



From Toys and *la Navidad* to *La rebelión de las ideas*: Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents

By Isabel Schon

From sturdy board books for the very young, to Perrault's always-popular *Barba Azul* and *Caperucita*, to traditional riddles, tongue twisters, and proverbs of the Spanish-speaking world, to Jose Maria Plaza's well-selected essays about current issues, these recently published fiction and nonfiction books published in the United States, Mexico, Venezuela, and Spain include a wide variety of themes, genres, and styles to appeal to Spanish speakers of any age.

For the Young

Bang, Molly. ***Cuando Sofía se enoja, se enoja de veras*** (*When Sophie Gets Angry, Really, Really Angry*). New York: Scholastic, 2002. 36 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from English by Carmen Rosa Navarro. ISBN 0-439-40987-X, \$3.99 (pb). Gr. Pre-K-2.

When Sofía's mother makes her share her toys with her sister, Sofía gets so angry that she wants to smash the world. She kicks, screams, runs, cries, climbs a tree, and eventually calms herself. When she feels better, she returns home, where everyone is happy to see her. The simple Spanish rendition

and Bang's bold, colorful double-spread illustrations capture perfectly Sofía's rage in a most natural and honest manner.

Brown, Marc. ***Arturo y la Navidad*** (*Arthur's Perfect Christmas*). New York: Lectorum, 2003. 40 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from English by Esther Sarfatti. ISBN 1-930332-48-3, \$6.95 (pb). Gr. K-3.

Just as confusing as the original English edition, which accompanied a PBS holiday special, Arturo's wishes for a perfect *Navidad* are narrated with several other stories. Difficult-to-follow subplots further complicate the Christmas/holiday tale featuring Brown's beloved characters. Despite this caveat, Sarfatti's enjoyable Spanish rendition makes *papá's* Middle Eastern cooking, Francisca's Hanukkah celebration, *tío* Fred's clumsiness, and Berto's disappointments less bewildering to devoted Spanish-speaking Marc Brown fans.

Browne, Anthony. ***Mi papá*** (*My Dad*). México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2002. 26 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from English by Carmen Esteva. ISBN 968-16-6443-4, \$14.99. Gr. Pre-K-3.

Maintaining the carefree tone of a child's vernacular—"Si que está bien mi papa" ("He's all right, my dad")—and Browne's humorous chalk-and-gouache full-page illustrations of an average pajama-and-bathrobe-clad father, this exalted portrait of a father who is not afraid, fights giants, swims like a fish, eats like a horse, and other far-fetched attributes will satisfy young Spanish speakers. This is especially true at the end, when the child narrator receives a giant loving hug from the object of his affection.

Damon, Emma. **Un mundo de creencias** (*All Kinds of Beliefs: A Lift-the-Flap Book with Poster*). Barcelona: Ediciones Beascoa, 2003. 14 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from English by María Casas. ISBN 84-488-1678-1, \$18.95. Gr. 2-4.

Through amusing cartoonish illustrations, a simple text, and well-designed lift-the-flaps and pop-ups, children are exposed to the similarities and differences among Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, and Hindu beliefs and ceremonies. This is not a ponderous treatise on religious beliefs; rather, it is a basic and enjoyable introduction to the symbols, temples, manners of worship, and clothing of different people with the message that each one is important.

Gay, Marie-Louise. **Buenas noches Samuel** (*Good Night, Sam*). ISBN 980-257-296-9.

_____. **Buenos días Samuel** (*Good Morning, Sam*). ISBN 980-257-293-4.

_____. **Estela, hada del bosque** (*Stella, Fairy of the Forest*). ISBN 980-257-272-1.

Each volume: Caracas, Ediciones Ekaré, 2003. 28 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from English by Kurusa. \$7.95 (pb). Gr. Pre-K-1.

Young Samuel's everyday experiences with his older sister, Estela, are beautifully captured in these humorous, simple Spanish renditions with fluid pen-and-watercolor illustrations. Spanish speakers are sure to enjoy the minimal text and understated repetition that delighted English-speaking preschoolers and early readers of the original editions, first published by Groundwood Books in Toronto. In *Buenas noches Samuel*, Estela patiently helps her younger brother find their missing dog so he can go to sleep; she also reassures him about *ruidos extraños* (strange noises) and other *monstruos* (monsters). Estela's patience is again needed when she offers to help Samuel get dressed in *Buenos días Samuel*, even though he insists he can do so by himself. In *Estela, hada del bosque*, she convinces Samuel to venture into the forest to search for fairies.

