

From Soccer and Pirates to Sex and Drugs: Recommended Books in Spanish for Young Readers

Isabel Schon

Fortunately, the selection of high-quality books in Spanish for young Spanish speakers and Spanish learners in the United States and internationally is constantly increasing. From simple bilingual biographies to delightful stories about female pigs and lime-green monsters for the very young, from memorable Russian tales and fluid Spanish renditions of fictional historical events to straightforward, candid books about nutrition and health for adolescents, these books, published in the United States, Mexico, and Spain are sure to engage Spanish-speaking children and adolescents and perhaps offend some adults.

For the Young

Contró, Arturo. *Cristiano Ronaldo*. ISBN 978-1-4042-7669-7.

———. *Gianluigi Buffon*. ISBN 978-1-4042-7668-0.

———. *Landon Donovan*. ISBN 978-1-4042-7666-6.

———. *Rafael Márquez*. ISBN: 978-1-4042-7667-3.

Obregón, José María. *David Beckham*. ISBN 978-1-4042-7665-9.

———. *Ronaldinho*. ISBN 978-1-4042-7664-2.



Ea. vol.: New York: Rosen/Editorial Buenas Letras, 2008. 24 pp. Illus. with photos. English translation by Megan Benson. Series: World Soccer Stars/Estrellas del Fútbol Mundial. \$21.25. Gr. 1-3.

Simple bilingual texts and candid color photos describe the lives and achievements of six world soccer stars—Cristiano Ronaldo, Gianluigi Buffon, Landon Donovan, Rafael Márquez, David Beckham, and Ronaldinho.

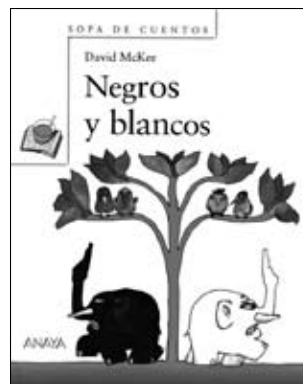
Lasky, Kathryn. *El pirata Bob* (Pirate Bob). Barcelona: Editorial Juventud, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by David Clark. Trans. from English by María Lucchetti. ISBN 978-84-261-3568-1, \$17.99. Gr. K-3.

El pirata Bob (Pirate Bob), like all other pirates, is mean, greedy, and heartless, but what he fears most is losing his pirate friend, *Jack*



el Amarillo (Yellow Jack). After burying his treasure, he looks for true friends and, as opposed to other bandit-pirates, *el pirata Bob* wonders: *seré feliz . . . creo* (I will be happy . . . maybe). Clark's exaggerated ink-and-watercolor illustrations are as enjoyable as Lucchetti's lively Spanish rendition. Originally published

by Charlesbridge Publishing, this pirate story will appeal to young Spanish speakers in search of buccaneer action and close friends.



McKee, David. *Negros y blancos* (*Tusk, Tusk*). Madrid: Anaya, 2008. 27 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from English by Juan Ramón Azaola. ISBN 978-84-667-7646-2, \$7.95. Gr. K-2.

White elephants hate black elephants, and black elephants hate white elephants. Not surprisingly, the result is a most unfortunate war. Fortunately, new young grey elephants now live in peace. Simple

black line and bright watercolor illustrations complement this tale of war, peace, and getting along. This book was originally published with the title *Tusk, Tusk*.



Mettler, René. *Album visual de la naturaleza y sus cambios mes a mes* (Nature: Month to Month). Madrid: Bruño, 2008. 33 pp. Trans. from French by Aquilino Álvarez. ISBN 978-84-216-8031-5, \$40.00. Gr. 2-4.

The change of seasons is described through the eyes of the author of this title that first appeared in French in 1997. Double-page spreads and foldouts with beautiful nature scenes complement this personal view of the seasons.

Randolph, Joanne. *Ambulances/Ambulancias*. ISBN 978-1-4042-7670-3.

———. *Coast Guard Boats/Lanchas guardacostas*. ISBN 978-1-4042-7671-0.

