

Book Selection

Books are the heart of *El día de los niños/El día de los libros* celebrations. Librarians may display selected titles, use particular works in story times, or booktalk a number of volumes, but first they must have a variety of books from which to create these activities. In selecting books for this tool kit, members of *El día de los niños/El día de los libros* committee of the Texas Library Association used the following sources and considered a number of issues discussed below.

Several Web sites provide links to bibliographies of dual-language books, translations from Spanish to English and English to Spanish, and books concerning Latino/Hispanic youth. These are listed on the Web site where this tool kit can be found, <http://www.texasdia.org>.

Awards and Prizes

A number of awards and prizes recognize books for Latino/Hispanic youth and full descriptions as well as previous recipients can be found at the Internet sites listed below.

The Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature – Given annually by the Consortium of Latin American Studies Program (CLASP) at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, this award recognizes outstanding children's and young adult books that “engagingly portray Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States.” <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CLACS/outreach/americas.html>.

Pura Belpré Award – Co-sponsored by the Association for Library Service for Children (ALSC) and the National Association to promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking (REFORMA), this biennial award is given to a Latina/Latino author and illustrator whose work of children's literature “best portrays, affirms, and celebrates” Latino culture. <http://www.ala.org/ala/alsc/awardsscholarships/literaryawds/belpremedal/belprmedal.htm>

Tomás Rivera Mexican-American Children's Book Award – Texas State University at San Marcos, Texas presents this annual award to an author/illustrator whose work best portrays the Mexican-American experience in the United States. <http://www.education.swt.edu/Rivera/mainpage.html>

Review Journals

The following review journals also provide help in selecting Spanish language materials for children.

Booklist – (<http://www.ala.org> and then link to Products and Publications). Five times a year Isabel Schon, director of the Barahona Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children, suggests titles appropriate for public and school libraries. Three of these columns deal with books published in the United States; two cover books originally published in other countries.

Críticas: An English speaker's guide to the latest Spanish language titles – (Access information about *Críticas* from the *School Library Journal* Home Page: <http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/>. Covering both adult and children's titles, as well as dual language books, original Spanish language editions, audio books in Spanish, and translations, *Críticas* utilizes reviewers who are primarily working with Latino/Hispanic youth.

The Horn Book Guide – (Access information about *The Horn Book Guide* from *The Horn Book*: <http://www.hbook.com>) While *The Horn Book Magazine* does not review

Spanish language materials, *The Horn Book Guide*, published four times a year, reviews a limited number of books translated from English into Spanish.

School Library Journal – (<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com>) Approximately six times a year, *School Library Journal* publishes reviews of dual language and Spanish language materials. Adults currently working with Latino/Hispanic youth contribute reviews.

VOYA: Voice of Youth Advocates – (<http://www.voya.com>) Every August, *VOYA*, which reviews materials intended for young adults, carries a column by Isabel Schon entitled “Noteworthy Books in Spanish for Adolescents.”

Unique Considerations for Bilingual and Translated Books

At one time, U. S. librarians had so few children’s books available to them in Spanish that they frequently ordered whatever was obtainable just so they could provide a modicum of service to Latino/Hispanic populations. Fortunately, that situation no longer holds true and librarians can now consider each book on its particular merits, thus allowing a consideration of some basic issues. These are discussed below.

Format

Books for toddlers

The most successful board books for very young children present a limited number of concepts, often with large print so these young children, with limited visual perception skills, can see the words. Dual language texts frequently have to resort to small print to make room for both languages. Books such as Ginger Foglesong Guy’s *¡Fiesta!* contain such limited texts that the words in either language are large and easy to see. Similarly, Donald Crews’s *Freight Train/Tren de carga*, which is not a board book but rather a picture book for younger readers, contains enough white space and employs such minimalist text that most pages allow generous space for the words. The one exception is the page representing “a Black steam engine/una locomotora negra.” On this page, a portion of the Spanish text is printed on dark puffs of smoke, making it difficult to see the words.

Meaningful translations of excellent board books, such as Sandra Boynton’s *Muu. Beee. ¡Así Fue!* (*Moo. Baa. La La La*) or *Azul el sombrero, verde el sombrero* (*Blue Hat, Green Hat*) retain the large print found in the English editions. Board books with longer texts and smaller type, such as the 2003 edition of Margaret Wise Brown’s *El gran ganero rojo* (*The Big Red Barn*) or Cynthia Rylant’s *Lléname de gracia* (*Give Me Grace*) or Angela C. Santomero’s *Buenas noches, Blue* are more appropriate for older toddlers.

Books for preschool children

Dual language picture books create their own formatting issues. Frequently they appear crowded because of the reduced print size required to place two texts on a single picture book page. More often than not, dual text picture books will devote one page to illustrations and one to text. However, several designers are making creative contributions to the effort. *Estrellita se despide de su isla/Estrellita Says Good-bye to Her Island*, for example, beautifully employs spot art to separate the Spanish text from the English.