Guerrero, Pablo. **Mi laberinto** (*My Maze*). Madrid: Kókinos, 2003. 28 pp. Illus. by Emilio Urberuaga. ISBN 84-88342-42-X, \$19.95. Gr. K-3.

In a spare, understated narrative, a young boy, seemingly addressing his cat, tells him what he does for the pet as he assumes different identities: "*Cuando soy pianista / canto al ritmo*

de tu corazón" ("When I am a pianist / I sing to the rhythm of your heart") or "*Cuando soy ladrón / robo todas tus penas*" ("When I am a thief / I steal all your sorrows"). In this original Spanish publication, Guerrero's simple first-person, present-tense text, which is almost poetic in its use of simile and metaphor, contrasts beautifully with Urberuaga's fanciful double-spread watercolors depicting a bemused cat observing his master as a taxi driver, painter, cook, and finally, child. Whether as pure fun or philosophical reverie, Spanish-speaking children and their parents will find much to share and ponder.

Max. **¡Cuántos amigos!** (*How Many Friends!*). ISBN 84-667-2546-6.

_____. **¿Dónde está la nieve?** (*Where Is the Snow?*). ISBN 84-667-2543-1.

_____. **¡Todos los colores!** (*All the Colors!*). ISBN 84-667-2544-X.

_____. **¡Ya sale el sol!** (*Sunrise!*). ISBN 84-667-2545-8.

Each volume: Madrid: Grupo Anaya, 2003. 20 pp. Illus. by the author. Series: Mi Primera Sopa de Libros. \$8.95. Gr. PreK-K.

Dani, a young penguin, and his friend, Renata, are the protagonists in these sturdy board books with bold cartoon-like illustrations and a simple text, originally published in Spain. As Dani picks up his room, he counts his toys from one to eleven in *¡Cuántos amigos!* Despite mama's apprehensions, Dani wants to play in the snow in *¿Dónde está la nieve?* Mama enjoys telling Dani about her favorite colors in *¡Todos los colores!* Although Dani tries to stay up until sunrise, he and Renata oversleep in *¡Ya sale el sol!* Whether for fun or sharing, the very young and their parents will enjoy.

Perrault, Charles. **Barba Azul** (*Blue Beard*). Trans. from French by Roberto Mansberger Amorós. ISBN 84-261-3266-9.



_____. **Caperucita Roja** (*Little Red Riding Hood*). Trans. from French by Alfonso Nadal. ISBN 84-261-3264-2.

Each volume: Barcelona: Editorial Juventud, 2002. 34 pp. Illus. by Eric Battut. \$15.95. Gr. K-3.

Battut's striking full-page watercolors with masterful use of line, contrasts, and perspective add a decidedly contemporary tone to Perrault's always-popular classics. This modernistic approach is especially noticeable when it is set against Perrault's original "morals" at the end of each story. Kind Caperucita gets in bed with and is eaten by the big, bad wolf. The *moraleja*, of course, warns girls about dangerous wolves. Although Barba Azul's new wife escapes the brutal death of her predecessors, the *moralejas* warn readers about the pitfalls of curiosity and the importance of good judgment. Despite a few peninsular Spanish conjugations (*abrid, entréis*) in *Barba Azul*, these modern renditions will be treasured by readers/viewers of any age.

Van Genechten, Guido. **Botas nuevas** (*New Boots*). Barcelona: Editorial Juventud, 2002. 26 pp. Illus. by the author. Trans. from Dutch. ISBN 84-261-3257-X, \$15.95. PreK-2.

Jan, a young boy, is happy with his new red boots. With great joy, he kicks a ball, climbs a wall, jumps from a fence, splashes water, and engages in other fun activities. He concludes that these are really *superbotas*, which he will be able to wear the next day. Bold black lines and bright watercolors depict an energetic boy enraptured with his new boots. Originally published by Clavis Vitgeverij, Amsterdam, this oversize book is a simple, entertaining read.

