



Américas Award Books about Artists, Musicians, and Writers

Artists

Diego: Bigger Than Life Carmen T. Bernier-Grand, Illustrated by David Diaz.
Diego Rivera was indeed bigger than life. In a series of short narrative poems, Bernier Grand treats all of the aspects of Rivera's life that make him such an influential artist and man. Each short poem is accompanied by an illustration which supports the theme, such as politics, romance, intellectual and artistic truth. Several are accompanied by actual artwork by Rivera. While Diego Rivera lived a life of great excess, at times making choices not sanctioned by mainstream culture, readers can appreciate how his passion also allowed for breathtaking and ambitious art, which for many, is the artistic face of 20th century Mexico. The detailed end matter includes a glossary, a timeline of Rivera's life, sources for further reading, and a page which reveals that many lines in the poems come from his own words. 64 pages. (Grades 6-10) **2010 Commended Title**

Diego Rivera: An Artist for the People Susan Goldman Rubin.
With *Diego Rivera: An Artist for the People*, Susan Goldman Rubin highlights the life of one of Mexico's most celebrated painters and muralists. The engaging text thoughtfully connects the biography with the art, while Rubin expertly covers Rivera's complexity as an artist or as a person, without exaggeration. Carefully selected artwork and photographs, as well as Rivera's own words, bring added depth to the text. The book highlights murals from Mexico City, San Francisco, and Detroit, along with Rivera's own paintings and those from artists influential in his development. Rivera's political and personal identities illuminate but never overshadow the focus on his art. The beautifully designed book features extensive back matter, including a note on the history of Mexico relevant to Rivera's work and his artistic influences. These notes, along with a glossary and bibliography will further expand classroom use. 56 pages. (Grades 5-10) **2014 Honorable Mention**

Frida Jonah Winter, Illustrated by Ana Juan.
Sparse text frames the visual narration that effectively recreates the intense life of Mexico's premier female artist. The stunning illustrations, though surreal, are child-centered and reflect the intriguing painting style that Kahlo herself incorporated in her artwork. 32 pages. (Grades Pre K-3) **2002 Honorable Mention**

Frida & Diego: Art, Love, Life, Catherine Reef.

This dual biography of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera traces their personal and professional lives, individually and as a couple, exposing their flaws as well as the lighter sides of their personalities, and shows how the two artists were bound by art, love, and politics. Befitting a book that is more biography than art book, few of the artists' paintings are shown; instead, there is an abundance of photographs, some personal and others illustrating the political and economic climate of the times. The book is simply written, and includes quotes by and about the artists as well as extracts from diaries and letters. Well researched and handsomely executed, it excels in showing that art is not produced in a vacuum but within the context of political, social, and economic currents. The author includes a list of museums and galleries where some of their works can be found, and suggests books for further investigation. The end of the book contains a lengthy timeline of events in the artists' personal, professional, and political lives, as well as a bibliography. (Grades 6-12) 2015 Commended Title.

Frida: ¡Viva la Vida!/Long Live Life! Carmen T. Bernier-Grand.

Frida Kahlo, a native of Mexico, is described here in 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. Her favorite motto was: ¡Viva la vida! (Long live life!) Back matter includes excerpts from Frida's diary and letters, a prose biography, a chronology of the artist's life, a glossary of Spanish words, sources, and notes. 64 pages. (Grades 8-12). **2008 Commended Title**

Me, Frida Amy Novesky, Illustrated by David Diaz.

Novesky tells the story, along with David Diaz's stunning illustrations, of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo's experiences upon arriving in the United States. Rather than presenting a biography of Kahlo's entire life, the author concentrates on a time in which Kahlo and her husband Diego Rivera lived in San Francisco, California. "She was in a foreign city. She didn't speak much English and she didn't have many friends." As Kahlo makes herself more comfortable in her new surroundings, she feels less like a "little bird" next to her husband, and gains confidence in herself as a developing artist. 32 pages. (Grades 3-6) **2011 Commended Title**

My Papa Diego and Me: Memories of My Father and His Art / Mi papa Diego y yo: Recuerdos de mi padre y su arte. Guadalupe Rivera Marín and Diego Rivera.

