



# The Booklist Project



Focus: Culture-Specific Booklist

Puerto Rican Culture

Developed by: Katie Ayer

Fall, 2010

**Book List**  
**Puerto Rican Culture**

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**September 29, 2010**

1. Winter, J. (author), & Rodriguez, E. (illustrator). (2009). *Sonia Sotomayor: A judge grows in the Bronx*. New York, NY: Antheneum Books For Young Readers.

**Summary:** This book is all about the life of Sonia Sotomayor. It shows the reader about her life growing up in the Bronx with very little. Sonia was raised by her hard working mother, and she relied on her families Puerto Rican traditions to “surround her like a warm blanket”. This biography follows Sonia all the way from her time at Princeton University through being nominated for Supreme Court Justice by President Obama. Readers will enjoy seeing that even though the road was rough, and she was faced with many skeptics, Sonia Sotomayor succeeded in becoming the first Latin American Supreme Court Justice.

I think that this book would be good for English Language Learners of Puerto Rican descent because it highlights a very strong, hard working woman who worked her way up to becoming a very prominent figure in American history. ELLs reading this book can see that even though there were hard times for Sonia, she overcame them and was able to get to where she is today.

**Helpful Links For Teachers:**

[http://books.simonandschuster.com/Sonia-Sotomayor/Jonah-Winter/9781442403031/reading\\_group\\_guide](http://books.simonandschuster.com/Sonia-Sotomayor/Jonah-Winter/9781442403031/reading_group_guide)

This website includes a guide to follow for reading groups working with this book.

**Grade Level:** Grade Three

**ISBN#:** 978-14424-0303-1

**WIDA Level:** Expanding and Bridging

2. Gonzalez, L. (author), & Delacre, L (illustrator). (2008). *The storyteller's candle*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.

**Summary:** Hildamar and Santiago recently moved from warm and sunny Puerto Rico to snowy and cold New York. They are feeling very homesick, especially since Three Kings' Day is quickly approaching. One day a visitor comes to their classroom opens the children's eyes to a whole new world at the public library. They were always told that the library was not meant for people who speak Spanish. With the help of the classroom visitor the children are soon on their way to putting together a play in honor of Three Kings' Day.

This story would be good for ELLs because it would help them make a connection to family celebrations they have within their own families. It would aid them in seeing that cultural celebrations can be and should be celebrated all over the world. Also, this story is written with

Spanish words embedded into the paragraphs, if an ELL were to read this book it would make them feel more comfortable with the language knowing that they knew several words in the story.

**Helpful Links For Teachers:**

<http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/esol/eng/Multicultural/PDF/Storyteller's%20Candle.pdf>

This website is a pdf file of a lesson plan for grades 3-5 centered on The Storyteller's Candle. It focuses on background knowledge and the Spanish vocabulary used in the book. There are pictures and definitions for these words in the file ready for teachers to use.

**Grade Level:** Grade Three

**ISBN#:** 978-0-89239-222-3

**WIDA Level:** Bridging

3. Zapater, B.M. (author), & Llorens, N.C. (illustrator). (1992). *Three Kings' Day*. Cleveland, Ohio: Modern Curriculum Press.

**Summary:** Melinda is very excited; it is the eve of Three Kings' Day. She rushes home after school to help her family with the preparations. One of which is placing grass and water under her bed as a treat for the camels the Three Kings ride. Even though her bother Andre fills her head with doubt about the visiting Three Kings, Melinda is full of hope that they will visit and leave her just what she wants, a new pair of white roller skates.

This book would be great for ELLs because it is a simple story that is told using not only illustrations, but also photographs of preparations for Three Kings Day. There are also Spanish words interspersed throughout the story which might help in the readability.

**Helpful Links For Teachers:**

<http://www.elboricua.com/losreyes.html>

This website gives detailed background information of the origins and traditions revolving the celebration of Three Kings' Day

**Grade Level:** Grade Two

**ISBN#:** 0-8136-2262-x

**WIDA Level:** Developing

4. **Manzano, S. (author) & Muth, J. (illustrator). 2004. *No dogs allowed*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books For Young Readers.**

**Summary:** Iris is going on a trip with her family to the Enchanted State Park. Everyone in her whole family is going, including her dog, El Exigente. It takes all of her family members a very long time to get ready and loaded up in the car. They eventually make it to the state park only to discover that there are no dogs allowed on the beach! Without skipping a beat, the entire family pulls together to devise a plan that will enable everyone to enjoy their time at the beach while still taking care of El Exigente.

