

Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP)

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 book will be honored at a ceremony on June 16, 2000 at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

1999 AMERICAS AWARD WINNER

CRASHBOOMLOVE: A NOVEL IN VERSE by Juan Felipe Herrera. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1999. 155 pages. ISBN 0-8263-2114-3 \$10.95

A carefully crafted, hard-hitting novel composed of a series of prose poems is written in the voice of 16-year-old César García. As a working-class Chicano teen, sensitive to the inequities he sees on a daily basis, César struggles – not always successfully – to resist the sort of peer pressure that defines adolescence. But like most teens, he wants to be accepted by his friends, even though they are on a path of self-destruction. Eventually César finds the strength to refuse to let others define him, which will ultimately be the key to his successful passage into adulthood. Herrera's inventive use of language uses beautiful imagery that holds true to adolescent experience. This powerful novel will especially resonate with teens who feel they don't belong, no matter who or where they are. (Grades 8-12)

1999 AMERICAS HONORABLE MENTIONS

CUBA: AFTER THE REVOLUTION written and photographed by Bernard Wolf. New York: Dutton, 1999. 64 pages. (0-525-46058-6) \$16.99

In this ground-breaking book, photojournalist Bernard Wolf offers a glimpse of contemporary life in Havana that few people living in the United States have ever seen. He documents his recent trip to Cuba's capital city in color photographs accompanying brief descriptions of what he saw and learned about the lives of people there. While he doesn't avoid pointing out the poverty and challenges faced by most Cuban citizens today, he balances this with the positive aspects of life in Havana: racial tolerance, a low crime rate, a high literacy rate, and an appreciation for the arts. (Grades 4-9)

MAGIC WINDOWS/VENTANAS MÁGICAS written and illustrated by Carmen Lomas Garza. Spanish translation by Francisco X. Alarcón. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press, 1999. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-157-X \$15.95

As we learn from an introductory note, the art of Mexican cut paper, or *papel picado*, goes back thousands of years when Aztec artists created bark paper banners. Carmen Lomas Garza first learned the art herself from her grandmother who used cut paper to create embroidery designs, and she continues the tradition today with her own intricately designed cut-paper art. Each *papel picado* presented in this volume is accompanied by a brief explanation, in both Spanish and English, which reveals something about the artist's personal history and how it's linked to her Mexican heritage. (Grades 3-8)

1999 AMERICAS COMMENDED LIST

A IS FOR AMERICAS by Cynthia Chin-Lee and Terri de la Peña. Illustrated by Enrique O. Sánchez. New York: Orchard, 1999. 32 pages. ISBN 0-531-30194-X \$15.95

An alphabetical exploration of the Americas introduces young readers to the wide range of people, places, and cultures that make up our hemisphere. A brief description and brightly colored illustration accompanies each letter and the corresponding word; for example, **j** is for jalapeño ... **k** is for kayak ... **l** is for Lake Titicaca. Young children will gain a good sense of both the immensity and the diversity of the Americas as a whole. (Grades K-3)

ANGELS RIDE BIKES/LOS ANGELES ANDAN EN BICICLETA by Francisco X. Alarcón. Illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press, 1999. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-160-X \$15.95

The third volume in Alarcón's tribute to the seasons celebrates his boyhood memories of autumn, growing up in an extended Chicano family in Los Angeles, California. Short, spirited poems in both Spanish and English deal with such subjects as the first day of school, going to the dentist, and celebrating both the Day of the Dead and Thanksgiving. Gonzalez's whimsical paintings aptly illustrate the poet's repeated use of angels as a symbol of caring people in one's life. (Grades 2-5)

ASPHALT ANGELS by Ineke Holtwijk. Translated from the Dutch by Wanda Boeke. Asheville, N.C.: Front Street Press, 1999. 184 pages. ISBN 1-886910-24-3 \$15.95

A gritty, realistic novel about street kids in contemporary Rio de Janeiro is narrated by 13-year-old Alex, the newest member of a group of peers who call themselves the Asphalt Angels. Life on the streets is tough and the Angels do what they have to in order to survive, including stealing, drug-running, and prostituting themselves. Because Alex is a thoughtful kid who agonizes over every act of wrong-doing and flat-out refuses to engage in some criminal behavior, this compelling novel will inspire discussions of ethics and moral decisions on the part of older students. (Grades 8 and up)

