



Consortium of Latin American Studies  
Programs (CLASP)  
2023 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 the Latinx community in the United States. By combining both and linking the Americas, the award reaches beyond geographic borders and multicultural boundaries, focusing instead on cultural heritages within the hemisphere. The award is sponsored by the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP).

The Américas Award winners, honorable mention titles, 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 are honored each year in a special celebration.

## 2023 Américas Award Winners

***Growing an Artist: The Story of a Landscaper and His Son* written and illustrated by John Parra.** Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books, 2022. ISBN 978-1534469273

Working alongside his Papi, Juanito takes part in the work of clearing and creating, using his sketchbook to capture moments fueling his creativity and appreciation for his father’s work in the community. Then, inspired by the canvas of an overgrown yard, young Juanito offers to sketch his own design proposal, countering the awkwardness he felt earlier at noticing a schoolmate in a nearby window who looked away, pretending not to see him. Juanito turns his awkwardness into creativity as his proposal is accepted. The end result is a collaboration that reveals his desire to use his art skills to tell the stories of “hardworking, passionate people.” Beautifully illustrated, this story of hard work and the nurturing of imagination invites all young artists to do what they love, even when treated like they’re invisible. (Grades PreK-3)

***Isla to Island* written and illustrated by Alexis Castellanos.** Atheneum Books for Young

Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, Inc., 2022. ISBN 978-1534469235

*Isla to Island* is a heartwarming graphic novel with little to no text or words – it allows one to “read” images and emotions that are often difficult to describe or put into words. It is an invitation to explore through emotive illustrations the story of one girl, Marisol, who was one of many Pedro Pan children airlifted out of Cuba to live with families across the United States during the 1960s. The book is based on the author's family stories and memories before the revolution. Marisol's memories of Cuba are filled with brilliant, saturated tropical colors – her subsequent move to Brooklyn is drab in comparison. We can see the difficulty of trying to communicate in a language that she does not know and foods and places that are foreign and different. It is also about the ability to connect and find the language that speaks to her past and present – a trip to the botanical gardens provides that opportunity and connection. *Isla to Island* is a moving story about the immigrant experience. It is a story of loss, hope, and the power of memories. Castellanos's illustrations are simply stunning, bringing Marisol's story to life in a way that words could never do. The end of the book includes a short historical notation on Operation Peter Pan, the author's notes, and a list of books for further reading. (Grades 6–12)

## 2023 Américas Award Honorable Mention Titles

***¡Ándale, Prieta! A Love Letter to My Family* written by Yasmín Ramírez.** Cinco Puntos Press, an imprint of Lee & Low Books, Inc., 2022. ISBN 978-1947627550.

*¡Ándale, Prieta! A Love Letter to My Family* is an insightful coming-of-age story centered on intergenerational mother-and-daughter relationships. It is a story that comes full circle back to where it starts – El Paso. It is also a memoir and tribute to Yasmín's (abuel)jita. Ita (she feels too young to be a grandmother and is adamant that abuelita be shortened to Ita) is a strong and colorful character. She loves bright colors, dancing, singing and refuses to ever turn 60 years old. Ramírez disrupts the idea of a quiet little old lady – Ita enjoys boxing matches and instructs Yasmín on how to throw a strong punch. The author suggests music to add to and heighten the reading experience. Ita is a woman who has worked backbreaking jobs, married, separated, divorced, and remarried. She has had her share of miscarriages, breast cancer, and a mastectomy. Ita's wounds and scars unfold over time and Yasmín learns about life's hard lessons and family struggles – she also learns how time heals. What were initially invisible become indelible memories of the past and a life that is so intertwined with familial ties that distance, separation, and death can no longer pull them apart. (Grades 10–12)

***Miss Quinces* written and illustrated by Kat Farjado.** Graphix, 2022. ISBN: 978-1338535594

*Miss Quinces* is a beautiful coming-of-age graphic novel that tells the story of a young girl trying to navigate her family's cultural expectations and traditions. A Quinceañera party is what her family wants, but it's not what she envisions for her summer vacation, especially not the pink

puffy dress. Could spending her summer visiting her family in Honduras change how she connects with culture and tradition? The story is so close to reality; it's effortlessly fun. Another element that makes this book special is the illustrations. The images constantly present cultural signifiers, incorporating ableism, diverse body shapes, and skin colors, allowing many readers to be seen in the story. (Grades 4-8)

