

Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP)

2008
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 4, 2008) during Hispanic Heritage Month at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Américas Award Winners

RED GLASS by Laura Resau. New York: Delacorte, 2007. 275 pgs. ISBN 978-0-385-90464-3
 The author of *What the Moon Saw* (2006), Resau works her magic again in this compelling first-person narrative. When Sophie's mother and stepfather assume the role of foster parents to Pablo, an orphan from Mexico, Sophie's life takes a fresh turn. After Pablo opens up and tells them about his village, Sophie's Aunt Dika and her friend, Mr. Lorenzo, offer to take Pablo back to his grandmother in Mexico. Soon, the unlikely group—Sophie, Pablo, Dika, Mr. Lorenzo, and his son, Angel—are off on a one-of-a-kind road trip. But after Mr. Lorenzo and Angel make a side trip to Guatemala and don't return as planned, Sophie sets out on her own to retrieve them. Along the way she finds her inherent strength, casting her old fears by the wayside. The vivid characters, the fine imagery, and the satisfying plot make this a rewarding novel of hope and self discovery. (gr 8-12)

YUM! ¡MMMM! ¡QUE RICO!: AMERICA'S SPROUTINGS by Pat Mora. Pictures by Rafael López. New York: Lee & Low, 2007. 32 pgs. ISBN 978-1-58430-271-1
 "Dad bites green mouth-fire/ laughs when tears fill his eyes, sighs/ '¡Mmmm! This heat tastes good.'" A combination of energetic haiku and informational text, this vibrant collection highlights fourteen foods native to countries throughout the Americas. The pairing of dual texts introduces background information about various food origins while providing readers with an opportunity to play with lyrical food descriptions. Blazing images suffused with magical realism create a sensory *celebración* that encourages readers to taste the foods, feel the heat of the sun, and listen to the popping cranberries. Children of all ages will leave this visual and lyrical feast begging for second helpings. (gr 1-6)

Américas Award Honorable Mentions

NOCHECITA/LITTLE NIGHT by Yuyi Morales. New York: Roaring Brook Press/A Neal Porter Book, 2007. 32 pgs. ISBN 978-1-59643-232-1 Spanish / ISBN 978-1-59643-088-4 English (simultaneous editions)

At the end of the day, Mother Sky is calling Little Night for bedtime. Little Night wants to play; she hides and encourages her mother to find her. The story will be familiar to children who like to stall at bedtime – but this story is full of beautiful metaphors and gorgeous illustrations that convey the images and enhance the story. Mother Sky finds Little Night and dresses her in a white dress crocheted from clouds and serves her milk from the Milky Way. Children will love Little Night’s beautiful world and want to read about her unique, yet familiar, nighttime ritual over and over. (gr PK-2)

RAINING SARDINES by Enrique Flores-Galbis. New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2007. 160 pgs. ISBN 978-1-59643-166-9

This author’s first book combines magic realism with a Cuban pre-revolutionary context. Ernestina and Enriquito find out that a powerful landowner intends to steal the mountain outside their city. In this mountain the *paso fino* horses roam free and he intends to steal them as well. The characters are determined not to let this happen and in so doing, they meet an array of unpredictable characters that inhabit a world of magic and absurdity. (gr 8-12)

Américas Award Commended Titles

ABUELITA FULL OF LIFE / LLENA DE VIDA by Amy Costales. Illustrated by Martha Avilés. Flagstaff: Luna Rising, 2007. 32 pgs. ISBN 978-0-87358-914-7

José is a little uncertain when he learns that his Abuelita is coming from Mexico to live with his family. He has to share his room as well as his soccer space in the backyard. To the boy’s surprise, even though Abuelita is old, wrinkly, and gray-haired, she is teeming with life. She plants a huge vegetable garden, cooks tantalizing foods, teaches him rhymes in Spanish, and reads stories with José and his little sister. Yes, “she is old, but she is lively. Her skin is wrinkled, but soft to kiss. She is frail, but her hugs are strong.” The affirming descriptions of this energetic Abuelita along with the snappy, repetitive text and bold, culturally-appropriate illustrations make this book a perfect choice for read-aloud. (gr PreK-3)

