



Martí's Song for Freedom / Martí y sus versos por la libertad

Emma Otheguy , Adriana Domainguez (translator) , Jose Martai (Contributor) , Beatriz Vidal (illustrator)

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*Yo soy un hombre sincero
De donde crece la palma,
Y antes de morirme quiero
Echar mis versos del alma.*

As a boy, José Martí was inspired by the natural world. He found freedom in the river that rushed to the sea and peace in the palm trees that swayed in the wind. Freedom, he believed, was the inherent right of all men and women. But his home island of Cuba was colonized by Spain, and some of the people were enslaved by rich landowners. Enraged, Martí took up his pen and fought against this oppression through his writings. By age seventeen, he was declared an enemy of Spain and forced to leave his beloved island.

Martí traveled the world, speaking out for Cuba's independence. But throughout his exile, he suffered from illness and homesickness. He found solace in New York's Catskill Mountains, where nature inspired him once again to fight for independence.

Written in verse, with excerpts from Martí's seminal Versos sencillos, this bilingual picture book is a beautiful tribute to a brilliant political writer and courageous fighter of freedom for all men and women.

Martí's Song for Freedom / Martí y sus versos por la libertad Details

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Author : Emma Otheguy , Adriana Domainguez (translator) , Jose Martai (Contributor) , Beatriz Vidal (illustrator)

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From Reader Review Martí's Song for Freedom / Martí y sus versos por la libertad for online ebook

Ariel says

I'm amazed that Martí's Song for Freedom is Emma Otheguy's debut picture book. She expertly details José Martí's Cuban childhood, his passion to end slavery and Spanish rule in Cuba, his subsequent imprisonment and expulsion from Cuba, and finally his return to Cuba to fight in the Ten Years' War. Throughout the story, Otheguy weaves in Martí's poetry alongside Beatrice Vidal's incredible illustrations and Adriana Domínguez's Spanish translation. Readers will come away understanding José Martí's importance to Cuba, poetry, and the universal fight for freedom.

Chana Stiefel says

Martí's Song for Freedom is a picture book biography about José Martí, a poet and political activist who fought for the rights of oppressed Cubans under Spanish rule in the late 19th century. Through Martí's poetry, Emma Otheguy's lyrical text, and Beatriz Vidal's lovely illustrations, this book will transport you to another time and place. A Spanish translation side-by-side with English text will make this important book accessible to children, parents, and teachers all over the world. Backmatter includes an afterword about Martí's life, an author's note about Martí's poetry linking Latin America with Nueva York (where the author lives), excerpts from Martí's poetry, acknowledgments about the author and illustrator's inspiration, and a selected biography. The quote from Martí on the back cover remains tragically relevant, yet hopeful and inspirational, to this day: "And let us never forget that the greater the suffering, the greater the right to justice, and that the prejudices of men and social inequalities cannot prevail over the equality which nature has created."

Katey Howes says

On each left hand page, side-by-side columns of English and Spanish text, complemented by a verse of Martí's own poetry in both languages, face full page illustrations on the right hand pages. Historical accuracy mixed with lyrical text and gorgeous art make this story of poet, freedom fighter, and Cuban national hero José Martí a joy to read. Welcome back matter gives plenty of information and resources. A wonderful book for classrooms, libraries, and multilingual programs.

Oona says

What a beautiful book! Written in verse, but not rhyming verse. It would work well to put one of the pages under a document camera and take a close look at the line breaks, punctuation and formatting choices. I especially like how the author includes only one of each of the "versos sencillos" at the end of certain pages as a means of focusing in on the messages developed on the page and in the book. Use this as a mentor text for students to write their own stories in verse after doing research. Consider partnered "side by side" read alouds in both English and Spanish to help students see the variations in etymology and specific Latin roots.

It would be a great addition to any Spanish classroom (I'm lending my copy to the Spanish teacher at my school!) And what to read next or before? Any of these narrative nonfiction books about those who patiently persevere and make a difference could be considered:

Pedal Power
Rolling Thunder
Ada Lovelace: The Poet of Science
Grace Hopper: Queen of Computer Code
One Plastic Bag
Lost and Found Cat
Long May She Wave
Their Great Gift
Shark Lady
The Stone Thrower
Fish for Jimmy

Alison Goldberg says

This bilingual story in verse pays tribute to an inspiring writer and freedom fighter from Cuba. Otheguy's language is lovely (He chased the river/as it swelled with the rains/and rushed on to the saltwater sea) and seamlessly includes excerpts from Martí's poem. An afterward provides additional biographical information. A wonderful book!

Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

Written in both English and Spanish, Otheguy introduces young readers to Cuban poet and freedom fighter José Martí. As a boy, Martí was introduced to the beauty of the Cuban countryside by his father, and he fell in love with it. But he also realized that not everything was wonderful when he saw enclaved people cutting sugarcane, but wanting to be free. Martí wished to end slavery in Cuba, however, Spain ruled the country and didn't care about the diverse people of Cuba. When the Cubans began a war against Spain, Martí supported them, writing pamphlets and newspaper articles, for which he was arrested. At 17, he was released from jail on condition that he leave Cuba forever. Martí settled in New York, continuing to support Cuba's fight for freedom. He found solace in writing verses about nature in the Catskill Mountains, but his heart never left Cuba. And, he felt that Cuba needed him, that it was time to fight Spain for its freedom again. Martí returned home and served as a soldier, and though he died before Cuba won its freedom, the fight was finished by friends who kept his dream alive. Written in short free verse stanzas, similar to Martí's own poetry, Otheguy introduces the reader to this hero of Cuba freedom who never strayed from his belief that the Cuban people deserved their independence. The poetry is supported by Vidal's beautiful gouache illustrations, in colors reminiscent of bright, sunny, warm hues of the Cuban landscape. Back matter is included.

Barbara says

This bilingual picture book offers a brief introduction to Cuban freedom fighter and social activist Jose

Marti. Troubled by the injustices he witnessed in Cuba, including slavery, the young man began writing and distributing social commentary holding the Spanish conquerors accountable for their behavior. He was arrested, made to work in a quarry, and then exiled from his beloved island, eventually settling in New York City. But even there, he noted that many failed to notice the injustices occurring around them. The author makes it clear that Marti drew inspiration from the beauty of nature, both in Cuba and in the Catskills. After replenishing his resources, he returned to Cuba to fight for independence alongside other Cubans. Marti's inspiring story is told through verses that include excerpts from his own writings, offering glimpses into the heart and soul of a man who saw wrongs and determined to make them right, no matter the personal cost to him. The gouache illustrations pay tribute to Marti and the natural world he loved so deeply. An Afterword provides additional information about this man of action whose words inspired others to make a difference in their homeland. It is clear that he loved both of his countries, and I'm delighted to have a picture book biography about him for a young audience. Who knows but that some reader will chance upon Marti's story and be compelled to call for change in some area just as he once did?

Donalyn says

Not only is the story written in both English and Spanish, the author's note and back matter are, too!

Jannie Ho says

Beautifully written in verse, bi-lingual story on Jose Marti. Clear and easy read with text by Emma Otheguy on the left paired with Beatriz Vidal's beautiful gouache illustrations on the right, which serves the story well. Events are broken down in a well and thoughtful manner. I was curious to know more as I know very little about Jose Marti, and happy to see there was extensive afterword with more info. It would definitely make a wonderful addition to any library!

Danielle Hammelef says

In honor of celebrating Multicultural Children's Book Day in 2018, the publisher provided me with a copy for an honest review.

The book is gorgeously illustrated with stunning details and warm, vibrant colors. The lyrical text is written in English and Spanish in two separate columns on each page, making it perfect for bilingual readers as well as introducing another diverse culture to readers. I wasn't aware that Cuba's population is a "mixing bowl" of diverse people like the US before reading this book. Actual verses from Marti's poems are given on each page too and then summarized in the back matter. I learned so much from this book about an important figure in history and enjoyed every minute inside this book.

The historical information provided in the afterword as well as the author's notes on why she wrote this book, add depth to the story and would make a great resource for teachers and parents alike.

Tasha says

This picture book in both Spanish and English verse tells the story of José Martí. Martí spent his entire life working to end slavery in Cuba after witnessing the brutality first hand. At the time, Spain ruled Cuba and a war of independence started in 1868. Martí wrote against the Spanish government and was jailed and put to hard labor. At 17-years-old he was sent away from Cuba. He continued to fight for Cuba's independence and settled in New York. He would travel into the Catskill Mountains to see the nature that he missed from Cuba. Martí eventually returned to Cuba and helped fight in the battles against the Spanish, dying on the battlefield before freedom was realized. His words live on: it was his words and songs that helped drive the Cubans to fight for freedom and to continue fighting.

The verse contains excerpts from Martí's works, allowing readers to read his words directly. The verse from the author and from Martí work beautifully together, flowing into one river of words that tell the story of Cuban freedom. The afterword and author's notes add information to the verse, giving more dates and information on the war for freedom in Cuba and on Martí's life. This picture book biography takes a complex subject and makes it accessible for young readers, demonstrating how a young-person's passion can ignite a nation.

The illustrations move from Cuba to New York to the Catskills, capturing scenes of daily life, lush greenery, and battles. There is a sense of energy to all of the illustrations, that matches that of the verse as it speaks to the drive that Martí had to speak out for Cuba's independence.

A great picture book biography that adroitly pairs English and Spanish on the page. Appropriate for ages 7-9.