***Self-Made Boys: A Great Gatsby Remix* written by Anna-Marie McLemore.** Feiwel & Friends, 2022. ISBN: 978-1250774934

In this retelling of the classic novel *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Carroway is reimagined as Nicolás Caraveo, a young trans Latino who moves to New York City for work and to be closer to his beloved cousin, Daisy. However, upon arrival East, Nick discovers that Daisy has hidden her Latine heritage, and is passing as white. Not only that, but she is entangled with Tom Buchanan, a local playboy. Nevertheless, Nick is devoted to his cousin and wants to protect her, but he soon finds himself locked in the orbit of Jay Gatsby, an eccentric young man whom Nick learns is also trans. Together, Nick and Jay navigate their own blossoming relationship against the backdrop of 1920s New York City intrigue. (Grades 7 and up)

## 2023 Américas Award Commended Titles

***Amazona* written and illustrated by Canizales.** Graphic Universe, 2022. ISBN: 978-1728448671

*Amazona* presents the reality of Colombia's Indigenous struggles in contemporary times. The cruelty of displacement is told through a powerful graphic novel accompanied by beautiful illustrations. The story centers the importance of sacred lands and spaces for Indigenous communities and their fight to protect them. Andrea, the main character, faces displacement, racism, and violence, yet she doesn't stop. She is determined to accomplish her missions to pay respect to her ancestors, continue ancestral ceremonies, and protect the land. Empowered by her intrinsic connection with nature and her love for her people, she faces many dangers to send us a message of awareness and an invitation to fight for environmental and social justice. (Grades 8-12)

***My Neighborhood* written by María José Ferrada, illustrated by Ana Penyas, and translated by Kit Maude.** Tapioca Stories, 2022. ISBN 978-1734783957

Chilean author María José Ferrada and Spanish illustrator Ana Penyas chronicle Ms. Marta's daily routine of checking in on her world, each day ensuring that her community is just as she left it: her friends playing cards, the beach "in the same place it always was" and making her appointments to the salon and the doctor's office. Readers of all ages are invited to explore the beauty of Ms. Marta's illustrated community. Each page reveals diverse, dynamic,

intergenerational characters and vibrant, edgy scenes that invite young readers to engage the world that Ms. Marta has known all her life. Finally, as the moon replaces the sun, we find Ms. Marta returning to the perfect fit of her home, settling into her sense of comfort that, tomorrow morning, the world will, once again, be just as she left it. (Grades K-3)

***Where Wonder Grows* written by Xelena González and illustrated by Adriana M. Garcia.** Cinco Puntos Press, an imprint of Lee & Low Books, Inc., 2022. ISBN: 978-1947627468

This colorful and lush picture book delves into the Earth's healing power as a grandmother tells her grandchildren about crystals, rocks, and other natural items that promote healing and communion with nature. In her special garden, grandmother teaches her grandchildren that stones aren't just things but living beings with histories and wisdom. Drawing on Indigenous knowledge, curanderismo, and other sacred practices, this picture book invites readers to respect and learn about the wondrous world around them. (Grades PreK-4)

***Still Dreaming/Seguimos soñando* written by Claudia Guadalupe Martínez, illustrated by Magdalena Mora, and translated by Luis Humberto Crosthwaite.** Children's Book Press, an imprint of Lee & Low Books, Inc., 2022. ISBN 978-0892394340

*Still Dreaming/Seguimos soñando* is a beautifully illustrated bilingual English/Spanish children's book that explores the often-omitted history of Mexican Repatriation during the 1930s. The book follows the story of one boy and helps us to understand better the emotional toll of family separation and the difficult decisions that many Mexican Americans and Mexicans were forced to make during the Depression. The story also explores the contributions that Mexican Americans and Mexicans have made as workers in Alaskan fisheries, railroad workers in Kansas, meat plant packers in Chicago, and agricultural workers in Michigan and Minnesota – pulled into the United States to work backbreaking jobs and then pushed out due to high unemployment and demand for “Mexican jobs” by many Dust Bowl families. Scholars estimate that nearly 2 million Mexican Americans (including U.S. citizens) and Mexicans were repatriated to Mexico during the 10 years between 1930 – 1940. It also reminds us that family separation is not new and that our immigration policies are broken. Included are the author's notes at the end of the book and a short historical overview of the push/pull forces of Mexican workers as well as the murals of Mexican artists commissioned to create works in the United States during the first half of the 20th century. (Grades 3–6)

***Abuelita and Me* written by Leonarda Carranza and illustrated by Rafael Mayani.** Annick Press, 2022. ISBN: 978-1773216102

*Abuelita and Me* is a heartwarming story that explores racism and prejudice through the tender relationship between a young girl and her grandma. Relying on public transportation to run errands, Abuelita and our young narrator have to face everyday life in the city - the good, the scary, and the sad. Guided by Abuelita's strength and bravery, this little girl learns how to navigate microaggressions and racism by trusting Abuelita's character. This is an empowering book for readers as it portrays a grandma as a caring essential caregiver and a mentor who shows a strong sense of dignity and courage. The beautiful illustrations balance this scary and

sad topic by adding a warm, loving relationship between the two characters. (Grades K-4)

