

Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP)

**2011**

## **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 (September 17, 2011) during Hispanic Heritage Month at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

### **2011 Américas Award Winners**

**Clemente!** by Willie Perdomo. Illustrated by Bryan Collier. Holt, 2010 32 pgs. ISBN 978-0-8050-8224-1.

A young boy shares the same name as baseball legend Roberto Clemente due to his family's deep respect for this man of integrity and skill. The boy recounts Clemente's biography, paying tribute to his great talent, his tenacity to continue on despite racism, as well as his pride in his Puerto Rican heritage. Spanish is woven seamlessly into this text so as to make it accessible and enjoyable for bilingual and monolingual children alike. The perfect match of text with full-page watercolor and collage illustrations evoke powerful images of Clemente's life as a child with lowered eyes and hunched shoulders, to a confident, successful baseball player and beloved father. A timeline, author and illustrator notes provide helpful background. (Grades K-3)

**The Dreamer** by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Illustrated by Peter Sís. Scholastic, 2010. 372 pgs. 978-0-439-26970-4.

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. (Grades 4 and up)

## **Américas Award Honorable Mention**

**The Firefly Letters** by Margarita Engle. Holt, 2010. 151 pgs. ISBN 978-0-8050-9082-6.

Beginning with a letter dated 1851, this book follows the historical visit of Swedish suffragette Frederika Bremer to Cuba. Written as poems from three different women of diverse backgrounds, this book explores the cultural history of Cuba and slavery as well as women's rights through three unique perspectives. The beautiful prose weaves an important account of Cuba in the mid-1800s. (Grades 6-12)

## **Américas Award Commended Titles**

**Arroz con Leche / Rice Pudding: Un poema para cocinar / A Cooking Poem** by Jorge Argueta. Illustrated by Fernando Vilela. Groundwood, 2010. 32 pgs. ISBN 978-0-88899-981-8.

"Sprinkle the rice into the pot / The little white grains of rice / rain music and sing / as they fall / In the kitchen the rice is singing / In the kitchen it is raining / little white grain drops." No, this is no ordinary one, two, three recipe. Read it aloud to hear the young narrator gleefully describe with all his senses the delicious joys of preparing and eating rice pudding with his family. Both languages are a delight to read, and the playful illustrations from different perspectives enhance the lyrical tone. ¡Delicioso! (Grades K-4)

**Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia** by Jeanette Winter. Beach Lane, 2010. 32 pgs. ISBN 978-1-4169-9778-8.

Luis Soriano loves books, and he loves bringing books to those without access to them. *Biblioburro*, "The Burro Library," tells Luis's story, incorporating vibrant illustrations that transport readers to remote communities in Colombia. Readers will undoubtedly appreciate the importance of Soriano's work, as well as the power that comes with reading. (Grades 1-4)

**César Chávez: A Photographic Essay** by Ilan Stavans. Cinco Puntos, 2010. 90 pgs. ISBN 978-1-933693-22-4.

This book presents the life and work of America's foremost farm labor leader/social activist during the formative years of the Civil Rights Era. Chavez's vocation was grounded in his Catholic faith, his commitment to racial justice, and his organizing skills. Factual and poignant text accompanies vivid black-and-white photographs that capture the complex spirit of the times. It gives the reader an intimate view of the struggles and victories of Chavez's passions and life work. "We are working toward creating the new man, the man who will think of the common good" said Chavez. The text provides a strong foundation for understanding Chavez and his importance in American history. (Grades 5-12)

**Dear Primo** by Duncan Tonatiuh. Abrams, 2010. 32 pgs. ISBN 978-0-8109-3872-4.

The simple conceit of two young cousins corresponding provides an age-appropriate vehicle for comparing and contrasting life in rural Mexico and urban United States. Although the details of their lives may differ, they find they have much in common. The lively English text incorporates Spanish words without direct translation: "We have a burro, pollos, and a gallo. Every morning the gallo crows and crows." Tonatiuh successfully employs the stylized art of ancient Mexico to create simple, effective drawings for life on both sides of the border. The story wraps up with the mutual exclamation, "I have a great idea! My primo should come visit me!" (Grades K-3)

**Dizzy in your Eyes: Poems about Love** by Pat Mora. Knopf, 2010. 168 pgs. ISBN 978-0-375-84375-4.

The red, black, and white optical art cover of *Dizzy in your Eyes* aptly captures the essence of Pat Mora's 50 poems, which she compares to a piece of music with four movements forming the cycle of love. Poem themes range from love's initial angst and confusion, to challenges and sadness, then healing and peace, and finally, new love. Written in a variety of forms including free verse, sonnets, haiku, and clerihew, some of the poems incorporate Spanish words and phrases, or are written entirely in Spanish and in English. This compact book invites repeated readings to fully capture the sounds, the feelings, and the essence of love through the stages of life. (Grades 7 and up)

**Eight Days: A Story of Haiti** by Edwidge Danticat. Illustrated by Alix Delinois. Orchard, 2010. 28 pgs. ISBN 978-0-545-27849-2.

