

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 (October 1, 2005) at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

AMERICAS AWARD WINNERS

MY NAME IS CELIA / ME LLAMO CELIA by Monica Brown. Illustrated by Rafael López. Flagstaff: Luna Rising, 2004. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-87358-872-X

Honoring the unique rhythms of Celia Cruz music, *My Name is Celia* pays tribute to the life and music of the famous Cuban singer. In combination with vivid illustrations this book is an exceptional picture book that will keep the memory of *la reina de la salsa* (the queen of salsa) alive, recognizing her legacy of artistic works and musical contributions. (K-5)

SAMMY & JULIANA IN HOLLYWOOD by Benjamin Alire Sáenz. El Paso: Cinco Puntos, 2004. 291 pgs. ISBN 0-938317-81-4

In this evocative novel the author takes the reader to Hollywood, a Chicano barrio during the 1960's Vietnam War. Through adolescents Sammy and Juliana's unconditional love the author crafts a powerful story that portrays the joys and struggles of living in a community where multiple situations and realities shape the characters' lives. The complexity of their development makes this novel an engaging and profound representation of the meanings of friendship, family and community relationships. (10-12)

AMERICAS HONORABLE MENTIONS

CALL ME MARÍA by Judith Ortiz Cofer. New York: Orchard, 2004. 127 pgs. ISBN 0-439-38577-6

Written in prose, letters and poetry, Ortiz-Cofer crafts the story of María, a Puerto Rican adolescent girl who moves with her father to New York City leaving her mother in Puerto Rico. As María gets used to her new life in the New York City barrio, she learns to negotiate two languages, two homes and two parents who live apart. In the same ways she finds her voice through poetry in spanglish, her growth as a woman is also situated in understanding how two worlds merge to define who she is. (7-9)

AMERICAS COMMENDED LIST

BECOMING NAOMI LEÓN by Pam Muñoz Ryan. New York: Scholastic, 2004. 246 pgs. ISBN 0-439-26969-5

Naomi Soledad León Outlaw had always thought that having such a mouthful for a name was her biggest problem. Naomi lives with Gram and her brother in a trailer, where she always manages to find time for her two hobbies: making lists and carving soap figurines. Their tranquil life comes to a sudden halt when the children's alcoholic mother shows up with the intent of taking Naomi to live with her. With the help of her Mexican neighbors, Gram moves the family to Oaxaca, in search of Naomi's father. There Naomi becomes immersed in the local culture and, through her carving, discovers what it means to be a true León. (6-8)

THE DREAM ON BLANCA'S WALL / EL SUEÑO PEGADO EN LA PARED DE BLANCA by Jane Medina, Illustrated by Robert Casilla. Honesdale: Boyds Mill, 2004. 48 pgs. ISBN 1-56397-740-0

The Dream on Blanca's Wall takes the reader through a progression of a young girl's thoughts about becoming a teacher. Jane Medina's expressive bilingual poetry conveys the inner feelings of a young Latina growing up in a barrio where she must learn English. From a young girl who tries to make herself white by using talcum powder, to teachers who don't understand the difficulties of living in the barrio, Blanca goes through many struggles to learn and find her way. (4-12)

ELENA'S SERENADE by Campbell Geeslin. Illustrated by Ana Juan. New York: Atheneum, 2004. 36 pgs. ISBN 0-689-84908-7

Beautiful illustrations help tell the story of Elena, a little Mexican girl, who longs to become a glassblower just like her father. "Whoever heard of a girl glassblower?" is her father's response. Elena leaves home disguised as a boy, determined to go to Monterrey where all the great glassblowers are found. Her journey leads to mystical encounters that help her pursue her dream. Arriving in Monterrey, Elena amazes the local glassblowers with her skills. Eventually she returns home to her once doubting father, and takes her place at his side. (2-5)

THE REMEMBERING STONE by Barbara Timberlake Russell. Illustrated by Claire B. Cotts. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-374-36242-4

What do you dream about? As the birds fly south in the fall, Ana's mother touches her locket, and thinks about her family in Costa Rica. She wishes that she could go home one day. Ana and her mother remember Costa Rica from a few treasures in a little box, keepsakes from their homeland. Ana's neighbors have dreams too about their lives, their families, and their homes. As Ana holds on to another treasure, a speckled volcanic stone, she falls asleep dreaming about visiting Costa Rica and the things she will see, smell, and hear. She awakens renewed, certain that one day her dream will come true and she will enjoy the surroundings and comfort of her grandparents' Costa Rican home. (K-5)

THE SANTERO'S MIRACLE by Rudolfo Anaya. Illustrated by Amy Córdova. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2004. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-8263-2847-4

Once again Anaya crafts a unique holiday story grounded in Southwest folklore and traditions. Don Jacobo, a *santero*, and his grandson anxiously await the moment to finish a carving of San Isidro before the rest of the family arrives for the holiday celebrations. As a result of a snow storm the family has to overcome a series of unfortunate events, showing the power of love, family and hope. (1-5)

SÉLAVI, THAT IS LIFE: A HAITIAN STORY OF HOPE by Youme. El Paso: Cinco Puntos, 2004. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-938317-84-9

Sélavi (literally translated as "that's life") is the name of a young boy orphaned in Haiti as a result of the country's civil unrest. Sélavi meets other orphaned children and together, with the help of some townspeople, the children build a house where they will have a place to eat, sleep and be safe. However, nothing comes easy in Haiti. The house is eventually destroyed and the children are forced to find a way to be heard. An insightful historical recounting of Haiti's recent unrest follows this poignant story. (2-5)

Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature
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