


Tales Our Abuelitas Told: A Hispanic Folktale Collection

Alma Flor Ada , F. Isabel Campoy

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Once upon a time, in a land far away... These stories have journeyed far -- over mountains, deserts, and oceans -- carried by wind, passed on to us by our ancestors. Now they have found their way to you.

A sly fox, a bird of a thousand colors, a magical set of bagpipes, and an audacious young girl...A mixture of popular tales and literary lore, this anthology celebrates Hispanic culture and its many roots -- Indigenous, African, Arab, Hebrew, and Spanish.

F. Isabel Campoy and Alma Flor Ada have retold twelve beloved stories that embody the lively spirit and the rich heritage of Latino people.

The work of four leading Latino artists and illustrators highlights this unforgettable collection.

Tales Our Abuelitas Told: A Hispanic Folktale Collection Details

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From Reader Review Tales Our Abuelitas Told: A Hispanic Folktale Collection for online ebook

Cayla Caudillo says

Kirkus Review

These lovingly collected and beautifully presented tales take in a wide swath of history and cultures, from Spain, long a crossroads between Europe and Africa, to North America and Latin America, with their own rich heritages. Several of the tales, familiar to the authors since childhood, were actually told by their abuelitas. Each tale is followed by an often-detailed note on its origins and the decisions the authors made in their retellings. The wonderfully varied stories range from the very short “The Castle of Chuchurumbé” from Mexico, to the elaborate “The Little Horse of Seven Colors,” set in New Mexico. The gentle “The Happy Man’s Tunic,” retold by Ada, is given “the Arabic setting of Al Andalus.” The stories are introduced by a listing of Spanish phrases traditionally used to begin a story, such as “Había una vez . . .” (Once upon a time . . .), and conclude with a sampling of ending phrases. An unusual and worthwhile collection, beautifully illustrated.

RLL220_Karen Segura says

Juan Bobo by F. Isabel Campoy, writes the tale of Juan Bobo getting sent to search for firewood. As Campoy describes who Juan Bobo is at the end of the story, how Juan is only able to resolve intricate problems. The picture that shows who Juan Bobo is on the page after the first page of the story, is an oil pastel painting with Juan sitting on top of a very small “burro” or donkey in English. You can also see the mother in the background looking at him in awe, possibly because of his way of solving problems. Overall, this traditional tale is very interesting because I have never heard of it. Juan Bobo can be seen like the Mexican Pepito. I would recommend these tales for students in ESL or even high school Spanish classes to exercise their Spanish.

Meridith Moore says

Tales Our Abuelitas Told: A Hispanic Folktale Collection by F. Isabel Campoy and Alma Flor Ada is a wonderful collection of twelve folktales with stories that truly embrace the heritage of Latino people. Each story is accompanied with a beautiful illustration that also captures the Hispanic culture. This is such an amazing collection because not only is it a group of tales passed down from generation to generation, but it also incorporates the Hispanic heritage. This is a great way to connect with students and support their background knowledge, as well as teach students who are unfamiliar about a new culture.

The first few pages of the book contain opening lines that are traditionally used when telling stories in the Spanish language and are accompanied by an English translation. This is helpful to speakers of both languages and will support readers with fluency. I believe it is important to introduce folklore from many cultures, not just one. This collection of stories would be great for a unit on folklore. As teachers, we should actively try to connect with students’ background knowledge, but it is important to understand that some students will need scaffolding with unfamiliar cultures. Introducing many cultures to students helps them expand their knowledge and grow appreciation and respect for cultures different from their own.

Folklore aligns with many of the Common Core Standards for language arts in grades 3-5. Any of these stories would serve as a great read aloud, but I believe these tales would be great to read independently or in partners as well. To encourage visualization and attention to detail, students could draw their own illustration of a folktale to display in the classroom. After reading a few stories from *Tales Our Abuelitas Told*, students could write their own folklores with a lesson or theme. This book would be great for students to identify central ideas in a story and find the take away message from it. Folklores are also great tales for students to identify similes, metaphors, personification, and other expressions. Students could also practice fluency by working on inflections in their voice when speaking as one of the characters in the story. I really loved this book and was entertained by the engaging stories and beautiful pictures. I will definitely find a copy of this for my future classroom!

