Locating Children’s and Young Adult Literature About Latinos:

There are numerous online and print resources listing recommended youth books about Latinos.

**Online Resources**

1. **Barahona Center for Study of Books in Spanish for Children & Adolescents** – This comprehensive website has reviews of children’s books either written in Spanish or English about Latinos and has a search engine that allows users to locate books set in specific Latin American countries. [http://www.csusm.edu/csb/english/languagecenter.htm](http://www.csusm.edu/csb/english/languagecenter.htm)

2. **Kay Vandergrift’s children’s literature website** – This comprehensive website includes a plethora of information about many aspects of children’s literature including a page devoted to *quality books about Latinos*. The page is entitled Powerful Hispanic and Latin-American Images Revealed in Picture Books can be found at: [http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/ChildrenLit/hispanic.html](http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/ChildrenLit/hispanic.html)


5. **Latino Children’s and Young Adult Book Awards Websites:**
   - Pura Belpré Award - [http://www.ala.org/alsc\belpre](http://www.ala.org/alsc\belpre)
   - Américas Award - [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CLACS/outreach/americas.html](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CLACS/outreach/americas.html)

6. **Reading is Fundamental - Latino Outreach Initiative - Recommended Books:**
   - [http://www.rif.org/leer/cuarto/libros_recomendados_english.mspx](http://www.rif.org/leer/cuarto/libros_recomendados_english.mspx)


**Print Resources**

1. **Isabel Schon’s Books** - Since the late 1970’s, Schon has published professional books recommending the best children’s books about the Latino people and cultures (*The Best of Latino Heritage* series) and the best children’s books written in Spanish (*Books in Spanish for Children & Young Adults* series). She also periodically compiles bibliographies of recommended Latino children’s books for the *Reading Teacher, Book Links, and Multicultural Review* journals. For a listing of her books consult: [http://www.csusm.edu/csb/english/ischon.htm](http://www.csusm.edu/csb/english/ischon.htm)

2. Sherry York’s Books - **Picture Books by Latino Writers** and **Children’s and Young Adult Literature by Latino Writers** (both published in Worthington, OH: Linworth Publishing, 2002) provide biographical information of Latino authors and recommends books about Latinos for various age-levels of children.


4. Frances Ann Day’s **Latina and Latino Voices in Literature** (Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 2003) introduces numerous authors from the Latino cultures along with their significant contributions.

Resources for Planning Latino Library Programs

Professional resources to assist librarians with incorporating children’s and young adult books about Latinos into their library programs.

1. **Time to Read** and **El día de los Niños/ Day of the Child** – Activity ideas and suggestions for Latino literacy and Dia programs are available at this website sponsored by the National Latino Children’s Institute and Verizon Wireless: [http://www.nlci.org/DLN2004/activities.htm](http://www.nlci.org/DLN2004/activities.htm).


4. **El día de los Niños/ El día de los libros (Day of the Child/ Day of the Book) Toolkit** is a 100 page online document describing booktalks, author visits, storytelling, and other ideas that can be used to celebrate El día de los Niños/El día de los libros on April 30th. These suggestions can be used for units in the classroom all throughout the school year! The comprehensive document is available at: [http://www.texasdia.org/toolkit.html](http://www.texasdia.org/toolkit.html).

5. **REFORMA’s Children’s and Young Adults Services website** offers many activities and resources for bilingual storytimes and resources. Available at: [http://www.reforma.org/CYASC.htm](http://www.reforma.org/CYASC.htm).

6. Schiller, Lara-Alecio, and Irby’s **The Bilingual Book of Rhymes, Songs, Stories, and Fingerplays** (2004) is a helpful collection of bilingual (Spanish/English) activities to use in your program.

7. Rose Treviño’s **The Pura Belpré Awards: Celebrating Latino Authors and Illustrators** (2006), (Book and DVD).

8. Alma Flor Ada’s **Alma Flor Ada and You Vol. 1.** (2005) provides numerous practical suggestions for integrating Latino children’s literature into the classroom (which can be adapted to the library program).


Information on Library Services to Latino Youth and Their Families

There are numerous print and non-print resources for assisting librarians serving Latino populations.


