

Pura Belpré Award Winners

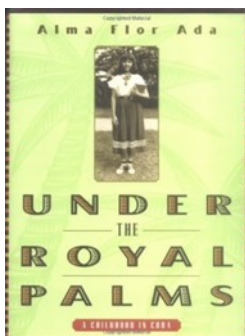
Why Read Pura Belpré books?

According to the American Library Association website, “The Pura Belpré Award... is presented annually to a 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” (Welcome). The titles in the following list do all of that and more. Whether you are looking for a book that may expand your cultural awareness, or you are looking for a diverse book that more closely mirrors you and your family, this is a set of winners you won’t regret adding to your Must Read list.

Under the Royal Palms: A Childhood in Cuba, by Alma Flor Ada

Ada, A. (1998). *Under the royal palms: A childhood in Cuba*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

These gentle stories share the author’s discovery of joy found in simple things. From evening rituals of counting bats with her grandmother and drinking cool water from clay pots, to games of exploration built around a fallen tree and getting lost in a *marabú* field, these stories are straight out of a child’s paradise, but the sweet tone is tempered with sadness—the loss of an adventurous uncle, and later, a beloved dance teacher. This lovely memoir offers readers a taste of growing up in a country we know little about, but they will want to learn more about afterwards.



Age Level: 8 - 12 years



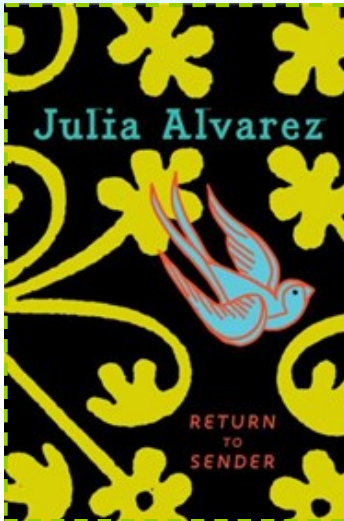
Citations:

Mexican Culture Is Alive and Well in the US - Cinco de Mayo. (2014, April 2). Retrieved May 1, 2015, from <http://www.stlbikefed.org/travel/mexican-culture-alive-well-us/>

Welcome to the Pura Belpré Award home page! (n.d.). Retrieved May 1, 2015, from <http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal>

Under the Royal Palms cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on April 24, 2015.





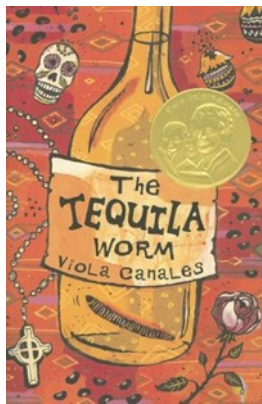
Cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on April 24, 2015.

Return to Sender, by Julia Alvarez

Alvarez, J. (2009). *Return to sender*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

After an accident that left Tyler's father unable to care for their farm, rather than sell, the Paquette family hires on the Cruz's, a family of undocumented workers from Mexico. Tyler and the oldest Cruz daughter, Mari, become close friends, sharing their deepest hopes and secrets, especially Mari's fears about her mother who, at the beginning of the story, has been missing for nearly a year. Heartwarming and sometimes heartbreaking, this book does an excellent job traversing the boundaries between what is right and what is moral, and leaves readers questioning where they stand on this tricky topic.

Age Level: 8 - 12 years



Cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on March 22, 2015.

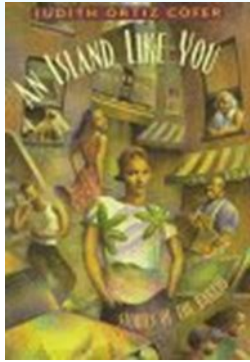
The Tequila Worm, Viola Canales

Canales, V. (2005). *The tequila worm*. New York: Wendy Lamb Books.

Sofia is a smart, talented Mexican-American girl growing up in McAllen, Texas. Facing up to a bullying student, Sofia decides to "kick" her bully by doing better than her in everything. Sofia's determination puts her at the top of the class, and earns a scholarship to an exclusive boarding school in Austin. Separated from family and friends, she faces new tormentors, but Sofia stands bravely and proves herself. This sweet, funny, and sometimes sad book is full of rich descriptions of family and cultural traditions, and will draw in readers from virtually any type of background.

Age Level: 12 and up





Cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on April 26, 2015.

An Island Like You, Judith Ortiz Cofer

Cofer, J. (1995). *An island like you: Stories of the barrio*. New York: Orchard Books.