Middle Grades

Adivinanzas y trabalenguas (*Riddles and Tongue Twisters*). Selected by J. C. Vales. Illus. by Natasha Rosemberg. ISBN 84-263-4803-3.

Refranes populares (*Traditional Proverbs*). Selected by Belén Bermejo. Illus. by Tomás Hijo. ISBN 84-263-4801-7.

Each volume: Zaragoza: Editorial Luis Vives, 2002. 123 pp. Illus. Series: Alcancía. \$18.95. Gr. 2-6.

With the joyous wordplay of the traditional riddles, tongue twisters, and proverbs of the Spanish-speaking world, this well-designed collection with amusing black-ink and watercolor illustrations resonates with universal truths in a brief, striking form. *Adivinanzas y trabalenguas* includes 242 riddles and 65 tongue twisters that will entertain and encourage young Spanish speakers' (and Spanish learners') abilities to identify items and rapidly articulate difficult (and not-so-difficult) words. More than 200 well-known proverbs, each followed by a brief explanation, are included in *Refranes populares*. Although these short, pithy sayings were collected in Spain, their widespread use in the Americas reflects basic truths or practical precepts long acknowledged by Spanish speakers

worldwide. A title index follows the text in each volume.

Almodóvar, Antonio R. **Cuentos populares españoles** (*Traditional Spanish Tales*). Madrid: Grupo Anaya, 2002. 319 pp. Illus. by Pablo Auladell and others. ISBN 84-667-1723-4. \$29.95. Gr. 3-6.

In a luxurious large-format edition, this collection of 65 traditional tales selected by Almodóvar, a recognized expert and scholar, includes tales of magic, talking beasts, and realistic situations. In contrast to other "sanitized" versions of these tales, Almodóvar has maintained the easygoing, lively style of the oral renderings, including colloquial and vernacular expressions that certainly add to their appeal. From the delightful "Blancaflor, la hija del diablo," to the slightly risqué "La flauta que hacía a todos bailar," these are sure to entertain and please all readers/listeners. Children will enjoy the stylized watercolor illustrations, and adults will appreciate the informative prologue and appendix.

Bustos, Eduardo. **¡Rima, rima y adivina!** (*Rhyme, Rhyme, and Guess!*). Illus. by Blanca Dorantes. ISBN 970-18-8569-4.

Lome, Emilio Angel. **Décimas lúdicas, cómicas, cálidas** (*Playful, Amusing, Affable Ballads*). Illus. by Felipe Ugalde. ISBN 970-18-8570-8.

Each volume: México, D.F.: Conaculta, 2002. Series: Cantos y Cuentos. \$7.95 (pb). Gr. 2-5.

Despite unassuming presentation and design, these humble paperbacks, which follow Mexican traditional rhymes and narrative poems, are pure fun. Sixty original riddles with facing pages of undistinguished ink and color illustrations, where youngsters can find the answer to each question, are included in *¡Rima, rima y adivina!* Following the traditional style of the balladeers of eastern Mexico—simple stanzas and joyful, catchy refrains—the three stories in rhyme in *Décimas lúdicas, cómicas, cálidas* abound in mischief and ingenuity and are beautifully complemented by Ugalde's exuberant watercolors. The ballads tell of a hungry hen, two *compadres*, and a talking dog.

Collins, Kathleen. **El Marqués de Lafayette: Héroe frances de la Guerra de Independencia** (*Marquis de Lafayette: French Hero of the American Revolution*). ISBN 0-8239-4139-6.

_____. **Sojourner Truth: Defensora de los derechos civiles** (*Sojourner Truth: Equal Rights Advocate*). ISBN 0-8239-4145-0.

_____. **Francisca Alvarez: El ángel de Goliad** (*Francisca Alvarez: The Angel of Goliad*). ISBN 0-8239-4133-7.

_____. **George Washington: Padre de la patria** (*George Washington: Father of the Nation*). ISBN 0-8239-4135-3.

_____. **John Paul Jones: Héroe de la marina estadounidense** (*John Paul Jones: American Naval Hero*). ISBN 0-8239-4137-X.

Hayhurst, Chris. **John Sutter: Pionero de California** (*John Sutter: California Pioneer*). ISBN 0-8239-4138-8.