3. **REFORMA** – an affiliate of ALA & the national association to promote library and information services to Latinos and the Spanish speaking. Available at: [http://www.reforma.org](http://www.reforma.org). North and South Carolina have their own chapter of REFORMA with information available at: [http://www.reforma.org/chapters/CarolinaChapter/index.htm](http://www.reforma.org/chapters/CarolinaChapter/index.htm)


6. Tim Wadham’s **Programming with Latino Children’s Materials** (1999) provides a sample flyer in English and Spanish that explains the difference between a library and a bookstore. He also offers a flyer entitled “How to Help Your Child Become a Reader,” which can be used by librarians as they survey and interact with their local Latino communities.


Ada, Alma Flor. *I love Saturdays y domingos.* Illus. by Elivia Savadier. Atheneum, 2002. A young girl describes the joy and excitement of visiting her Anglo grandma and grandpa on Saturdays and her abuela y abuelito on Sundays. This charming picturebook portrays a Latina child of mixed race and positively integrates the Anglo and Latino cultures.


Bertrand, Diane Gonzales. *The Empanadas that Abuela Made.* Illus. by Alex Pardo DeLange. Piñata Books, 2003. This engaging cumulative rhyme describes how an Abuela (grandmother) makes empanadas (turnovers) for her family. A recipe for making empanadas is also included.

Carling, Amelia Lau. *Mama and Papa Have a Store.* Dial, 1998. Using detailed watercolor and gouache illustrations, Carling describes the life of her Chinese immigrant family as they manage a store in Guatemala City. This colorful picturebook, one of the few books that depict Asian Latinos, provides an alternative and positive view of the cultural diversity in the Central American country of Guatemala.

Delacre, Lulu. *Arrorró, mi niño: Latino Lullabies and Gentle Games.* Lee and Low, 2004. Incorporating soothing oil-washed illustrations and rhythmic bilingual text, Delacre’s collection of lullabies celebrates numerous Latino subcultures as well as Latinos from all walks of life. The collection was chosen for its unique visual depiction of multiple Latino subcultures in various urban and rural settings, and for its tribute to the oral tradition of multiple subcultures.

Elya, Susan Middleton. *Bebé Goes Shopping.* Illus. by Steven Salerno. Harcourt, 2006. Rhyming text, which includes Spanish words, describes the exciting shopping trip of a Mamá and her bebé boy. This delightful read is sure to engage young children as they follow the baby’s antics in the grocery store.

Galindo, Mary S. *Icy Watermelons/Sandía fría.* Illus. by Pauline Rodriquez Howard. Piñata Books, 2001. A typical Latino family eats watermelons and listens to the grandparents’ stories about how the fruit helped them to meet each other. This positive, non-stereotyped book portrays the strong bonds of the extended Latino family.


Gonzalez, Maya Christina. *My Colors, My World / Mis colores, mi mundo.* Children’s Book Press, 2007. Although she lives in a brown sandy desert, a little girl named Maya is able to see the beautiful colors around her. This gorgeously-illustrated bilingual picturebook, which teaches colors in English and Spanish, is highly recommended for use in early childhood programs.

Guy, Ginger Foglesson. *My Grandma/ Mi Abuelita.* Illus. by Vivi Escrivá. Rayo, 2007. Simple bilingual text and colorful illustrations engage young children as they trail a father and his two children on their visit to see their Abuelita.

Recommended Picturebooks to Help Young Children Understand Latino Cultures


Mora, Pat. *A Birthday Basket For Tia*. Illus. by Cecily Lang. Simon & Schuster, 1992. Young Cecilia prepares for her 90-year-old Tia’s (Aunt’s) birthday party but has trouble deciding the perfect gift for her special relative.

Mora, Pat. *Uno, Dos, Tres; One, Two, Three*. Illus. by Barbara Lavallee. Clarion, 1996. Through rhyming text and bold illustrations, readers follow two little girls as they count to ten in English and Spanish while searching for a birthday present for their Mamá.

Morales, Yuyi. *Just a Minute: A Trickster Tale and Counting Book*. Chronicle, 2003. As Grandma Beetle prepares for a birthday party, she is visited by Señor Calavera (Death) who tells her it is time to go. Through a series of excuses that involve counting in Spanish and English, the clever grandma outwits death and enjoys a spectacular day with her grandchildren.