This story is all about a huge extended Puerto Rican family coming together when one of them needs help. I think that an ELL could connect to this story's strong sense of family. Many ELLS are probably familiar with having extended family members come along on outings such as the one in the book, considering the value that the Puerto Rican culture places on strong family bonds. ELLS could also connect to some of the simple Spanish words that are used in the dialog.

**Helpful Links For Teachers:**

<http://books.simonandschuster.com/No-Dogs-Allowed!/Sonia-Manzano/9780689830884>

This website allows teachers to browse pages of the book and includes a *No Dogs Allowed* activity sheet. This activity would be appropriate for students in grades 2-3.

<http://books.google.com/books>

**Grade Level:** Grade Three

**ISBN#:** 0-689-83088-2

**WIDA Level:** Expanding

5. **Mike, J. (author) & Reasoner, C. (illustrator). (1995). *Juan Bobo and the horse of seven colors*. Troll Associates.**

**Summary:** Juan Bobo was a young shepherd who watched sheep for the King. One night while watching over the King's wheat field, Juan encounters a rare looking horse with a rainbow colored mane. The horse offers Juan seven of his magical mane hairs if Juan will allow him to escape. Juan takes the offer and sets out to put the hairs to good use. Immediately, Juan uses up six of the wishes on such things as: itch relief for his ant bites, a sausage as long as his arm, a nice pair of clothes, and a horse to ride on. When he falls off of the horse, he is attacked by a swarm of bees. His wish is for them to be chased away, and quickly there is a flock of birds doing just that. As Juan continues to walk on his journey to the princess, he is joined by a line of cats

and then dogs. He and his entourage walk into the kingdom, and immediately upon seeing him, the princess erupts in laughter, a sound that has not been heard in quite some time. This greatly pleases the king causing him to invite Juan Bobo to live in the kingdom forever.

This book is a retell of an old Puerto Rican legend. I think that ELLs could connect to this on a personal level if they have heard this or other Juan Bobo stories being told from generation to generation. The familiarity of the story might make reading it less stressful on an ELL student, and it may also open up discussion with other students in the class who are unfamiliar with this tale.

**Helpful Links For Teachers:**

<http://www.beaconlearningcenter.com/search/mastersearch.asp> (search Juan Bobo)

In this website there is a great lesson that focuses on making predictions about a story based on prior knowledge, the title of the book, what the cover tells, and the illustrations inside. This lesson is appropriate for first or second grade students.

**Grade Level:** Fourth Grade

**ISBN#:** 0-8167-3746-0

**WIDA Level:** Bridging

6. **Montes, M. (author) & Cepeda, J. (illustrator). (2000). *Juan Bobo goes to work*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.**

**Summary:** Juan Bobo is a silly boy whom many would call simple. In this classic Puerto Rican folktale, Juan sets out to find a job at his mother's urging. Before leaving the house, his mother cautions him to put his payment in a safe place where it will not be lost. Not quite understanding his mother's request, Juan places coins in his pockets with holes, milk in a burlap bag, cheese on his head, and ham on a string. Lucky for Juan, the sight of him walking dragging a ham behind him makes the very ill princess laugh, something she has not done in a very long time. The king is so grateful to Juan for saving his daughter that he sent a nice ham every Sunday for Juan and his mother to enjoy.

ELLs with a Puerto Rican background have probably heard this folktale before. Having the familiarity of the story may ease some of the stress of reading in English. There are also many Spanish words throughout the book which may be helpful in getting meaning across. This story is one of many Juan Bobo stories, ELLs may be able to make connections between this and the other Juan Bobo stories they have heard or read.

**Helpful Links For Teachers:**

<http://www.marisamontes.com/juanbobogoestowork.htm>

This is the authors own website, it gives some background knowledge to readers about her Interpretation of the folktale of Juan Bobo.

**Grade Level:** Second Grade

**ISBN#:**0-688-16233-9

**WIDA Level:** Late Beginning

**7. Delacre, L. (2000). *Salsa stories*. New York, NY: Scholastic Press**

**Summary:** When Carmen Teresa receives a journal as a gift she is confused about what to write in it. Luckily for her, her large Latin American family has many stories to share. She decides to let each of them write their own story in her journal. Carmen’s family has no problem retelling stories of holiday celebrations, trips to the beach, family traditions, and delicious recipes.

Many ELLs can connect with this book’s sense of family and it’s descriptions of how families celebrate Latin American holidays. The traditions that are described throughout the book will create a comfort level for these readers. This book would also give ELLs a great opportunity to share with classmates first-hand accounts of holidays celebrated in their culture.

**Helpful Links For Teachers:**

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/multimedia/authors>

This page includes a “meet the author” video with Lulu Delacre.

[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_books/books163.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_books/books163.shtml)

This website has helpful hints on topics to teach while reading this book with students.

