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## **Selections from The Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature (1993-2004)**

### About the Américas Award

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 relate to Latin America, the Caribbean, or to 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 annual annotated Américas commended lists can be found at: [www.uwm.edu/Dept/CLACS/outreach/americas.html](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CLACS/outreach/americas.html)

### INDIGENOUS PAST AND PRESENT

**ANGELA WEAVES A DREAM** by Michèle Solá. Photographs by Jeffrey Jay Foxx. New York: Hyperion, 1997. 48 pgs. ISBN 0-7868-0073-9 (3-5)

In Chiapas, Mexico, Angela, a young Maya girl, learns to weave the sacred designs of her culture from the expert weavers in her village, while also learning the symbolic meaning of the designs.

**MI HIJA, MI HIJO, EL AGUILA, LA PALOMA: UN CANTO AZTECA / MY DAUGHTER, MY SON, THE EAGLE, THE DOVE: AN AZTEC CHANT** by Ana Castillo. Illustrated by S. Guevara. Dutton, 2000. 48 pages. ISBN 0-523-45867-0 (Spanish edition) ISBN 0-525-45856-2 (English edition) (6-9)

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.

### AFRICAN DIASPORA

**HOW NIGHT CAME FROM THE SEA: A STORY FROM BRAZIL.** Retold by Mary-Joan Gerson. Illustrated by Carla Golembe. Boston: Little, Brown, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-316-30855-2 (K-3)

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.

**THE RED COMB** by Fernando Picó. Illustrated by María Antonia Ordóñez. (Originally published in Spanish by Ediciones Huracán, Puerto Rico and Ediciones Ekaré, Venezuela) BridgeWater Books, 1994. 46 pgs. ISBN not listed (3-5)

Set in 19th century Puerto Rico, a young girl, together with an elderly neighbor, work to help a runaway slave. This welcome translation which keeps the original illustrations is based upon historical events.

### HISTORICAL THEMES

**ESPERANZA RISING** by Pam Muñoz Ryan. Scholastic, 2000. 262 pages. ISBN 0-439-12041-1 (4-8)

Twelve-year-old Esperanza leads a privileged life as the only child in a prominent family living in Mexico in the 1930s. But when her father dies, she experiences a drastic change of fortune, and she and her mother must eek out a living by going north to California as migrant workers. More than a mere riches-to-rags story, Pam Muñoz Ryan skillfully weaves history and social issues into a compelling story based on the author's grandmother's childhood.

**IN THE DAYS OF THE VAQUEROS: AMERICA'S FIRST TRUE COWBOYS** by Russell Freedman. Clarion, 2001. 70 pages. ISBN 0-395-96788-0 (3-5)

Beginning with verses from a beloved Mexican Cowboy ballad, "El Caballero Blanco," Freedman invites readers of his expertly done non-fiction picture book to consider the historically overlooked Mexican cow-herders, the *Vaqueros*. Unlike their North American counterparts, *Vaqueros* never enjoyed the romanticized role that cowboys did in the U.S. Yet it was the *Vaqueros*, pitifully underpaid, landless laborers, that taught U.S. cowboys the trade they had practiced and perfected on the Mexican plains for almost five hundred years.

**A LIBRARY FOR JUANA** by Pat Mora. Illustrated by Beatriz Vidal. New York: Knopf, 2002. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-375-80643-1(3-5)

Pat Mora introduces young readers to Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, with a picture book biography of the poet's early life. The eloquent watercolor and gauche artwork incorporates elements of illustrated manuscript, re-creating the environment that nurtured a gifted child who became colonial Latin America's most famous poet.

**TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE: THE FIGHT FOR HAITI'S FREEDOM** by Walter Dean Myers. Paintings by Jacob Lawrence. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996. 36 pgs. ISBN 0-689-80126-2 (6-8)

A collection of paintings first exhibited at the 1940 Chicago Negro Exhibition chronicle the liberation of Haiti in 1804. A well-written narrative tells of the emotional journey of those who were enslaved and their desperate fight for freedom.

