

# From *Hansel y Gretel* to 9/11/2001: Recent Books in Spanish

by Isabel Schon



From modernist bilingual editions of classic tales, to the always popular Harry Potter, to pacifism and 9/11, these books recently published in the United States, Spain, and Mexico will entice Spanish speakers and a growing number of Spanish learners.

## Young Readers

Abeyà, Elisabet. *Hansel and Gretel/Hansel y Gretel*. Illus. by Cristina Losantos. ISBN 0-8118-4793-4.

Ros, Roser. *The Musicians of Bremen/Los músicos de Bremen*. Illus. by Pep Montserrat. ISBN 0-811-4795-0.

Ea. vol.: 24 pp. Bilingual (Spanish-English) ed. English translation by Elizabeth Bell. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2005. \$14.95. Gr.1-3.

Maintaining the rhythm and cadence of the original Spanish-language adaptations, these bilingual editions with modernist watercolor-and-ink illustrations give an updated look to the classic tales. Whether enjoying them as read-alouds or as independent reading, English and Spanish speakers will celebrate as Gretel and Hansel delight in the mean witch's treasures in *Hansel and Gretel/Hansel y Gretel*, and as four aging animals find a new home after outwitting a gang of robbers in *The Musicians of Bremen/Los músicos de Bremen*.

Argueta, Jorge. *Moony Luna/Luna, lunita lunera*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 2005. 32 pp. Illus. by Elizabeth Gómez. Bilingual (Spanish-English) ed. ISBN 0-89239-205-3, \$16.95. Gr. K—2.

Although *mami* and *papi* reassure five-year-old Marisol that school is a fun place, she worries about ugly monsters with scary voices that live there. Even if she is now “*soy grande como la luna llena/as big as the full moon*,” she still worries and hides under a table as soon as she arrives. But after spending a happy day with her kind teacher and friendly classmates, she knows that “*En esta escuela no viven monstruos feos/no monsters live at my school*.” It is regrettable that the layout of Argueta's simple bilingual text—the Spanish text is followed by the English in the same font and size—may confuse beginning readers of either language. Despite this caveat, Gómez's whimsical, bright illustrations, brimming with a loving Latino family and a childlike monster that is seen disappearing as Marisol becomes comfortable at school, will gently remind readers and listeners of other personal fears/monsters that also seem to disappear.

Berner, Rotraut Susanne. *El libro de la primavera (The Book of Spring)*. Madrid: Anaya, 2005. 16 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from German by Moka Seco. ISBN 84-667-4526-2, \$19.95. Gr. Preschool—K.

When spring arrives, people and animals are eager to enjoy the good weather. In a delightful large-format board book, this wordless picture story with lively, detailed pen-and-watercolor illustrations originally published by Verlag, Germany, depicts busy scenes of families, friends, and their animals getting ready to leave their homes, going to a farm, taking a train, visiting a museum and a library, shopping in a plaza and a large department store, and enjoying a day in the park. The appropriately placed labels, framed within the illustrations, will assist beginning Spanish readers to identify a *Gasolinera* (gas station), *Salidas* (Departures), *Frutas y Verduras* (Fruits and Vegetables), and other pertinent areas. Amid the whimsy, lovers of detail will enjoy the bustle.

Browne, Anthony. *Mi mamá* (*My mom*). Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005. 24 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from English by Andrea Fuentes. ISBN 968-16-7375-1, \$15.95. Gr. Preschool—2.

Maintaining the carefree tone of its predecessor, *Mi papá* (*My Dad*), the book's child narrator now provides an exalted portrait of his/her mother. Introducing an average flowered-robe-clad mother as *Es linda mi mamá* (She's nice, my mom), she is also a *fantástica cocinera* (great cook), juggler, painter, gardener, fairy godmother, singer, who at times roars like a lion and is as forceful as a rhinoceros, yet *¡Si que es Linda, LINDA, MUY LINDA, mi mama!* (She is really, really nice!) Browne's always engaging chalk-and-gouache full-page illustrations with humorous allusions to Marilyn Monroe, Superwoman, and other far-fetched characters conclude with a loving mother fondly embracing the child. Spanish-speaking parents and the little ones will appreciate the fancy amid the candor.

Pfister, Marcus. *El pez arco iris: colores/Rainbow Fish: Colors*. ISBN 0-7358-1978-5.

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Ea. vol. 24 pp. New York: North-South Books, 2005. Illus. by the author. Bilingual (English-Spanish) ed. \$4.99 (pb). Ages 1—3.