ALFREDITO REGRESA VOLANDO A SU CASA / ALFREDITO FLIES HOME by Jorge Argueta. Illustrated by Luis Garay. Toronto: Groundwood, 2007. 36 pgs. ISBN 978-0-88899-586-5 Spanish / ISBN 978-0-88899-585-8 English (simultaneous editions)

Jorge Argueta creates a realistic narrative from a young Salvadoran’s perspective journaling his family’s voyage to his Central American homeland. From anxiously preparing for the trip, to experiencing his first plane ride, to reconnecting with the cousins he left behind, Alfredito expresses what so many young transnational citizens feel and understand as they jump back and forth between their worlds. Luis Garay’s illustrations beautifully compare the hustle and bustle of the character’s American life to the rural, colorful setting of his Salvadoran homeland and bring Alfredito’s experience to life. (gr K-4)

ANGELINA’S ISLAND By Jeanette Winter. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux / Frances Foster Books, 2007. 32 pgs. ISBN: 978-0-374-30349-5

Angelina’s heart aches for Jamaica, and no matter how much Mama talks of having a better life in New York, Angelina still dreams about mangos, johnnycake, rainbow-colored birds, and the warmth of the sand under her feet. Then one day Mama sees something in the paper about Carnival in Brooklyn, New York, and she thinks she may have found a way to soothe Angelina’s homesickness. With vibrant colors and short phrases, the author pays homage to Jamaica and traditions of the West Indian people. (gr K-4)

CAPOEIRA: GAME! DANCE! MARTIAL ART! by George Ancona. New York: Lee & Low, 2007. 48 pgs. ISBN 978-1-58430-268-1

George Ancona brings us another brilliant photographic exploration of Latin American culture. This time he travels to Brazil to explore the history, tradition and beautiful sport of Capoeira. He follows the journey this practice takes from its African roots to young American capoeiristas playing in California today. The colorful photographs bring the game to life, describing the essential articles, elements and vocabulary, as well as capturing the movement and spirit of this South American martial art. Ancona's photos are so captivating that you can almost hear the rhythmic drums and melodies that accompany the game jump right off the page. (gr K-5)

A CARIBBEAN JOURNEY FROM A TO Z: READ AND DISCOVER WHAT HAPPENED TO Z by Mario Picayo. Illustrated by Earleen Griswold. New York: Campanita, 2007. 64 pgs. ISBN 978-0-9725611-8-1

This very original alphabet book gives brief descriptions of many aspects of the geography, animal species and history of the Caribbean. Even though a reader might consider an alphabet book as appropriate only for beginner readers, this one has so much information and poetic language, that older, more mature children will benefit from the information conveyed. Colorful and detailed naïve illustrations accompany the text. The best part of the book is finding out what the Z means to the Caribbean. (gr K-4)

COME LOOK WITH ME: LATIN AMERICAN ART by Kimberly Lane. Watertown: Charlesbridge, 2007. 32 pgs. ISBN 978-1-890674-20-5

As part of the *Come Look with Me* series of interactive art books, this title highlights twelve artists from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Uruguay and the United States. On each spread, a full-page reproduction faces a short biography and a discussion of the artist's work. The paintings are reproduced in full color on high-quality paper. The writing is lively and interesting, yet the discussions of artistic ideas and theories are concise and easy to understand. Questions at the beginning of each section serve as useful prompts for discussion. Unfortunately, there is no bibliography for further information. (gr all)

FRIDA: ¡VIVA LA VIDA! / LONG LIVE LIFE! by Carmen T. Bernier-Grand. Tarrytown: Marshall Cavendish, 2007. 64 pgs. ISBN 978-0-7614-5336-9