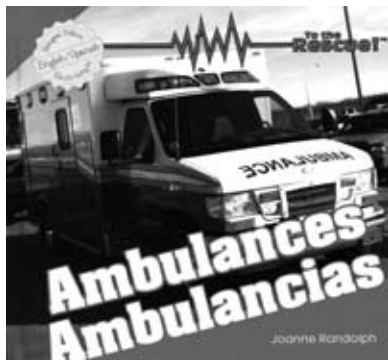
———. *Emergency Helicopters/Helicópteros de emergencia*. ISBN 978-1-4042-7672-7.

———. *Fire Trucks/Camiones de bomberos*. ISBN 978-1-4042-7673-4.

———. *Police Cars/Patrullas*. ISBN 978-1-4042-7674-1.

———. *Tow Trucks/Grúas*. ISBN 978-1-4042-7675-8.

Ea. vol.: New York: Rosen/Editorial Buenas Letras, 2008. 24 pp. Spanish translation by Eduardo Alamán. Series: To the Rescue. \$21.25. Gr. K-1.



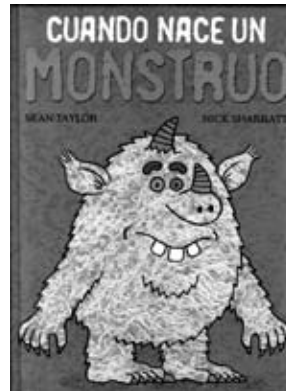
In a most simple bilingual text (one sentence per page), young readers are exposed to the work of rescue vehicles—ambulances, coast guard boats, emergency helicopters, fire trucks, police cars, and tow trucks—and the workers who use them. To avoid confusing English and Spanish learners, the fluid Spanish rendition follows the English in a lighter font. Each title includes a “Word to Know/Palabras que debes saber.”

Stehr, Frédéric. *Las tres cerditas* (*The Three Little Pigs*). Barcelona: Corimbo, 2006. 28 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from French by Ana Coll-Vinent. ISBN 978-84-8470-005-0, \$ 24.50. Ages 4-7.



This delightful version of the three little female pigs is a joyous tale of genders reversed. The first female pig, *cerdita*, is eaten by an elegantly clad wolf, *lobo*, disguised as a pig. The second female *cerdita* is also deceived by the disguised *lobo*. But the third *cerdita*, who manages to outwit the ferocious *lobo*, thrives in the admiration of all the male pigs. The appropriately witty line-and-watercolor full-page spreads will charm all boys and girls. Originally published by Lécôle des loisirs, Paris, in 1997.

Taylor, Sean. *Cuando nace un monstruo*. (*When a Monster Is Born*). Barcelona: Juventud, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Nick Sharratt. Trans. from English by María Lucchetti. ISBN 978-84-261-3564-3, \$20.99. Ages 4-6.



Things happen when monsters live in *los bosques lejanos* (the Faraway-in-the Forests Monsters) or *debajo de tu cama* (the Under-Your-Bed Monsters). They either sit down quietly and play basketball or they eat the school principal. The either/or scenarios will entrance young Spanish speakers as they wonder what monsters do when they dance, sleep, fall in love, and have a baby monster. Sharratt's bright illustrations featuring lime-green and violet monsters are as engaging as Lucchetti's circular Spanish rendition.

For the Middle Grades

Adams, Simon. *Alejandro: El joven que conquistó el mundo* (*Alexander: The Boy Soldier Who Conquered the World*). Trans. from English by Patricia Helena Hernández. ISBN-10 970-770-741-0.

Kramer, Ann. *Mandela: El rebelde que dirigió a su nación a la libertad* (*Mandela: The Rebel Who Led His Nation to Freedom*). Trans. from English by Patricia Helena Hernández. ISBN-10 970-770-739-9.

Malam, John. *Leonardo Da Vinci: El genio que definió el Renacimiento* (*Leonardo Da Vinci: The Genius That Defined the Renaissance*). Trans. from English by Wendy P. López. ISBN-10 970-770-765-8.

McCarty, Nick. *Marco Polo: El hombre que viajó por el mundo medieval* (*Marco Polo: The Boy Who Traveled the Medieval World*). Trans. from English by Wendy P. López. ISBN 970-770-763-1.

