

# The power of the teacher: Integrating Latino-themed literature in the K-12 classroom

October 9, 2009

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**Multicultural Literature Defined:** Literature by and about people of ethnic and racial diversity (includes linguistic diversity)

## Role of MC Lit (Bishop, 1990):

- Mirrors: Beneficial effect on school achievement for children denied realistic images of themselves, their families, community, and culture
- Windows: A view into other cultures
- Sliding glass doors & portals: Points of entry

## “Best Practices” are only the first step

### Level I: General Literacy Practice

- Knowledge of best practices for literacy instruction
- Ability to implement
- Management skills: High expectations for respect

### “Best Practices”

- Pre-reading, pre-reading, pre-reading: K-W-L, Book Boxes, Anticipation Guides, Picture Walks, Book bits (frontloading vocabulary); Visuals; Brainstorming; Predictions
- Multiple response modes: Oral, Written, Art, Drama
- Writer’s Workshop: The Author/Illustrator chair

### Level II: Literary Conversations

- Questioning skills
- Inquiry listening + formative assessment
- Ability to hear difficult or different student responses to stories
- Recognition of storytelling patterns from differing cultural traditions—balancing tension

### Open-ended prompts

- *¿Qué es lo que notas en la historia?* [What do you notice in the story?]
- *¿Qué piensas de la historia?* [What do you think about the story?]
- *¿Qué piensan ustedes de eso?* [What do you think about this?]

### Follow-up prompts

- Based on students’ behaviors or comments during and after textual reading
- Clarifications, rationale for laughter, requests for more information
- *“En este momento, ¿qué estás pensando acerca de la historia y los dibujos?”* [What are you thinking about the story and the pictures right now?]
- *“Veo que estás sonriendo, dime ¿por qué?”* [I see you’re smiling, tell me why.]

### Grand Conversations

- Validation of student responses
- Safe places to talk: Free from border patrols and border walls
- Space to share new, difficult realizations and deeply personal narratives
- Chance to be known and better understood

## Story acceptance

- Uncomfortable, painful themes
- Resistance: Polite Questioning
- The “Wild Rumpus” (Sendak, 1983): Parallel stories, extensions and revisions to texts endings
  - References to Latin American cultural products (movies, TV shows and actors)
  - High drama!

## Level II: Personal cultural investment

- Strong knowledge base: Students’ families; students’ local and transnational communities; cultural values
- Ability to find or build commonalities and relationships with students & families
- Willingness to assimilate the “other,” to change one’s own cultural map: Students’ are not “foreign”
- Potential commonalities
  - Previously untapped personal and academic understanding of Latino culture
  - Similar family values, structures, patterns of living, relationships, and terms of endearment
  - Foods we all enjoyed
  - Transmission of culture through: Games (*Lotería*); Spanish-language media

### A POEM in many voices!

- Commonalities shared and modeled by the teacher result in student excitement to share personal stories
- “Wild Rumpuses” and/or stories of resistance serve to build community
- Students’ responses through DRAMA, writing & art allow more voices to enter the poem.
- Student and parental stories can serve as **portals into students’ worlds**
- **Greater insights** into how children interpret/ analyze illustrations and text
- Best practices, student/family stories, **TOGETHER WITH** teacher knowledge and expanding cultural dispositions:

### Practice + Grand Conversations + Teacher’s Personal/Cultural Investment = Cyclical process

- Informed literacy methods and strategies (classroom-based assessment) (PRACTICE)
- Informed prompts, and re-prompts for future lessons (CONVERSATIONS)
- Expanding teacher knowledge and cultural dispositions
- Open portals to students’ thinking

## Resources

### Professional Reading:

Compton-Lilly, Catherine (Ed.). (2008). *Breaking the silence: Recognizing the social and cultural resources students bring to the classroom*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

### Websites:

NLU Library Libguides: Here you will find resources to assist you with finding books, including the Americas Collection housed at the Lisle campus of NLU, book award information and electronic resources for both multicultural and Spanish/bilingual children’s and young adult literature. <http://libguides.nl.edu/eslresources>