_____. **Toro Sentado: Jefe Sioux** (*Sitting Bull: Sioux War Chief*). ISBN 0-8239-4144-2.

Libertson, Jody. **Nathan Hale: Héroe de la Guerra de Independencia** (*Nathan Hale: Hero of the American Revolution*). ISBN 0-8239-4141-8.

Moriarty, J. T. **Phillis Wheatley: Poeta afroamericana** (*Phillis Wheatley: African-American Poet*). ISBN 0-8239-4143-4.

Phillips, Larissa. **Cochise: Jefe apache** (*Cochise: Apache Chief*). ISBN 0-8239-4129-9.

Porterfield, Jason. **Annie Oakley: Tiradora del lejano oeste** (*Annie Oakley: Wild West Sharpshooter*). ISBN 0-8239-4126-4.

Silate, Jennifer. **Betsy Ross: Creadora de la bandera estadounidense** (*Betsy Ross: Creator of the American Flag*). ISBN 0-8239-4128-0.

Each volume: New York: Rosen/Buenas Letras, 2004. 32 pp. Illus. Trans. from English by Eida de la Vega. Series: Grandes Personajes en la Historia de los Estados Unidos. \$21.25. Gr. 4–7.

Attractive layout and design; clear color and black-and-white maps, drawings, and period photographs; and an easy-to-read Spanish text characterize these biographies of famous people in American history. Each title highlights the life and significant contributions of the subject and includes a time line, a glossary, and an index.

Collodi, Carlos. **Las aventuras de Pinocho** (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*). Barcelona: Editorial Juventud, 2003. 157 pp. Illus. by Iassen Ghiuselev. Trans. from Italian by M. T. Dini. ISBN 84-261-3289-8, \$25.95. Gr. 4–7.

Collodi's original novel of the egotistical and self-centered puppet who doesn't anticipate the consequences of his actions is now available in a refreshing unabridged Spanish rendition. While there are numerous versions in Spanish of the classic tale, Ghiuselev's numerous black-and-white drawings and exquisite full-page watercolors add a distinctive touch to this well-designed edition. Notwithstanding the peninsular Spanish conjugations (*os habéis, figuraos*), Spanish speakers from the Americas will want to make this their favorite *Pinocho*.

Gisbert, Montse. **Las pequeñas (y grandes) emociones de la vida** (*The Small [and Large] Emotions of Life*). Valencia, Spain: Tandem Ediciones, 2003. 72 pp. Illus. by the author. ISBN 84-8131-466-8, \$15.95. Gr. 2–5.

Simple explanations and cartoonish pen-and-watercolor illustrations of a young child and his/her mother, father, or friends describe 30 feelings and sensations such as *felicidad* (happiness), *miedo* (fear), and *valentía* (bravery). Some adults may object to a stylized frontal nudity drawing (barely perceptible) of three young children and a fourth one covering

his genitals with his hands to explain the concept of *pudor* (modesty). Whether used for an open discussion of personal feelings and values or as a vocabulary builder of difficult-to-explain thoughts and ideas, these are indeed most tactful, appropriate, and imaginative interpretations of feelings that even the young can understand.

Polisar, Barry Louis. **¡Eso no se hace! Guía infantil sobre malos modales, reglas absurdas y etiqueta inadecuada** (*Don't Do That! A Child's Guide to Bad Manners, Ridiculous Rules, and Inadequate Etiquette*). Barcelona: Ediciones Obelisco, 2003. 32 pp. Illus. by David Clark. Trans. from English by Lidia Bayona Mons. ISBN 84-9777-009-9, \$15.95. Gr. 3–6.

Just as irreverent as the original English edition, this humorous Spanish rendition with tongue-in-cheek full-page cartoonish illustrations introduces young Spanish speakers to totally inappropriate behavior and manners at home and at school. From *maneras correctas de jugar con la comida* (how to play with your food) to *cómo interrumpir* (how to interrupt), these absurd examples may be the best reminders of appropriate etiquette.