An Island Like You is a compilation of twelve short stories about teenagers living in a New Jersey barrio. Their heritage is Puerto Rican, but they struggle combining their culture with the American dream. Some want to escape, some embrace it, and others are just trying to decide when, where and how they fit. While each of these vibrant stories stands easily on its own, the vignettes blend smoothly and give readers that sense of bonding with characters that actually matter to them.

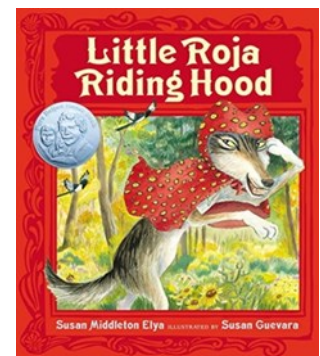
Age Level: 12 and up

Little Roja Riding Hood, Susan Middleton Elya

Elya, S., & Guevara, S. (n.d.). *Little Roja Riding Hood*.

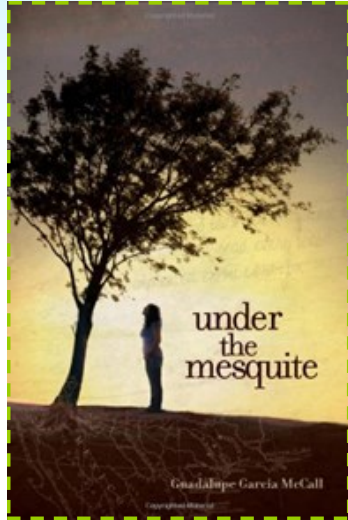
In this modern, rhyming take on the fairy tale, Little Roja is sent through the woods with hot soup for her grandmother. A big wolf convinces her to gather flowers, and while Roja picks, Wolf steals away with her red cape. Grandmother remarks on Wolf's big eyes, ears and pointy teeth, but before he can eat her, Roja runs in and saves the day. The lively illustrations and artful use of Spanish and English combined make this fun to read, and the author also includes a glossary to help non-Spanish speakers.

Age Level: 5 - 8 years



Cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on April 26, 2015.





Cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on April 3, 2015.

Under the Mesquite, Guadalupe Garcia McCall

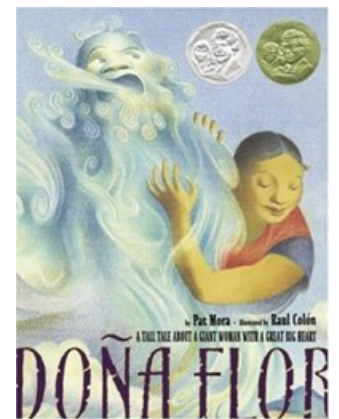
McCall, G. (2011). *Under the mesquite*. New York: Lee & Low Books.

Garcia McCall's book in verse follows the story of Lupita and her seven siblings. As their mother battles with cancer and their father becomes emotionally distant, Lupita takes on the responsibilities of parenting her younger siblings as well as working on her own schooling—especially drama competitions. Even when their life is at its most bleak, Lupita finds moments of hope and beauty, and these come through clearly to readers with the author's free-verse poetic style. This book will resonate with those who have dealt with loss as well as readers trying to find their place in the world. **Age Level: 12 and up**

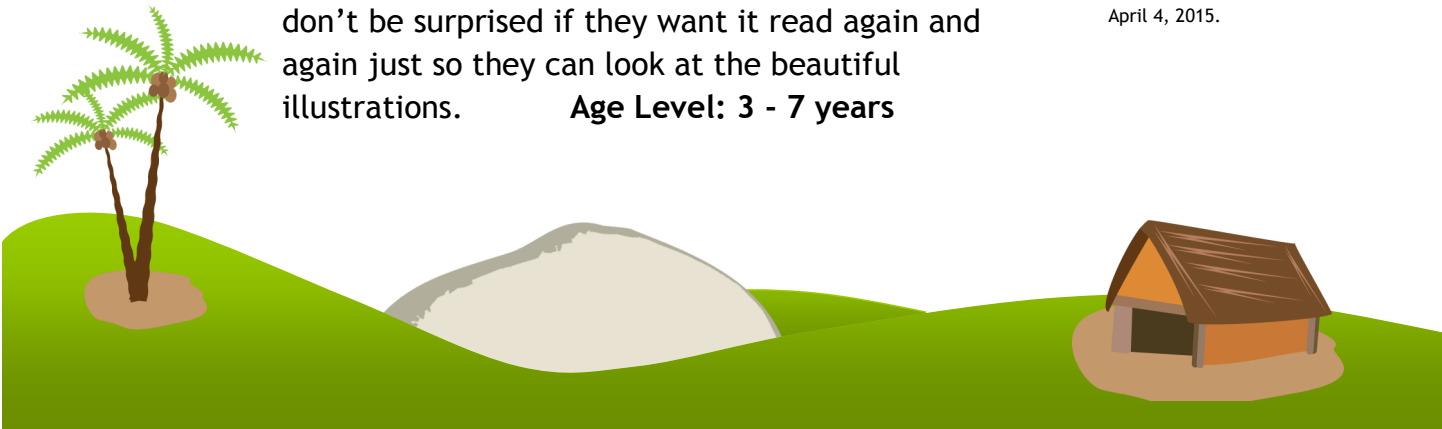
Doña Flor: A Tall Tale About a Giant Woman with a Great Big Heart, Pat Mora