### MYTH AND LEGEND

**JADE AND IRON: LATIN AMERICAN TALES FROM TWO CULTURES** edited by Patricia Aldana. Translated by Hugh Hazelton. Illustrated by Luis Garay. Toronto: Groundwood, 1996. 64 pgs. ISBN 0-88899-256-4 (3-5)

With thoughtful presentation, the editor has selected a broad cross-section of stories that represent the indigenous and European cultures of Latin America. The collection was drawn from a rich variety of narrative sources, both oral and written, originally published in various Latin American countries.

**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 (K-3)

Tunuri and his family were walking to the sacred mountain when he was distracted by a beautiful butterfly. Lost and alone, the boy comes upon a blue deer who helps him find his way; as they journey, the deer leads him to 'our family in nature'-- Grandfather Fire, Father Sun, Mother Earth, Brother Wind and Sister Sky. The folk art yarn drawings by indigenous Huichol artists complement the story.

### FESTIVALS/HOLIDAYS

**CARNAVAL** by George Ancona. San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, 1999. 32 pages. ISBN 0-15-201793-3 (2-6)

Ancona's exquisite color photographs document the preparations leading up 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 focused 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.

**THE CHRISTMAS GIFT / EL REGALO DE NAVIDAD** by Francisco Jiménez. Illustrated by Claire B. Cotts. Houghton Mifflin, 2000. 32 pages. ISBN 0-395-92869-9 (K-3)

Based on a short story from *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999), a bilingual picture book centers on one particular Christmas memory from the author's childhood in which his parents found a way to help another family even more destitute than their own.

**CUBA 15** by Nancy Osa. New York: Delacorte, 2003. 277 pgs. ISBN 0-385-73021-7 (6-8)

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. 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.

**SALSA STORIES** by Lulu Delacre. Scholastic, 2000. 105 pages. ISBN 0-590-63118-7 (3-6)

When Carmen Teresa's family and friends gather to celebrate the New Year, each one shares food and a story from his or her native country, which include Argentina, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Peru.

### MUSIC, RHYMES, GAMES ALPHABET BOOKS

**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 (K-3)

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.

**DIEZ DEDITOS/TEN LITTLE FINGERS AND OTHER PLAY RHYMES AND ACTION SONGS FROM LATIN AMERICA** selected by Jose-Luis Orozco. Illustrated by Elisa Kleven. New York: Dutton, 1997. 56 pgs. ISBN 0-525-45736-4 (K-3)

This bilingual collection of finger rhymes and action songs from many Spanish-speaking countries includes lyrics in Spanish and English, music scores and bright and colorful illustrations. Songs and games from Mexico, the Caribbean, several South American countries, and Spain are included

### POETRY

**COOL SALSA: BILINGUAL POEMS ON GROWING UP LATINO IN THE UNITED STATES** edited by Lori Carlson. Introduction by Oscar Hijuelos. New York: Holt, 1994. 123 pgs. ISBN 0-8050-3135-9 (6-8)

Growing up Latino in America means speaking two languages, living two lives, learning the rules of two cultures. This book celebrates the tones, rhythms, sounds and experiences of that double life.

**FROM THE BELLYBUTTON OF THE MOON AND OTHER SUMMER POEMS/DEL OMBLIGO DE LA LUNA Y OTROS POEMAS DE VERANO** by Francisco X. Alarcón. Illustrated by Maya Christina González. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1998. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-89239-153-7 (1-3)

As summer comes, you feel the warmth, and it invites you to come out and play. This bilingual collection of poems, told from the perspective of children, is a delight to read on your own or out loud. The author has captured the essence of summer, family, and children at play.

**A MOVIE IN MY PILLOW/UNA PELICULA EN MI ALMOHADA** by Jorge Argueta. Illustrated by Elizabeth Gómez. Children's Book Press, 2001. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-165-0 (K-3)

In poetry and picture, the reader is gently moved into the experiences of a child in the Salvadoran community of San Francisco. The pain of flight from a beloved country rift with civil war is poignantly conveyed. Yet with equal resonance, we hear the optimism and joy of a family that is finally reunited.