Lori Shook says

I LOVE folktales!! I think they are a great way to bring different cultures into the classroom. They also offer a rich tradition of oral literacy. By looking at details and descriptions within a folktale one can ascertain what values are important, what the geography is like, as well as customs, food, and styles of artwork. In my class, I would use folktales as an opportunity to get the parents' families involved. I would have students ask their parents for any stories they heard as a child or even talk about an event that happened to them and perhaps create their own folktale to begin passing down. In this book, my favorite folktale is "A Bird of One Thousand Colors."

Missy says

Twelve stories have flown from the peaks of the Basque Region, from the deserts of Arabia, across the oceans from Spain, from the heart of Mexico and the indigenous lands in South and Central America, over the Sangre de Cristo range and the blue rivers of New Mexico.

These stories form this rich and beloved collection of Latino folk stories, that include sly animal tales with familiar characters like the fox, and happy and endearing tales- like the magic bagpipes that make all who hear them dance joyously, to the tale of Blancaflor, to my personal favorite, the Tale of the Happy Man's Tunic, in which a kingdom is searched high and low for the tunic of the man who is the most content of all. These beautifully written tales are perfect to tell to a little one at bedtime or to a family gathered 'round, and make up a rich heritage of cultural stories.

Whitney Pittsenbarger says

really enjoyed these stories

Ms. Kelly says

Beautiful pictures and even more beautiful stories. I really enjoyed the pages of background information,

giving even more insight into the world that each particular tale comes from. I felt far more drawn to the stories with less European influence, and more Hispanic American flavor ~ partially for their newness, partially just personal preference. The tropes of European stories seemed to dilute the magic, to me. There are enough forms of magical imaginings ~ we don't have to always rely on the same forms.

However, as a collection, it is interesting to see a variety of tales.

Martina Martinez and Perez the Mouse was a cute story, and I can see how the characters have become ingrained in the cultural psyche.

The Bird of One Thousand Colors was a particularly lovely tale about a kind and beautiful bird that, upon giving his beautiful feathers to a trickster, is gifted in turn by all the birds in the forest with one beautiful feather from each bird. The message (to me) was that beauty can never be lost because others will see your true beauty. Loved it.

Caitlyn says

This is a wonderful collection of 12 Hispanic folktales with beautiful vibrant pictures to boot! These folktales can help not only myself understand better the customs of Hispanic culture, but also help non-Hispanic students understand them, and give the Hispanic students something to be proud of and be able to share their own stories. Understanding the culture of our students is so important, and these folk tales are a small window into that culture. Not only are the tales fascinating, but they are prefaced with a historical lesson on the roots of where they most likely originated. They can teach the students about culture, geography, and history as well.

This book would be a great time to invite in guest speakers (parents, aunts, uncles, historians) that have great folktales to tell, and get the children involved with other student's families and cultures! Every kid has stories that they were told when they were little, and they are all different. This book is a great way to lead a conversation about these folktales and how different cultures have different values and how these stories can help us identify some of the differences, but also the similarities. This book is not only educational, but entertaining. There are even Spanish words mixed in with the stories which are a great attribute. Highlighting other cultures in our classroom and making sure all our students feel proud of where they come from is the best way to create a community of learners who respect each other and want to learn with, and from each other.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

Overall, I enjoyed this collection of folktales very much, the ones toward the end more so than the ones at the beginning. "Dear Deer! Said the Turtle" reminded me of the Aesop fable about the race between the tortoise and the hare, with elements from some African versions I've read. "Catalina the Fox" reminded me of an Uncle Remus tale, which originated in Africa. "Juan Bobo" is the Spanish version of the Jack tales popular throughout Europe. My favorite stories were the lengthy "The Little Horse of Seven Colors", "The Happy Man's Tunic" (such a wonderful moral!), and "Blancaflor".

What I enjoyed most about the book were all the notes that accompanied each story. I learned some interesting things from those notes. For example, I didn't know that people from the area of Spain called Galicia are Celtic in origin--hence, the bagpipes played by the youngest brother in "The Joyful Bagpiper". I also didn't know that a large Basque population exists in the northwest Rocky Mountain area of the U.S. Also, at the beginning was a list in Spanish and English of traditional ways to begin a story, and at the end was a list in Spanish and English of traditional ways to end a story.

