



Américas Award Books: Folktales

Animal Poems of the Iguazú/Animalario del Iguazú, Francisco X. Alarcón.

Illustrated by Maya Christina González.

Distinguished poet Francisco X. Alarcón invites young readers into the South American rain forest. In both Spanish and English, individual animals and different forest features rhythmically express their beauty and relevance, not only to this ecosystem, but to the entire world. We learn of Guaraní myths of the clouds and sky, the jaguar's majestic spirit and even the importance of the pesky mosquito. Informative footnotes enlighten the journey and the vibrant colors and textures of Maya Christina González's illustrations bring this collection to life. 2008. 32 pages. (Grades 1-6) **2009 Commended Title.**

Baila, Nana, Baila / Dance, Nana, Dance: Cuban Folktales in English and Spanish, Joe Hayes. Illustrated by Mauricio Trenard Sayago.

Joe Hayes presents a rich, soulful collection of Cuban short stories. His retelling of these classic folktales will have readers of all ages tasting the flavors and moving to the beat of the Spanish, African and Caribbean cultures that blend together in the oral tradition of this Caribbean island. Working with Cuban author Martha Esquenazi, Hayes added his literary touch to each piece, maintaining cultural integrity as he introduces these folktales to U.S. children. Each story is presented in both Spanish and English, with additional endnotes for each, as well as rich, colorful illustrations by Mauricio Trenard Sayago. 2008. 128 pages. (Grades 4-8) **2009 Commended Title.**

The Bossy Gallito: A Traditional Cuban Folktale, retold by Lucia M. Gonzalez.

Illustrated by Lulu Delacre.

In this bilingual cumulative folktale from Cuba, a chain of events results in the cleaning of a rooster's beak in time for his uncle's wedding. The setting of the illustrations is Little Havana in Miami. The book provides extensive and welcome author and illustrator comments; the narrative should be fun for out-loud activities. 1994. 32 pages. (Ages 5 and up) **1994 Commended Title.**

Cendrillon: A Caribbean Cinderella, Robert D. San Souci. Illustrated by Brian Pinkney.

Set in Martinique, this version of Cinderella is told from the fairy godmother's point of view. As in the Perrault version, Cendrillon becomes the stepchild of a selfish woman whose only daughter was spoiled and demanding. Cendrillon in the end finds true love. The story is interspersed with French Creole words and phrases that are explained in a glossary. 1998. 40 pages. (Grades K-4) **1998 Honorable Mention.**



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La Cucaracha Martina: A Caribbean Folktale / La Cucaracha Martina; Un Cuento Folklorico Del Caribe, Daniel Moretón. Illustrated by Daniel Moretón.

Moretón's version of this traditional Caribbean folktale about "La Cucaracha Martina, who didn't care much for life in the big city ..." is freshly retold and cleverly illustrated. The noise of the big city is what Martina liked the least so on Monday morning she fixed herself all up and went out in search of the beautiful noise that "made her feel all funny inside." Vivacious and witty, Martina encountered all kinds of animals that made terrifying noises before she found what she was looking for. Bright illustrations of contemporary looking animals and onomatopoeic text are integrated in the design of each page. Both language versions maintain the humor while accurately translating animal sounds. Delightful for reading aloud to young audiences. Spanish and English editions available. 1997. 32 pages. (Grades K-3) **1997 Commended Title.**

Cuckoo / Cucu, Lois Ehlert. Translated by Gloria de Aragón Andújar.

Ehlert's bilingual version of this traditional Mayan tale about the courage of the cuckoo is exquisitely illustrated with designs inspired by traditional Mexican crafts. From trees of life to papercuts, the illustrations create a culturally authentic visual setting that masterfully synthesizes many elements of Mexican folk art. Equally poetic in Spanish and English this story is ideal for introducing very young children to Mexican craft motifs within the context of a very well told folktale. 1997. 36 pages. (Grades K-3) **1997 Commended Title.**

De Colores and Other Latin American Folk Songs for Children, selected, arranged and translated by Jose-Luis Orozco. Illustrated by Elisa Kleven.

