

# From Andersen to pequeño: Children's Books in Spanish

By Isabel Schon

From Hans Christian Andersen's always-popular stories to celebrate the 200th anniversary of his birth, to Terry Deary's witty approach to history, to excellent Spanish renditions of fiction and nonfiction works, these titles, published in Spain and the United States, are sure to please and inform.

## For the Young

Brown, Marc. **D.W. la quisquillosa** (*D.W., the Picky Eater*). New York: Lectorum, 2003. 24 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from English by Esther Sarfatti. ISBN 1-930332-42-4, \$6.95 (pb). Gr. PreK-2.

D.W. is a fussy eater; she doesn't like vegetables, or spaghetti with sauce, or liver. She especially hates spinach. And yet she finally discovers that the delicious meal she just enjoyed was made with *un montón de espinacas*. Sarfatti's Spanish rendition, which maintains the spare, humorous text of the original, and Brown's colored-pencil illustrations, will appeal to all fussy Spanish-speaking eaters.

Carling, Amelia Lau. **La tienda de mamá y papá** (*Mama and Papa Have a Store*). Toronto: Groundwood/Distributed by Publishers Group West, 2003. 32 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from English by Elena and Leopoldo Iribarren. ISBN 0-88899-538-5, \$16.95. Gr. K-3.

The youngest child in a Chinese family that now lives in Guatemala City describes a typical day in her parents' general store: a Mayan weaver family come to buy thread, her family enjoys a happy dinner of Chinese food and *tortillas de maíz*, her brothers and sisters slide down their waxed tin roof against a beautiful Guatemalan landscape, and more. With exquisite detail, the book depicts a joyful intermingling of cultures. This fluid Spanish rendition is marred, unfortunately, by one serious spelling mistake, "elejir" [*sic*]. Despite this caveat, the story and the meticulous watercolor illustrations provide an intimate view into the life of an immigrant family.



Chapra, Mimi. **Amelia's Show-and-Tell Fiesta/Amelia y la fiesta de "muestra y cuenta."** New York: HarperCollins, 2004. 30 pp. Illus. by Martha Avilés. Bilingual ed. Trans. from English by Cristián Pietrapiana. ISBN 0-06-050255-X, \$14.99. Gr. K-2.

Amelia is excited about her first show-and-tell in her new school in the United States. She joyfully decides to wear her special fiesta dress from Cuba, only to

find out that she may have made a mistake *muy grande*. An understanding teacher and classmates help her overcome her embarrassment as she shows her talking skirt and sings "La Bamba." Despite the predictable ending, young children—especially those from other countries who may not be familiar with show-and-tell—will empathize with Amelia's confusion. Unfortunately, because the fluid Spanish rendition follows the English text and appears on the same page in identical color font, size, and face, beginning readers of either language may be confused. Avilés's lively, colorful illustrations perfectly portray the fun of a Cuban fiesta in an American school.

Cousins, Lucy. **¡Crick-ras-flash! Cuenta con Maisy** (*Maisy's Twinkly Crinkly Counting Book*). Barcelona: Serres, 2004. 12 pp. Illus. by the author. ISBN 84-8488-121-0, \$12.95. Ages 1-3.

Maisy's toddler fans will enjoy touching and feeling the cute mouse as they count to five amid bright, bold watercolors and alluring textures in this sturdy board book that invites lots of touching.

Cronin, Doreen. **Jajá, jijí, cuac** (*Giggle, Giggle, Quack*). New York: Lectorum, 2003. 30 pp. Illus. by Betsy Lewin. Trans. from English by Alberto Jiménez Rioja. ISBN 1-930332-46-7, \$15.00. Gr. K-2.

Continuing the fun of the previous farce, *Clic, clac, muu: vacas escritoras, granjero*, Brown now goes on vacation and leaves his brother Bob to take care of the animals. *Pato*, however, intervenes, which results in pizzas for the animals, bubble baths for the pigs, and a movie, *El Sonido de la Música*. Jiménez Rioja's mirthful Spanish rendition and the original line-and-watercolor cartoons make *Pato's* antics a joyous, messy combination.