Recommended for folktale enthusiasts and those who want to learn more about the culture of Spain.

Vamos a Leer says

Tales our Abuelitas Told, written by F. Isabel Campoy and Alma Flor Ada, and illustrated by Felipe Davalos, Vivi Escribe, Susan Guevara, and Legla Torres, is a lovely compilation of Hispanic folktales whose origins span the globe. Given the length and detail of the stories, this book is best for more advanced readers; however, if children are being read to, all ages could enjoy these beautiful tales.

The book begins with a "Welcome" section, where Campoy and Ada introduce not only their objective in creating such a collection, but also the general history and development of many of these tales, starting in Europe, with Arabic and Jewish influence, and moving to Latin America, fusing with African heritage. While providing an extensive and impressive history of folklore throughout the Iberian peninsula and then the Western hemisphere, Campoy and Ada remind readers of the ultimate beauty and importance of storytelling: "Through stories people share their dreams, their hopes, and the lessons they learn from life, and also their celebration of the imagination and the ingenuity of a well-told tale."

The introduction provides an excellent, synthesized overview of the historical context of these stories, which in itself could lead to a variety of lessons on history and geography. From the European relations between the Greeks, Phoenicians, and Carthaginians, the invasion in Spain of the Visigoths, and the Arabic influence in southern Spain, to the onset of colonization in 1492, the indigenous civilizations of the Americas and their "magnificent civilizations," and the slave trade, the introduction provides a detailed account of the history of these folktales. In particular, the authors discuss the influence of African culture in the Americas:

The enslaved African people, who were brought to the Americas, came without material possessions. Still, they carried with them their experiences, their knowledge, their cultural beliefs and worldviews, their languages and their stories. Some of the best-known and most-beloved stories told in Latin America today originated in Africa or among the African people forced into slavery.

This collection is rich with historical context and cultural heritage, weaving in thoughts, sentiments, stories and dreams of peoples from all over the globe, who spent their lives in Latin America. Imbued in the telling and retellings of Ada and Campoy is a love and awe for the power of storytelling and the resounding tragedy, mirth, and beauty of the past.

The authors' "Welcome" section also introduces the format for their rich and highly informative collection: "After each story we tell you a little about its origin—and in some cases about our relationship with the story—so that you may learn a bit more about the people who created that tale and the long journey it has traveled to reach you."

One particular folktale, "Blancaflor," tells the story of a young prince whose father, the king, has fallen

terribly ill. In exchange for his father's health, the prince makes a deal with spirit, that in three years' time, he must go to the Three Silver Towers in the Land of No Return. Once the king has regained his health, he insists that his son must marry, so that he can live to see his grandchildren. However his son denies every proposition, and, right before three years have gone by, starts making his way towards the Land of No Return. Although the Land of No Return is a bleak and barren place, the prince meets a young girl by the name of Blancaflor. Here, the story takes an uplifting turn, and readers will delight in Blancaflor's cunning and charm, and the ensuing tale of young love: "And this is the story of Blancaflor. It began with threads of silver and ended with threads of gold, all woven for you in the story I told."

At the beginning of the book, following the introduction, the authors have also included a page on "To Begin a Story," where they provide Spanish phrases and their English translations: "To gain their full attention, the storyteller begins with a phrase that seizes listeners' imaginations." Readers learning Spanish or English as a second language will benefit from these translations, and more advanced readers could even use them in an exercise on writing and storytelling. From "había una vez.../Once upon a time..." to "Para saber y contar y contar para aprender.../To know in order to tell and tell in order to know...", students could practice using these opening lines to start and create their own stories. To deepen the exercise, teachers could also have students focus their original tale on childhood memories, family history and culture, or other such markers of heritage. At the back of the book, the authors have included a page on "To End a Story," where again they provide readers (and educators) with a list of Spanish and English phrases useful for wrapping up a tale "...y colorín colorado, este cuento se ha acabado/...and, my many-colored feathered friend, now the story has found an end." Just as Ada and Campoy have drawn from cultural heritage to exercise their own creativity, students of all ages could do the same.