Books for older readers

Because of the projected length of a book, dual language texts seldom appear in longer novels or informational books for older readers. There are, of course, exceptions such as Tomás Riviera's *Y no se lo tragó la tierra / And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* and Marcos Bretón's photo-essay on Latino baseball players, *Home Is Everything: The Latino Baseball Story*. In the latter book, the dual language works because the layout of photographs allows Spanish and English text to be varying lengths. As is noted elsewhere, more Spanish words are required to say the same things that were said in English.

Code Switching

Books that employ code switching are most frequently found in predominately English editions. Often the Spanish phrases are written in italics or bold print to set them apart from the English texts. These formatting features alert young readers to language changes in the text, an aid that may also help those just learning to read. Books, such as Susan Middleton Elya's *Say Hola to Spanish at the Circus* or *Eight Animals on the Town* often include a glossary to indicate both pronunciation and definitions of Spanish words and phrases. Such a tool is particularly helpful to non-Spanish-speaking readers, either adults reading aloud to a group or children tackling the reading on their own.

Fine books that employ code switching for older children, such as Julia Alvarez's *Before We Were Free*, flawlessly integrate definitions into the language, reflecting the typical conversational patterns of the speakers. These translations, whether in the narrative or the dialogue, are so natural that they help create believable characters. Notice how the protagonist "translates" one of her housekeeper's colloquial sayings as easily as she does the code switching in the second example below.

"Mami quotes one of Chucha's sayings, 'No flies fly into a closed mouth.' The less said the better" (Alvarez 2002, 26).

"'I think it's best if your tío doesn't say pío.' Tío Toni laughs. Best to lay low" (Alvarez 2002, 59).

Translations

Language

Translation from one language to another is an art as much as it is a skill. Translations must retain the flow of the language rather than produce word-by-word renditions. For example, Bill Martin's *Oso pardo, oso pardo, ¿qué ves ahí?* (*Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*), recreates the repetitive phrasing, "*¿Qué ves ahí?*", that made the original English edition a perennial favorite among very young children. In the same way, Eric Carle's, *De la cabeza a los pies* (*From Head to Toe*), employs natural and conversational repetition in the question "*¿Puedes hacerlo tú también?*" (Can you do it too?) and an answer "*¡Claro que sí!*" (Yes, I can!) that encourages young listeners to join in the reading pleasure. Occasionally, translators will select less common words from one language to retain the flow indicated in the original language. For example, Teresa Mlawer's translation *Si llevas un ratón a la escuela* (*If You Take a Mouse to School*) employs *maletita* for lunchbox rather than the more common *lonchera*. This choice softens the sounds in the Spanish sentence. "*Y lo guardará dentro de tu maletita,*" (Numeroff 2003, [20]) a device in keeping with the original English, "So he'll put it in your lunchbox." (Numeroff, 2002, [20]).

It is important to remember that books successful in one language will not necessarily translate well to another. "The sun did not shine./ It was too wet to play./ So we sat in the house/all that cold, cold,

wet day,” the thrilling beginning from the *Cat in the Hat*, loses its beloved sing-song pattern in this Spanish language edition: “*El sol no brillaba./ Estaba demasiado mojado para jugar./ Así es que nos sentamos adentro de la casa/ todo aquel frío, frío día mojado*” (from: Dr. Seuss, *El gato en el sombrero/The Cat in the Hat*; Traducido por Carlos Rivera, New York: Random House, 1967, p. 3).

There is, however, no template for translations. Books by one author, such as Ezra Jack Keats’s *Peter’s Chair (La silla de Pedro)*, frequently contain awkward texts in translation, whereas other choices, such as *Un día de nieve (The Snowy Day)*, successfully recreate the soft sounds so cherished in the original.

Dual language translations

There is much debate about the value of dual language texts. Some authorities believe that dual language texts are inappropriate for young readers, particularly those learning to read or those struggling with one language or another. The point is well taken. Young readers cannot simultaneously focus on two languages. Other children’s literature specialists, however, see value in dual language books, particularly if the translations are well done or the base story is strong. Family members, or adult readers of board and picture books, may not have the same language skills as the children to whom they are reading; dual language books allow both English speakers and Spanish speakers to share the same volume (Morales 2003).

The “best” kind of Spanish

The other issue that arises in translations and dual language books concerns the various dialects or forms of Spanish used in the translations. Some librarians favor traditional or non-regional Spanish. Others advocate colloquial Spanish. As Isabel Schon, director of the Barahona Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Young Adults, says, about Gary Soto’s *Chato y su cena (Chato’s Kitchen)*, translated by Alma Flor Ada and Isabel Campoy: “It’s that comic storytelling, that vernacular – ‘the coolest low-riding cat of East L.A.’ and ‘novio boy’ – that is beautiful. This is really going to encourage readers. You can’t do it if you’re offering books that are not written in a beautiful natural style” (Morales 2003, 22). Both traditional Spanish and more colloquial Spanish are reflected in the choices included in this tool kit.

