

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 book will be honored at a ceremony on September 16, 2006 at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Américas Award Winner**

**CINNAMON GIRL: LETTERS FOUND INSIDE A CEREAL BOX** by Juan Felipe Herrera. New York: HarperCollins; Joanna Cotler Books, 2005. 164 pgs. ISBN 0-06-057984-6

This is the story of thirteen-year-old Yolanda, "Canelita" (Cinnamon Girl) as her Uncle DJ named her. It is September 2001. Uncle DJ was trapped when the towers fell, and he now lies in a hospital bed, full of tubes. Her uncle has been Canelita's lifeline, through countless letters they wrote back and forth, precious letters she keeps stuffed inside a cereal box. *Cinnamon Girl* is a coming of age story, poignantly and lyrically told through letters, diary entries and poems that aptly describe the joys and sorrows of Canelita's life, her struggle to belong and to find the strength to make the right decisions in the face of unbearable tragedy, with the love and support of her Puerto Rican family. (8-12)

### Américas Award Honorable Mentions

**A SEASON FOR MANGOES** by Regina Hanson. Illustrations by Eric Velasquez. New York: Clarion, 2005. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-618-15972-X

Sareen is attending her first sit-up, a Jamaican tradition that celebrates the life of a loved one who has died. She has many memories of her Nana especially related to Nana's last mango season that she wants to share, but is very nervous. Once she faces her fear, she realizes that what she best remembers is the joy of Nana's life. This tender story and beautiful illustrations demonstrate the special way that Jamaican's celebrate the life of departed loved ones. (K-3)

**THE TEQUILA WORM** by Viola Canales. New York: Random House, 2005. 199 pgs. ISBN 0-385-74674-1

Viola Canales takes us on a wonderful voyage filled with rough and calm waters as she describes the life of a young Mexican-American woman. Sofia is caught between two worlds--one filled with the old traditions and folktales from Mexico--the other offering her an opportunity to excel and join a community of more privileged children at an elite boarding school. Watching Sofia merge these two worlds is a humorous and loving tale of a young woman coming of age. (6-9)

### Américas Award Commended Titles

**JULIO'S MAGIC** by Arthur Dorros. Illustrated by Ann Grifalconi. New York: HarperCollins, 2005. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-06-029004-8

In his rural Mexican village, young Julio learns his craft from master woodcarver Iluminado. This year there is a contest with a big prize for the best carving in the region, and Julio wants to enter. However, Julio has some decisions to make about friendship and generosity when he sees how hard times are for Iluminado due to failing eyesight and poor crops. Through Dorros' sensory descriptions and Grifalconi's collages of photographs and painted surfaces, this intergenerational story places real value on celebrating artistic creation, community and kindness. (K-3)

**LUCHA LIBRE: THE MAN IN THE SILVER MASK** by Xavier Garza. Illustrations by Xavier Garza. El Paso: Cinco Puntos, 2005. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-938317-92-X

Carlitos is attending his first-ever *Lucha Libre* (professional wrestling) match in Mexico City with his Papá Lupe. While waiting for Tío Vicente, they enter the arena and come upon vendors selling *luchador* masks. Papá Lupe offers to buy Carlitos one, and he chooses the mask of the greatest *luchador* of all time, The Man in the Silver Mask. Vibrant illustrations take us into the ring as fans boo and hiss *los rudos*--the bad guys who will stop at nothing to win--and to cheer *los técnicos*--the good guys who earn their victories fairly. When Tío Vicente shows up after the action is over, readers will be left wondering, "Who was that masked man?" Includes a brief history of *Lucha Libre*. (2-6)

**RED HOT SALSA: BILINGUAL POEMS ON BEING YOUNG AND LATINO IN THE UNITED STATES** edited by Lori Marie Carlson. New York: Holt, 2005. 140 pgs. ISBN 0-8050-7616-6

Carlson follows up *Cool Salsa* (1994) with another bilingual collection of poetry. In Spanish and English, this collection includes many well known writers such as Martin Espada, Luis J. Rodriguez, Gary Soto and Gina Valdes as well as emerging poets. They speak of the challenges of being bicultural, and of *amor*, neighborhoods, and family moments. Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, Oscar Hijuelos, wrote the introduction. Teen readers of all backgrounds will find connection to the diversity of experiences presented in *Red Hot Salsa*. Includes helpful glossary and biographical notes. (8-12)

**RED RIDIN' IN THE HOOD AND OTHER CUENTOS** by Patricia Santos Marcantonio. Pictures by Renato Alarcão. New York: FSG, 2005. 186 pgs. ISBN 0-374-36241-6

*Red Ridin' in the Hood* is a creative collection of upbeat fairy tales retold with a Latino twist. Patricia Santos Marcantonio infuses her Mexican-American heritage by retelling and giving new life to several well-known stories. The *cuENTOS* are transformed in time and place and sprinkled with charm. For example, three "Chicharrones" end up building homes in Residencias Chicharrones. In "Sleeping Beauty," the *bruja* runs off with the "true love" leaving the "beauty" in her dusty *quinceañera* dress complaining of the parties she's missed. These *cuENTOS* will surprise, delight, and engage readers with unexpected outcomes. (4-6)

**ROBERTO CLEMENTE: PRIDE OF THE PITTSBURGH PIRATES** by Jonah Winter. Illustrated by Raul Colón. New York: Atheneum, 2005. 32 pgs. 0-689-85643-1

Born in Puerto Rico, Roberto Clemente began playing baseball at a very young age. With aspirations of being a great baseball player, Roberto worked his way up through the minor leagues, winter leagues and finally to the major leagues with the Pittsburgh Pirates. In poetic language we are told about the struggles Clemente encountered as a black Latino baseball player. More importantly, we learn about his humanitarian efforts and how he never forgot the poor people of his beloved Puerto Rico. An author's note at the end of the book reminds us that Roberto Clemente was more than just a famous baseball player--he was a caring human being. Raúl Colón's illustrations capture both the rhythm of the text, and Roberto's struggle to overcome dual stereotypes. (2-6)

**SAWDUST CARPETS/ALFOMBRAS DE ASERRIN** by Amelia Lau Carling. Toronto: Groundwood, 2005. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-88899-625-X English / 0-88899-624-1 Spanish (simultaneous editions)

In Antigua, Guatemala, Holy Week is celebrated with processions re-enacting the story of Christ's death and resurrection. On the streets, neighbors create carpets with colored sawdust, flowers and fruit, featuring elaborate designs. The carpets are offerings, meant to be destroyed as the processions pass over them. This is the setting for Amelia Carling's second autobiographical book (the first, *Mama and Papa Have a Store*, 1998) about her Chinese immigrant family living in Guatemala. The story is imbued with abundant details showing the blending of Guatemalan and Chinese cultures, made the more vivid by the watercolor illustrations. The Spanish version is perfectly translated, a reflection of Carling's immersion in the culture and language. (K-3)

**Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature**  
**2005 Review Committee**

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