For the full review, visit teachinglatinamericathroughliterature.wordpress.com

Stavroula says

I cannot recommend this book enough. The stories in it are well-told and the full-page, full-color illustrations are beautiful. But even more importantly, the authors have included illuminating cultural notes following each story and an introduction to the book that gives an impressively thorough yet concise (6 pages) description of the complex cultural/historical origins of Hispanic folktales. In addition, there are a few pages in the book with suggestions on how to begin and end a story in English and Spanish (e.g. "habia una vez" = "once upon a time"). The stories themselves are written in English, with some Spanish words interspersed. It is simply a must-have book for anyone telling stories to young children.

Emily Mateos says

Grade/interest level: Primary (1st-3rd grade)

Reading level: No lexile level available but looks to be about 3rd grade level with some support

Genre: Traditional literature, multicultural (Spanish words)

Main Characters: Multiple animals along with humans

Setting: Various settings but mostly in the country

POV: 3rd person narration

This book is a collection of stories popular in Hispanic culture. Most of the stories contain a reason for why something is the way it is today or have a lesson to be learned. The book also contains some references to Spanish words but it is clearly stated what they mean in English so this would be a book for anyone to enjoy. One of the tales in the book describes a turtle challenging a deer to a race up the mountain because the deer said the turtle could never make it. The turtle outsmarts the deer however and has two of her friends who look exactly like her meet the deer at the scheduled stops. When the deer finds he has underestimated the turtle and the turtle wins, the deer never laughs again and stays away from animals and people because of his shame.

I would use this book in the classroom as an example of folktales. Students would be able to read these Hispanic multicultural tales and maybe make their own using their own culture. Also, each story can be used as a read aloud to make a certain point that needs to be addressed. Because these are told in such a fun positive way, I think students will learn from them and learn the lesson trying to be told in the story to be used in their lives.

Camden Adkins says

Alma Flor Ada has done a wonderful job provide 12 amazing folktales. This is a book providing the reader with a collection of folktale. Reading this story you will find your self diving deeper into the Hispanic culture. Ada's book is intended for grade students. As you read and discover more about the culture you also get to view many illustration that help provide the readers with an image of the tale. This book does well teach the reader about the culture through tales. As you continue to read you become more engage with the interesting endings. Reading this story does is a great way to share some of the most original culture folktales offered. One thing that should not be overlooked while reading are the illustrations offered. Each illustration focuses on providing the reader with a image of the folktale. For teaching purposes, this book is a great way to introduce students to the hispanic culture. Overall if I used this story to teach children I would focus on the culture and how it is represented through the book.

Cynda says

Campoy and Ada have done a fine job. Think of "fine" as in "fine silver".

The stories have been shared and altered with the generational changes and the location changes. The stories have been so well researched that all the stories are known to have originated in the Old World. One story origins have been so well remembered--these are stories told by abuelitas/grandmothers--or researched that Campoy notes that "The Story of the Not-So-Small Animal" comes from the Basque Country in modern-day Spain.

At least on of these stories collected here have characters of Moorish Spain. The story takes place in the valleys of Al Andalus, a place in Moorish Spain. So a story who belongs to the New World, that came from Spain, that came from Ottoman Turks/Moors who had travelled throughout the Mediterranean, bringing African and Middle Eastern information and influences into Spain, including this story.

The art used has been updated. The language always changing. Several times, the collector and writer of the printed story tells alternate versions she knows of.

This collection so impressed me that I had to go bad and re-read other collections of Hispanic folk tales In have read this year, back down to 4 stars.

This book is great piece of academic and family history work. Fine Literature

Marissa Elera says

This is a collection of twelve stories from Latin America. The introduction of this collection goes into great depth about the connections between Latin America, Spain and the rest of Europe, and Africa, providing a rich source of information for the curious folktale aficionado. Most of the stories are followed by an equally detailed account of the sources consulted and the process of choosing and refining the story. Some tales have more detailed notes than others.

While most of the tales are a little lengthy at ten pages on average, and usually very lyrically told, they are simple enough to be revised for storytelling to younger children, perhaps five and older. Animal themes are common in this collection, also making them suitable for younger children. Noteworthy stories for this would be “Catalina the Fox” and “Martina Martinez and Perez the Mouse”. There is no specific order to the stories.

Extra areas of interest in the collection are sections dedicated to how to begin and to end a tale in the style of the traditional Hispanic storyteller.