Jill says

This bilingual biography of José Julián Martí Pérez tells the story in freestyle verse of a Cuban national hero and writer.

The author reports that Martí "fell in love with his home island" of Cuba when he was a young boy. But he hated the slavery he saw and wished he could help end it. Cuba was ruled by Spain at that time, but in 1868, the Cuban people began a war to gain independence.

Martí wrote political tracts and handed them out everywhere. He was jailed and sent to a quarry to do forced labor. The Spanish agreed to release him, but only if he left Cuba, so the 17-year-old went to New York. There, he continued to write against injustice in Cuba, and he gave speeches to inspire the fight for equality and liberty.

Martí missed the natural beauty of Cuba, however, and would retreat to the Catskill Mountains for solace. But the mountains also made him so homesick, he decided to return to Cuba and serve as a soldier in the war for independence. He died in the Battle of Two Rivers. As the author observes:

"He didn't live to see his dreams come true,
But José's friends carried his words in their hearts
And finished the fight."

She concludes:

"José Martí helped free Cuba,
And to all of us he left these simple verses
That keep the rhythm of the *palmas reales*,
And that sing forever of freedom."?

At the end of the book, there are excerpts from some of Martí's verses and a select bibliography.

Colorful gouache illustrations by Beatriz Vidal are done in a folk-art style that pays tribute to Latin American culture.

Discussion: The narrative in this book did not give me a solid understanding of why Martí was such a hero and an important figure in Latin American history. Nor is there an Author's Note filling in the blanks. In digging on my own, I discovered that in fact, as Wikipedia reports, Martí not only raised awareness and support for the cause of Cuban independence:

"His unification of the Cuban émigré community, particularly in Florida, was crucial to the success of the Cuban War of Independence against Spain. He was a key figure in the planning and execution of this war, as well as the designer of the Cuban Revolutionary Party and its ideology."

In addition, he was revered in literary circles:

"Martí is considered one of the great turn-of-the-century Latin American intellectuals. His written works include a series of poems, essays, letters, lectures, novel, and a children's magazine. He wrote for numerous Latin American and American newspapers; he also founded a number of newspapers. His newspaper *Patria* was an important instrument in his campaign for Cuban independence. After his death, one of his poems from the book, "Versos Sencillos" (Simple Verses) was adapted to the song 'Guantanamera,' which has become the definitive patriotic song of Cuba."

The author does include some excerpts from "Versos Sencillos," but does not inform readers of their significance.

Nevertheless, the story and lovely artwork could inspire children to find out more about this poet, writer, and nationalist leader, who only lived to the age of 42.

Rating: 3.5/5

Alisha says

A short bitter-sweet picture book about the life of Jose Marti. The pictures are bright and colorful. The topic might be too dense for younger audiences but middle/high school students who are reading about history or Spanish will gain a lot from this.

Gina Perry says

Emma Otheguy's debut picture book is a bilingual biography, written in verse. The story is at once poetic and profound. I had no prior knowledge of José Martí and found this to be a lush, lyrical, and intriguing primer on his story. José Martí's love for Cuba and New York, and the sacrifices he made for emancipation and Cuba's independence from Spain make for a captivating read. The illustrations are rich yet formal, adding to the weight of the story.

Suzanne says

I heard of Jose Marti when I read *The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora* by Pablo Cartaya. Arturo's grandparents loved Marti's poetry and his place in Cuban history. The excerpts that Arturo read within the story made me curious, so when I saw a picture book biography of Marti, I had to read it. The bilingual nature of the text makes sense, since Marti lived in the United States for years during his exile from Cuba, and he helped to make the U.S. and other countries around the world aware of conditions in Cuba and the struggle for independence taking place there. The gouache illustrations depict key scenes from Marti's life - seeing the treatment of slaves in the cane fields, working in the quarry after his arrest, giving speeches, walking in the Catskills during his time in New York, and Battle of Two Rivers where he was killed. But the pictures also show the things about Cuba that he loved so much. The palmas reales, the diversity of Cuba's population, even the iconic metal grill-work decorations on windows and pastel colors on the buildings provide a look at the country he held dear. Readers can also see the beauty of the Catskill Mountains, the street scenes of New York, and Marti writing at his desk. The illustration that Marti himself would treasure most is the crowd celebrating Cuba's independence; there are people waving their hats in the air, playing guitar and drums, even a couple dancing. It is a party he would have been proud to join.

The text works in pieces from Marti's poetry, as well as using images from his poems to bring his passion to life. An afterword and author's note provide additional information, and an excerpt from his *Versos Sencillos* is included. After finishing this biography, many readers will want to find a full length copy of his poems to read. This is a solid addition to school libraries and could be used in history lessons as well as language arts classes.

I read an e-book provided by the publisher through edelweiss.