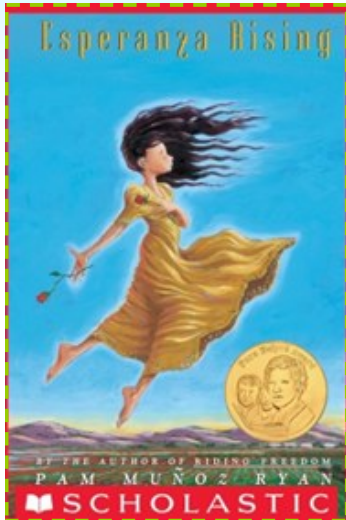
Mora, P., & Colon, R. (2005). *Doña Flor: A tall tale about a giant woman with a great big heart*. New York: A.A. Knopf.

Doña Flor is a gentle giant who loves and cares for all those around her. She makes the best tortillas, and shares them with the villagers every morning. She loves reading to the children and animals, and when the wind is too wild, she hugs it to calm it down. When the villagers become terrified by a huge roaring mountain lion, Doña Flor comes to their rescue, searching out the frightening creature. This tall tale will delight children, but don't be surprised if they want it read again and again just so they can look at the beautiful illustrations. **Age Level: 3 - 7 years**



Cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on April 4, 2015.





Cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on March 18, 2015.

Esperanza Rising, Pam Muñoz Ryan

Ryan, P. (2000). *Esperanza rising*. New York: Scholastic Press.

Esperanza lives a happy life of privilege as the daughter of a wealthy rancher in Mexico. When tragedy strikes, she has to learn how the other side lives, and it isn't always a smooth path for her. Esperanza discovers what poverty and discrimination look like as she adjusts to the life of a farm worker in California during the Great Depression. Readers will enjoy the rich imagery and strong characters in this book. While Esperanza comes across as a spoiled brat at first, readers want to be sympathetic, and they are paid off for their patience in the end.

Age Level: 8 - 12

Chato and the Party Animals, Gary Soto

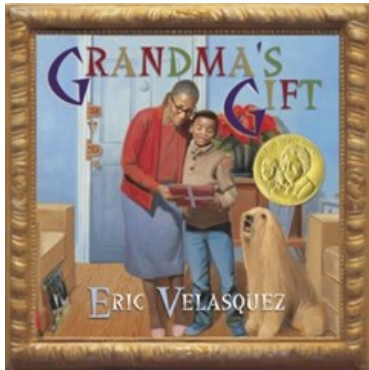
Soto, G., & Guevara, S. (2000). *Chato and the party animals*. New York: Putnam.

Chato finds out his best friend, Novio Boy, has never had a birthday party, and he decides to throw him the best celebration ever! When time comes for the party, no one can find Novio Boy, though. The party animals search the neighborhood, but still no luck. Assuming the worst, everyone mourns the loss of their friend, until Novio Boy shows up and the party begins, with even more reason to celebrate than before. Susan Guevara's incredible illustrations and Gary Soto's witty writing take this story to a whole new, entertaining level for picture books. **Age Level: 5 - 8 years**



Cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on March 23, 2015.





Cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on April 4, 2015.

Grandma's Gift, Eric Velasquez

Velasquez, E., & Gastonguay, N. (2010). *Grandma's gift*. New York, NY: Walker.

Eric spends holidays with his Puerto Rican grandmother. Together they shop, bake traditional holiday treats, and also go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to complete Eric's project for school. While there, he sees a portrait of Juan de Pareja, a former slave who became a famous painter. In the author's note, Mr. Velasquez tells readers that as a child this painting inspired him to become an artist himself. Readers will enjoy the relationship Eric shares with his grandmother, and they will appreciate it even more when they realize the book is based on real life.

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Cultural Awareness—so much more than knowing where to buy the best taco.

