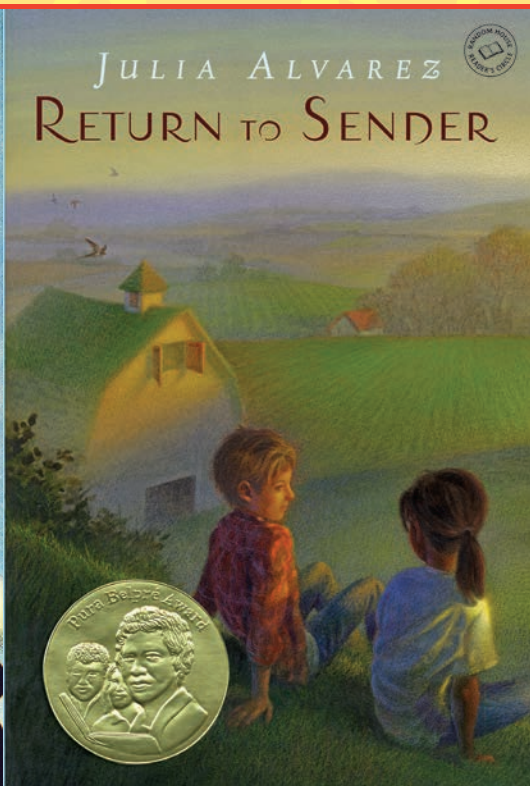
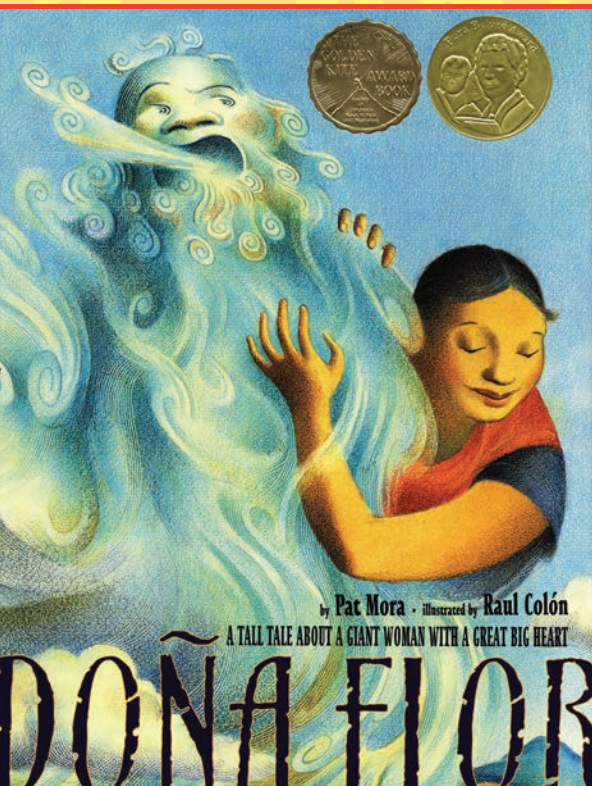


Latino Authors & Culture

Readers Guide



Meet the Author: *Julia Alvarez*

Born in New York City but raised in the Dominican Republic until she was ten years old, Julia Alvarez experienced two cultures growing up. When her family returned to the United States, Ms. Alvarez felt out of place and spent a lot of time in her room where she discovered the world of imagination and books. She taught poetry for five years before she accepted a job

teaching high school English. From there she moved on to a teaching college, and in 1991, she earned tenure at Middlebury College and published her first novel, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent*. Her writing reflects the cultural experiences she has had, and it is those experiences that give her writing depth and feeling.