Length

Translations of books from one language to another create other kinds of considerations. Books aimed at early readers, such as Cynthia Rylant’s Henry and Mudge series, will never, in their Spanish language editions (*Henry y Mudge con barro hasta el rabo*, a translation of *Henry and Mudge in Puddle Trouble*) contain as few words as the original English publications and consequently will not replicate the exact early reading experiences of the original works. As Isabel Schon states in Ed Morales’s article “The ABC’s of Kids’ Books,” “We all know that in Spanish you need at least 20% more words than you use in English to say the same thing” (Morales 2003, 20).

Translators

Several characteristics of translated books help selectors. Books translated by the authors, such as Francisco Jiménez’s *Cajas de cartón (The Circuit)* and Senderos fronterizos (*Breaking Through*) or Marc Simont’s *El perro vagabundo (The Stray Dog)*, will often contain the same attention to linguistic nuance as the original publications. Likewise, books such as *Mandaderos de la lluvia y otros poemas de América Latina*, profit from the editing of an accomplished translator like Claudia

M. Lee, who brings her expertise to the English, *Messengers of Rain and Other Poems* from Latin America.

Works published simultaneously in separate Spanish and English editions frequently reflect equal attention to both languages. Examples of these kinds of fine translations are Claudia M. Lee's translation of Pat Mora's *A Library for Juana, Una biblioteca para Juana* or F. Isabel Campoy and Alma Flor Ada's excellent translation of Kathleen Krull's *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez, Cosechando esperanza: La historia de César Chávez*. In addition, those books that have received special recognition for their translations, such as the 1994 Mildred Batchelder award (<http://www.ala.org/ala/alsc/awardsscholarships/literaryawds/batchelderaward/batchelderaward.htm>) recipient, *The Apprentice*, written by Pilar Molina Llorente and translated from the Spanish (*El aprendiz*) by Robin Longshaw, are strongly recommended for local collections.

Culture

Not only should translated books show sensitivity to language, they must also have the same view about the culture. Henry Horenstein's *Baseball in the Barrios* (available as a translated book, *Béisbol en los barrios*) gives readers a glimpse into the Venezuelan passion for baseball and contains the following passage "Our currency is named for Simón Bolívar, our greatest national hero, who is known as *El Libertador*, the Liberator, and also as the George Washington of South America." The translation gives a particular Anglicized twist to Bolívar since, in Venezuela, George Washington is known as the Simón Bolívar of the United States rather than the reverse.

Such Anglican sensibilities can also influence publishing that crosses borders in other ways. Kurusa's *The Streets Are Free*, a translation of *La calle es libre*, has been criticized because of one illustration that shows a gathering of activists who are drinking beer. The text makes no mention of the group's refreshment, but some American readers question the appropriateness of an illustration showing beer drinkers in a children's book, without recognizing the genius the illustrator, Monika Doppert, displays in portraying the particular Venezuelan culture. Similarly, others wonder about the strong images in Matthew Gollub's *Tío Culebra (Uncle Snake)* or those found in various versions of *La Llorona*. Such tales are often unfamiliar to U.S. readers and have not been stripped of their powerful elements, as have their European counterparts, which show, for example, the big bad wolf escaping the three little pigs rather than being boiled in water.

While it is tempting for librarians, trained in the United States and speaking only English, to limit their collections to familiar books originally written in English and translated into Spanish, such a narrow view robs young readers of some of the power of literature. Yes, many Latino/Hispanic children want to read the same books as do their English-speaking friends and classmates, and translations of books such as Beverly Cleary's *Ramona the Pest (Ramona la chinche)* are particularly applicable. Besides, *Ramona* is a universal character who speaks to children all over the globe. But, if literature is to provide youngsters the means with which they can, as Hazel Rochman so eloquently puts it, "cross borders," then the passage must go both ways. Books originally from Mexico, South America, or Spain have much to offer to both Latino/Hispanic youth and to their non-Latino/Hispanic peers. These must be included in any well-rounded collection. Examples of books from Spanish-speaking countries as well as those published in America are included in this tool kit.

Sources for purchasing books

The most complete listing of sources for purchasing books can be found in “Collections and Services for the Spanish-Speaking: Issues and Resources” by Solina Kasten Marquis, published in *Public Libraries* 42 (March/April 2003): 106 – 112. This information is also located at http://venus.twu.edu/~g_2marquis/fuen3collectiondevelopmentresources.html and is updated regularly.