A fine collection of songs with Spanish lyrics, English translation, and background on the song's origin and description of related games (so children can actually do the appropriate gestures or games). Rich in color and life, the illustrations are marvelous, culturally full of artifacts, diverse faces, and beautiful borders. 1994. 56 pages. (Ages 2-8) **1994 Commended Title.**

Doctor Bird: Three Lookin' Up Tales from Jamaica, Gerald Hausman and Ashley Wolff.

This folktale is based on the positive thinking of a hummingbird, the national bird of Jamaica. In this story Doctor Bird, as he is called, changes the lives of three animals: Mongoose, Mouse and Owl. Without using dialect, the author enhances the rhythm of the Jamaican language by the conversational flow of the words. Mention is made of hibiscus tea, yellow yam and mango, all of which give the story a colorful local setting. 1998. 36 pages. (Pre-K and up) **1998 Commended Title.**

The Golden Flower: A Taino Myth from Puerto Rico, Nina Jaffe. Illustrated by Enrique O. Sánchez.

This myth explains the origins of the sea, the forest, and the island now called Puerto Rico. It will especially delight young children who know something about pumpkins, but who may be surprised to discover that the pumpkin becomes the source of life for the



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Taino people. Background on the Taino culture before the arrival of Columbus is provided in an afterword. 1996. 32 pages. (Grades K-3). **1996 Commended Title.**

Golden Tales: Myths, Legends, and Folktales from Latin America / De Oro Y Esmeraldas: Mitos, Leyendas Y Cuentos Populares De Latino America, Lulu Delacre.

These stories from thirteen countries and four indigenous cultures date from pre-Columbian and post-Columbian times. Maps, background notes, and source information demonstrate the effort which went into the collection and will provide further avenues for exploration of Latin American folklore. (Published as English and Spanish dual editions.) 1996. 74 pages. (Grades 3-5) **1996 Commended Title.**

The Honey Jar, Rigoberta Menchú with Dante Liano. Illustrated by Domi. *The Honey Jar* retells the ancient stories Rigoberta Menchú's grandparents told her when she was a little girl, and we can imagine her listening to them by the fire at night. These Mayan tales include natural phenomena narratives and animal stories. The underworld, the sky, the sun and moon, plants, people, animals, gods, and demigods are all players in these vibrant stories. Enchanting images by Domi draw on the Mayan landscape and the rich visual vocabulary that can be found in the weavings and crafts for which the Maya are renowned. 2006. 64 pages. (Ages 9 and up) **2005 Commended Title.**

How Iwariwa the Cayman Learned to Share: A Yanomami Myth, retold and illustrated by George Crespo.

The animals in the Amazon rainforest find a way to trick Iwariwa into sharing the fire he uses to cook his food. The author's note is well-done, particularly in explaining how the story was re-told. 1995. 32 pages. (Ages 5-8) **1995 Commended Title.**

How Music Came to the World: An Ancient Mexican Myth, retold by Hal Ober. Illustrated by Carol Ober.

Ober retells a Mexican legend in which the sky god and the wind god bring music from Sun's house to the earth. Vibrant illustrations accompany the story, as do author and illustrators' notes. 1994. 32 pages. (Grades K-3) **1994 Commended Title.**

How Night Came from the Sea: A Story from Brazil, Retold by Mary-Joan Gerson. Illustrated by Carla Golembe.

An African sea goddess, Iemanjá, brings the gift of night to the land of daylight, thus permitting rest under Brazil's hot sun. Author's note discusses the African Diaspora in Brazil, and the religion of Candomblé. 1994. 32 pages. (Ages 6 and up) **1994 Commended Title**

Journey of the Nightly Jaguar, Burton Albert. Illustrated by Robert Roth.