Le Saux, Alain and Solotareff, Grégoire. **Pequeño museo/Little Museum**. Bilingual ed. Trans. from French into Spanish by Margarida Trias, into English by Esther Sarfatti. Barcelona:



Corimbo, 2004. 308 pp. ISBN 84-8470-170-0, \$30.95. Gr. 1-4.

Illustrated with details from 149 paintings by world-renowned painters such as Bellini, Rubens, and Picasso, this attractive, 6" x 6" "little museum" introduces 149 words in Spanish in alphabetical order—from *águila*/eagle to *zapatos*/shoes—followed by the English translation. Each reproduction includes notes in both languages informing readers about

the artist, title, date, and museum. Painter indexes are also

included. Despite the caveat that definite articles are not provided (How will Spanish learners know that it is [el] águila, [el] árbol, and [la] torre?), young artists-to-be will be intrigued. Mattern, Joanne. **Astronautas** (*Astronauts*). ISBN 0-8239-6842-1.

\_\_\_\_\_. **Brigadas aéreas contraincendios** (*Smoke jumpers*). ISBN 0-8239-6844-8.

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\_\_\_\_\_. **Policía montada** (*Mounted Police*). ISBN 0-8239-6843-X.

\_\_\_\_\_. **Técnicos en emergencias médicas** (*Emergency Medical Technicians*). ISBN 0-8239-6839-1.

Ea. vol.: New York: Editorial Buenas Letras/Rosen, 2003. 24 pp. Illus. with photos. Series: Trabajo en Grupo. \$12.95. Gr. 1-3.

Emphasizing how astronauts, smoke jumpers, chefs, pilots, mounted police, and emergency medical technicians work as team members to perform their duties, this easy-to-read series, with clear color photos and a few sentences per page, provides beginning Spanish readers or reluctant readers with a basic introduction to their work, equipment, and special challenges. Each title includes a glossary, an index, and suggestions for further reading (in English only).

Miller, William. **Richard Wright y el carné de biblioteca** (*Richard Wright and the Library Card*). New York: Lee & Low, 2003. 32 pp. Illus. by Gregory Christie. Trans. from English by Eida de la Vega. ISBN 1-58430-180-5, \$16.95. Gr. 2-5.

Just as powerful as the original English version, De la Vega's straightforward Spanish rendition of a fictionalized episode from Richard Wright's autobiography depicts the restrictions African Americans in the segregated South of the 1920s faced in public libraries. Christie's impressionistic acrylic and colored pencil illustrations add to the somber tone in which a young man has to lie and pretend that he is illiterate to be able to enter the library and read wonderful books.

Nobisso, Josephine. **En inglés, por supuesto** (*In English, of Course*). New York: Gingerbread House, 2003. 34 pp. Illus. by Dasha Ziborova. Trans. from English by Rosario Pérez. ISBN 0-940112-16-7, \$8.95 (pb). Gr. 1-3.

Josephine, an Italian immigrant, and her classmates are asked by their teacher to introduce themselves. Although she and some of her classmates cannot speak English—here presented in Spanish—well, they nevertheless try. Josephine tries to tell them about her native Napoli, which results in humorous miscommunications. As she supplements her limited Spanish with vocal expressions, body language, and unusual Spanish words and usages, she tells her story and learns new words. Finally, her teacher understands her. Young Spanish speakers will empathize with Josephine's efforts to communicate, but may be confused by the stumbling Spanish text. Nonetheless, Ziborova's lively mixed-media collages maintain

the humorous tone of the original English rendition.

Patricelli, Leslie. **Grande pequeño** (*Big Little*). ISBN 970-29-0988-0.

\_\_\_\_\_. **Silencio ruido** (*Quiet Loud*). ISBN 970-29-0987-2.

Ea. vol.: Miami, Fla.: Santillana, 2003. Illus. by the author. Trans. from English by P. Rozarena. \$7.95. Gr. PreK.



Originally published by Walker Books Limited, London, these enchanting board books are just right to introduce the very young to the concept of contrasts. The cheerful cartoonish illustrations of a diaper-clad toddler against a flat background in bright colors add immeasurably to the easy-to-understand descriptions of big/little

and quiet/loud. The only caveat is that the picture captions at the end of each book do not include definite articles. How will Spanish learners learn that *nube* is *la nube* and *tambor* is *el tambor*?

