



Américas Award Books about the Maya

The Américas Award, which began in 1993, was founded by the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP) to encourage and commend authors and illustrators who produce children's and young adult literature with themes concerning Latin America. More information can be found on the CLASP website (<http://claspprograms.org/pages/detail/37>). Each year the award names two winners, honorable mentions and commended titles. The books listed below are those books which address issues of relevance to teaching about the Maya, both archaeologically and modern day issues concerning the Maya. Lists of other Américas Award winning books can be found on the CLASP website.



Américas Book Award Resources Focusing on the Maya

A is for Americas, Cynthia Chin-Lee and Terri de la Peña; Illustrated Enrique O. Sánchez. An alphabetical exploration of the Americas introduces young readers to the wide range of people, places, and cultures that make up our hemisphere. A brief description and brightly colored illustration accompanies each letter and the corresponding word; for example, j is for jalapeño ... k is for kayak ... l is for Lake Titicaca. Young children will gain a good sense of both the immensity and the diversity of the Americas as a whole. (Grades K-3). Orchard, 32 pages. **1999 Commended Title.**

Abuela's Weave, Omar Castaneda; Illustrated Enrique O. Sánchez. Esperanza, a young Guatemalan girl, learns traditional weaving alongside her grandmother. Taking their work to market, Esperanza worries when she sees the machine-made weaving that no one will buy their handmade cloth. Rich in Guatemalan details, this gentle story interweaves themes of individual resourcefulness and strength through family, and promotes discussion of maintaining cultural traditions. Lee and Low, 32 pages. **1993 Commended Title.**

Angela Weaves a Dream, Michèle Solá; Photographs Jeffrey Jay Foxx. In Chiapas, southern Mexico, Angela, a young Mayan girl, learns to weave the sacred designs of the Mayan culture from the expert weavers in her village, while also learning the symbolic meaning of the designs. The writer provides rich information through texts and sub-texts. This rite of passage is illustrated with beautiful photographs. The lasting beauty of the Mayan culture is respectfully presented in an engaging and colorful way. Hyperion, 48 pages. **1997 Commended Title.**

Before Columbus: the Americas of 1491, Charles C. Mann. This beautiful adaptation of Mann's adult book, 1491, reveals myriad misconceptions about the "discovery" of the Americas and the subsequent clash of cultures of many distinct people. Divided into three sections, readers learn about how old and complex the various indigenous cultures really are, how Europeans were able to conquer and colonize, and finally, a close look at the myth of the American Wilderness. Colorful fonts, maps, photographs and reproductions of representative art, make this accessible to a wide range of readers and the text itself is suitable for research. Teachers will also appreciate the interdisciplinary nature of historical research, and will be able to find classroom links in the sciences and arts as well as social studies and history. (Grades 5-12). Atheneum, 132 pages. **2010 Commended Title.**

Beyond the Ancient Cities, Jose Maria Merino; Translated Helen Lane. The mestizo son of a lost Spanish conquistador joins his godfather on a voyage to Panama where the godfather will take up a royal appointment. Full of drama and action, the story provides commentary on the impact of the Spanish presence in the New World, explores indigenous cultures, and highlights the role of chroniclers during the sixteenth century. Indigenous cultures are strikingly explored. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 209 pages. **1994 Commended Title.**



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Cuckoo / Cucu, Lois Ehlert; Translated Gloria de Aragón Andújar.

Ehlert's bilingual version of this traditional Mayan tale about the courage of the cuckoo is exquisitely illustrated with designs inspired by traditional Mexican crafts. From trees of life to papercuts, the illustrations create a culturally authentic visual setting that masterfully synthesizes many elements of Mexican folk-art. Equally poetic in Spanish and English this story is ideal for introducing very young children to Mexican craft motifs within the context of a very well told folktale. Harcourt Brace, 36 pages. **1997 Commended Title.**

Golden Tales: Myths, Legends, and Folk Tales from Latin America / De Oro Y Esmeraldas: Mitos, Leyendas Y Cuentos Populares De Latino America, Lulu Delacre.

These stories from thirteen countries and four indigenous cultures date from pre-Columbian and post-Columbian times. Maps, background notes, and source information demonstrate the effort which went into the collection and will provide further avenues for exploration of Latin American folklore. (Published as English and Spanish dual editions.) Scholastic, 74 pages.

1996 Commended Title.

Heart of a Jaguar, Marc Talbert.