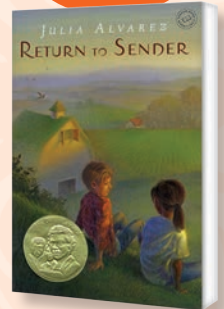
Teach Her Novels

Return to Sender

Grades 5 up • HC: 978-0-375-85838-3 • GLB: 978-0-375-95838-0 • PB: 978-0-375-85123-0 • EL: 978-0-375-89161-8 Ω

After Tyler's father is hurt in a tractor accident, the family is forced to hire Mexican migrant workers to help with the dairy farming. While the Mexicans themselves live in fear of being discovered and deported, Tyler doesn't understand why his father would break the law to hire undocumented workers, especially with three daughters. As Tyler begins to make friends with Mari, the oldest, his feelings become even more confused. His plight intensifies on every front: bullies at school taunt Mari, Mari's uncle is caught running from the border patrol and is arrested, Mari's mother is missing, and immigration officials raid the farm. Tyler's grandmother offers one of the few places of refuge as she "adopts" the three girls, a true act of compassion and friendship.

Pura Belpré
Award
Winner

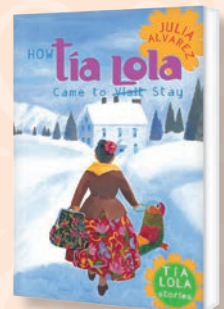


1. The Paquette and Cruz families accept each other without hesitation and without prejudice. What does this say about the character of the two families? How do they help each other through difficult situations?
2. What does Mari's willingness to go to the immigration officials to speak on her parents' behalf say about her nature? Why is she willing to risk her own freedom for her parents? Does Mari's risk gain what she desires?

How Tía Lola Came to Visit Stay

Grades: 3-5 • HC: 978-0-375-80215-7 • GLB: 978-0-375-90215-4 • PB: 978-0-440-41870-2 • EL: 978-0-307-53118-6 Ω

After Miguel and Juanita's parents' divorce, they move to Vermont with their mother who invites Tía Lola from the Dominican Republic to come for a visit. Upon her arrival, Miguel struggles to welcome her. He is embarrassed by his aunt who speaks no English and does not dress like other Americans. But Tía Lola's love and good humor find its way into the hearts of the community people and brings them all together.

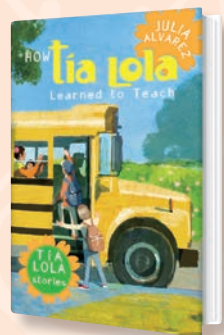


1. What is the most valuable lesson Miguel learns as a result of his aunt's living with him and his family? How does the lesson help him adjust to his new home and his parent's divorce?
2. When the customs agent questions Miguel about not looking like an American, he assures the agent that he is an American. (page 134) Why does Miguel question what makes him an American?

How Tía Lola Learned to Teach

Grades 3-5 • HC: 978-0-375-86460-5 • GLB: 978-0-375-96460-2 • PB: 978-0-375-85792-8 • EL: 978-0-375-89584-5 Ω

The people in the community in which Juanita and Miguel live have grown to love Tía Lola and she has come to be an integral part of the community. When the principal of the elementary school asks Tía Lola to volunteer at the school teaching Spanish, Tía Lola grudgingly agrees, but once she begins her lessons, she realizes how much fun it will be. When Tía Lola's visa expires, everyone in the community supports her at the immigration hearing.



1. Why does Tía Lola use Spanish idioms to teach the students Spanish? What else does she teach by using the idioms?
2. Tía Lola tells Juanita that, "we're all one human family, even if we speak different languages and come from different countries." (page 64) What does Tía Lola mean? How do the characters in the story exemplify this statement?
3. What truth do readers learn about the culture of the Dominican Republic from the Tía Lola books?

Also by Julia Alvarez

Before We Were Free

Grades 7 up
PB: 978-0-440-23784-6 • EL: 978-0-307-43317-6

Finding Miracles

Grades 7 up
PB: 978-0-553-49406-8 • EL: 978-0-307-43333-6

A Gift of Gracias

Grades K-3
HC: 978-0-375-82425-8

How Tía Lola Saved the Summer

Grades 3-5
HC: 978-0-375-86727-9

The Secret Footprint

Grades Preschool-2
PB: 978-0-440-41747-7



Meet the Author: *Pat Mora*

Pat Mora was born and raised in El Paso, Texas, and is an eyewitness to the changes in the Mexican culture as new immigrants come to the United States. Believing that people's sense of identity is firmly rooted in their culture, she writes about the Mexican American experience to help readers appreciate the centuries-old values, languages, and customs of the Mexican people.