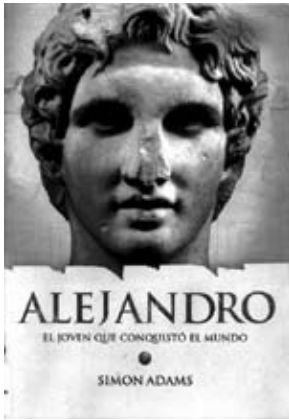
Steele, Philip. *Galileo: El genio que se enfrentó a la Inquisición* (*Galileo: The Genius Who Faced the Inquisition*). Trans. from English by Patricia Helena Hernández. ISBN-10 970-770-740-2.

———. *Marie Curie: La mujer que cambió el curso de la ciencia* (*Marie Curie: The Woman Who Changed the Course of Science*). Trans. from English by Wendy P. López. ISBN-10 970-770-764-X.

Ea. vol.: México: Santillana, 2006. 64 pp. Series: Biografías de Personajes Importantes en la Historia del Mundo. \$28.95. Gr. 4-7.

Originally published by Marshall Editions, London, these attractively designed biographies present the lives and accomplishments of outstanding people in the history of the world. With clear color photos, a brief text, numerous sidebars and simple time lines, these are indeed engaging, easy-to-understand introductions to the times and achievements of each person. Each title includes a glossary, a bibliography, and an index.

The most important successes in the life of Alexander, the Great are described in *Alejandro: El joven que conquistó el mundo*. Nelson Mandela's political ventures and the turmoil that affected South Africa for over a century are included in *Mandela: El rebelde que dirigió a su nación a la libertad*. The genius of Leonardo Da Vinci as



a scientist, painter, sculptor, architect, inventor, and musician is highlighted in *Leonardo Da Vinci: El genio que definió el Renacimiento*. Marco Polo's life as a ceaseless explorer is featured in *Marco Polo: El hombre que viajó por el mundo medieval*. Galileo's influence in the development of modern mathematical physics is explained in *Galileo: El genio que se enfrentó a la Inquisición*. Marie Curie's contributions to the discovery of radioactivity, radium, and polonium are described in *Marie Curie: La mujer que cambió*

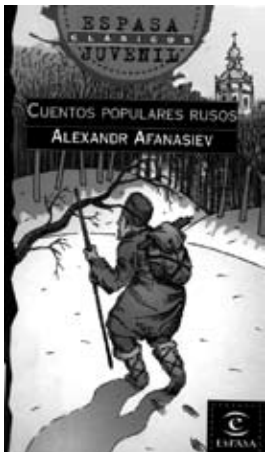
el curso de la ciencia. These are indeed noteworthy biographies for young Spanish speakers.

Afanásiev, A. N. *La bruja Yagá y otros cuentos-I (Baba Yaga, the Witch and Other Stories I)*. 276 pp. Illus. by Violeta López. ISBN 978-84-667-6497-1.

———. *El anillo mágico y otros cuentos-II (The Magic Ring and Other Stories-II)*. 270 pp. Illus. by Nicolai Troshinsky. ISBN 978-84-667-6498-8.

———. *La princesa hechizada y otros cuentos-III (The Bewitched Princess and Other Stories-III)*. 306 pp. Illus. by Raquel Aparicio. ISBN 978-84-667-6499-5.

———. *El vampiro y otros cuentos-IV (The Vampire and Other Stories-IV)*. 264 pp. Illus. by Beatriz Martín Vidal. ISBN 978-84-667-6500-8.



Ea. vol.: Madrid: Anaya, 2008. Trans. by Isabel Vicente. Series: Cuentos Populares Rusos. \$19.95. Gr. 5–8.

Two hundred and fifty memorable Russian tales by the nineteenth-century Russian folklorist are included in four volumes with attractive color illustrations that depict traditional costumes and early Russian settings. Especially noteworthy are Vicente's lively Spanish rendition, full of action and vigor, and Antonio Rodríguez Almodóvar's always-insightful introductions highlighting important aspects about each

author's life and the tales. *La bruja Yagá y otros cuentos* includes tales about animals and magic with stories about *la bruja Yagá* (Baba Yaga), the fearsome Russian witch with iron teeth, and *El lobo y la cabra*, similar to Grimm's *The Seven Little Goats and the Wolf* but with a different ending. *El anillo mágico y otros cuentos* contains more tales of animals and magic as well as of manners and customs. *La princesa hechizada y otros cuentos* combines mostly fairy tales about wise princesses, bewitched czars, and Vasilisa, the beautiful. *El vampiro y otros cuentos* includes tales based on historical heroes and mysterious events. A well-done glossary complements each volume.