The always popular *Pez arco iris/Rainbow Fish*, now in a simple bilingual board book edition, introduces toddlers to nine colors and ten numbers in two languages. Colorful images face bold labels in English and, in a lighter typeface, in Spanish. Pfister uses his seductive iridescent fish scales only on the cover and last page of each title, announcing that there is "only one glittering Rainbow Fish/*Pero sólo un pez arco iris brillante!*" Just right for parents looking for enticing bilingual board books for their youngsters.

## Middle Grades

Alarcón, Francisco X. *Poems to Dream Together/Poemas para soñar juntos*. New York: Lee & Low, 2005. 32 pp. Illus. by

Paula Barragán. Bilingual (Spanish-English) ed. ISBN 1-58430-233-X, \$16.95. Gr.3—5.

Alarcón celebrates families, communities, and life in this bilingual collection of poems. Especially appealing are his short poems, which tell about dreams, nightmares, real questions, and happy feelings. Others, with a not-so-subtle didactic intent (helping *Mamá* with household chores, working in the family garden) will remind readers of family sermons or preachy verses. Nonetheless, Barragán's pencil, cut paper, and gouache digital renditions with a strong Latino flavor add a more joyful imaginative tone.

Andersen, Hans Christian. *El árbol de Navidad* (*The Christmas Tree*). 24 pp. ISBN 84-241-1628-3.

---. *La cerillera* (*The Little Match Girl*). 24 pp. ISBN 84-241-1632-1.

---. *El porquerizo* (*The Swineherd*). 24 pp. ISBN 84-241-1627-5.

---. *La reina de las nieves* (*The Snow Queen*). 32 pp. ISBN 84-241-1629-1.

---. *La sirenita* (*The Little Mermaid*). 47 pp. ISBN 84-241-1633-X.

---. *El soldadito de plomo* (*The Steadfast Tin Soldier*). 24 pp. ISBN 84-241-1630-5.

---. *El traje nuevo del emperador* (*The Emperor's New Clothes*). 24 pp. ISBN 84-241-1631-3.

Ea. vol.: León: Everest, 2005. Adapted by Arnica Esterl. Illus. by Anastassija Archipowa. Trans. from German by María Victoria Martínez Vega. \$18.95. Gr. 2—4.

As in the originals, most of these stories—*La cerillera* (*The Little Match Girl*); *El porquerizo* (*The Swineherd*); *La reina de las nieves* (*The Snow Queen*); *La sirenita* (*The Little Mermaid*); *El soldadito de plomo* (*The Steadfast Tin Soldier*)—depict the heavenly rewards for their worthy protagonists as well as the loneliness and suffering that are necessary for happiness and growth. The snappy, fluid Spanish texts, which are just right for individual reading or reading aloud, are accompanied by detailed full-page pastel illustrations that complement the tone and message of each story. Although these fresh Spanish renditions based on Esterl's adaptations omit some details, they nevertheless follow Andersen's stories fairly closely. My favorites are *El porquerizo*, a lively and accessible retelling of the familiar story about the rejected prince who disguises himself as a swineherd and ultimately rejects the arrogant princess, and *El traje nuevo del emperador*, an equally spirited rendition of one of Andersen's most popular stories in which everyone, except a child, is afraid to tell the ostentatious emperor the truth about his clothes. Despite a few

Peninsular Spanish pronouns and conjugations (e.g., *dejadlo, tendríais, vosotras*), Spanish speakers from the Americas will enjoy.

Gnojewski, Carol. *Cinco de Mayo: Se celebra el orgullo (Cinco de Mayo: Celebrating Hispanic Pride)*. Trans. from English by Carolina Jusid. ISBN 0-7660-2616-7.

---. *El Día de los muertos: Una celebración de la familia y la vida (Day of the Dead: A Latino Celebration of Family and Life)*. Trans. from English by Romina C. Cinquemani. ISBN 0-7660-2615-9.

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Landau, Elaine. *El Día de Acción de Gracias: Un momento para agradecer (Thanksgiving Day: A time to be Thankful)*. Trans. from English by Romina C. Cinquemani. ISBN 0-7660-2618-3.

---. *El Día de Colón: Celebramos a un explorador famoso (Columbus Day: Celebrating a Famous Explorer)*. Trans. from English by Carolina Jusid. ISBN 0-7660-2619-1.