**THE TREE IS OLDER THAN YOU ARE: A BILINGUAL GATHERING OF POEMS AND STORIES FROM MEXICO WITH PAINTINGS BY MEXICAN ARTISTS** selected by Naomi Shihab Nye. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. 101 pgs. ISBN 0-689-80297-8 (3-older)

This bilingual collection is remarkable, both in terms of the poetry and the illustration. Works of all lengths for all ages are included. Shihab Nye has done a commendable service to Mexican culture and U.S. readers by producing such a book.

### ART

**FRIDA** by Jonah Winter. Illustrated by Ana Juan. New York: Scholastic, 2002. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-590-20320-7 (K-3)

Sparse text frames the visual narration that effectively recreates the intense life of Mexico's premier female artist. The stunning

illustrations, though surreal, are child-centered and reflect the intriguing painting style that Kahlo herself incorporated in her artwork.

**MURALS: WALLS THAT SING** by George Ancona. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2003. 52 pgs. ISBN 0-7614-5131-5 (3-5)

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.

## CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

### *Environment*

**WHEN THE MONKEYS CAME BACK** by Kristine L. Franklin. Illustrated by Robert Roth. New York: Atheneum, 1994. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-689-31807-3 (K-3)

Always remembering how the monkeys in her Costa Rican village disappeared when all the trees were cut down, Marta grows up, plants more trees, and sees the monkeys return. Original illustrations combine with a simple story about the enormous changes caused by deforestation, and the role of a single individual in bringing about change.

### *Maintenance of Cultural Traditions*

**MAYEROS: A YUCATEC MAYA FAMILY** by George Ancona. New York: William Morrow, 1997. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-688-13465-3 (3-5)

Armando, a young *Mayero* and his family, descendants of the 4,000 year old Mayan civilization, are the central characters in Ancona's color photographs and nonfiction narrative. The narration follows Armando and his family through a week of preparations for the town's fiesta, as it also provides descriptions and explanations of the family's daily work and play. Through references to his own Mayan heritage, historical information and ancient codices, Ancona shows readers the deep links between the past and present in Mayan culture.

**THE POT THAT JUAN BUILT** by Nancy Andrew-Goebel. Illustrated by David Diaz. New York: Lee & Low, 2002. 32 pgs. ISBN 1-58430-038-8 (K-5)

This original cumulative tale effectively engages younger children in the ancient art of pottery making. On the opposite page, older children can read the story of Juan Quezada and his quest to re-create this art form from the village of Mata Ortiz in Chihuahua, Mexico. For students of art who want to learn more about pottery making, the last five pages are devoted to the process.

### *Migrant Life*

**BREAKING THROUGH** by Francisco Jiménez. Houghton Mifflin, 2001. 195 pages. ISBN 0-618-01173-0 (6-8)

A welcomed sequel to his award winning novel *The Circuit* (1997), the autobiographical journey of the son in a family of migrant farmworkers continues. Readers come to learn that Panchito, deported to Mexico when it seemed that his hardworking family was finally on the roads to some financial solvency, makes it back to the U.S. with his documentation in order. In the convincing voice of a young adolescent, we hear the details of his life in California in the early sixties.

**CALLING THE DOVES/EL CANTO DE LAS PALOMAS** by Juan Felipe Herrera. Illustrated by Elly Simmons. Emeryville, CA: Children's Book Press, 1995. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-89239-132-4 (3-5)

The author recalls his childhood in the mountains and valleys of California with his farmworker parents who inspired him with poetry and song. Through the poetics of memories and imagery, the story powerfully evokes good things remembered in a migrant childhood. Engaging illustrations echo of magical realism, and a strong sense of family and community suffuses the story.

**THE CIRCUIT: STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF A MIGRANT CHILD** by Francisco Jiménez. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997. 134 pgs. ISBN 0-8263-1797-9 (6-8)

The dream of this family from rural Jalisco, Mexico is to go north, cross *la frontera* and leave poverty behind. In California, they join “the circuit” of migrant workers following the crops to be picked: strawberries, cotton, carrots. The author poignantly weaves the family’s customs, beliefs and hopes with the cruel reality of never ending migrant labor camps.