Brill, Marlene Targ. *Allen Jay y el ferrocarril subterráneo (Allen Jay and the Underground Railroad)*. Illus. by Janice Lee Porter. ISBN 978-0-8225-77-84-3.

Patrick, Jean L.S. *La niña que ponchó a Babe Ruth (The Girl Who Struck Out Babe Ruth)*. Illus. by Jeni Reeves. ISBN 978-0-8225-7785-0.

Wetterer, Margaret K., and Wetterer, Charles M. *Caminando bajo la nieve (Snow Walker)*. Illus. by Mary O'Keefe Young. ISBN 978-0-8225-7786-7.

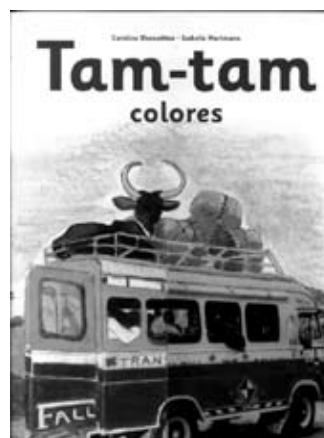
Ea. vol.: Minneapolis: Lerner, 2006–2008. 48 pp. Trans. from English by translations.com. Series: Yo Solo Historia. \$23.93. Gr. 2–4.



These new additions to the Yo Solo Historia series maintain the easy-to-read and exciting text of the English originals in these zestful Spanish renditions with vivacious color illustrations. One recent title in this lively historical fiction series recounts how Allen Jay, a young Quaker boy, helped a passenger on the *Ferrocarril Subterráneo* (Underground Railroad) escape from slavery in 1842 in *Allen Jay y el ferrocarril subterráneo*. A second, *La niña que ponchó a Babe Ruth*, narrates the day in 1931 when, in an exhibition game, 17-year-old Jackie Mitchell, a female professional baseball player, struck out both Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig. Finally, *Caminando bajo la nieve* tells how in 1888 in New York 12-year-old Milton Daub ventured into a dangerous blizzard to bring food and medicine to his helpless neighbors. This is an excellent series to entice Spanish-speaking beginning readers (and Spanish learners) to appreciate well-known events of the history of the United States.

Desnoëttes, Caroline. *Tam-tam colores (Tam-Tam Colors)*. Zaragoza: Edelvives, 2007. 40 pp. Illus. by Isabelle Hartmann. Trans. from French by P. Rozarena. ISBN 978-84-263-6405-0, \$22.95. Gr. 3–5.

Mussa, a grandfather, writes a simple and evocative letter to his granddaughter, Fatu, describing his bus trip from his home country of Senegal in West Africa, to Ethiopia in northeast Africa, through the Central African Republic, to his last stop in South Africa. He highlights beautiful sights and details such as the exquisite ceramic pots and woven textiles from Burkina Faso, the dense jungle in Guinea, and the colorful marketplace in Congo. Especially noteworthy are the cut-paper collages of photos and watercolor illustrations in bright shades of green and tan and the facing clear color photos



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of African art objects. Originally published by Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, this large-format publication is an enticing overview of the people, sights, and cultures of Africa.

Fontes, Justine, and Ron Fontes. *El caballo de Troya: La caída de Troya: Un mito griego* (*The Trojan Horse: The Fall of Troy: A Greek Myth*). Illus. by Gordon Purcell and Barbara Schulz. ISBN 978-0-8225-7970-0.

Limke, Jeff. *Isis y Osiris, hasta el fin del mundo: Un mito egipcio* (*Isis and Osiris, to the Ends of the Earth: An Egyptian Myth*). Illus. by David Witt. ISBN 978-0-8225-7971-7.

———. *El rey Arturo: La espada Excalibur desenvainada: Una leyenda inglesa* (*King Arthur, Excalibur Unsheathed: An English Legend*). Illus. by Thomas Yeates. ISBN 978-0-8225-7968-7.

———. *Thor y Loki en la tierra de los gigantes: Un mito escandinavo* (*Thor and Loki in the Land of the Giants: A Norse Myth*). Illus. by Ron Randall. ISBN 978-0-8225-7969-4.