Haitian-born Danticat presents her interpretation of a young boy's experience of the Haitian earthquake. The book begins with seven-year-old Junior answering questions about being trapped under his home for eight days. Junior tells readers, "I cried, I was afraid. But in my mind, I played." This powerful book presents the Haitian earthquake in a way that highlights the imagination of one earthquake victim, showing his strength, resilience and will to survive. (Grades 3-8)

**Fiesta Babies** by Carmen Tafolla. Illustrated by Amy Córdova. Tricycle, 2010. 20 pgs. ISBN 978-1-58246-319-3.

Follow the fiesta babies through this bilingual book as they enjoy Mexican-American customs and culture. Perfect for very young readers, *Fiesta Babies* is light on text and heavy on vibrant illustrations. A glossary is provided at the end to explain the Spanish terms that are used in the mainly English text. (Grades K-2)

**From North to South / Del norte al Sur** by René Colato Laínez. Illustrated by Joe Cepeda. Children's Book Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-89239-231-5.

Immigration and deportation are foreshadowed in a striking way in the end pages of this bilingual picture book, presenting a detailed map of the major freeways between San Diego and Tijuana. Illustrations with gentle, loving images stand juxtaposed to the depth of pain experienced by young José at the recent deportation of his mother to Mexico. José misses his mother's bedtime stories and their time spent gardening together, and can hardly wait to see her as Papá's car creeps slowly through border traffic to visit her in Tijuana. The author is donating a portion of the proceeds from this book to El Centro Madre Assunta, a refuge for immigrant women and children in Tijuana. (Grades K-3)

**Grandma's Gift** by Eric Velasquez. Bloomsbury, 2010. 32 pgs. ISBN 978-0-8027-2082-5.

Based on a real experience in the author's life, Velasquez shares another story of the loving relationship with his grandmother. Living in New York's Spanish Harlem is a comfortable haven out of which they venture during Christmas vacation to view a painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art. He and his grandmother share a deep pride in the portrait's subject, the African-born slave and accomplished painter Juan de Pareja. The title refers to the fact that the young narrator treasures both the outing and grandma's subsequent Christmas gift of art. The masterfully executed oil paint illustrations clearly depict the setting, era and dear love between the characters. Author's notes at the end explain the personal significance of his grandmother's gift in his professional development as an artist. (Grades 1 -3)

**How Tía Lola Learned to Teach** by Julia Alvarez. Knopf, 2010. 135 pgs. ISBN 978-0-375-86460-5.

The second book in the series on Tía Lola, this book follows Lola who is from the Dominican Republic, as she becomes an integral part of a school's community as temporary Spanish teacher. Important issues faced by many communities and families are explored in this book as we struggle with issues of immigration and the importance of family and language. (Grades 9-12)

**The Last Summer of the Death Warriors** by Francisco X. Stork. Scholastic, 2010. 344 pgs. ISBN 978-0-545-15133-7.

Pancho Sanchez is intent on identifying the individual involved in the death of his sister Rosa, whom he is convinced was murdered despite a police report indicating otherwise. At the age of 17, Pancho is placed in an orphanage in Las Cruces while still grieving this loss, as well as the untimely deaths of his father three months prior, and of his mother when he was five. He is assigned summer employment assisting D.Q., a boy dying from a rare form of brain cancer. Similar to the classic protagonist in *Don Quijote*, D.Q. compels Pancho to set out on an adventure, this time to find a cure for his cancer while also training Pancho to become a "Death Warrior." (Grades 8-12)

**Me, Frida** by Amy Novesky. Illustrated by David Diaz. Abrams, 2010. 32 pgs. ISBN 978-0-8109-8969-6.

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. (Grades 3-6)

**Napí funda un pueblo / Napí Makes a Village** by Antonio Ramírez. Illustrated by Domi. Greenwood, 2010. 48 pgs. ISBN 978-0-88899-965-8.

The third book about Napi, this book focuses on the land struggle of the Mazateca people. Vivid illustrations communicate the beauty, strength, and terror that face this community. This is an important story about indigenous identity and the difficult issues facing many communities throughout Latin America. Written in Spanish, English, and a few Mazatec words, the book provides a glossary at the end to orient the reader to the rich diversity of Latin America. (Grades 4-8)

**Ole! Flamenco** by George Ancona. Lee & Low, 2010. 48 pgs. ISBN 9778-1-60060-361-7.

*Ole! Flamenco* can be used as a beginner's guide to the art of flamenco music. The reader follows a young girl, Janira, as she learns about the origins and traditions at her flamenco school in New Mexico. There are many great lessons to be learned from this book because of its acknowledgement of both the changes and continuities that reside within flamenco as practiced today. Ancona's book encourages readers to explore the ways that flamenco brings diverse peoples together. (Grades 3-6)

**Star in the Forest** by Laura Resau. Delacorte, 2010. 149 pgs. ISBN 978-0-385-73792-0.

*Star in the Forest* highlights the importance of family and of friends to Zitlally, whose name means “star” in Nahuatl. When Zitlally’s father is deported to Mexico, Zitlally finds a dog in the forest and nurses it back to health with her friend. Throughout the story, we see how Zitlally is caught between different countries, cultures, and languages. Reseau’s story sheds light on the complex issues surrounding undocumented migration between countries, as well as exploring a young girl’s attempt to navigate the social landscape of middle school. (Grades 3-8)

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