### Books for Middle Readers

Andersen, Hans Christian. **La cerillera** (*The Little Match Girl*). 27 pp. Illus. by Toril Marø Henrichsen. ISBN 84-241-1682-8.

\_\_\_\_\_. **El compañero de viaje** (*The Traveling Companion*). 31 pp. Illus. by Elfriede and Eberhard Binder. ISBN 84-241-1680-1.

\_\_\_\_\_. **Los cisnes salvajes** (*The Wild Swans*). 45p. Illus. by Juan Ramón Alonso. ISBN 84-241-1685-2.

\_\_\_\_\_. **La hija del Rey de los Pantanos** (*The Swamp King's Daughter*). 32 pp. Illus. by Tiziana Gironi. ISBN 84-241-1681-X.

\_\_\_\_\_. **El patito feo** (*The Ugly Duckling*). 47 pp. Illus. by Tiziana Gironi. ISBN 84-241-1686-0.

\_\_\_\_\_. **Pulgarcita** (*Thumbelina*). 28 pp. Illus. by Toril Marø Henrichsen. ISBN 84-241-1683-6.

\_\_\_\_\_. **La Reina de las Nieves** (*The Snow Queen*). 45 pp. Illus. by Uwe Häntschi. ISBN 84-241-1687-9.

\_\_\_\_\_. **El ruiseñor** (*The Nightingale*). 45 pp. Illus. by François Crozat. ISBN 84-241-1688-7.

\_\_\_\_\_. **La sirenita** (*The Little Mermaid*). 32 pp. Illus. by Hubert Sergeant. ISBN 84-241-1679-8.

\_\_\_\_\_. **Totalmente cierto** (*It's Absolutely True!*). 28 pp. Illus. by François Crozat. ISBN 84-241-1684-4.

Ea. vol.: León, Spain: Everest, 2005. Trans. from Danish by María Victoria Martínez Vega. \$17.95. Gr. 3–6.

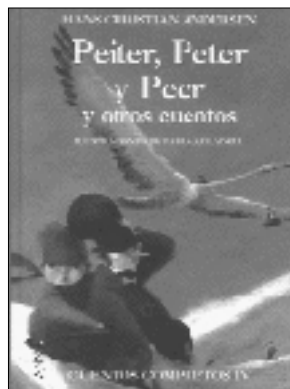


Andersen's classic tales are always popular in the Spanish-speaking world, especially so in 2005, which celebrates the 200th anniversary of his birth. Like other Spanish versions, most of these are over-sentimental renditions with a strong dose of religious overtones. Nonetheless the full-page color illustrations will entice loyal Andersen fans. Spanish speakers from the Americas will note the

Peninsular Spanish

pronouns and conjugations used throughout, such as *comprendéis*, *matadme*, *os apartéis*, *vosotros*, *seguidme*. My favorites in this series are *El patito feo*, the beloved story of an unhappy, ugly duckling who is ostracized by the other animals until he grows into a beautiful swan and *Totalmente cierto*, one of Andersen's lesser-known works, which highlights the effects of gossip, particularly when an insignificant feather can result in five dead hens.

Andersen, Hans Christian. **Peiter, Peter y Peer y otros cuentos** (*Peiter, Peter and Peer and Other Stories*). Madrid: Anaya, 2004. 286 pp. Illus. by



Pablo Auladell. Trans. from Danish by Enrique Bernárdez. ISBN 84-667-4012-0, \$22.95. Gr. 4–7.

This smooth Spanish rendition of *Samlede Eventyr of Historier*, first published in 1874, includes 39 stories written by Andersen between 1865 and

1872 when he was over 60. Although none is as well known as his popular tales, Andersen fans will find the nostalgia and mournfulness that characterize this author in such stories as "La tetera" (The Teapot), "El bisabuelo" (Great-Grandfather), and "El cometa" (The Comet). Children will enjoy Auladell's sensitive, dark-toned watercolors, which are scattered throughout the book. Adults will appreciate the well-written prologue and appendix.

Arnold, Nick. **Esa poderosa energía** (*Killer Energy*). 144 pp. Trans. from English by Josefina Cabal Guerrero. ISBN 84-272-2093-6.

———. **Esos experimentos explosivos** (*Explosive Experiments*). 192 pp. Trans. from English by Conchita Peraire del Molino. ISBN 84-272-2094-4.