Balam, a Maya boy struggling to achieve manhood, participates in community rituals to appease the gods and bring rain to his village. Talbert offers a non-romanticized view of Maya life in the Yucatan peninsula, rich with ethnographic detail. A bibliography draws upon diverse sources. Countless elements of daily life, relationship with the natural world, and the Maya belief system are well rendered in this unforgettable rite of passage story. Simon and Schuster, 197 pages.

1995 Honorable Mention.

The Honey Jar, Rigoberta Menchú, Co-authored with Dante Liano; Illustrated Domi.

The Honey Jar retells the ancient stories Rigoberta Menchú's grandparents told her when she was a little girl and we can imagine her listening to them by the fire at night. These Maya tales include natural phenomena narratives and animal stories. The underworld, the sky, the sun and moon, plants, people, animals, gods, and demigods are all players in these vibrant stories.

Enchanting images by Domi draw on the Maya landscape and the rich visual vocabulary that can be found in the weavings and crafts for which the Maya are renowned. Greenwood, 64 pages.

2007 Commended Title.

Jade and Iron: Latin American Tales from Two Cultures, Edited Patricia Aldana; Translated Hugh Hazelton; Illustrated Luis Garay.

With thoughtful presentation, the editor has selected a broad cross-section of stories that represent the indigenous and European cultures of Latin America. The collection was drawn from a rich variety of narrative sources, both oral and written, originally published in various Latin American countries. Greenwood, 64 pages. **1996 Commended Title.**

Journey of the Nightly Jaguar, Burton Albert; Illustrated Robert Roth.

Inspired by a Maya legend, the sun becomes a jaguar at night, stalking through the jungle until it appears again as the sun in the eastern sky. As much a poem as a story, illustrations and text



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flawlessly dovetail as raindrops become jaguar spots become shimmering bubbles become the morning sun. Atheneum, 32 pages. **1996 Commended Title.**

Journey of Dreams, Marge Pellegrino.

In this modern Underground Railroad adventure, Tomasa flees the scorched earth of her Maya village for safe refuge in the United States. The journey with her father and two brothers takes us over mountains, through rivers and across deserts, and finally into the safety of Arizona's Sanctuary Movement, where her family reunites and begins anew as Guatemalan refugees. Tomasa's narrative woven with Mayan folktales is an important, relevant, and heart-felt history lesson that should be shared so this Central American tragedy is not forgotten. (Grades 6-8). Frances Lincoln, 260 pages. **2010 Commended Title.**

Mayeros: A Yucatec Maya Family, George Ancona.

Armando, a young Mayero and his family, descendants of the 4,000 year old Mayan civilization, are the central characters in Ancona's color photographs and nonfiction narrative. The narration follows Armando and his family through a week of preparations for the town's fiesta, as it also provides descriptions and explanations of the family's daily work and play. Through references to his own Mayan heritage, historical information and ancient codices, Ancona shows readers the deep links between the past and present in Mayan culture. William Morrow, 40 pages. **1997 Honorable Mention.** A curriculum surrounding this book (***Beyond the Book: Mayeros- A Yucatec Family***) is available for free download from the LARC website (<http://stonecenter.tulane.edu/articles/detail/350>).

Pascual's Magic Pictures, Amy Glaser Gage; Illustrated Karen Dugan.

Having saved enough money to buy a disposable camera, Pascual goes into the Guatemalan rain forest near Tikal to take pictures of howler monkeys, but the results are not what he expects. Illustrations mirror snapshots with borders of Guatemalan weaving. Carolrhoda, 32 pages. **1996 Commended Title.**

People of the Corn: A Mayan Story, Retold Mary-Joan Gerson; Pictures Carla Golembe.

After several unsuccessful attempts to create grateful creatures, the Maya gods use sacred corn to fashion a people who will thank and praise their creators. Gerson sensitively presents this story from the Popol Vuh, the creation myth of the Maya. Engaging illustrations and the clear narrative express the Maya relationship to the natural world and why they are the "people of corn." Brown and Company, 32 pages. **1995 Commended Titles.**

The Secret Legacy, Rigoberta Menchú, Co-authored with Dante Liano; Illustrated Domi.

This book of Mayan legends is told by Ixkem, the story's protagonist. Ixkem is a young girl who lives with her grandparents. One day, while tending to their cornfield, Ixkem is confronted by b'e'n, or spirits. When she visits the world of the b'e'n, her stories begin. After telling seven legends, and receiving a secret from the b'e'n, Ixkem returns to her family. Beautiful illustrations accompany each chapter and a useful glossary of K'iche' Maya terms rounds out this collection. (Grades 5-8). Groundwood, 64 pages. **2009 Commended Title.**