***Abuela's Fideo: A Story of a Grandma's Love* written and illustrated by Gabriela Tijerina.** Del Alma Publications, 2022. ISBN: 978-1736418222

Fideo, a soup with noodles in a tomato broth, is a comfort food for many Latinxs, including Dulce Ramos, who craves her grandmother's special fideo. However, her grandmother has recently passed away, and Dulce's grief is magnified by her realization that she never learned Abuela's recipe. Dulce does her best to replicate the special soup but finds her concoction inedible. Devastated, Dulce starts to cry, but her mother steps in, and the two, together, do their best to remember Abuela's recipe and her love as they cook a new batch of fideo. (Grades PreK-2)

***Hispanic Star: Roberto Clemente* written by Claudia Romo Edelman and Sara E. Echenique and illustrated by Manuel Gutierrez.** Roaring Book Press, 2022. ISBN 978-1250828088

This book is a comprehensive biography of legendary Puerto Rican baseball player Roberto Clemente. Written by Claudia Edelman and Sara E. Echenique, it explores the life and achievements of Clemente, showing his contributions both on and off the field. The story celebrates his cultural heritage as a Hispanic sports figure and highlights his dedication to humanitarian work. The vivid and engaging illustrations by Manuel Gutierrez, coupled with supplemental historical notes throughout, capture the essence of Clemente's character and the challenges of racial integration, examining how Clemente's contributions as an athlete and philanthropist transcended the world of sports. (Grades 3-7)

***Chabelita's Heart / El corazón de Chabelita* written by Isabel Millán.** Reflection Press, 2022. ISBN 978-1945289248

*Chabelita's Heart/El corazón de Chabelita* is an important bilingual English/Spanish children's book that celebrates "girls can like girls!" The book explores the budding friendship of Chabelita and Jimena as they share their excitement about what they are learning in school, as well as languages and cultural connections. The bright and engaging illustrations bring the story to life and create a sense of belonging and acceptance. At the end of the book are the author's notes on how this book came to be and information about Chabelita and Jimena's role models as well as an invitation to join Chabelita's bow tie friends #chabelitasbowtiefriends. There are instructions on creating your own bow tie with a demo video by the author at [www.reflectionpress.com/bowtie](http://www.reflectionpress.com/bowtie). (Grades K-3)

***Llort: The life of-la vida de* written by Cynthia Gonzalez and illustrated by Citlali Reyes.** Lil' Libros, Bilingual Edition, 2022. ISBN 978-1948066259

*The Life of/La vida de Llort* introduces young readers to the life of Fernando Llort, one of the most important artists from El Salvador. This little book highlights the important people, history, and culture of this Central American country. Aside from being an artist, Llort was also a

community leader who helped the people of his town see how art could also be a source of pride, income, and cultural legacy. The book's colorful illustrations are inspired by Indigenous symbolism and are infused by the artwork of Llorca and his community of artists, crafters, and artisans. This bilingual book brings representations of Central American stories, history, art, and community. (Grades K-2)

***El niño de maíz/The Boy of Maize* written by Mario Bencaastro and illustrated by Christina Rodriguez.** Piñata Books, 2022. ISBN 978-1558859463

*El niño del maíz/The Boy of Maize* is inspired by the stories in the Popol Vuh, the sacred book of the Maya. This bilingual version retells the story of the birth of the children of Maíz, Children of Corn. The book will introduce readers to a beautiful Indigenous story of the origin of the Maya people. This fun, colorful book brings together many animal friends who work together to deliver the message of the birth of the child. A giant blue turtle will carry the boy on her strong back to find his community. The story centers the cosmovision of Indigenous cultures, their relationship with nature, and the importance of corn as the main source of life. (Grades K-4)

***Invisible* written by Christina Diaz Gonzalez and illustrated by Gabriela Epstein.** Graphix, 2022. ISBN 978-1338194548

The five middle school characters in this heartwarming bilingual graphic novel discover that although mischaracterized as a collective of Spanish-speaking Latinx youth, each brings a unique cultural perspective to celebrate. Navigating the realities of being socially “invisible” against the backdrop of a predominantly white, seemingly authoritarian school environment, author Christina Diaz Gonzalez and illustrator Gabriela Epstein weave a story of community service beyond the punitive cleaning up of a school cafeteria. The story, told in Spanish and English, involves the Breakfast Club-inspired characters being called into the principal's office to give their own account of what took place during their forced time together. We learn, alongside each of them, that although they may come from very different cultural and personal backgrounds, their willingness to rally together in support of a homeless woman and her young child leads them to recognize that being seen for who you are and working together can lead to some unexpected friendships and outcomes. (Grades 3-7)

