



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Book of the Month Parent/Family Discussion Guide: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, and encourage social action. For parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



Planting Stories

Anika Aldamuy Denise (Author), Paola Escobar (Illustrator)

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Year Published: 2019

Age Range: 4–8

Book Themes

Latin American/Hispanic people, Identity and Culture, National Latin American/Hispanic Heritage Month, Power of books

About the Book

When she came to the U.S. in 1921, Pura Belpré carried the folktales of her Puerto Rican homeland. Finding a new home at the New York Public Library as a bilingual assistant, she turned her popular retellings into books and spread story seeds across the land. Today, these seeds have grown into a lush landscape as generations of children and storytellers continue to share her tales and celebrate Pura's legacy. This is an inspiring picture book biography of storyteller, puppeteer, and New York City's first Puerto Rican librarian, who championed bilingual literature. A Spanish-language edition, [*Sembrando historias: Pura Belpré: bibliotecaria y narradora de cuentos*](#), is also available.

Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book along with your child or your child reads it on their own and you discuss it later, use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remember not to judge their responses and to listen thoughtfully and engage in a conversation that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What happens in the story?
- What did you learn about Pura Belpré? What more do you want to know about her?
- When Pura Belpré starts working in the library, what does she notice about what kinds of books are missing? Have you noticed certain kinds of books missing in our library or bookstore?
- Why do you think the book award for Latin American/Hispanic stories is named after Pura Belpré? How do you think she would feel about the books that win this award? Why?
- Pura Belpré says stories are like seeds. When you plant seeds, what happens? Is Pura Belpré really planting stories in the ground like seeds? What is she doing with stories? How do seeds and stories spread, grow and blossom?
- How is planting seeds like planting stories?
- What is the overall message of the book?

Talking Points

Below are some important considerations that will make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

1. Learn about Pura Belpré

Talk with your child about what they learned Pura Belpré from reading the book. Together, read the Author's Note on pages 30-31 to learn more about her. Explain that Pura Belpré was the first Puerto Rican librarian to be hired by the New York Public Library. She was a storyteller and puppeteer and used stories and puppets to share the folktales that had been handed down across generations of her family. In 1966, the Pura Belpré Award was created in honor of Pura Belpré, which is presented every year to a Latin American/Hispanic writer and illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and honors the Latin American experience. Ask your child why they think she was honored in this way and why it is important to focus on children's literature about Latin American/Hispanic people. If you want to learn more about Pura Belpré, use one or more of these online resources or visit the library and do further research: [Pura Belpré: Library Storyteller](#), the [Pura Belpré Award](#), [Pura Belpré: Her Life and Legacy](#) and [How NYC's First Puerto Rican Librarian Brought Spanish To The Shelves](#).

2. The Power and Importance of Diverse Books

In the book, when Pura Belpré arrives in NYC and starts working in the library, she notices that there are no Puerto Rican folktales or stories. That's when she decides to tell and write her own. Talk with your child about the importance of diverse books. Diverse books refer to children's (and other) literature that reflect the diversity and identity of people and stories that make up the people and communities in our country and world. If we don't see ourselves reflected in books (often referred to as "mirror" books), and other media, it can make us and others feel less important valued in our society. It also prevents other people who don't share that identity from learning about that group of people and community. Talk with your child about the "mirror" books that are available for them,

where they see reflections of themselves in books (and other media) and where they see gaps or lack of representation in books and what they can do about it.

3. National Latin American/Hispanic Heritage Month

Explain to your child that September 15-October 15 is National Hispanic/Latin American Heritage Month—an annual celebration of the history, achievements and contributions of Latin American people in the U.S. Explain that the reason a month is dedicated to honoring Latin American people, history and culture is because sometimes when history is discussed and taught, Latin American people are not included due to bias and exclusion. This is also true for other themed months like Women's History and Black History Month. You can explain that this book focuses on Pura Belpré, a prominent and important Latin American person in history. Make sure to emphasize this is just one story about Latin American people and while there are similarities within identity groups, there are also many differences. You can also discuss the importance of overcoming obstacles and how difficult it can be when people hold stereotypes (the false idea that all members of a group are the same and think and behave in the same way)—in this case those stereotypes could be about Latin American people. Discuss why stereotypes are incomplete, unfair and harmful. Talk about the importance of challenging stereotypes by reading or watching many different stories, and encouraging all people to express themselves, explore their interests and follow their dreams. You can also explore whether there are any Hispanic and/or Latin American communities in your town or region, prominent people or stories, institutions (like cultural societies or museums) and see if there are any events happening this month or throughout the year.

Other Books You May Like



Mango, Abuela and Me by Meg Medina, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/mango-abuela-and-me



Pablo Neruda: Poet of the People by Monica Brown, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/pablo-neruda-poet-of-the-people



Sonia Sotomayor: A Judge Grows in the Bronx by Jonah Winter, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/sonia-sotomayor-a-judge-grows-in-the-bronx



Yes! We are Latinos by Alma Flor Ada and Isabel Campoy, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/yes-we-are-latinos

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on Latin American people, identity and culture and the importance of diverse books.

Websites

9 Must-Read Children's Books for National Hispanic Heritage Month

www.adl.org/blog/9-must-read-childrens-books-for-national-hispanic-heritage-month

This blog offers recommended children's books for National Hispanic Heritage Month to help young people explore identity, names, culture, immigration, discrimination and important people in Latin American history.

Books Matter: The Power of Children's Literature

www.adl.org/blog/books-matter-the-power-of-childrens-literature

Anyone who has ever read to or with a child—parent, family member, teacher or friend—knows books leave lasting impressions. This blog speaks about books having the power to instill empathy, affirm, teach, transport and inspire action.

National Hispanic Heritage Month: Ideas for Teachers

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/national-hispanic-heritage-month-ideas-for-teachers

A curation of PreK-12 educational resources curriculum and other resources that help bring the themes of Hispanic Heritage Month to your classrooms.

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/parent-family-and-caregiver-resources

Strategies, tips, guiding principles and resources to help parents, family members and caregivers impart values and principles to the children in their lives.

The Question Corner: Early Childhood FAQs

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/question-corner

A collection of answers to frequently asked questions about anti-bias issues faced by early childhood professionals and family members interested in promoting respect for diversity among young children. See "[How Should I Respond When Children Notice Differences in Others?](#)"

Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk

Provides the tools parents and family members need to engage their families in conversations about important news stories and other timely discussions about societal and world events. Includes discussion guides containing a topic summary, questions to start the conversation and dig deeper, ideas for taking action and additional resources.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

People, Identity & Culture: Latino/Hispanic, Latino American, Hispanic-American, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[210\]=210](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[210]=210)