

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 books will be honored at a ceremony on September 24, 2004 at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

2003 AMERICAS AWARD WINNERS

JUST A MINUTE: A TRICKSTER TALE AND COUNTING BOOK by Yuyi Morales. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2003. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-8118-3758-0

In this charming counting book, Yuyi Morales lays out a feast – a birthday feast for Grandma Beetle and a visual feast for the reader. Through the delightful, vibrant illustrations, readers young and old can almost taste and smell the many treats that Grandma Beetle prepares as she coaxes el Señor Calavera into celebrating life along with her. The simple yet charming text takes the reader from *uno* through *diez* with a trickster Grandmother. (K-3)

THE MEANING OF CONSUELO by Judith Ortiz Cofer. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003. 186 pgs. ISBN 0-374-20509-4

With vivid, lyrical language, Judith Ortiz Cofer tells a bittersweet coming-of-age story set in 1950s Puerto Rico, the era of Operation Bootstrap. Consuelo, the young narrator of the novel, is a keen observer of human nature. She struggles to hold together a family that is drifting apart, even as she herself yearns for new experiences. Reflecting the social discord of Puerto Rican society at the time, Consuelo's family views with mixed emotions the increasing US influence on their island. Eventually, Consuelo must decide on the direction of her own life and find her place within her family, her community, and the world. Throughout, the narrator's wry sense of humor and determination give her the strength to contend with loss and reach for a better future. (9-12)

2003 AMERICAS HONORABLE MENTIONS

CUBA 15 by Nancy Osa. New York: Delacorte, 2003. 277 pgs. ISBN 0-385-73021-7

Fifteen-year old Violet Paz, is less than thrilled when her Cuban grandmother proclaims that her granddaughter must celebrate her *quinceañera* with a traditional ceremony. Violet, who speaks only a smattering of Spanish and more closely resembles her blonde, blue-eyed Polish-American mom than her Cuban dad, has her doubts. She can hardly imagine anything less appealing than dancing in front of a roomful of guests, especially while wearing a ruffled pink dress with a tiara on her head. Before long, however, Violet's naturally upbeat personality and curiosity, as well as her desire to please her adored grandparents, win over, and she begins to explore not only the meaning of the event, but also her own identity and family history. (6-8)

HARVESTING HOPE: THE STORY OF CESAR CHAVEZ by Kathleen Krull. Illustrated by Yuyi Morales. San Diego: Harcourt, 2003. 48 pgs. ISBN 0-15-201437-3

Krull has written a very personal and appealing biography of César Chávez, founder of the National Farm Workers' Association. The captivating illustrations of Yuyi Morales show Chávez within his communities of family, field and protest. His story, from boyhood to labor leader, emphasizes that intelligence, sensitivity and a commitment to social justice on the part of one individual can indeed help change the world. As Chávez says at one point in the story, "nonviolence takes more guts." The story's momentum builds (as did the farm workers' movement) from the early, somewhat solitary efforts of Chávez to the 1966 march on Sacramento that began with 68 people and ended in a gathering of 10,000 in the California capital. This is, indeed, a story of hope. (3-5)

2003 AMERICAS COMMENDED LIST

THE AFTERLIFE by Gary Soto. San Diego: Harcourt, 2003. 161 pgs. ISBN 0-15-204774-3

Seventeen year-old Chuy, a senior at East Fresno High, never would have imagined that he could get killed for admiring another guy's shoes. But he did. Chuy is dead as he narrates this strange, often funny, tale of the afterlife. Dead, Chuy find opportunity opening up to him as it never had while alive – he is bolder with girls, can go pretty much where he pleases, and can even influence the behavior of his friends, family, and others, both living and dead. This novel in its simplicity, humor, and perspective challenges readers to confront violent death and the consequences that unnatural death has on the living. (6-8)

THE JOURNEY OF TUNURI AND THE BLUE DEER by James Endredy. Illustrated by María Hernández de la Cruz and Casimiro de la Cruz López. Rochester: Bear Cub Books, 2003. 36 pgs. ISBN 159143016-X

Beautiful yarn drawings by Huichol Indian artists tell the story of Tunuri, a young Huichol boy. Tunuri and his family were walking through the woods on their way to the sacred mountain in Wirikuta when he was distracted by a beautiful butterfly and became separated from everyone. Lost and alone, the boy comes upon a blue deer who helps him find his way; as they journey, the deer leads him to what the author calls 'our family in nature'--Grandfather Fire, Father Sun, Mother Earth, Brother Wind and Sister Sky. The traditional folk art illustrations truly complement the story. (K-3)

LITTLE BLUE HOUSE by Sandra Comino. Toronto: Groundwood, 2003. 154 pgs. ISBN 0-88899-541-5

In a rural town in Argentina there is a magical house that once a year turns blue and nobody seems to know why. This house becomes the refuge for twelve-year-old Cintia to escape her harsh relationship with her father, and once the house goes up for sale, it becomes Cintia's goal to save it. The author shares an intriguing narrative that combines elements of reality and magic, making this story rich in both literary elements and social themes. (6-8)

MURALS: WALLS THAT SING by George Ancona. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2003. 52 pgs. ISBN 0-7614-5131-5

George Ancona photographed outdoor community murals for this book. The murals, Ancona says in the introduction, "portray the people of the neighborhood and their concerns." He begins with a mural depicting Father Miguel Hidalgo during the 1810 Mexican Revolution and continues with murals honoring saints, neighborhood people, and individuals who have made important contributions to society. The photographs are vibrant and beautiful, exactly what one would expect from George Ancona. (3-5)

XOCHITL AND THE FLOWERS by Jorge Argueta. Illustrated by Carl Angel. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 2003. 36 pgs. ISBN 0-89239-181-2

Far from El Salvador in San Francisco, Xochitl and her family miss the days they spent in their garden arranging bouquets of flowers for people's special occasions. When the family decides to begin their flower business in San Francisco, papi surprises mami and Xochitl with a new space to grow their own garden. Unexpectedly, they confront resistance to their business, and it becomes the community's job to support *la familia de las flores*. In this book Argueta narrates a powerful story of family endurance and community support. The vivid illustrations document the family's life past and present, adding another level to the narrative. (K-3)

2003 Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature
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