***Rima's Rebellion: Courage in a Time of Tyranny* written by Margarita Engle.** Atheneum Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, Inc., 2022. ISBN: 978-1534486935

Set during Cuba's struggle for suffrage in the 1920s, this verse novel follows Rima, a young activist who rides her horse with Las Mambisas, fighters for Cuban independence and then suffrage. Rima's status as a “natural” child, a child born out of wedlock to an already married man, pushes her to become involved with the movement, as natural children do not have the same rights and opportunities as children born to married couples. The dual causes of suffrage and rights for natural children galvanize Rima, but she is disheartened when the movement experiences multiple setbacks. Nevertheless, Rima keeps fighting back and seeks justice and

equity. (Grades 7 and up)

***Islands Apart: Becoming Dominican America* written by Jasminne Mendez.** Piñata Books, 2022. ISBN: 978-1558859449

In this engaging memoir, Mendez recalls the travails of growing up as an Afro-Latina, an identity that she did not have the words for as the child of immigrants. Starting with her birth and early childhood, Mendez’s essays chart her life and formative experiences—from having chicken pox to shaving her legs for the first time. The essays are joined by a series of photographs from Mendez’s childhood, which provide unique context and an intimate look into Mendez’s life. (Grades 7-12)

***Frizzy* written by Claribel A. Ortega and illustrated by Rose Bousamra.** First Second, 2022. ISBN: 978-1250259639

The young Afro-Latina Marlene dreads going to the salon with her mother. The process is tedious and painful, and it never lasts, as Marlene’s naturally curly hair always reemerges at the slightest hint of moisture. The unique graphic novel format allows readers to see Marlene’s expressions and the seemingly untamable “mess” of her frizzy hair. Marlene wishes she could wear her natural hair but is told it is unattractive and unladylike. But when Marlene spends the weekend with Tía Ruby, who lets her own natural curls shine, Marlene learns how to take care of her hair and delights in her new look. However, she must convince her mother to allow her to wear her natural hair, a feat that seems impossible. With Tía Ruby’s help, Marlene embraces her own look and even encourages her mother to do the same. (Grades 5-7)

***Tumble* written by Celia C. Pérez.** Kokila, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2022. ISBN 978-0593325179

Adela “Addie” Ramírez is a precocious 12-year-old who is asked by her mother and stepfather to officially formalize their relationship by agreeing to have her stepfather adopt her. Addie stumbles upon a photograph in her mother’s trunk that leads her and her best friend Cy on a journey to find her biological father and ask questions about him that have never been raised or answered – who is he? And what happened? *Tumble* is a page-turner adventure referencing various historical events: Crispus Attucks and the Boston Massacre to the Adelitas of the Mexican Revolution. The book also addresses the importance of personal archives as well as documents and records of community organizations such as the Cactus Wrestling League. Slowly, Addie begins to find her place with her biological father’s side of the family, the Bravos, and realizes that she also belongs to them. She is ready to face the challenges that lie ahead in embracing them into her extended family. *Tumble* is a reminder that home is not always a place. It is the people who love you and who make you feel safe and accepted without judgment. (Grades 4–8)

***Lakelore* written by Anna-Marie McLemore.** Feiwel & Friends, 2022. ISBN 978-1250624147.

Young readers are offered an insight into the inner struggles of its two non-binary protagonists,

Lore and Bastián, as they try to make sense of an outside world that presents differently to each of them. Set in a small town surrounded by a magical lake, the story explores the themes of identity, love, and acceptance, immersing the reader into Lore and Bastián's journeys of self-discovery and personal advocacy. Incorporating magical realism and folklore elements, author Anna-Marie McLemore (they/them) weaves a poignant story of friendship and family using a unique LGBTQ+ narrative that navigates adolescent gender self-discovery alongside cognitive learning differences like ADHD and Dyslexia. Like the waters of Lake Lore that seem to flow uncontrolled beyond the boundaries of its fixed shores, McLemore's story offers a beautifully written tale that spills into and flows out of the author's own lived experience of being nonbinary, Mexican American and living with ADHD. (Grades 7-9)

***The Secret of the Plátano* written by Luz Maria Mack and illustrated by Stephany Mesa.**  
Soaring Kite Books, 2022. ISBN 978-1953859235

Dedicated to her own Dominican grandmother, children's author Luz Maria Mack and illustrator Stephany Mesa present a simple, delightful, intergenerational story of Abuela and her young grandson, celebrating the music and rhythms of nature. Under the enchantment of a starry, moon-lit night, Abuela dances among the whispering sounds of the banana leaves, teaching her grandson to listen to the bonds that reveal the beauty of passing on a shared cultural heritage and a secret connection to nature. (Grades K-3)