Storrie, Paul D. *Hércules, los doce trabajos: Un mito griego* (*Hércules, the Twelve Labors: A Greek Myth*). Illus. by Steve Kurth and Barbara Schulz. ISBN 978-0-8225-7967-0.

Ea. vol.: Minneapolis: Lerner, 2008. 48 pp. Trans. from English by translations.com. Series: Mitos y Leyendas en Viñetas. \$8.95 (pb). Gr. 4–8.



With fast action, colorful cartoon graphics, and the look of comic books, this Mitos y Leyendas en Viñetas series, now available in a fluid, accessible Spanish rendition, introduces some of the world's best known myths and legends. These are not for purists nor for serious students of ancient tales; rather these may appeal to reluctant Spanish-speaking readers who prefer contemporary language, cartoonlike embellishments, and supernatural feats. Each title includes a glossary, additional English-language readings and web sites.

The ancient Greek legend about the hollow wooden horse in which the Greeks hid and gained entrance to Troy, later opening the gates to their army, is retold in *El caballo de Troya: La caída de Troya: Un mito griego*. The ancient Egyptian goddess Isis and her efforts to save her husband Osiris's throne from his jealous brother are depicted in *Isis y Osiris, hasta el fin del mundo: Un mito egipcio*. Although England is in trouble, young Arthur pulls the mysterious sword from the stone and wins the loyalty of *los Caballeros de la Mesa Redonda* (the Knights of the Round Table) in *El rey Arturo: La espada Excalibur desenvainada: Una leyenda inglesa*. Thor, powerful god of thunder, and his brother Loki travel to *la tierra de los gigantes* (land of giants) to determine whether strength or brains win in the Norse myth as narrated in *Thor y Loki en la tierra de los gigantes: Un mito escandinavo*. Hercules, the son of the god Zeus

and a mortal mother, is a hero of extraordinary strength who wins immortality by performing twelve seemingly impossible labors, as retold in *Hércules, los doce trabajos: Un mito griego*.

Gudule. *Cuentos y leyendas del amor* (*Stories and Legends about Love*). 139 pp. Illus. by Raúl Allén. ISBN 978-84-667-6244-1.

Joly, Dominique. *Alejandro Magno* (*Alexander the Great*). 158 pp. Illus. by Max Hierro. ISBN 978-84-667-5387-6.

Ea. vol.: Madrid: Anaya, 2007. Trans. from French by Ana Conejo. Series: Tus Libros Cuentos y Leyendas. \$11.95 (pb). Gr. 5–8.



Thirteen well-known love stories and legends from Greece, Italy, Tibet, Ghana, China, and Germany featuring such couples as *Romeo y Julieta*, *Tristán e Isolda*, *Orfeo y Eurídice*, and *Adán y Eva* recount, briefly and succinctly, their passion, happiness, and misfortunes in *Cuentos y leyendas del amor*. With a great deal of drama and adventure, Joly's readable recreation of the life of the warrior king of Macedonia as he conquered and united the world from Greece to India is portrayed in *Alejandro Magno*.

Serious history students might disapprove of some of the fictionalized characters; nonetheless, Alexander the Great's ambition and desire for conquest and glory that make him one of the most fascinating conquerors of ancient times are certainly here. Both titles include simply written historical notes and informative footnotes.

Letria, José Jorge. *Animales fantásticos* (*Fantastic Animals*). Sevilla: Kalandraka, 2007. 40p. Illus: André Letria. Translated by Xosé Balasteros. ISBN: 978-84-96388-41-3. \$20.95. Gr. 3–6.



Twenty mythological animals that explain aspects of the natural world or delineate the psychology, customs, or ideals of diverse societies and cultures are featured in this beautifully designed book. In striking, colorful double-page spreads and an appropriately allegorical rhyming text *Animales fantásticos* tells about such well-known, supernatural beings as *El Ave Fénix* (Phoenix), the bird in Egyptian mythology that consumed itself by fire and rose, renewed, from its ashes; *El Centauro* (Centaur) in Greek mythology, a monster with the head, arms, and trunk of a man and the body and legs of a horse; *El Cíclope* (Cyclops), the one-eyed giant of Greek mythology, reputedly descended from Titans; and *El Minotauro* (Minotaur), a half man and half bull monster, also from Greek mythology. Unfortunately, the lack of

a table of contents, index, or introduction limits the book's use; nonetheless, this is indeed a most intriguing introduction to mythological creatures.

