

From *dinosaurios* to *Gaturro*:



Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents

by Isabel Schon

From such appealing characters as Tomás, who loves dinosaurs, to Totola, who is not sure she is ready for school, and from an informative series that encourages middle readers to explore nature to a fast-paced novel about sibling rivalry, these recently published books in Spanish should not be ignored.

For the Young

Bilgrami, Shaheen. ***Dinosaurios increíbles***. (*Amazing Dinosaur Discovery*). Mexico City: Planeta, 2003/Dist. by Planeta Publishing, 2004. unpaginated. Illus. by Mike Phillips and others. ISBN 970-690-794-7, \$13.95. Gr. K-3.

Tomás, who loves dinosaurs, is delighted to spend Sunday with his father at the *Museo de Dinosaurios*. As they view the skeletons, Tomás consults his notebook and reviews basic facts and pictures of five different species: *Apatosaurio*, *Estegosaurio*, *Tiranosaurio Rex*, *Coritosaurio*, and *Triceratops*. In addition to the sturdy, sliding pull-tabs featuring the different dinosaurs, young Spanish-speaking dinosaur enthusiasts will enjoy the simple narrative, cartoon-style color drawings, and amusing

balloons with running comments of museum visitors. Originally published by the British publisher Sterling, this is indeed a playful yet informative introduction to dinosaurs.

Child, Lauren. ***Soy demasiado pequeña para ir al colegio*** (*I'm Too Absolutely Small for School*). Barcelona: Ediciones Serres, 2003. 32 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from English by

Esther Rubio. ISBN 84-8488-111-3, \$13.95. Gr. Preschool-1.

Although Totola's parents think she is ready for school, she is not so sure. She insists she is extremely busy doing important things at home. But her older brother, Juan, knows exactly how to convince her. Upon returning from the first day of school, she proclaims, "*Yo no estaba preocupada. . . yo estaba estupendamente*" (I wasn't worried. . . I was delighted). Rubio's lighthearted Spanish rendition joyfully depicts young children's normal fears and apprehensions, which are further enhanced by the author's always appealing collage illustrations and signature fonts in varied shapes and sizes.

Harper, Piers. ***Osito blanco*** (*Snow Bear*). Barcelona: Editorial Juventud, 2003. 22 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from English by Christianne Reyes. ISBN 84-261-3319-3, \$16.95. Gr. Preschool-2.

A young polar bear is eager to see the world. *Mamá* Bear encourages him to go, but warns him to stay close so she can watch him. *Osito* marvels at the beautiful surroundings, plays with a young seal and a kind reindeer, and later, when he is hungry and tired, decides to find his mother. A friendly Eskimo girl knows exactly where to take him. A happy *Osito* cuddles in his mother's arms as he concludes, *pero estar en casa contigo es lo mejor* (but to be home with you is the best thing in the world.) The eye-catching double-page spreads depicting gorgeous North Pole landscapes are further enhanced by a velvety material on soft-to-the-touch furry animals. Despite the bland story, young children will be attracted to the appealing oversized spreads with textured animal characters.

Percy, Graham. **La liebre y la tortuga** (*The Hare and the Tortoise*). Madrid: Ediciones SM, 2002. 29 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from English by P. Rozarena. ISBN 84-348-8682-0, \$14.95. Gr. Preschool-2.

Based on Percy's retelling, originally published by David Bennet, London, this bouncy Spanish rendition of the Aesop's fable about perseverance is just right for one-on-one reading/viewing. Percy's close-up black-line and color illustrations, albeit small, provide endearing views of the haughty hare and the deliberative tortoise. The illustrations work especially well with the snappy conclusion: *Sin prisa, pero sin pausa, has ganado la carrera*. A delightful version of a popular fable.

Recorvits, Helen. **Me llamo Yoon** (*My Name Is Yoon*). Barcelona: Editorial Juventud, 2003. 32 pp. Illus. by Gabi Swiatkowska. Trans. from English by Christiane Reyes. ISBN 84-261-3335-5, \$16.95. Gr. K-2.



In contrast to the original edition, where learning the English language is the problem, here Yoon, a Korean-born girl, narrates in a graceful first-person point of view her struggles

to adjust to a new country and to learn to write in Spanish. Because she dislikes her name as written in Spanish—*Sabiduría Resplandeciente*—Yoon refers to herself as *gato*, *pájaro*, and *Magdalena* as a way to feel accepted in her new school and new country. Swiatkowska's fanciful illustrations perfectly depict Yoon's initial sadness and feelings of alienation as well as her ultimate evolution into a smiling and proud girl.

Middle Grades

Hipp, Andrew. **El árbol del olivo: Por dentro y por fuera** (*Olive Trees, Inside and Out*). Illus. by Fiammetta Dogi. Trans. from English by Tomás González. ISBN 1-4042-2865-9.

_____. **El girasol: Por dentro y por fuera** (*Sunflowers, Inside and Out*). Illus. by Andrea Ricciardi di Gaudesi. Trans. from English by María Cristina Brusca. ISBN 1-4042-2868-3.

_____. **El maíz: Por dentro y por fuera** (*Corn, Inside and Out*). Illus. by Andrea Ricciardi di Gaudesi. Trans. from English by Tomás González. ISBN 1-4042-2863-2.

_____. **El roble: Por dentro y por fuera** (*Oaks, Inside and Out*). Illus. by Fiammetta Dogi. Trans. by Tomás González. ISBN 1-4042-2864-0.