Guadalupe Rivera Marín, daughter of Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, shares her personal memories of her father in this touching and informative book, written both in English and Spanish. Rivera Marín uses her own personal photographs as well as her father's artwork to talk about her father, his art, and Mexican history. This book will be enjoyed by children and adults alike. 32 pages. (Grades 4-7) **2010 Honorable Mention**

***Funny Bones: Posada and His Day of the Dead Calaveras*, Duncan Tonatiuh.**

Author and illustrator Duncan Tonatiuh's latest work presents an extraordinary blend of biography, art, and politics focusing on the life of José Guadalupe Posada (1852-1915), or Don Lupe, as he was known at the time. Posada is most famous for his socially-conscious depictions of calaveras, the often comic skeletons that are well-associated with Mexico's Day of the Dead holiday celebration. This non-fiction picture book will appeal to a wide range of readers, with its engaging hand-drawn, digitally collaged depictions of Don Lupe, first as a child with a natural talent in drawing, and then throughout his adult life as an artist mastering the craft of lithography. Throughout, we see as Don Lupe continuously pursues his artistic passion while offering social commentary about the world around him. Additionally, Tonatiuh includes a detailed author's note, glossary of terms, and bibliography for readers interested in diving further into Posada's work. (Grades 3-6). **2016 Honorable Mention**

***Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat*, Javaka Steptoe.**

Javaka Steptoe, with color and theme, reveals the true and tragic events of Jean-Michel Basquiat in a way that redeems the artist and makes his brilliant work accessible. Steptoe guides the young reader into the realization that art was a path to success, and that almost anything can motivate a young person to make beautiful things that inspire others. Young readers learn from the simple, elegantly bold images Steptoe creates to illustrate Basquiat's talent, persistence, and the challenges he faced. The messiness of these colorful, textured layers suggests to young readers a joy in creating art that is not constrained by rules. In simple words and phrases young readers see the world as a more complex place, one where beauty grows out of tragedy in wild, expressive, and even popular ways. They experience a short, brilliant life thru images they can make while learning to temper themselves at the same time, learning thru Steptoe's story that it is better to climb a ladder than to ride a rocket to success over the course of a long, happy lifetime. (Grades K-3). **2017 Commended Title.**

Musicians

***My Name is Celia/Me Llamo Celia* Monica Brown, Illustrated by Rafael López.**

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. 32 pages. (Grades K-5) **2005 Américas Award Winner**

***Tito Puente, Mambo King/ Tito Puente, Rey del Mambo* Monica Brown, Illustrated by Rafael López.**

From musical prodigy on the streets of Harlem to five-time Grammy Award winner, Tito's life was full of rhythm. With a vibrant text that begs to be read out loud and dynamic and colorful illustrations, this book takes us on a trip of Tito's life as he grows up in Harlem, studies music at Julliard, is recognized as the Mambo King and earns his first Grammy Award in 1979. 32 pages. (Grades K-2) **2014 Commended Title**

Writers

A Library for Juana Pat Mora, Illustrated by Beatriz Vidal.

Pat Mora introduces young readers to Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, with a picture book biography of the poet's early life. The eloquent watercolor and gauche artwork incorporates elements of illustrated manuscript, re-creating the environment that nurtured a gifted child who became colonial Latin America's most famous poet. 32 pages. (Grades K-3) **2002 Commended Title**

The Dreamer Pam Muñoz Ryan, Illustrated by Peter Sís.

Neftalí is a Chilean boy who is fascinated by the world outside of his bedroom window. He takes every possible moment to enjoy the peculiar people and things that he encounters on his way to school. Yet, Neftalí's odd appreciation for nature and language does not seem to please his father, who envisions that he will become a businessman. As he ages, the only way for Neftalí to escape his father's tough expectations is through poetry and literature. The boy that was once timid eventually becomes vocal and rebellious. He starts to express his thoughts in writing, beginning his path to becoming one of Latin America's most beloved poets. 372 pages. (Grades 4 and up) **2011 Américas Award Winner**

Jorge Luis Borges Georgina Lázaro, Illustrated by Graciela Genovés.