---. *El Día de San Valentín: Caramelos, amor y corazones (Valentine's Day: Candy, Love and Hearts)*. Trans. from English by Susana C. Schultz. ISBN 0-7660-2613-2.

Robinson, Fay. *Halloween: Disfraces y golosinas en la Víspera de Todos los Santos (Halloween: Costumes and Treats on All Hallows' Eve)*. Trans. from English by Romina C. Cinquemani. ISBN 0-7660-2614-0.

Ea. vol.: Berkeley Heights, N.J.: Enslow, 2005. 48 pp. Series: *Días Festivos*. \$23.93. Gr. 3—5.

Following the attractive presentations of the English originals with clear color photos and art reproductions, large fonts, and simple sidebars, these serviceable Spanish renditions present historical and cultural information about holidays for new readers. Unfortunately, incomplete and at times clumsy glossaries and a few awkward, stilted translations mar this otherwise noteworthy series. The importance of the battle on May 5, 1862, in which the Mexican army and people of the city of Puebla fought the French army is recounted in lively fashion in *Cinco de Mayo: Se celebra el orgullo*. Mexican beliefs about death, cemeteries, and celebrations on the Day of the Dead are explained in *El Día de los Muertos: Una celebración de la familia y la vida*. Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and the National Civil Rights Museum are honored in *El Día de Martin Luther King, Jr.: Honramos a un hombre de paz*.

A brief historical background of Thanksgiving Day in 1620 in Plymouth, Massachusetts, as well as Chinese, Jewish, and contemporary Thanksgiving celebrations in American cit-

ies are described in *El Día de Acción de Gracias: Un momento para agradecer*. The life of Christopher Columbus, the Italian explorer, who in 1492 in the service of Spain arrived in the New World, is retold in *El Día de Colón: Celebramos a un explorador famoso*. The origins and various ways of celebrating Valentine's Day around the world are discussed in *El Día de San Valentín: Caramelos, amor y corazones*. The beginnings, traditions, and symbols of Halloween and modern Halloween celebrations are explained in *Halloween: Disfraces y golosinas en la Víspera de Todos los Santos*.

McDonald, Megan. *Judy Moody (Judy Moody)*. 166 pp. ISBN 1-59437-816-9.

---. *Judy Moody adivina el futuro (Judy Moody Predicts the Future)*. 162 pp. ISBN 1-59437-837-1.

---. *Judy Moody salva el planeta (Judy Moody Saves the World)*. 167 pp. ISBN 1-59437-838-X.

---. *¡Judy Moody se vuelve famosa! (Judy Moody Gets Famous!)*. 142 pp. ISBN 1-59437-817-7.

Ea. vol.: Miami, Fla.: Santillana USA, 2004. Illus. by Peter H. Reynolds. Adapted by Isabel Mendoza. Trans. from English by Atalaire. \$7.95 (pb). Gr. 3—5.

With the easy-to-read, engaging style of the originals, these jovial Spanish renditions highlight Judy Moody, a zestfully enthusiastic third grader, whose adventures and ideas are as universal as children everywhere. It is important to note that the scarcity of books in Spanish that depict life's frustrations and challenges from a child's perspective make these books even more appealing to Spanish-speaking children. And, of course, Reynolds's witty black-and-white, watercolor, and pen-and-ink illustrations further enhance the humorous prose, snappy dialogue, and brief chapters that make this series irresistible. *Judy Moody* introduces the spirited protagonist, who happens to be in a bad mood the first day of school until she gets an intriguing assignment: *preparar un collage sobre sí mismos* (to create a "me" collage). Although Judy obtains a mood ring that describes her *de un humor insoportable* (in a grouchy, impossible mood), she still tries to convince her classmates that she can predict the future in *Judy Moody adivina el futuro*. After Judy fails to win *un concurso de curitas* (an adhesive bandage design contest), she inspires her class to become involved in a major environment-saving project in *Judy Moody salva el planeta*. Because Judy can't even spell *Berenjena*, she can't win a spelling bee, yet she is still determined to find a way to become famous in *¡Judy Moody se vuelve famosa!*

Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter y la Orden del Fénix (Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix)*. Barcelona: Salamandra, 2004. 893 pp. Trans. from English by Gemma Rovira Ortega. ISBN 84-7888-742-3, \$25.95. Gr. 5—10.