Ms. Mora's poems have been reprinted in many elementary, middle, and high school textbooks because of her narrative style and heartfelt messages. Ms. Mora founded the family literacy initiative El día de los niños/El día de los libros, Children's Day/Book Day, which is celebrated across the country in April, and shares what she calls "bookjoy" by linking all children to books, languages, and cultures.

Teach Her Books

Doña Flor: A Tall Tale About a Giant Woman with a Great Big Heart

Grades: Preschool–3 • HC: 978-0-375-82337-4 • PB: 978-0-375-86144-4 • Spanish Version: PB: 978-0-440-41768-2

Flor is a giant woman who lovingly shares her food and flowers with her neighbors and protects them from harm. When the villagers hear a terrifying roar, Flor travels to the highest mesa to discover that the animal making the noise can be easily tamed.

Before reading the book, involve the students by reading the poem Ms. Mora wrote.

www.patmora.com/ideas_dona_younger.htm

After reading the book, ask children:

1. Why is the story about Doña Flor a tall tale?
2. What characteristics of Doña Flor are exaggerated?



Tomás and the Library Lady

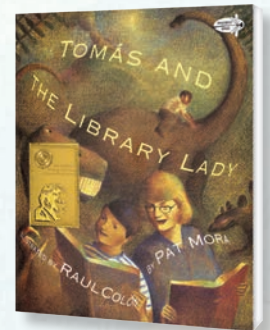
Grades: Preschool–3 • HC: 978-0-679-80401-7 • PB: 978-0-375-80349-9 • Spanish version: PB: 978-0-679-84173-9

After repeatedly listening to his grandfather's stories, Tomás visits the town library where he discovers a whole new world of stories to share with his family, thanks to the local librarian.

1. What is a migrant worker? How does Tomás help his family?
2. How does the "library lady" help Tomás find books he will enjoy reading?

Compare *Doña Flor* and *Tomás and the Library Lady*:

Both children's books focus on a person; one fictional and one real. Discuss with students the difference between fact and fiction, pointing out the differences after both books have been read. Also, discuss the influence of the Mexican culture in both books.

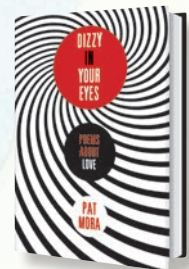


Dizzy in Your Eyes: Poems about Love

Grades: 7 up • HC: 978-0-375-84375-4 • GLB: 978-0-375-94565-6 • EL: 978-0-375-89601-9

A collection of fifty poems about love in all its many shapes and sizes expressing the emotional highs and lows that only love can produce.

Ask students read the poems, ask them to make a list of poems they can personally relate to; poems that bring a specific memory or emotion to their mind. Then give them a list of the formats with the page numbers that Ms. Mora used throughout the book. Ask students to select a format and write a poem about the memory of a special person, event, emotion, or time in their lives. Students can share their poems with the class or in small groups.



Also by Pat Mora

A Library for Juana

Grades Preschool–3 • HC: 978-0-375-80643-8



Meet the Author: *Matt de la Peña*

Matt de la Peña grew up in a surf town on the coast of California, a half Mexican/half white kid, from a “have-not” background. His characters are disenfranchised and alone, burdened by their pasts and their life situations. Matt attended the University of the Pacific on a basketball scholarship

and went on to earn a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at San Diego State University.

Matt de la Peña currently lives in Brooklyn, New York and teaches creative writing at New York University and visits high schools and colleges throughout the United States.