Frida Kahlo, a native of Mexico, is described here in 26 biographical poems accompanied by her own artwork. Both text and images reveal the anguish and joy of her two marriages to muralist Diego Rivera, her life-long suffering from a crippling bus accident, and her thirst for life, even as she tasted death. Captions help to elucidate the paintings but do not overwhelm them. (gr 6-12)

HIP, HIP, HOORAY, IT'S MONSOON DAY! / ¡AJUA, YA LLEGO EL CHUBASCO! by Roni Rivera-Ashford. Illustrated by Richard Johnsen. Tucson: Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Press, 2007. 42 pgs. ISBN 1-886679-36-8 (bilingual)

Rivera-Ashford creates a quaint story chronicling the tradition of San Juan's Day in Arizona. She explores the history attached to this Latin American summer solstice celebration welcoming the monsoon rain to the Sonoran Desert. The story is followed by geographical and historical details that inform the reader of the American Southwest's relationship to the Latin American world. Richard Johnsen's beautiful watercolors let you experience the heavy humidity which accompanies the desert's long awaited rainy season. (gr K-3)

MARTINA THE BEAUTIFUL COCKROACH: A CUBAN FOLKTALE / MARTINA UNA CUCARACHITA MUY LINDA: UN CUENTO CUBANO by Carmen Agra Deedy. Illustrated by Michael Austin. Atlanta: Peachtree, 2007. 32 pgs. ISBN 978-1-56145-399-3 English / ISBN 978-1-56145-425-9 Spanish (simultaneous editions)

The Cucaracha household is crawling with excitement! Martina Josefina Catalina Cucaracha is 21 days old and ready to give her leg in marriage. To assist her granddaughter in choosing the right husband, Martina's Abuela introduces her to "The Coffee Test." By pouring coffee on the shoes of her suitors, Martina will be able to determine how her would-be husband will speak to her when he's angry. After several scalding situations with Don Gallo, Don Cerdo, and Don Lagarto, the beautiful cockroach is ready to abandon her search for the perfect husband until Abuela introduces her to Pérez the mouse. Children of all ages will delight in Deedy's humorous retelling of the well-known Latin American folktale of Martina. Deedy's lively Cuban version sparkles with wit as well as aspects of the culture. Following in Pura Belpré's legacy as a wonderful storyteller, Deedy's contribution enables the story of Martina and Pérez to be highly accessible to a new generation of children. The personalities that she gives her characters will long be remembered. (PreK-4)

MY COLORS, MY WORLD / MIS COLORES, MI MUNDO by Maya Christina González. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 2007. 24 pgs. ISBN 978-0-89239-221-6 (bilingual)

This bilingual picture book is the first that artist Maya Christina Gonzalez has written. Maya, with the help of her bird friends, finds beautiful colors in her desert world. She discovers vibrant purples in Mama's flowers, greens in the cactus, hot pink in clouds at sunset, and black in her Papi's hair. As young readers follow Maya's search for all the colors of the rainbow, they too might ask – where are the colors in my world? (gr PK-3)

MY NAME IS GABITO / ME LLAMO GABITO: THE LIFE OF GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ/LA VIDA DE GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ by Monica Brown. Illustrated by Raúl Colón. Flagstaff: Luna Rising, 2007. 32 pgs. ISBN: 978-0-87358-908-6 (bilingual)

Monica Brown creatively introduces young readers to one of Latin America's most prolific writers, Gabriel García Márquez. Drawing from his own memoirs and the many imaginative tales he has told, the author weaves together a poetic biography chronicling Gabito's childhood and journey into becoming Colombia's most beloved writer. Illustrator Raúl Colón brings the magical mind of García Márquez to life as his paintings visually dance along Brown's writing. (gr K-3)

N IS FOR NAVIDAD by Susan Middleton Elya and Merry Banks. Illustrated by Joe Cepeda. San Francisco: Chronicle, 2007. 40 pgs. ISBN 978-0-8118-5205-0