CARNAVAL by George Ancona. San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, 1999. 32 pages. ISBN 0-15-201793-3 \$18.00

Ancona's exquisite color photographs document the preparations leading up to the annual five-day festival in Olinda, Brazil, as well as details related to specific carnival events. In an explanatory note, the author indicates that he specifically chose to focus on this small town in northeastern Brazil because everyone in the town participates in the celebration of folklore, music, and cultural traditions that demonstrate Brazil's rich blend of African, European and Native peoples. (Grades 2-6)

ERANDI'S BRAIDS by Antonio Hernández Madrigal. Illustrated by Tomie dePaola. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1999. 32 pages ISBN 0-399-23212-5 \$15.99

In the tradition of many Tarascan women in Michoacán, Mexico, young Erandi and her mother take pride in their long, thick hair, refusing to sell it when representatives from the cosmetic industry come to their small town, offering the women money for their hair. But financial hardship ultimately leads Erandi to make a great sacrifice and sell her beautiful braids so her family can buy a new fishing net. DePaola's soft, brightly colored paintings aptly illustrate the mid-twentieth century village in which the story takes place. (Grades 2-5)

I'M JOSÉ AND I'M OKAY; THREE STORIES FROM BOLIVIA written by Werner Holzwarth. Translated from the German by Laura McKenna. Story idea and illustrations by Yatiyaw Studios. U.S. edition: Kane/Miller, 1999. 38 pages ISBN 0-916291-90-1 \$13.95

José is a plucky eleven year old who works in Sarata, Bolivia, in his uncle's auto repair shop. Although he has already taken on the adult responsibilities that are a reality for many working-class children in Latin America, José's childlike nature shines through in three humorous slice-of-life episodes, illustrated with bold full-color paintings that emphasize José's resilience and creative problem-solving. Based on incidents in the life of a real child in Bolivia, the story concept and illustrations were created by a non-profit organization in La Paz which strives to encourage literacy through stories based on actual life experiences. Humor, open-endedness, and an accessible design will make this volume especially appealing to reluctant readers. (Grades 4-7)

ISLAND IN THE SUN by Harry Belafonte and Lord Burgess. Illustrated by Alex Ayliffe. New York: Dial, 1999. 24 pages ISBN 0-8037-2387-3 \$15.99

The lyrics to a song first made popular by Harry Belafonte generations ago are accompanied by warm collage illustrations that capture Belafonte's fond memories of his Jamaican childhood. Details of day-to-day life – cutting cane, casting fishing nets, carrying goods to market – are shown against the backdrop of a lush natural setting. Complete musical notation is included, making this especially useful in early elementary classrooms. (Grades K-3)

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY: A BARRIO STORY/NO TIENE QUE SER ASÍ: UNA HISTORIA DEL BARRIO by Luis J. Rodríguez. Illustrated by Daniel Galvez. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press, 1999. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-161-8 \$15.95

The author of *Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.* turns his considerable talents and his own personal experiences toward young readers in a bilingual story about ten-year-old Monchi, who gives in to the pressure to join his neighborhood gang. After his twelve-year-old cousin, Dreamer, is caught in gang crossfire, Monchi realizes the seriousness of his decision to join and, with the help of his uncle, manages to extricate himself. Realistic illustrations enhance the true-to-life nature of a picture book for older readers, which will inspire discussions about peer pressure, making tough choices, and the consequences of decisions we make. (Grades 3-8)

TWO DAYS IN MAY by Harriet Peck Taylor. Illustrated by Leyla Torres. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999. 32 pages ISBN 0-374-37988-2 \$16.00

A Latino family is at the center of a quiet picture story set in a multicultural urban neighborhood where everyone pulls together when five deer show up in a community garden. As soon as the neighbors learn that the animal control office plans to shoot the deer, they decide to camp out in the garden overnight to protect the deer until a wildlife rescue organization come out to pick them up the next day. A strong sense of community and an awareness of vanishing natural habitats are at the core of this discussion-provoking story which is based on a true event. (Grades 1-4)

**1999 Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature
Review Committee**

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