Ea. vol.: Barcelona: Molino/Planeta, 2003. Illus. by Tony De Saulles. Series: Esa Horrible Ciencia. \$9.95 (pb). Gr. 5–8.

Like the previous 25 titles of this delightful, easy-to-understand series, originally published by Scholastic, London, these unassuming paperback publications with numerous black-and-white cartoonish drawings, witty explanations, amusing sidebars, and a lighthearted text will certainly appeal to reluctant readers interested in science. From *¿Qué es la energía?* (What is energy?) to energy as a source of usable power, from energy consumption to the big bang theory, a

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number of key concepts are discussed in *Esa poderosa energía*. Explosive experiments that have been done around the world—from Galileo and William Harvey to amazing brain studies and unusual experiments in chemistry, light, and electricity—are explained in *Esos experimentos explosivos*.

Ball, Jackie and Behrens, Kristen. **Nueva York: El estado imperial** (*New York: The Empire State*). ISBN 0-8368-5546-9.

Barenblat, Rachel. **Texas: El estado de la estrella solitaria** (*Texas: The Lone Star State*). ISBN 0-8368-5547-7.

Chui, Patricia. **Florida: El estado del sol** (*Florida: The Sunshine State*). ISBN 0-8368-5543-4.

Feeley, Kathleen. **Illinois: El estado pradera** (*Illinois: The Prairie State*). ISBN 0-8368-5544-2.

Holtz, Eric Siegfried. **Nueva Jersey: El estado jardín** (*New Jersey: The Garden State*). ISBN 0-8368-5545-0.

Ingram, Scott. **California: El estado dorado** (*California: The Golden State*). ISBN 0-8368-5542-6.


Ea. vol.: Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens, 2004. 48 pp. Series: World Almanac Biblioteca de los Estados. \$21.95. Set ISBN 0-8368-5541-8, \$131.70. Gr. 5-8.

These six titles from Gareth Stevens's World Almanac Library of the States series are now available in smooth Spanish renditions with clear, easy-to-understand graphs, charts, sidebars, maps, and time lines as well as attractive photographs and an appealing design. Each title provides a factual profile and an introduction to the state's history, people, government, economy, culture, lifestyle, and special attractions.

Deary, Terry. *La horrible historia del mundo* (*The Wicked History of the World*). Barcelona: Molino, 2003. 93 pp. Illus. by Martin Brown. Trans. from English by Josefina Caball Guerrero. ISBN 84-272-2050-2, \$19.95. Gr. 5-8.

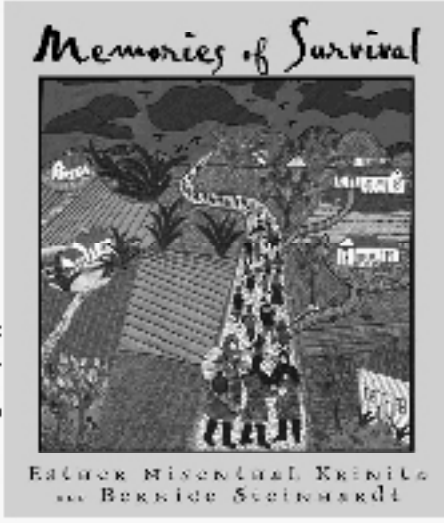
In contrast to Deary's previous paperback series *Esa Horrible Historia* (*Horrible History*) with Brown's characteristic black-and-white cartoon illustrations, this large-format edition is vividly illustrated with Brown's always witty, now color cartoons. In his inimitable style, Deary describes *los seres más abominables, perversos crueles y horribles* (the most detestable, perverse, cruel, and horrible beings) in history. From "horrible" aspects of prehistoric men to the "grim" laws of Mesopotamia, from "depravities" in ancient Rome up to the terrible wars of the twentieth century, he concludes in the epilogue by quoting Hegel: "*No aprendemos nada de la historia...*

*pero aprendemos mucho de los horrores de la historia.*" ("We don't learn anything from history...but we learn a lot from history's horrors.") Purists may be offended, but reluctant history readers will welcome this candid and witty approach to history.

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/](http://www.csusm.edu/csb/). Isabel Schon is director of the Barahona Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents at California State University, San Marcos. 

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