Orozco, José-Luis. *Diez Deditos/Ten Little Fingers and Other Play Rhymes and Action Songs from Latin America*. Illus. by Elisa Kleven. Dutton Children’s Books, 1997. This vibrantly illustrated bilingual collection of songs and finger rhymes are a perfect way to integrate music from the Latino cultures into the early childhood classroom. An accompanying CD is available for those who do not speak Spanish or can not carry a tune.

Pérez, Amada Irma. *My Diary from Here to There*. Illus. by Maya Christina Gonzalez. Children's Book Press, 2002. In this bilingual book with vibrant illustrations that seem to burst from the page, a young Mexican girl describes her excitement and fears as her family immigrates into the United States from Mexico. This vivid picturebook, which is an autobiographical account of Pérez’s own immigration experience, authentically and accurately portrays the Mexican immigration experience into the U.S.


Ramírez, José. *Quinito’s Neighborhood / El vecindario de Quinito*. Illus. by Ina Cumpiano. Children’s Book Press, 2005. Chosen for its representation of gender diversity in the generic Latino culture, this simple bilingual picturebook describes the various occupations of a young boy’s relatives and neighbors. Women are presented in traditional male occupations such as a carpenter and a truck driver, while men are depicted in traditional female roles such as a nurse and an elementary school teacher. In addition, the bold acrylic illustrations exude the warmth of Quinito’s neighborhood.

Weeks, Sarah. *Counting Ovejas*. Illus. by David Diaz. Atheneum, 2006. When a small child has trouble falling asleep, he decides to count sheep. Unfortunately, he spends most of the night trying to get all of the rainbow-colored sheep out of his bedroom. Bilingual text introduces colors in Spanish and English and includes pronunciation guides directly below each Spanish word. Wonderful book for circle time or bedtime!

Recommended Parenting Resources

Recommended Picture Books and Novels Representing Latino Diversity for Older Children and Young Adults

Alarcón, Francisco X. Angels Ride Bikes and Other Fall Poems/Los Ángeles Andan en Bicicleta y otros poemas de otoño. Illus. by Maya Christina Gonzalez. Children's Book Press, 1999. Magical realism and bold illustrations abound in this cheerful, bilingual poetry collection which describes the everyday experiences of the Mexican American author’s childhood in Los Angeles. This lighthearted collection affords a positive representation of the middle-class Mexican American culture that includes people who are overweight as well as characters in gender-defying roles.

Ancona, George. Mayeros: A Yucatec Maya Family. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1997. Emphasizing their daily experiences, Ancona spotlights a contemporary Maya family living on the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico. This vibrant photo-essay provides a positive representation of an indigenous Mexican Indian culture which is quite different than the usual representations of Mexican subcultures in children’s books.


Castañeda, Omar. Abuela’s Weave. Illus. by Enrique O. Sánchez. Lee and Low Books, 1993. While helping her Abuela with weaving, a young Guatemalan girl learns to appreciate her grandmother as well as her traditional artwork. This book positively represents the Central American country of Guatemala, portrays an elderly Latina character who is active, and provides an alternative Latino subculture beyond the typical Mexican and Mexican American cultures that are often represented in children’s picturebooks about Latinos.

Endredy, James. The Journey of Tunuri and the Blue Deer: A Huichol Indian Story. Illus. by Maria Hernández de la Cruz and Casimiro de la Cruz López. Bear Cub Books, 2003. A small Huichol boy gets lost in the woods and must rely upon a magical Blue Deer’s help to escape. Along their journey out of the forest, Blue deer introduces Tunuri to his nature family – Father Sun, Brother Wind, Sister Water, Mother Earth, and Grandfather Fire – and helps him learn of the gifts each gives to humans. This retelling of a Huichol Indian tale, illustrated with actual Huichol yarn art drawings, uniquely presents an alternative native subculture within the Mexican subculture. Too often, children’s books about the Mexican subculture often overlook indigenous peoples as well as mestizos (Latinos of mixed heritage).

Garza, Carmen Lomas. In My Family/En mi familia. Children’s Book Press, 1996. Using detailed illustrations and memories of her childhood, Garza weaves a tantalizing collection about the everyday experiences of Mexican Americans residing in her childhood home of Kingsville, Texas. This vivid bilingual picturebook offers a unique and positive sampling of Mexican American cultural topics such as curanderos, la Llorona, and empanadas.