For Adolescents

Kaufert Horwitz, Martha. *Asuntos de mucho peso: Un libro sobre aciertos y errores en la alimentación* (*Weighty Matters: A Book about Nutrition Successes and Mistakes*). México: Serpentina, 2007. 79 pp. Illus. by Iris Alcázar and Rey David Rojas. ISBN 978-968-5950-029-9, \$12.95 (pb). Gr. 6–10.



With appealing, modernist color illustrations and a straightforward, conversational text, the author explains the causes and effects of obesity and overweight conditions in young people, proper nutrition, exercise, and special diets. It is important to note that the author describes fruits, vegetables, and dishes well known in Mexico, such as *nopales* and *mamey*, and other Mexican delicacies, such as *sopes* and *tostadas*.

Adolescents in search of guidelines for healthful eating habits will appreciate the easy-to-understand recommendations for a balanced lifestyle. Although it includes a table of contents and a glossary, the book lacks an index.

Thal, Lilli. *Mimus* (*Mimus*). Madrid: Anaya, 2007. 507 pp. Trans. from German by Moka Seco Reeg. ISBN 978-84-667-6291-5, \$22.95. Gr. 8–11.



After many years of cruel wars, the medieval kingdom of Vinland seems to be ready to sign a peace treaty with the kingdom of Monfiel. Sadly, 12-year-old *príncipe Florín* finds out that his father *el rey Teodor* has been tricked and is imprisoned in the castle's dungeons. Young Florín is now obligated to serve as an apprentice to *Mimus*, Teodor's enigmatic and unpredictable court jester. *Mimus* was originally written in German and became hugely successful in English-speaking countries. Seco Reeg's exquisitely flowing

Spanish rendition will enthrall Spanish speakers in search of a thought-provoking fantasy with strong historical fiction elements. It is important to note that Spanish speakers from the Americas will not mind a few Peninsular Spanish conjugations, such as *esperad* and *créais*.

Torres, José Alejandro. *Refranero del Quijote* (*Quijote's Book of Proverbs*). Mexico: Lectorum, 2005. 117 pp. ISBN-10 970-732-091-5, \$10.45 (pb). Gr. 8–adult.



More than 300 proverbs, aphorisms, maxims, and sayings from Miguel de Cervantes's classic work, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, are included in this modest paperback publication. A brief explanation or summary follows each proverb. Spanish speakers will recognize such proverbs as *Pagan justos por pecadores* (When someone does not deserve to be punished), *Donde una puerta se cierra, otra se abre* (Good times follow bad times), *Cosa pasada es cosa juzgada* (When something is done, it's done), *Más vale buena queja que mala paga* (Hope is better than bad payment) as well as other short, pithy sayings that are in widespread use in the Spanish-speaking world. This is not a scholarly essay about *el Quijote*; rather this collection highlights Cervantes's genius as a collector of the wisdom, ideas, basic truths, and practical precepts of the common people of Spain. Even though it lacks an index and a table of contents, this book is still a lighthearted introduction to *Quijote's* and Sancho Panza's adventures.

Vargas de González Carbonell, Gabriela and Rosado, Yordi. *Quiúbole con . . . tu cuerpo, el ligue, tus cuates, el sexo, tu familia, las drogas y todo lo demás: Manual de supervivencia para hombres* (*What's Up? With Your Body, Flirting, Buddies, Sex, Family, Drugs and Everything Else*). México, D.F.: Santillana Ediciones Generales, 2006. ISBN-10 970-770-409-8 (pb). Gr. 7–adult.



Written in an easy colloquial style with numerous subheads and illustrated with witty color cartoons, this engaging *Manual de supervivencia para hombres* (*Survival Manual for Men*) is just right for adolescents. Such chapters as your body, friends, sex, family, drugs, and "everything else" include suggestions on how to say no, driving with friends, sexual orientation, and other subjects of perennial interests to teenage boys and their parents.

For additional high-quality books in Spanish for children and adolescents, please visit the forthcoming "Recommended Books" section of the Isabel Schon International Center for Spanish Books for Youth, San Diego Public Library, web site.

Isabel Schon is the founder and director of the Isabel Schon International Center for Spanish Books for Youth at the San Diego Public Library. ☺