**GOING HOME** by Eve Bunting. Illustrated by David Diaz. New York: HarperCollins, 1996. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-06-026296-6 (K-3)

Although a Mexican family comes to the United States to work as farm laborers so that their children will have opportunities, the parents still consider Mexico their home. The uniquely styled illustrations combine brilliant color with Mexican artifacts and magically real movement. The children begin to recognize not only their parents’ sacrifice, but the bonds that connect an extended family to each other and to place.

**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 (3-5)

Krull has written a very personal and appealing biography of César Chávez, founder of the National Farm Workers’ Association. 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.”

**LA MARIPOSA** by Francisco Jiménez. Illustrated by Simón Silva. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-395-81663-7 (English edition) (3-7)

Francisco, the son of migrant workers, has difficulty adjusting to a new school because he doesn't speak or understand English and, to make matters worse, the class bully seems to have it in for him. Simón Silva's use of orange and black in his paintings underscores the author's subtle use of a monarch butterfly to symbolize Francisco's metamorphosis. Adapted from a chapter in Jiménez's *The Circuit*, winner of the 1997 Américas Award.

#### *Political Repression*

**BEFORE WE WERE FREE** by Julia Alvarez. New York: Knopf, 2002. 167 pgs. ISBN 0-375-81544-9 (6-8)

Twelve-year-old Anita de la Torre's life changes suddenly when her cousins and friends must abruptly leave the country. What's more, she learns the extent to which members of her own family, particularly her uncle and father, are involved as leaders in the plot to overthrow *El Jefe*, dictator of the Dominican Republic. Anita begins to understand the danger involved as she witnesses people taking great risks to gain freedom.

**BEHIND THE MOUNTAINS** by Edwidge Danticat. New York: Orchard, 2002. 166 pgs. ISBN 0-439-37299-2 (4-8)

Using eloquent language steeped in the language of proverb and the folklore of her native Haiti, Danticat paints a moving portrait of family as its members are caught in the physical, emotional and economic turbulence surrounding Haiti's transformation from military to democratic rule.

**THE COLOR OF MY WORDS** by Lynn Joseph. Joanna Cotler/HarperCollins, 2000. 138 pages. ISBN 0-06-028232-0 (4-8)

Growing up in the Dominican Republic, twelve-year-old Ana Rosa understands the power of words because she herself is a writer. When the government announces that it is going to bulldoze the working-class neighborhood in which Ana Rosa and her family live, her brother Guarío organizes a community resistance movement. But words, with all their power, cannot save Guarío from the powerful forces against which he struggles.

**THE COMPOSITION** by Antonio Skármeta. Illustrated by Alfonso Ruano. Translated from the Spanish by Elisa Amado. Groundwood, 2000. 32 pages. ISBN 0-88899-390-0 (3-10)

At age nine, Pedro is most concerned about acquiring a new soccer ball, just like the ones the professional players use. Only after he witnesses a friend’s father being arrested and taken away by soldiers does Pedro begin to wonder about his own parents’ political leanings. What will Pedro write about when a government official comes to his school and announces there will be a prize for best composition with the title “What My Family Does at Night?”

**TONIGHT BY SEA** by Frances Temple. New York: Orchard Books, 1995. 152 pgs. ISBN 0-531-06899-4 (6-9)

As governmental brutality and poverty become unbearable, Paulie joins with others in her small Haitian village to help her uncle secretly build a boat they will use to escape to the United States. The story, told from Paulie’s point of view, sensitively

weaves political and economic issues into the cultural fabric of the characters. Beyond the poverty, she shows the strength and community that media images often fail to capture.

## FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND DAILY LIFE

**THE AFTERLIFE** by Gary Soto. San Diego: Harcourt, 2003. 161 pgs. ISBN 0-15-204774-3 (6-8)

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.

**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 (8 and older)

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 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.