Inspired by Maya legend, the sun becomes a jaguar at night, stalking through the jungle until it appears again as the sun in the eastern sky. As much a poem as a story,



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illustrations and text flawlessly dovetail as raindrops become jaguar spots become shimmering bubbles become the morning sun. 1996. 32 pages. (Grades K-3) **1996 Commended Title.**

Juan Bobo and the Horse of Seven Colors: A Puerto Rican Legend, Jan Mike. Illustrated by Charles Reasoner.

After winning seven wishes from a magical horse, the foolish Juan Bobo quickly uses six of them on his way to try to make the King's daughter laugh. Perhaps Juan Bobo is wiser than we thought. 1995. 32 pages (Ages 7 and up) **1995 Commended Title.**

Juan Bobo: Four Folktales from Puerto Rico, retold by Carmen T. Bernier-Grand. Illustrated by Ernesto Ramos Nieves.

This "I Can Read Book" offers nice diversity for the new reader. The author and illustrator are both from Puerto Rico; the illustrations, with their bright color, simple shapes and folk art fit well with the lighthearted foolishness of the stories. Good forewords from the author and illustrator are provided. The stories capture elements of rural life and community. 1994. 64 pages. (Ages 4-8) **1994 Commended Title.**

The Magic Bean Tree: A Legend from Argentina, Nancy Van Laan. Illustrated by Beatriz Vidal.

An Argentine version of a Quechua story tells how young Topec saved his people from drought by going out in search of rain, aided by the advice of a wise old carob tree. Argentine-born illustrator Beatriz Vidal uses rich colors and a naive style to enhance the mood and setting of this ancient story. 1998. 40 pages. (Grades Pre-K -3) **1998 Commended Title.**

The Magic Feather: A Jamaican Legend, retold by Lisa Rojany. Illustrated by Philip Kuznicki.

Solidae must pull a feather from the dreaded Mancrow to bring color and light back to the island of Jamaica. Simple illustrations accompany the text of this tale which highlights the wit and intelligence of a girl child. The author includes background notes on Jamaica. 1995. 32 pages. **1995 Commended Title.**

Martina the Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale/Martina una cucarachita muy linda: un cuento cubano, Carmen Agra Deedy. Illustrated by Michael Austin.

Carmen Agra Deedy's sweet and witty retelling of the Cuban folktale will ensure that you'll never look at a cockroach the same way again. Each compact disc includes Carmen's storytelling performance and her narrations in English and Spanish, with the sounds of musical instruments as page-turn prompts. 2007. 32 pages. (Grades 1 and up) **2008 Commended Title.**

Medio pollito/Half-Chicken, Alma Flor Ada. Illustrated by Kim Howard.

This well-done bilingual folktale explains why the weather vane has a little rooster on one end that spins around to show which way the wind is blowing. In contrast to the



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Ugly Duckling, here the unique and unlike-others chicken becomes vain from all the attention! Readers will find themselves exploring the unusual and brilliant illustrations. 1995. 40 pages. (Grades 1-3) **1995 Commended Title.**

Mi Hija, Mi Hijo, El Aguila, La Paloma: Un Canto Azteca / My Daughter, My Son, the Eagle, the Dove: An Aztec Chant, Ana Castillo. Illustrated by S. Guevara.

Ancient and contemporary elements are nicely blended in both text and illustrations in these attractive small books designed to instill cultural values and inspire adolescent readers. 2000. 48 pages. (Grades 6-9) **2000 Commended Title.**

Momentos Magicos: Tales from Latin America Told in English and Spanish, Olga Loya.

A bilingual (Spanish/English) collection of fifteen traditional tales from Latin America arranged into four sections: Scary Stories; Trickster Tales; Strong Women; and Myths. Extensive notes about sources and variants make this particularly useful in classrooms. 1998. 188 pages. (Grades 4-8, younger for reading aloud) **1998 Commended Title.**

My First Book of Proverbs/Mi primer libro de dichos, Ralfka Gonzalez and Ana Ruiz.