NLU Book Awards Database: This database resource links to a wide-range of children’s book award web sites. There is a separate tab for the Multicultural Book Awards which includes Latino awards. Downloading the files in MS Access 2007 enables you to search the database by author, illustrator and book title to discover if a book has won an award. <http://libguides.nl.edu/bookawards>

Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC): CCBC website through the University of Wisconsin, Madison; an invaluable resource for recommended books for children and adolescents (including a bibliography of bilingual books), author video links, etc. <http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/default.asp>

International Children’s Digital Library: A kid-friendly (K-7) website filled with scanned books from around the world in original languages. <http://www.icdlbooks.org>

### **Latino and Spanish Language Literature:**

América's Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature: Award through the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for U.S. works of fiction, poetry, folklore, or selected non-fiction that authentically and engagingly present the experience of individuals in Latin America or the Caribbean, or of Latinos in the United States. <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CLACS/outreach/americas.html>

Pura Belpré Award: Award through the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA) and National Association to Promote Library Services to the Spanish Speaking (REFORMA), an ALA Affiliate. Awarded biannually to the Latino/Latina writer and illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth. [www.ala.org/alsc/belpre.html](http://www.ala.org/alsc/belpre.html)

Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award: Annual award that recognizes the author or illustrator of the most distinguished book for children and young adults authentically reflecting the lives and experiences of Mexican Americans in the Southwestern region of the United States [www.education.txstate.edu/subpages/tomasrivera/information.html](http://www.education.txstate.edu/subpages/tomasrivera/information.html) and [www.education.txstate.edu/subpages/tomasrivera-archive/index.html](http://www.education.txstate.edu/subpages/tomasrivera-archive/index.html)

Barahona Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Young Adults (University of California, San Marcos) [http://csbs.csusm.edu/csbs/www.book.book\\_home?lang=SP](http://csbs.csusm.edu/csbs/www.book.book_home?lang=SP)

Críticas: An English speaker's guide to the latest in Spanish language titles. Magazine website sponsored by Library Journal and the School Library Journal. <http://www.criticasmagazine.com/>

Kay Vandergriff & Denise Agosto: Powerful Hispanic and Latin American Images Revealed in Picturebooks: <http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/ChildrenLit/hispanic.html>

## **Award and Honor Latino Children and YA Literature (1993-2008)**

### K-3 Books:

Ada, A. F. (1997). *Gathering the sun: An alphabet in English and Spanish*. Lothrop. (K-3; poetry)

Alarcón, F. X. (1997) *Laughing tomatoes and other spring poems / Jitomates risueños y otros poemas de primavera*. Children's Book Press. (K-3; bilingual poetry)

Alarcón, F. X. (1998). *From the bellybutton of the moon and other summer poems / Del ombligo de la luna y otros poemas de verano*. Children's Book Press. (K-3; bilingual poetry).

Alarcón, F. X. (2001). *Iguanas in the snow and other winter poems/ Iguanas en la nieve: y otros poemas de invierno*. Children's Book Press. (K-3; bilingual poetry)

Anaya, R. (1995). *The farolitos of Christmas*. Hyperion Books for Children. (K-3; picturebook)

Andrews-Goebel, N. (2002). *The pot that Juan built*. Lee & Low (K-3; nonfiction, with parallel repetitive text.

Argueta, J. (2001). *A movie in my pillow /Una película en mi almohada: Poems*. Children's Book Press. (K-3; bilingual poetry; Picture book)

Bernier-Grand, C. T. (2005). *César: ¡Sí, Se Puede! Yes, We Can!* Marshall Cavendish.

Brown, M. (2004). *My Name Is Celia/ Me Llamo Celia: The Life of Celia Cruz/ La Vida de Celia Cruz*. Ill. by R. López. Luna Rising/Rising Moon.