**BARRIO: JOSE'S NEIGHBORHOOD** by George Ancona. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1998. 48 pgs. ISBN 0-15-201049-1 (1-5)

The Mission District of San Francisco, called affectionately *El barrio* by its residents, is home to young José Luis, an active, curious member of his Latino family and community. Through the artful use of photographic compositions, color, and point of view, and through clear, fluid prose, Ancona shows the reader José's daily interests and pathways through *El barrio*. At the same time we see his community's history, hopes, and gatherings through the images of people of the Americas who have shaped the lives of today's community

**BASEBALL IN THE BARRIO** by Henry Horenstein. New York: Gulliver/Harcourt Brace, 1997. 36 pgs. ISBN 0-15-200499-8 (K-3)

This photo essay is narrated by Hubaldo Antonio Romero Páez, a Venezuelan fifth grader who lives in Caracas. Readers learn about his love for his country's most popular sport--*béisbol*--and get glimpses of family and school life through the excellent photographs and a text that remains true to the voice of the young narrator.

**BUTTERFLY BOY** by Virginia Kroll. Illustrated by Gerardo Suzán. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 1-56397-371-5 (K-3)

This beautifully illustrated and tender story portrays a young boy's vibrant relationship with his grandfather who is confined to a wheelchair and can no longer speak. Their daily routine includes watching butterflies gather in their backyard, attracted by the white garage door. The communication between the two is built on deep affection and mutual understanding that goes far beyond verbal interactions.

**CRASHBOOMLOVE: A NOVEL IN VERSE** by Juan Felipe Herrera. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1999. 155 pages. ISBN 0-8263-2114-3 (8-12)

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.

**CUBAN KIDS** by George Ancona. Marshall Cavendish, 2000. 40 pages. ISBN 0-7614-5077-7 (3-6)

In his trademark photo-documentary style, Ancona combines outstanding color photographs of contemporary Cuban children with an inviting narrative that describes their lives at school, at home and at play.

**THE FACE AT THE WINDOW** by Regina Hanson. Illustrated by Linda Saport. New York: Clarion, 1997. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-395-78625-8 (K-3)

Coerced by her older friends, Dora, who just started school, hurled a stone at Miss Nella's mango tree. Miss Nella's face appeared at the window. Sensitively told, the story exposes the superstition surrounding mental illness in a small Jamaican community.

**HUE BOY** by Rita Phillips Mitchell. Illustrated by Caroline Binch. New York: Dial, 1993. 25 pgs. ISBN 0-8037-1448-3 (K-3)

Everyone in Hue Boy's Caribbean village has suggestions on how to help him grow, everything from eating the right tropical fruits to visiting the *curandera* for special herbs. But when Hue Boy's father returns from the sea, Hue Boy needs nothing else to make him stand very tall.

**I LOVE SATURDAYS Y DOMINGOS** by Alma Flor Ada. Illustrated by Elivia Savadier. New York: Atheneum, 2002. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-689-31819-7 (K-3)

A young child is doubly blessed to have two sets of loving grandparents, each with distinctive cultural heritages: her grandparents are European-American, and her *abuelos* are Mexican-American. She happily shares in the varied cultural experiences when visiting on the weekend. Ada effectively juxtaposes the joys to be found by a child growing up within dual cultures.

**ICY WATERMELON / SANDIA FRIA** by Mary Sue Galindo. Illustrated by Pauline Rodriguez Howard. Piñata Books/Arte Público, 2000. 32 pages. ISBN 1-55885-306-5 (K-2)

As three generations of a Mexican-American family share a watermelon on the front porch, Abuelo and Abuela recount the amusing story of how they first met when a watermelon fell off the back of a truck.

**IN MY FAMILY/EN MI FAMILIA** by Carmen Lomas Garza. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1996. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-89239-138-3 (K-older)

In this bilingual picture book celebrating Mexican American culture, Lomas Garza shares memories of growing up in her hometown of Kingsville, Texas, near the Mexican border. Her paintings of children and adults playing and working together as they prepare food, celebrate life events, and mend ills enable readers to understand constancy and change among family and friends.

