



**Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP)  
2013 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 Américas 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 in September 2013 during Hispanic Heritage Month at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**2013 Américas Award Winner**

**The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano** by Sonia Manzano Scholastic, 2012. ISBN: 978-0545325059

Puerto Rican teenager Evelyn Serrano experiences two revolutions: the Young Lords coming to her community in East Harlem and her own coming of age. The two intertwine, making this an engaging and educational story for middle and high school students. Sonia Manzano sets this historical fiction in 1969, when the Young Lords occupy a church, calling attention to the need for free breakfast and other community programs. The book is an ideal introduction for students to the Young Lords, a key yet seldom taught story Puerto Ricans in the modern Civil Rights Movement. The Young Lords were established in 1968 in various cities in the U.S. as "a human rights movement for self-determination for Puerto Rico and other nations, and for neighborhood controlled development and empowerment." The author, Sonia Manzano, is best known for her role as "Maria" on the acclaimed television series *Sesame Street*. While Manzano is an Emmy Award winner for her television writing, this is her first novel. (Grades 5-8)

**2013 Américas Honorable Mention**

**Martín de Porres, the Rose in the Desert** by Gary D. Schmidt. Illustrated by David Diaz. Clarion Books, 2012. 32 pgs. ISBN 978-0-547-61218-8.

*Martin de Porres, the Rose in the Desert* tells the moving story of the first Black Catholic Saint of the Americas. The illegitimate son of a former slave and a Spanish conqueror, Martin grew up in the poorest barrio of 17th century Lima, Peru where 'hunger lived in their home and illness was their companion.' *The Rose in the Desert* tells how the child was taken in as a servant by Dominican Friars, where he became known for his miraculous ability to heal both animals and humans. The poor came to Martin to be healed, and soon Spanish royals began to request his services but 'learned to wait for him to tend the poorest among the barrios first.' In spite of his humble spirit and service to the community, the mulatto child was frowned upon by the friars and addressed as 'son of a slave' and 'mongrel.' Finally, some



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thirteen years after his arrival at the monastery, he was permitted to take his vows as a Dominican tertiary. Among the Dominican brothers, he performed miracles and heal the sick, until his death in 1639.

In San Martin, young readers learn about universal concepts such as charity, poverty, justice and community. Moments of tribulation, compassion and triumph are all present in this simple yet lyrical text. A full palette of emotion is expressed through mixed media illustrations which provide a unique blend of shapes and vibrant watercolors. This story of the patron saint of interracial harmony and social causes leaves the reader with a feeling of inspiration and hope for humanity. (Grades K-4)

**2013 Américas Commended Titles**

**Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe** by Benjamin Alire Sáenz. Simon and Schuster, 2012. 359 pages. ISBN 9781442408920.

*Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* is the deeply moving account of two young men growing into adulthood in El Paso, Texas, in the late 1980s. Sentences are expertly distilled - spare in words, but rich in meticulous details and astute character development. Readers follow the two young men as they thoughtfully discover the complexities of the world around them as well as truths about themselves – indeed, the secrets of the universe. Woven throughout are details that expand the novel's relevance: nuanced depictions of Mexican-American families and their heritage; musings about the purpose of life; and honest questions about sexuality and love. In telling the story of their coming of age, Sáenz offers homage to, “all the boys who’ve had to learn to play by different rules.” It is a novel that can complement discussions (in the classroom and beyond) around discrimination in response to culture and the LGBTQ community. At its core, the novel shows Saéenz unearthing how to be true to oneself – something to which we can all relate. (Grades 9-12)

**Drummer Boy of John John**, by Mark Greenwood. Illustrated by Frané Lessac. Lee and Low, 2012. 31 pages. ISBN 9781600606526.

This book's story is inspired by that of Winston “Spree” Simon, the creator of Trinidad and Tobago's national instrument, the steel drum. Drums and other percussive instruments take center stage in young Winston's quest to compete to have the best band in his island's Carnival parade. The celebration of sound drives the story, with onomatopoeia serving as an effective device to draw the reader into the fun feeling of Carnival. Young Winston hears percussive instruments all around him, and, discovering a wealth of sounds from all sorts of found objects, he eventually finds a “junkyard band,” which takes first prize. The illustrator's use of vibrant tones and people in motion capture the energy of the occasion. Whimsical scenes in the junkyard and beyond add interest to the telling of this tale for young readers. (Grades K-3)



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**In Darkness** by Nick Lake. Bloomsbury, 2012. 341 pages. ISBN 9781599907437.

Trapped in crushing darkness beneath debris of the 2010 earthquake, Shorty recalls his violent, gang-controlled life in Haitian slums. While despairing of rescue, he is heartened and disturbed by thoughts of Toussaint l'Ouverture who led a slave revolt in the eighteenth century and died in darkness. Ultimately Shorty is prepared to reclaim his life. "I was in darkness, but now I am in light." By braiding the parallel lives of Shorty and Toussaint, Lake paints an alarming, thought-provoking portrait of Haitian history, both present and past. It gives young readers a heady mix of the social, religious, and political realities of the Americas' poorest country. (Grades 9-12)



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