<http://www.luludelacre.com>

<http://books.google.com/books>

**Grade Level:** Fourth Grade

**ISBN#:**0-590-63118-7

**WIDA Level:** Late Expanding, Bridging

8. Bernier-Grand, C. (author) & Delacre, L. (illustrator). (2002) *Shake it Morena, and other folklore from Puerto Rico*. Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press

**Summary:** This book is an entertaining mix of songs, riddles, stories, and games that all revolve around the Puerto Rican culture. The reader follows Morena from wake up time through her school day. This book introduces the reader to Morena's family and friends through beautifully drawn illustrations and also teaches through singing and playing.

This book would probably be a difficult independent level for an ELL, however, it would be high interest level. The familiar songs, stories and riddles might encourage an ELL to read in English what they already know in Spanish. Also, as with some of the other books on this list, this book may be nice to have in a classroom library to allow sharing of the traditional stories either by the teacher or an ELL student.

**Helpful Links For Teachers:**

<http://new.music.yahoo.com/musical-kids-international/tracks/cheki-morena-shake-it-morena-instrumental--175635009>

This website provides the instrumental version of Cheki, Morena! (Shake It, Morena!). It might be fun for students to hear the music and try to sing along the Spanish or English version of the song.

[http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com/lit\\_resources/authors/stories\\_behind/storygrand.html](http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com/lit_resources/authors/stories_behind/storygrand.html)

<http://www.books.google.com/books>

**Grade Level:** Varying depending on which song, riddle, or story is being read.

**ISBN#:** 0-7613-1910-7

**WIDA LEVEL:** Varying depending on which song, riddle, or story being read.

9. Caraballo, S. (author) & Torrecilla, P. (illustrator). (2008). *Estrelita in the big city*. Texas: Piñata Books

**Summary:** Estrelita is fascinated at the wonders of the big city of Brooklyn after arriving from her small island of Puerto Rico. In a phone conversation with her Abuelita, she describes the boisterous and fun-filled subway ride to Manhattan. She describes an underground world of street musicians and food stands, busy Fifth Avenue, the sky high buildings and giant, foot-long hotdogs.

This book may appeal to ELLs because it recounts the struggles of a little girl adjusting to life in a new, big, English speaking city, something they may have experienced themselves. Many of them will be able to relate to the frustrations Estrelita feels looking at all of the billboards and city signs that are in English only. Also, many ELLs can more than likely connect to having to have a relationship with family members who have stayed in their native countries, just like Estrelita's grandmother. Additionally, the format of this book is great for ELLS because it is bilingual, with Spanish on the top of the page and English on the bottom.

**Helpful Links For Teachers:**

<http://www.delsolbooks.com/estrellitainthecity.htm>

This is a link to an audio reading of the book, done in English by an expressive young reader.

<http://books.google.com/books>

**Grade Level:** Second-Third Grade

**ISBN#:**978-1-55885-498-7

**WIDA LEVEL:** Expanding

10. **Nodar, C. (1992). *Abuelita's paradise*. New York, NY: Albert Whitman and Company.**

**Summary:** Marita, a Puerto Rican girl wraps herself in happy memories of her grandmother who recently passed away. She is able to do this when she receives her Abuelita's rocking chair as a gift. While she rocks, Marita thinks about the stories Abuelita has told her about growing up on the beautiful island of Puerto Rico. Marita is reminded, by her mother, as she reminisces, that the lush island was Abuelita's paradise while she was alive, however, she is now happy in a another paradise.

An ELL reading this story may be able to connect with the concept of family. It is also packed with beautiful watercolor pictures of the island of Puerto Rico. An ELL student might find comfort in this story if they have ever had to deal with the death of a family member.

**Grade Level:** Second-Third Grade

**ISBN#:**978-0-80750-129-0

**WIDA Level:** Bridging

### **Additional Links**

<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/lessonplan.jsp?id=1293>

This is an excellent website all about the celebration of Carnival. It contains lessons for visual arts, language arts and history.

<http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Pa-Sp/Puerto-Rican-Americans.html>

This website has pages of information on Puerto Rico. Everything from history, modern times, cuisine, dances, holidays, photographs, etc.

<http://www.elboricua.com/BoricuaKids.html>

This website is a wealth of knowledge for teachers. It contains recipes, children's songs, coloring pages, and lesson plans.

<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/puerto-rican-culture.html>

A very helpful website that has links to interesting facts about Puerto Rico, information on Puerto Rican holidays, articles about famous Puerto Ricans, and more.

<http://www.topuertorico.org/culture/>

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## The Booklist Project

A Project of the  
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