With humorous, contemporary illustrations of traditional Mexican American proverbs, this bilingual collection gives a sense of the commonalities in speech across languages and cultures. 1995. 32 pages. (Grades 1 and up). **1995 Commended Title.**

People of Corn: A Mayan Story, retold by Mary-Joan Gerson. Pictures by Carla Golembe.

After several unsuccessful attempts to create grateful creatures, the Maya gods use sacred corn to fashion a people who will thank and praise their creators. Gerson sensitively presents this story from the Popol Vuh, the creation myth of the Maya. Engaging illustrations and the clear narrative express the Maya relationship to the natural world and why they are the "people of corn." 1995. 32 pages. (Grades K-3) **1995 Commended Title.**

Rabbit Wishes, Linda Shute.

Elements of culture can be found throughout this Afro-Cuban tale which explains why rabbits have long ears. The story offers the opportunity to compare stories featuring the rabbit in folklore and also offers the message "be pleased with who you are." 1995. 26 pages. (Grades Pre-K and up) **1995 Commended Title.**

The Secret Legacy, Rigoberta Menchú. Co-authored with Dante Liano. Illustrated by Domi.

This book of Mayan legends is told by Ixkem, the story's protagonist. Ixkem is a young girl who lives with her grandparents. One day, while tending to their cornfield, Ixkem is confronted by b'e'n, or spirits. When she visits the world of the b'e'n, her stories begin. After telling seven legends, and receiving a secret from the b'e'n, Ixkem returns to her



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family. Beautiful illustrations accompany each chapter, and a useful glossary of K'iche' Maya terms rounds out this collection. 2008. 64 pages. (Grades 5-8) **2009 Commended Title.**

The Song of El Coqui and Other Tales of Puerto Rico, Nicholasa Mohr and Antonio Martorell.

This collection of three folktales reflects the diverse heritage of Spanish, African, and indigenous influences within Puerto Rican culture. Just as the introduction describes, the book presents Puerto Rico as a tapestry, both narratively and visually, with swirling, rich illustrations. The author and illustrator are Puerto Rican by birth. 1995. 41 pages. (Ages 6 and up). **1995 Commended Title.**

The Tale of Rabbit and Coyote, Tony Johnston. Illustrations by Tomie de Paola. In this lively Zapotec story with equally lively southwestern style illustrations (and an informative author's note), Rabbit outwits Coyote, which explains why coyotes howl at the moon. With mischievous humor, this makes for good reading in combination with other trickster tales. 1994. 32 pages. (Grades Pre-K – 3) **1994 Commended Title.**

The Tree that Rains: The Flood Myth of the Huichol Indians of Mexico, Emery and Durga Bernhard.

With the help of Great-Grandmother Earth, Watakame survives a great flood and begins a new life. The story includes an author's note about the Huichol of western Mexico and the present day festival and its celebration of cultural beliefs. 1994. 32 pages (Ages 4-8) **1994 Commended Title.**

Tukama Tootles The Flute: A Tale from the Antilles, retold by Phillis Gershator. Paintings by Synthia Saint James.

In this universal story with strikingly simple artwork, Tukama is captured by a two-headed giant, and uses his flute to escape. Also included is a note about this particular retelling, its source, and the cultural elements within. 1994, 32 pages. (Grades Pre-K and up) **1994 Commended Title.**

When Jaguars ate the Moon and Other Stories about Animals and Plants of the Americas, Maria Cristina Brusca and Tona Wilson. Illustrated by Maria Cristina Brusca.

This collection of short, one-page stories represents the rich and varied folklore of twenty-five indigenous cultures of the Americas. Animal and plant illustrations, organized alphabetically, surround the text. 1995. 41 pages. (Ages 6 and up). **1995 Commended Title.**