentence. The moral and ethical issues presented provide a tremendous springboard for discussion with older children and adolescents. (Gr. 3-10)

Fiction Category

THE COLOR OF MY WORDS by Lynn Joseph. Joanna Cotler/HarperCollins, 2000. 138 pages. ISBN 0-06-028232-0 \$14.95

Growing up in the Dominican Republic, twelve-year-old Ana Rosa understands the power of words because she herself is a writer. Her family supports her aspirations, even though some of their neighbors find them unrealistic. From her vantage point at the top of her beloved *gri gri* tree, she takes in everything she observes, in both the natural and the human world, and transforms it into poetry. When the government announces that it is going to bulldoze the working-class neighborhood in which Ana Rosa and her family live, her brother Guarío organizes a community resistance movement. But words, with all their power, cannot save Guarío from the powerful forces against which he struggles. They do, however, help Ana Rosa tell his story, as well as her own. A lyrical first-person narrative strongly evokes a people and a place in an engaging, accessible story that does not shy away from some of the hard truths. (Gr. 4-8)

2000 AMERICAS HONORABLE MENTIONS

ESPERANZA RISING by Pam Muñoz Ryan. Scholastic Press, 2000. 262 pages. ISBN 0-439-12041-1 \$15.95

Twelve-year-old Esperanza leads a privileged life as the only child in a prominent family living in Mexico in the 1930s. But when her father dies, she experiences a drastic change of fortune, and she and her mother must eek out a living by going north to California as migrant workers. More than a mere riches-to-rags story, Pam Muñoz Ryan skillfully weaves history and social issues into a compelling story based on the author's grandmother's childhood. Outstanding characterizations, a well developed sense of place, and a strong story line mark this fine historical novel. (Gr. 4-8)

MY VERY OWN ROOM / MI PROPIO CUARTITO by Amada Irma Pérez. Illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez. Children's Book Press, 2000. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-164-2 \$15.95

As the eldest child and only daughter in a large Mexican-American family, the spirited narrator of this joyful bilingual story longs for a little space to call her own. With the help of her mama and papa, her Tío Pancho, and her five younger brothers, she's able to fix up a small bedroom for herself in a storage closet. And as soon as she has everything just as she wants it, she invites her brothers in so she can read them a story. Brightly colored, stylized illustrations enhance the exuberance of the text in a story that communicates both individuality and family solidarity. (Gr. K-3)

2000 AMERICAS COMMENDED LIST

THE CHRISTMAS GIFT / EL REGALO DE NAVIDAD by Francisco Jiménez. Illustrated by Claire B. Cotts. Houghton Mifflin, 2000. 32 pages. ISBN 0-395-92869-9 \$15.00

Based on a short story from *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999), a bilingual picture book centers on one particular Christmas memory from the author's childhood in which his parents found a way to help another family even more destitute than theirs. (Gr. K-3)

CUBAN KIDS by George Ancona. Marshall Cavendish, 2000. 40 pages. ISBN 0-7614-5077-7 \$15.95

In his trademark photo-documentary style, Ancona combines outstanding color photographs of

contemporary Cuban children with an inviting narrative that describes their lives at school, at home and at play. (Gr. 3-6)

ICY WATERMELON / SANDIA FRIA by Mary Sue Galindo. Illustrated by Pauline Rodriguez Howard. Piñata Books/Arte Público, 2000. 32 pages. ISBN 1-55885-306-5 \$14.95

As three generations of a Mexican-American family share a watermelon on the front porch, Abuelo and Abuela recount the amusing story of how they first met when a watermelon fell off the back of a truck. (Gr. K-2)

MI HIJA, MI HIJO, EL AGUILA, LA PALOMA: UN CANTO AZTECA / MY DAUGHTER, MY SON, THE EAGLE, THE DOVE: AN AZTEC CHANT by Ana Castillo. Illustrated by S. Guevara. Dutton, 2000. 48 pages. ISBN 0-523-45867-0 (Spanish edition) ISBN 0-525-45856-2 (English edition) \$12.99

Ancient and contemporary elements are nicely blended in both text and illustrations in these attractive small books designed to instill cultural values and inspire adolescent readers. (Gr. 6-9)

PEDRO AND ME: FRIENDSHIP, LOSS, AND WHAT I LEARNED by Judd Winick. Henry Holt, 2000. 187 pages. ISBN 0-8050-6403-6 \$15.00

By shattering stereotypes, a young HIV-positive Cuban-American man forever changed the life of an aspiring cartoonist when the two were cast as roommates on MTV's *The Real World 3, San Francisco*, as their story is told here in a graphic novel format. (Gr. 6-12)

ROADRUNNER'S DANCE by Rudolfo Anaya. Illustrated by David Diaz. Hyperion, 2000. 32 pages. ISBN 0-7868-80254-5 \$15.99

David Diaz's glowing Southwestern-style illustrations serve as the perfect complement to Anaya's original tale that explains how roadrunners came into being. (Gr. K-3)

SALSA STORIES by Lulu Delacre. Scholastic, 2000. 105 pages. ISBN 0-590-63118-7 \$15.95

When Carmen Teresa's family and friends gather to celebrate the New Year, each one shares food and a story from his or her native country, which include Argentina, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Peru. (Gr. 3-6)

2000 Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature
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