Teach His Novels

I Will Save You

Grades 7 up • HC: 978-0-385-73827-9 • GLB: 978-0-385-90719-4 • EL: 978-0-375-89742-9

Devon and Kidd have a love-hate relationship—Devon, the bad guy, always doing his best to bring Kidd, the good guy down. Devon lies, steals, runs away for days at a time, stalks girls, and lives a dangerous life. Kidd, on the other hand, works hard, does his best to overcome a difficult past, and sets his sights on the future. When Kidd and Devon’s lives intersect, death—for one or both—is the only possible outcome.

1. Kidd thinks his father left him when he was nine, and his mother died when he was ten. How does Kidd’s heritage affect the decisions he makes? What role do Kidd’s parents play in his confusion about who he really is?
2. How do the events and people of the summer finally force Kidd to face Devon and the belief that Kidd, by nature, is evil? Is there any one event or person that brings Kidd to the final breaking point?
3. How does the title, *I Will Save You*, relate to the major characters in the novel?

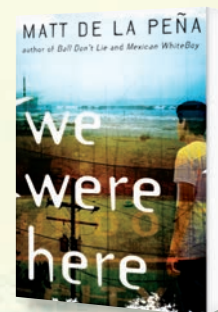


We Were Here

Grades 9 up • PB: 978-0-385-73670-1 • HC: 978-0-385-73667-1 • GLB: 978-0-385-90622-7

Life usually doesn’t work out how you think it will. And most of the time, running away is the quickest path right back to what you’re running from. *We Were Here* is the story of three boys who find they can be friends despite their own varied pasts and personal tragedies and that the journey to find yourself might start with someone else.

1. In his first month at the group home, Miguel refuses to talk to his counselors—or anyone else—about what happened to Diego. Why does Miguel isolate himself?
2. Miguel repeatedly asks himself, “Shouldn’t I have to pay for what I did? Shouldn’t I have to suffer somehow?” How could his life on the run be considered payment for what he did?

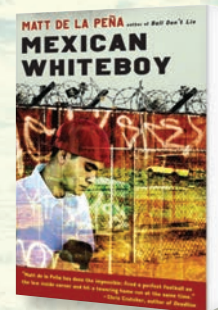


Mexican WhiteBoy

Grades 9 up • PB: 978-0-440-23938-3 • HC: 978-0-385-73310-6 • GLB: 978-0-385-90329-5

Set in the alleys and ball fields of San Diego County, *Mexican WhiteBoy* is a story of friendship, acceptance, and the struggle to find your identity in a world of definitions.

1. Why does Danny dig into his skin with his fingernails? How does the pain make him feel real? How do Danny’s mom and uncles react when they realize what he is doing? How could they have helped him?
2. The relationship between fathers and sons is examined through Uno and his father and Danny and his father. How are the boys’ relationships with their fathers different? How are they the same? Does either Uno or Danny come to accept the relationships with their fathers?



Also by Matt de la Peña

Ball Don't Lie

Grades 9 up • PB: 978-0-385-73425-7 • EL: 978-0-307-43316-9

As our world changes, the importance of cultural diversity in our society rises to the forefront, especially in the educational setting. The upswing in the popularity of Latino literature shows the increased respect with which it is received as it becomes included in literary canons and makes a place in classrooms. However, Latino cultures cannot be categorized as a monolithic culture since they draw from countries throughout Latin America. The diversity within the differing cultures can be read in the literature, heard in the music, and experienced in relationships.

Books written by Latino authors open the door to cultures rich in tradition with strong family values. The characters revel in celebrations, rely on their religion, and respect their coming-of-age rituals while trying to function in two distinct cultures. Holding onto their roots while trying to fit in and find a place in American society forces the characters to experience the process of forming a cross-cultural identity. Characters question which aspects of their heritage they hold on to with pride and without embarrassment. The characters have been taught the importance of honor, good manners, and respect for authority and the elderly, and it is these qualities that help them make the adjustment.