From the Cuando los Grandes Eran Pequeños series, Lázaro's beautiful verse (in Spanish) transports the reader to Buenos Aires, Argentina. Readers will learn about Borges's childhood and his family. Through Genovés's illustrations, readers will also enjoy seeing images from their favorite children's stories and allusions to Borges's works. The ¿Te Gustaría Saber Más? section at the end of the book gives more concrete information about the writer's life. 32 pages. (Grades 4-8) **2010 Commended Title**

The Lightning Dreamer: Cuba's Greatest Abolitionist. Margarita Engle.

In light of severe persecution and censorship, many of 19th century Cuba's staunchest abolitionists were poets who proclaimed their message in metaphor. In *The Lightning Dreamer*, Engle tells the fictionalized biography of the poet, abolitionist and feminist Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda, also known as 'Tula'. The young protagonist resisted an arranged marriage at the age of 14 and was sent away from home. The young girl defied the commonly held belief of the time that girls were 'expected to live without thoughts,' as she expressed herself skillfully in poetry. Engle captures the spirit of this budding young poet through verse which is at once light and lyrical, and heavy in references to the injustices of the era. (Grades 4-9) **2014 Commended Title**

My Name is Gabito: Me Llamo Gabito: The Life of Gabriel Garcia Marquez/La Vida de Gabriel Garcia Marquez Monica Brown, Illustrated by Raúl Colón.

Can you imagine a shipwrecked sailor living on air and seaweed for eight days? Can you imagine a trail of yellow butterflies fluttering their wings to songs of love? Once, there was a little boy named Gabito who could. Gabriel Garcia Marquez is perhaps one

of the most brilliant writers of our time. He is a tremendous figure, enormously talented, and unabashedly admired. This is his story, lovingly told, for children to enjoy. Using the imagery from his novels, Monica Brown traces the novelist's life in this creative nonfiction picture book from his childhood in Colombia to today. This is an inspiring story about an inspiring life, full of imagination and beauty. 32 pages (Grades Pre K – 3) **2008 Commended Title**

Pablo Neruda: Poet of the People Monica Brown, Illustrated by Julie Paschkis. Brown and Paschkis have created a paean to renowned Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. A warm, lyrical text is embedded in soothing, color-saturated pictures. Streams of words - to delight the eye and ear- infuse the illustrations with surprising gems of multilingual word associations. They are a highlight of the book. Both provide a child-friendly introduction to aspects of Neruda's life and, most prominently, to his passions for the natural world and the social concerns of his times. (Grades 2-5) **2013 Américas Award Winner.**

Pablo Georgina Lázaro, Illustrated by Marcela Donoso. This picture book length biography focuses on the childhood of Pablo Neruda, Nobel Prize winning poet and politician from Chile. Long before he published his first poem or advocated for the native people of Chile, Pablo was an observant and imaginative boy who grew up with a love for his country and for learning. Bright paintings reveal much about both his early life and the geography and natural landscape of Chile, as well as his interests and hobbies as an adult. Written in rhyme in Spanish, Pablo is part the Cuando Los Grandes Eran Pequeños series. 32 pages (Grades 2-5) **2009 Commended Title**

To Go Singing Through the World: The Childhood of Pablo Neruda

Deborah Kogan Ray.

Pablo Neruda grew up in the rough and wild frontier town of Temuco, Chile. His father was a railroad man and not inclined to draw out the introspective boy. However, his stepmother, descended from the Mapuche people, was gentle and nurturing and told him stories of Chile's native people. But in her husband's presence, she was as silent as Pablo. So the child found refuge in nature and in books. And secretly he wrote down his thoughts. With the encouragement of Gabriela Mistral, an award-winning poet, teacher, and friend, Neruda's writing grew resonant and powerful. At age sixteen he left Temuco for the university in Santiago and went on to become the "people's poet" and to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. 36 pages. (Grades 5-8) **2007 Commended Title**