This rhyming, informative text follows an extended Latino family from A to Z as they engage in holiday preparations for the Christmas season which includes Navidad, Tres Reyes (Three Kings Day), and Las Posadas. Each letter of the Spanish alphabet is followed by a rhyme that details a specific tradition. The two-page author's note provides definitions and a pronunciation guide of Spanish words as well as extensive background information on the holidays mentioned. Cepeda's lively illustrations introduce additional cultural details that extend the rhymes. (gr K-3)

NANA'S BIG SURPRISE / NANA, ¿QUE SORPRESA! by Amada Irma Pérez. Illustrated by Maya Christina González. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 2007. 32 pgs. ISBN 978-0-89239-190-5 (bilingual)

The day arrived for Nana's visit but this year she was coming to California because Tata, beloved husband and abuelo, has died. Amada and her five brothers have a coop full of chicks (just like the ones Nana raised in Mexico) to help cheer her up. Nothing seems to cheer Nana, until one day the chicks reveal a big surprise of their own. (gr K-3)

OLD DOG by Teresa Cárdenas. Translated by David Unger. Toronto: Groundwood, 2007. 104 pgs. ISBN 978-0-88899-757-9 (First published in Cuba as *Perro Viejo*, 2006)

Perro Viejo was taken from his mother at birth and has known no other life than that of servitude. The only thing that keeps him alive is the memory of Asunción, a beautiful girl he once met while washing his master's horses at the river. Never to see her again, he closes his heart to all forms of love. Nearing the end of his life, Perro Viejo meets Beira, an old slave who is avoided by the other slaves because they think she is a witch. She warms Perro Viejo's heart, and together they hatch a plan to escape from slavery. Young readers will join Perro Viejo as he finally learns what it is to love and to feel free. (gr 6-8)

SACRED LEAF by Deborah Ellis. Toronto: Groundwood, 2007. 206 pgs. ISBN: 978-0-88899-751-7 (Part Two of the *Cocalero* series, following *I am a Taxi*) Twelve-year-old Diego finds himself caught between Bolivian local coca growers, who have used the plant as tea and medicine. and the government, (with U.S. support) which requires that coca growers stop cultivating the plant , the basis for cocaine. Deborah Ellis balances both sides of the argument by describing Diego's loyalties to the different people who are part of his life. (gr 8-12)

A SMALL NATIVITY by Aquiles Nazoa. Illustrated by Ana Palmero Cáceres. Translated by Hugh Hazelton. Toronto: Groundwood, 2007. 32 pgs. ISBN: 978-0-88899-839-2

Written by famed poet Nazoa, this small jewel is a Latin American retelling of the Nativity story, juxtaposing contemporary and medieval time periods. Intricate illustrations integrate contemporary Latin American characters with period scenes from manuscripts common in the Middle Ages. The visual feast is complete with an extensive illustrator's note on the symbolism of various objects in the illustrations. Older children and teens will appreciate the artistic gifts of the Venezuelan creators. (gr 6-12)

TOUCHING SNOW by M. Sindy Felin. New York: Atheneum, 2007. 234 pgs. ISBN 978-1-4169-1795-3

In this first novel from a promising author, a Haitian family is caught in a circle of poverty and domestic violence. The suffering and danger that are described in the book are heart wrenching and explicit. The way out of this situation is by committing a crime in self defense. Through strong family ties and love, the family heals itself. (gr 10-12)

TRICYCLE by Elisa Amado and Alfonso Ruano. Toronto: Groundwood, 2007. 32 pgs. ISBN 978-0-88899-614-5

Elisa Amado has created a remarkable children's book that effectively explores the difficult issues of race, class and violence for young readers. The character of Margarita experiences these grown up concepts through befriending and caring about her poor neighbor playmate, overhearing the adult conversations around her, and worrying about what will become of her friend and their world. The author sets the story at the foot of the omniscient Volcán de Fuego outside of Antigua, Guatemala, reminding all of the possible explosions that could instantly occur around them. Alfonso Ruano's illustrations capture the visual discrepancies between the cultures and the beauty that resides in this Central American nation. (gr 3-5)

**Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature
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