Zazan Tleino: Adivinanzas nahuas de ayer, hoy and siempre (*Nahuatl Riddles from Yesterday, Today and Always*). México, D.F.: Artes de México, 2002. 48 pp. Illus. by Clofas Ramírez Celestino. Edited by José Antonio Flores Farfán. ISBN 970-683-073-1, \$13.95 (pb). Gr. 3–6.

Presented in four languages—Nahuatl, Spanish, English, and French—this collection of brief riddles from the oral tradition of the indigenous people of central Mexico features their musical instruments, games, tools, and other pastimes. The vivid, colorful illustrations beautifully depict Mexican folklore settings and motifs in *amates* (paintings on paper made from tree bark). A scholarly introduction, prologue, and bibliography (in Spanish only) are also included.

Adolescents

Alvarez, Blanca. **El puente de los cerezos** (*The Bridge of the Cherry Trees*). Madrid: Grupo Anaya, 2003. 159 pp. Illus. by Federico Delicado. ISBN 84-667-2719-1, \$12.95. Gr. 8–12.

Seventeen-year-old Bei-Fang is sent against her will to live with her grandmother in a faraway village. Through her grandmother, she learns the secret language used by several generations of women who endured the power and absolute control of men—their husbands and lords. Set in China, this heartbreaking tale based on traditional beliefs highlights the tragic lives of women who were treated as useful objects—never allowed to complain or disagree with their masters. At times the spontaneity of the narrator's voice is lost amid adult voice-overs about the relationship between parents and adolescents and the meaning of life. Yet the gripping setting, intriguing survival story, and tenacious characters have the power to engage adolescents. The sensitive Chinese-style illustrations definitely reinforce the ambiance.

Curtis, Christopher Paul. **Me llamo Bud, no Buddy** (*Bud,*

Not Buddy). León, Spain: Editorial Everest, 2002. 247 pp. Trans. from English by Alberto Jiménez Rioja. ISBN 84-241-8638-9, \$9.95 (pb). Gr. 5–8.

Jiménez Rioja's vigorous Spanish rendition of Curtis's Newbery and Coretta Scott King award-winning novel about Bud, a ten-year-old orphan in search of his long-lost father, is as tender, moving, and humorous as the original. Bud's honest first-person narrative—including his numbered "*reglas y cosas*" ("rules and things") that allow him to cope with the adult world—will especially resonate with Spanish-speaking adolescents, who need books with genuine voices without preachy adult voice-overs. The only disconcerting aspects are the peninsular Spanish conjugations (*habéis, vais*), which sound too formal to Spanish speakers from the Americas, who would naturally expect a much more informal and relaxed tone.


Lowry, Lois. *En busca del azul* (*Gathering Blue*). León, Spain: Editorial Everest, 2003. 219 pp. Trans. from English by María Luisa Balseiro. ISBN 84-241-8018-6, \$9.95 (pb). Gr. 5–9.

Nora, an orphan who has been lame from birth, is taken from her home to live in *El Edificio del Consejo*, where her talents and creativity allow her to survive despite cruel and abusive villagers. Lowry's dispassionate tone is maintained in this sober Spanish rendition that depicts perfectly the envy, greed, and anger of a repressive society. Spanish speakers will note the contrasts between the solemnity of the peninsular Spanish conjugations and the charming spontaneity of the dialect of the people of Nava, represented by the waif Mat,

whose crude manners and unpolished vernacular make him an object of ridicule and scorn in a hostile community.

Plaza, José María. *La rebelión de las ideas: Antología del ensayo español* (*The Revolt of the Ideas: Anthology of Spanish Essays*). Madrid: Espasa, 2002. 269 pp. ISBN 84-670-0093-7, \$10.95 (pb). Gr. 9–adult.

Like Plaza's three previous historical anthologies—devoted to poetry, fiction, and humor—this volume includes brief fragments (from two to five pages) of 30 selected essays from some of the most important Spanish writers from the Middle Ages up to 2001. In addition, the book contains 20 brief newspaper articles about current issues written by some of the most distinguished contemporary Spanish journalists. Plaza's insightful introductions to each historical era and to each author and his or her works make this anthology a pleasure to read and to ponder. From well-selected classical works of such writers as Alfonso X *el Sabio*, to such eminent thinkers as Miguel de Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset, to controversial views about President Bush and the war on terrorism, these selections are sure to encourage critical thinking.

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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