Martínez, Victor. Parrot in the Oven, 1996. Through a series of vignettes, readers follow Manny as he attempts to discover his place in a society that despises his poor, Mexican-American family. (novel)

Ryan, Pam Muñoz. Esperanza Rising. Scholastic, 2000. After her father’s sudden death, Esperanza’s life is shattered when her Uncle tries to take over the family estate in Mexico. Fleeing for their lives, Esperanza and her mother immigrate into the U.S. where they must survive the harsh condition of migrant farm life during the Depression. (novel)

Santiago, Esmeralda. When I was Puerto Rican, 1993. This powerful coming-of-age memoir follows Esmeralda as she leaves her poverty-stricken family in Puerto Rico to live with family in New York and struggles to find her true identity in an unjust world. (novel).
Latino Literacy (Outreach) Programs

¡Colorín Colorado! – Supported by the American Federation of Teachers, the National Institute for Literacy, and the U.S. Department of Education, this reading program provides information on the importance of reading in the lives of English Language Learner (ELL) children. Activities and links are available concerning children’s literature about Latinos, helping Latino families, how the school can serve Latino families, etc. Early childhood educators could consider using the activities, the free 92 page booklet, and video clips in units in their programs. Available at: http://www.colorincolorado.org/homepage.php.

Lee y serás (Read & You Will Be) – The program is a “multi-faceted, multi-year, reading initiative to inform, engage, and help prepare families and communities to support the reading development of Latino children. Lee y serás was created by Scholastic in partnership with the Latino Community Foundation, a National Latino Advisory Committee, Univision, and Verizon Communications” (Scholastic’s webpage, 2005). The program provides support for Latino parents with training about early literacy, offers educators resources that will create print-rich learning environments for Latino children, and supplies information to public agencies to support Latino literacy in the community. More information about the program is available at: http://www.leeyseras.net/ or http://www.scholastic.com/familymatters/read/all/leeyseras/index.htm.

Common Publishers & Distributors of Children’s and YA Books about Latinos

- Lee & Low –http://www.leeandlow.com/
- Del Sol Books –http://www.delsolbooks.com
- Lectorum –http://www.lectorum.com
- Santillana USA –http://www.santillanausa.com/
- A list of other publishers of children’s books about Latinos can be located at: http://www.hispaniconline.com/hh02/culture_child_read_corner.html.

Book Links
Published by the American Library Association, the periodical Book Links often provides reviews of children’s books about Latinos in the Multicultural Literature section of their Classroom Connections feature. Below is a list of articles about Latino children’s literature appearing in Book Links:

- January 2007: “From Aztecs to Zorro: Recent Books about Latinos”
- September 2006: “Mayan Culture Past and Present”
- January 2005: “From the Alamo to Colibrí: New Books about Latinos”
- July 2004: “Celebremos! Picture Books about Mexico and Central America”
- January 2004: “Latinos, Hispanics, and Latin Americans”
- June/July 2001: “From Tangos to Tortillas: Latinos and Geography”
- July 2000: “Recent Children’s Books about Latinos”
- January 1999: “Delightful Recent Books about Latinos”
- September 1998: “Skeletons and Marigolds: Días de los Muertos”
- July 1997: “The Art of Mexico”
Select Latino/a Illustrator and Author Websites