Despite the 893 pages of small print, Spanish-speaking fans will be just as enthusiastic about this fifth installment of

Harry Potter's magical adventures. Now a 15-year-old, typical teenager, Harry finds himself upset at the *Ministerio de Magia*, the mean *profesora* Dolores Umbridge, and other hypocritical adults who neither understand nor care for the students at the school. The occasional Peninsular Spanish pronouns and conjugations (*os turnáis, vosotros habéis*) will not deter Spanish-speaking fans from the Americas to applaud a maturing Harry as he confronts his own sometimes awkward emotions in this long and imaginative coming-of-age story.

## Adolescents

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *El archivo de Sherlock Holmes (The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes)*. 329 pp. Trans. from English by Juan Manuel Ibeas. ISBN 84-667-4527-0.

Twain, Mark. *Las aventuras de Tom Sawyer (The Adventures of Tom Sawyer)*. 296 pp. Trans. from English by Doris Rolfe. ISBN 84-667-4528-9.

Ea. vol.: Madrid: Anaya, 2005. Series: Tus Libros Selección. \$11.95 (pb). Gr. 9—Adult.

Delightful Spanish renditions characterize this series, especially prepared for adolescents, which includes numerous sidebars and footnotes on almost every page explaining particular words and concepts and brief introductions to each author. The last twelve stories written by Doyle about Sherlock Holmes, including *El problema del puente Thor (The Problem of Thor Bridge)*, one of the favorites of his numerous admirers, are included in *El archivo de Sherlock Holmes*. Set in the 1830s in a small Mississippi River town, *Las aventuras de Tom Sawyer* highlights the adventures of Tom, a mischievous orphan boy, who is as irresponsible as he is good-hearted. Generations of Spanish speakers continue to enjoy these longtime classics of the English language.

Gavin, James. *Deep in a Dream: La larga noche de Chet Baker (The Long Night of Chet Baker)*. Barcelona: Mondadori, 2004. 574 pp. Trans. from English by Juan Manuel Ibeas. ISBN 84-397-1058-5, \$27.95 (pb). Gr. 10—Adult.

With the polished style of the original, Ibeas's Spanish rendition chronicling the life and times of the acclaimed trumpet player and vocalist Chet Baker is certainly not for the fainthearted. Jazz enthusiasts, however, will not be dissuaded by the intensity of this well-researched biography, which offers numerous details of Baker's personal and professional life. Heroin addiction, violence, and abusive personal relationships ultimately destroy his talent and lead to his death in a drug-infested street in Amsterdam. Despite the almost 600 pages of text, which also include notes, a bibliography, and candid black-and-white photos, mature Spanish-

speaking adolescents around the world will be fascinated by the life of this tragic musical legend, whose many flaws are here painfully depicted.

*Red Hot Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Being Young and Latino in the United States*. New York: Holt, 2005. 140 pp. Edited by Lori Marie Carlson. Bilingual (English-Spanish) ed. ISBN 0-8050-7616-6, \$14.95. Gr. 8—12.

Through deeply felt poems offered in English and Spanish, Latino authors portray their personal histories and special feelings about growing up Latino in the United States. Written in a lively mix of "streety English hip-hop," conventional Spanish, and a composite of both, these are a testimony to the wealth and diversity of the two languages. It is unfortunate that although the English translations maintain the lyricism and beauty of the original Spanish poems, several of the Spanish translations are awkward and confusing; for example, *Mi poema a la comida más corto* [sic] (p.15) and *sin embargo anhelo vivir y quedarme vivo* (p.115). What a disappointment!

Sierra i Fabra, Jordi. *La guerra de mi hermano (My Brother's War)*. Madrid: SM, 2004. 169 pp. ISBN 84-675-0178-2, \$11.95 (pb). Gr. 9—12.

Set in Spain shortly after 9/11, this novel highlights the strong reactions about the *misión humanitaria* (humanitarian mission) in the Middle East as experienced by a Spanish family: Seventeen-year-old Gabriel, a committed pacifist and severe critic of the Bush administration's policies in Iraq, who introduces each chapter with *El día que mi hermano se marchó a la Guerra . . .* (The day my brother went to war . . .); Marcos, who is eager to serve in a peaceful mission; the father, who knows terrorism should be defeated; the mother, who loves her son and can't stand the idea of his going to war; and other siblings, who can't understand. Some readers will certainly disagree with the frequent authorial asides expressing anti-American ideas. Others will question the political diatribes, and still others, the one-dimensional characters—pro-war, antiwar, loving mother, materialistic sister. Nonetheless, this novel has already proven popular among Spanish-speaking adolescents.

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For additional high-quality books in Spanish for children and adolescents, please visit 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/).

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