**ISLA/LA ISLA** (English and Spanish editions) by Arthur Dorros. Illustrated by Elisa Kleven. New York: Dutton, 1995. 40 pgs. ISBN 0-525-45422-5 (Spanish) 0-525-45149-8 (English) (K-3)

In this sequel to *Abuela*, Rosalba and her grandmother take an imaginary journey to the Caribbean island where her mother grew up and where some of her family still live. They have another adventure, this one full of island life detail. Overall, this is a warm presentation of family and the magic power of imagination and storytelling.

**AN ISLAND LIKE YOU: STORIES OF THE BARRIO** by Judith Ortiz Cofer. New York: Orchard, 1995. 165 pgs. ISBN 0-531-06897-8 (9-12)

Twelve interconnected stories portray young people within a Puerto Rican neighborhood in New Jersey as they deal with the conflicts, ambiguities and contradictions of living in two cultures. The stories, written with sensitivity and imagination (not to mention humor), cumulatively build and strengthen the overall narrative of life in the barrio.

**JUST A MINUTE: A TRICKSTER TALE AND COUNTING BOOK** by Yuyi Morales. San Francisco: Chronicle, 2003. 32 pgs. ISBN 0-8118-3758-0 (K-3)

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.

**MAMA & PAPA HAVE A STORE** by Amelia Lau Carling. New York: Dial, 1998. 32 pgs. ISBN 00-8037-2044-0 (K-3)

In the heart of Guatemala City, a Chinese immigrant family owns a specialty store where they sell fabric, buttons, thread, and ribbons, in addition to a small selection of Chinese imports. The events of a typical busy day are recounted as seen through the eyes of the family's youngest daughter. Through the details of everyday life, we see how cultures peacefully co-exist and enrich each other in this autobiographical picture story.

**THE MEANING OF CONSUELO** by Judith Ortiz Cofer. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003. 186 pgs. ISBN 0-374-20509-4 (9-12)

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, 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. Throughout, the narrator's wry sense of humor and determination give her the strength to contend with loss and reach for a better future.

**THE MERMAID'S TWIN SISTER: MORE STORIES FROM TRINIDAD** by Lynn Joseph. Illustrated by Donna Perrone. New York: Clarion, 1994. 63 pgs. ISBN 0-395-64365-1 (3-5)

Tantie is the matriarchal storyteller who keeps the family history vibrantly alive by telling the children stories of the old times. Tantie passed on her bamboo beads to Amber, her niece, and is showing her how to find stories anywhere. This remarkable collection of African-Caribbean folktales reincarnates the best of the African *grioterary* tradition through the Caribbean vernacular of Trinidad.

**MY VERY OWN ROOM / MI PROPIO CUARTITO** by Amada Irma Pérez. Illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez. Children's Book Press, 2000. 32 pages. ISBN 0-89239-164-2 (K-3)

As the eldest child and only daughter in a large Mexican-American family, the spirited narrator of this joyful bilingual story longs for a little space to call her own. With the help of her mama and papa, her Tio Pancho, and her five younger brothers, she's able to fix up a small bedroom for herself in a storage closet. And as soon as she has everything just as she wants it, she invites her brothers in so she can read them a story.

**PARROT IN THE OVEN: MI VIDA** by Victor Martínez. New York: HarperCollins, 1996. 216 pgs. ISBN 0-06-026704-6 (9-12)

The story of Manny Hernández propels readers into the heart of a Mexican American boy \_who trusts too much.\_ Using fresh, metaphorical language, Martínez captures Manny's tests of courage and masculinity, and his sense of self and place as he works alongside migrant workers in a chili pepper field, drives through an upperclass neighborhood with his teacher, and tends his grandmother's garden. Yet the central setting for the story is Manny's home, where, amidst his family's love, fear and loyalties he is most able to reflect and begin to build a future.

**PEDRO AND ME: FRIENDSHIP, LOSS, AND WHAT I LEARNED** by Judd Winick. Henry Holt, 2000. 187 pages. ISBN 0-8050-6403-6 (6-12)

By shattering stereotypes, a young HIV-positive Cuban-American man forever changed the life of an aspiring cartoonist when the two were cast as roommates on MTV's *The Real World 3, San Francisco*, as their story is told here in a graphic novel format.