Houghton, Gillian. **Abejas: Por dentro y por fuera** (*Bees, Inside and Out*). Illus. by Studio Stalio. Trans. from English by

Mauricio Velázquez de León. ISBN 1-4042-2862-4.

_____. **Arañas: Por dentro y por fuera** (*Spiders, Inside and Out*). Illus. by Studio Stalio. Trans. from English by Tomás González. ISBN 1-4042-2867-5.

_____. **Búhos: Por dentro y por fuera** (*Owls, Inside and Out*). Illus. by Studio Stalio. Trans. from English by Tomás González. ISBN 1-4042-2866-7.

_____. **Tortugas: Por dentro y por fuera** (*Turtles, Inside and Out*). Illus. by Studio Stalio. Trans. from English by Tomás González. ISBN 1-4042-2869-1.

Each vol.: New York: Editorial Buenas Letras/Rosen, 2004. 28 pp. Series: Explora la Naturaleza. \$21.95. Gr. 2-5.

Through exquisite color photos and drawings and a straightforward Spanish text, this series encourages readers to explore nature. The first four titles—*El árbol del olivo: Por dentro y por fuera*, *El girasol: Por dentro y por fuera*, *El maíz: Por dentro y por fuera*, and *El roble: Por dentro y por fuera*—explain basic facts about the growth, reproduction, care, and special characteristics of olive trees, sunflowers, corn, and oak trees. The last four titles—*Abejas: Por dentro y por fuera*, *Arañas: Por dentro y por fuera*, *Búhos: Por dentro y por fuera*, and *Tortugas: Por dentro y por fuera*—discuss the physical characteristics, behavior, reproduction, and life cycles of bees, spiders, owls, and turtles. Each title includes a well-done glossary and an index.

Adolescents

Doyle, Arthur Conan. **El último saludo de Sherlock Holmes** (*His Last Bow*). 284 pp. Trans. from English by Juan Manuel Ibeas. ISBN 84-667-3669-7.



Stevenson, Robert Louis. **Noches en la isla** (*Island Night's Entertainment*). 195 pp. Trans. from English by María Eugenia Santidrián. ISBN 84-667-3668-9.

Each vol.: Madrid: Grupo Anaya, 2004. Series: Tus Libros Selección. \$11.95 (pb). Gr. 9-Adult.

Like previous titles in this series prepared especially for adolescents, these exquisite Spanish renditions include brief introductions to each classic author as well as numerous sidebars and footnotes on almost every page explaining particular concepts and words. Eight of Conan Doyle's last stories in which mystery, murder, and honor predominate are included in *El último saludo de Sherlock Holmes*. Set in the South Seas, *Noches en la isla* includes three stories that depict Stevenson's attachment to the people of the islands. Spanish-speaking adolescents in search of engrossing short stories will

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not be disappointed.



Gifford, Clive. **La enciclopedia del fútbol** (*Soccer: The Ultimate Guide to the Beautiful Game*). Madrid: Ediciones SM, 2003. 96 pp. Illus. Trans. from English by Jimena Licitra. ISBN 84-348-9228-6, \$18.95. Gr. 6-9.

From the history of soccer to the rules, skills, and tactics of the game as well as profiles of legendary players, this attractive book is sure to please soccer aficionados. A succinct text, informative sidebars, and numerous computer-generated images and color photos on every page provide a wealth of information about the sport. The only disappointment to Spanish speakers from the Americas is that

the appendixes highlight information about *Fútbol español* (Soccer in Spain) and web sites from Spain. Despite this caveat, all Spanish speakers will appreciate the glossary, index, and practical information about this popular sport.

Nik. **Gaturro 4**. Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 2004. 96 pp. Illus. by the author. ISBN 950-515-761-4, \$8.95 (pb). Gr. 7-12.

This collection of comic strips features the big-cheeked, big-eyed *Gaturro*, an inquisitive, naive cat that offers quick-witted observations on life's normal and not-so-normal situations. Two to six panels per page present self-contained scenes in which *Gaturro* comments on difficult-to-please *chicas*, presumptuous men, productive and unproductive work, misunderstood people, and other lifelike predicaments. Written in the vernacular of Argentina with amusing wordplay and illustrated with witty, expressive cartoons in bright colors, *Gaturro* will charm fans of the genre.

Seidler, Tor. **Hermanos bajo cero** (*Brothers Below Zero*). León: Editorial Everest, 2004. 118 pp. Trans. from English by Liwayway Alonso. ISBN 84-241-8076-3, \$8.95 (pb). Gr. 6-8.

With the brisk, clear tone and breezy dialogues of the original (published in 2002 by HarperCollins), Alonso's readable Spanish rendition makes this almost sensational novel about sibling rivalry slightly more believable. Although seventh-grader Tim Tuttle tries to measure up to his popular and successful younger brother John Henry, he finds he cannot compete. Intuitively, his kind and eccentric *tía abuela* Winifred encourages him to paint and to avoid comparing himself to his younger brother. John Henry, however, cannot accept his brother's talent and parents' attention. After almost causing his brother's death, John Henry is suddenly repentant, acknowledges his misdeeds, and realizes how much he really cares for Tim. Despite John Henry's quick conversion, the fast-paced plot and honest details about family life will appeal to Spanish-speaking teens.

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For additional high-quality books in Spanish for children and adolescents, go to the "Recommended Books" section of the Barahona Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents web site, www.csusm.edu/csb/.



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