- Brown, M. (2007). *My Name is Gabito: The Life of Gabriel García Márquez/Me llamo Gabito: la vida de Gabriel García Márquez*. Ill. by R. Colón. Luna Rising.
- Carling, A. L. (1998). *Mama & Papa have a store*. New York: Dial. (K-3 picturebook)
- Deedy, C. A. (2007). *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale*. Ill. by M. Austin. Peachtree.
- Delacre, L. (1993). *Vejigante Masquerader*. Scholastic. (K-3; picturebook)
- Delacre, L. (2004). *Arroró, Mi Niño: Latino Lullabies and Gentle Games*. Lee & Low Books, Inc.
- Elvgren, J. (2006). *Josias, Hold the Book*. Ill. N. Tadjell. Boyds Mill.
- Geeslin, C. (2004). *Elena's serenade*. Atheneum. (K-3; picture book)
- González, L. M. (1994). *The bossy gallito /El gallo de bodas: A traditional Cuban folktale*. Scholastic. (K-3; traditional literature/picture book)
- González, L. M. (2008). *The Storyteller's Candle / La velita de los cuentos*. Ill. by L. Delacre. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.
- Gonzalez, M. C. (2007). *My Colors, My World/Mis colores, mi mundo*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.
- Jaffe, N. (1996). *The golden flower: A Taino myth from Puerto Rico*. Simon Schuster. (K-3; traditional lit./picture book)
- Krull K. (2003). *Harvesting hope*. Harcourt. (K-3; biography, Cesar Chávez)
- Montes, M. (2000). *Juan Bobo goes to work*. HarperCollins. (K-3; traditional literature; picture book).
- Montes, M. (2007). *Los Gatos Black on Halloween*. Ill. by Y. Morales. Holt.
- Mora, P. (1997). *Tomás and the library lady*. [Tomás y la bibliotecara]. NY: Knopf (K-3; fiction)
- Mora, P. (2002). *A library for Juana*. Ill. by B. Vidal. New York: Knopf. (K-3; biography)
- Mora, P. (2005). *Doña Flor: A Tall Tale About a Giant Woman with a Great Big Heart*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Morales, Y. (2009). *Just in case*. Roaring Brook Press
- Morales, Y. (2003). *Just a minute: A trickster tale and counting book*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books. (K-3; picturebook—counting, repetitive text)
- Mora, P. (2007). *Yum! Mmm! ¡Qué rico!: America's sprouting*. Ill. by R. López. NY: Lee & Low.
- Pérez, A. I. (2000). *My very own room / Mi propio cuartito*. Ill. by M. C. González. San Francisco: Children's Book Press. (K-3; bilingual picture book)
- Pérez, A. I. (2002). *My diary from here to there /Mi diario de aqui hasta alla*. Children's Book Press. (K-3; bilingual picture book).
- Pérez, L. K. (2002). *First day in grapes*. Lee & Low Books, Inc. (K-3; picture book).
- Rodriguez, L. J. (1999). *It doesn't have to be this way*. Children's Book Press. (K-3; picture book).
- Russell, B. T. (2004). *The remembering stone*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. (K-3; picture book)

Salinas, B. (1998). *The three pigs: Nacho, Tito y Miguel*. Piñata Publications. (K-3; traditional literature; picture book).

Slate, J. (1998). *The secret stars*. Marshall Cavendish. (K-3; picture book)

Soto, G. (1995). *Chato's kitchen*. Ill. by S. Guevara. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. (K-3; picturebook)

Soto, G. (1997). *Snapshots from the wedding*. Putnam. (K-3; picturebook)

Soto, G. (2000). *Chato and the party animals*. G. P. Putnam's Sons. (K-3; picture book)

Winter, J. (2002). *Frida*. Scholastic. (K-3; biography; picturebook)

### Grades 3-5:

Ada, A. F. (1998). *Under the royal palms*. Atheneum (3-5/6.; autobiography)

Anaya, R. (1999). *My land sings*. Morrow Junior Books. (3-6; traditional literature)

Ancona, G. (1993). *Pablo remembers: The fiesta of the Day of the Dead*. Lothrop. (3-5; nonfiction)

Ancona, G. (1997). *Mayeros*. William Morrow. (3-5; nonfiction)

Ancona, G. (1998). *Barrio: José's neighborhood [Barrio: El barrio de José]*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace. (3-5; nonfiction)

Bernier-Grand. (2007). *Frida: ¡Viva la vida! Long Live Life!* Marshall Cavendish.