Julia Alvarez and Pat Mora contribute much to the canon of Latino literature. Both write for all ages and their stories introduce characters who are trying to find their place in an unfamiliar country. The themes in their books are much the same as other Latino authors: personal identity, economic strain, and love for family. Latino authors Matt de la Peña, Carmen Tafolla, Sophia Quintero, and Christina Diaz Gonzalez also make positive contributions to the ever-growing number of culturally diverse books available.

The novels and authors for this guide were selected because of the contribution they make to the canon of Latino literature. Readers of all ages will gain a new perspective on the Latino culture and meet an amazing cast of characters from Cuba, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico, and the United States. Open the pages of these books to experience Latino culture and discover new worlds.

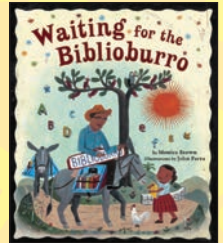
More Books Celebrating Latina Culture

Waiting for the Biblioburro by Monica Brown

Grades: Preschool-1 • HC: 978-1-58246-353-7 • GLB: 978-1-58246-398-8

Ana's life is changed when she meets the man carrying books on his two donkeys, Alfa and Beto. The traveling librarian explains to Ana that she is able to borrow books and read them until he returns. Soon Ana is sharing the new stories with her brothers and other children in her small village of Colombia.

How is Ana's life changed as a result of her ability to read a variety of books? How does she share what she reads?



Fiesta Babies by Carmen Tafolla

Grades: Preschool-1 • HC: 978-1-58246-319-3 • GLB: 978-1-58246-372-8

A lyrical and colorful explanation of babies' lives in a Hispanic community.

As the children listen to the story, have them act out the words.

Pura Belpré
Honor Book for
Illustration



Other Books by Carmen Tafolla

What Can You Do with a Rebozo?

Grades: Preschool-1 • HC: 978-1-58246-270-7

What Can You Do with a Paleta?

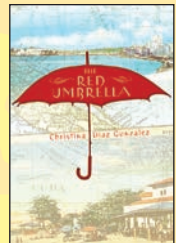
Grades: Preschool-1 • HC: 978-1-58246-221-9

The Red Umbrella by Christina Diaz Gonzalez

Grades: 5 up • HC: 978-0-375-86190-1 • GLB: 978-0-375-96190-8 • EL: 978-0-375-89628-6

Lucía's family is torn apart when Castro comes to power in the early 1960s. In desperation, Lucía's parents send their children to the United States unaccompanied so that they will live in freedom. Lucía and her brother live with a foster family in Nebraska until their parents can leave Cuba to join them.

What is propaganda? How does Castro and other leaders of the revolution use propaganda to force change?

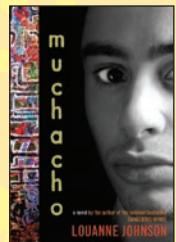


Muchacho: A Novel by Louanne Johnson

Grades: 7 up • HC: 978-0-375-86117-8 • GLB: 978-0-375-96117-5 • EL: 978-0-375-89355-1

Eddie lives in a neighborhood of drug dealers and gang members. Eddie does not want to be a juvenile delinquent but the choices he makes will soon have him join the ranks. But then Lupe steps in and Eddie falls in love. Seeing himself through her eyes motivates Eddie to change.

It is important for Eddie to be a good example for his younger brother and sister. Who sets an example for Eddie? What characters have an impact on his life?



Efrain's Secret by Sofia Quintero

Grades: 7 up • HC: 978-0-375-84706-6 • GLB: 978-0-375-94706-3 • EL: 978-0-375-89549-4

Raised in the poverty of the South Bronx, Efrain sets his sight on escaping the expected life of a poor black kid. He beats the school record for the highest SAT scores, and he is determined to attend an Ivy League college like Harvard or Yale. When the reality of the cost of one of those colleges faces Efrain, he makes a choice that could ruin his life, or at the very least could shatter his dreams.

Efrain's mother says, "Tell me who you run with and I'll tell you who you are." (page 27) Why does Efrain disagree with his mother and maintain his relationship with Nestor?



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Prepared by Susan Geye, Director of Library Services, Everman ISD, Texas.

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