- Susan Guevara’s art has received many awards including Pura Belpré Award, the Américas Award, the Américas Commended, and the Tómas Rivera Mexican American Children’s Book Award. [http://www.susanquevara.com/](http://www.susanquevara.com/).
- Yuyi Morales is a Latina artist, writer, puppet maker, and Brazilian folk dancer who grew up in Mexico. For more information on Morales, visit: [http://www.yuyimorales.com/](http://www.yuyimorales.com/).
- Simon Silva, a Chicano artist, spent much of his childhood working in the fields with other immigrant children. His vibrant gouache illustrations depict the everyday experiences of Latino farmers in the United States. His art has received the Pura Belpre Honor Award and the Américas Commended. [http://www.simonsilva.com/indexf.html](http://www.simonsilva.com/indexf.html).
- Alma Flor Ada has written many novels, picturebooks, and collections about Latino children. [http://www.almaflorada.com](http://www.almaflorada.com).
- Julia Alvarez, a Dominican American author and literature professor, was primarily a writer of adult fiction and poetry until the 2000 when she began writing fiction books for older children. [http://www.juliaalvarez.com/](http://www.juliaalvarez.com/).
- Veronica Chambers, an author from Panama, considers herself a secret Latina. She appears to be African American and growing up she felt alienated in the Latino community because of her physical appearance. Chambers has written numerous adult books and in the late 1990s began writing children’s books about her Latino roots. [http://www.veronicachambers.com](http://www.veronicachambers.com).
- Marisa Montes, a Puerto Rican American author and Writing Professor, has published several beginner chapter books about the Puerto Rican American culture. She created the Get Ready For Gabi series which is about a middle-class, third-grade, Puerto Rican American girl and the daily challenges she faces at school and growing up in the U.S. Gabi has been compared as a Latina Junie B. Jones. More information on Montes can be found at: [www.marisamontes.com/](http://www.marisamontes.com/).
- Pam Muñoz Ryan, a writer and educator of both Mexican and Spanish descent, has created a variety of books on many different topics including Mexican Americans. For more on Ryan, consult: [www.pammunozryan.com](http://www.pammunozryan.com).
- Esmeralda Santiago, a Puerto Rican American author, has written numerous teen novels recounting her experiences growing up in the U.S. as a newly arrived immigrant from Puerto Rico. Santiago has also edited two collections of Latino/a memoirs. For more on Santiago, consult: [www.esmeraldasantiago.net](http://www.esmeraldasantiago.net).
- José-Luis Orozco, a native of Mexico City, has created thirteen collections of children’s songs, games, and rhymes available in song book, cassette, or CD formats. Three of his collections (De Colores, Diez Deditos, and Fiestas) have been illustrated by Elisa Kleven. Orozco’s music collections are available at [www.joseluisorozco.com](http://www.joseluisorozco.com).
- Gary Soto is one of the few Mexican American authors who write for children, young adults, and adults. He is the most well-known Chicano author for children and has published more than 20 picturebooks about the Latino culture. Information on Soto is available at: [http://garysoto.com](http://garysoto.com).
Guidelines for Evaluating Children’s Picturebooks about Latinos

Examine the Personal Traits of the Character:
- Are the Latino characters portrayed as having a broad range of emotions similar to characters from other cultures?
- Can Latinos solve their own problems or do they rely upon Anglos for help?
- Do Latinos abandon some aspect of their culture in order to achieve happiness?
- Do Latinos move to the U.S. where everything is “perfect” and everyone is happy?

Examine the Role of Various Characters:
- Do Latino characters actively participate in the story (main character) or are they only secondary characters? Do they have leadership roles?
- Do Latinos spend their time taking siestas and putting off things until mañana?
- Are Latino characters in culturally stereotyped roles such as newly arrived immigrants, men full of machismo, shy girls, mothers of many children, or gang members?
- Is a strong sense of community and family expressed in the illustrations and text? Do elders help care for the children?

Examine and Identify Stereotypes:
- Are Latinos only depicted as poor low class citizens often living in barrios (Latino neighborhoods)?
- Are cultural stereotypes present in the illustrations such as sombreros, piñatas, cacti, mariachi bands, donkeys, and palm trees?
- Are females depicted outdoors and as active as male characters?
- Do Latinos lapse into Spanish when excited or use broken English?

Examine the Diversity in Text and Illustrations:
- Are positive role models of both genders provided for Latino children?
- Do all of Latino characters have the same appearance? OR Is the diversity in skin tones, hair styles and textures, and clothing presented? Not all Latinos have a “Latin Look” of dark skin, hair, and eyes.
- Are varied cultural experiences of Latinos represented? Is the diversity of the Latino subcultures represented such as Central and South America, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Cuba, etc.?

Examine the Experience of the Author and Illustrator:
- Does the author/illustrator have experience with the Latino subculture that he/she is representing? OR Is the book written/illustrated by someone who has only briefly visited a Latin American country? How qualified is the author/illustrator?

*Many of the ideas for these evaluation criteria are my own and other are adapted from: Council on Interracial Books for Children. “Latinos or Hispanic Americans.” Guidelines for selecting bias-free and storybooks. New York: Author, 1980.