De Jenkins, L. B. (1996). *So loud a silence*. Lodestar (3-5; fiction)

Freedman, R. (2001). *In the days of the vaqueros*. Clarion Books. (3-5+; nonfiction)

Garza, C. L. (1990). *Family pictures / cuadros de familia*. Children's Book Press. (3-5; bilingual; nonfiction autobiographical)

Garza, C. L. (1996). *In my family/ En mi familia*. Children's Book Press. (3-5; nonfiction; bilingual; autobiographical)

Garza, C. L. (1999). *Magic windows / Ventanas Mágicas*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press. (3-5.; nonfiction)

Joseph, L. (2000). *The color of my words*. Joanna Cotler/HarperCollins. (3-5; fiction; picture book)

Medina, J. (2004). *The dream on Blanca's wall / El sueño pegado en la pared de Blanca*. Boyds Mill Press. (3-6; fiction)

Muños Ryan, P. (2000). *Esperanza Rising*. Scholastic Press. (3-5; historical fiction)

Muños Ryan, P. (2004). *Becoming Naomi León*. Scholastic. (3-5; fiction).

Reich, S. (2005). *José! Born to dance*. Ill. by R. Colón. Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books

Skármeta, A. (2000). *The composition*. Groundwood. (3-5; fiction picture book).

Soto, G. (1995). *Baseball in April*. Harcourt. (3-5; fiction)

Wolf, B. (1999). *Cuba: After the revolution*. Dutton. (3-5; nonfiction photo essay)

Grades 6+/YA:

- Alvarez, J. (2002). *Before we were free*. Knopf (gr. 6+; fiction)
- Canales, V. (2005). *The Tequila Worm*. Wendy Lamb Books.
- Cofer, J. O. (1995). *An island like you*. Orchard Books. (YA; fiction).
- Cofer, J. O.. (2003). *The meaning of Consuelo*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. (YA; fiction)
- Cofer, J. O. (2004). *Call me María*. Orchard. (YA; fiction; written in prose, letters, poetry)
- Engle, M. (2008). *The Surrender Tree: Poems of Cuba's Struggle for Freedom*. Henry Holt.
- Engle, M. (2006). *The poet slave of Cuba*. Ill. by S. Qualls. Holt.
- Herrera, J. F. (1998). *Laughing out loud, I fly*. HarperCollins. (12+; bilingual poetry).
- Herrera, J. F. (1999). *CrashBoomLove*. University of New Mexico Press. (YA; fiction)
- Herrera, J. F. (2005). *Cinnamon girl: Letters found inside a cereal box*. HarperCollins/Joanna Cotler Books.
- Herrera, J. F. (2005). *Downtown boy*. Scholastic Press.
- Holzwarth, W. (1999). *I'm José and I'm Okay*. Kane Miller. (YA; fiction)
- Jiménez, F. (1997). *The circuit*. University of New Mexico Press. (12+; autobiographical/ usually in fiction)
- Jiménez, F. (2001). *Breaking the circuit*. Houghton Mifflin Co. (12+; autobiographical/ usually in fiction).
- Martinez, F. (1997). *Spirits of the high mesa*. Arte Público. (YA; fiction)
- Martinez, V. (1996). *Parrot in the oven*. HarperCollins. (YA; fiction)
- Osa, N. (2003). *Cuba 15*. Delacorte. (YA; fiction).
- Resau, L. (2007). *Red Glass*. NY: Delacorte.
- Sáenz, B. A. (2008). *He Forgot to Say Goodbye*. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing.
- Sáenz, B. A. (2004). *Sammy & Juliana in Hollywood*. Cinco Puntos Press. (YA; historical fiction)
- Tafolla, C. (2008). *The holy tortilla and a pot of beans*. Wings Press.

