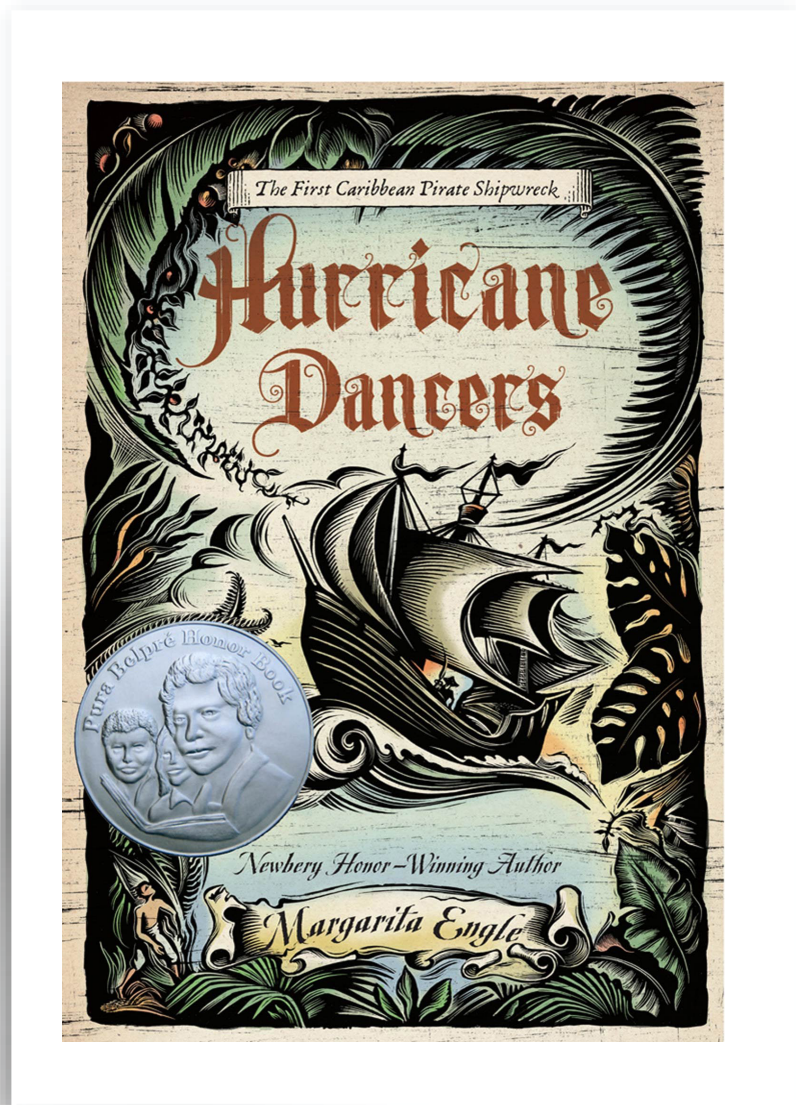


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Educator's Guide

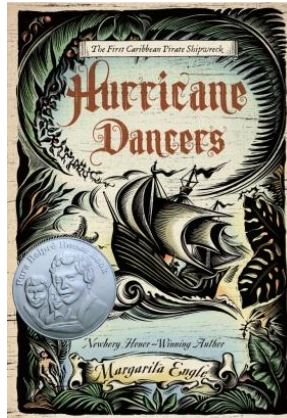
Hurricane Dancers:

The First Caribbean Pirate Shipwreck

Written by Margarita Engle

Published by Holt, 2011

ISBN: 9780805092400



BOOK SUMMARY

Quebrado has been traded from pirate ship to ship in the Caribbean Sea for as long as he can remember. The sailors he toils under call him el quebrado—half islander, half outsider, a broken one. Now the pirate captain Bernardino de Talavera uses Quebrado as a translator to help navigate the worlds and words between his mother's Taíno Indian language and his father's Spanish. But when a hurricane sinks the ship and most of its crew, it is Quebrado who escapes to safety. He learns how to live on land again, among people who treat him well. And it is he who must decide the fate of his former captors.

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

- Pura Belpré Award
- Américas Award
- 2012 White Ravens List
(among others)

AUTHOR'S CORNER

Margarita Engle's own thoughts on writing, novels-in-verse, and the influence of her family's history:

"Writing a historical novel in verse feels like time travel, a dreamlike blend of imagination and reality. It is an exploration. It is also a chance to communicate with the future, through young readers.

I love to write about young people who made hopeful choices in situations that seemed hopeless. My own hope is that tales of courage and compassion will ring true for youthful readers as they make their own difficult decisions in modern times.



My connection to the history of Cuba is personal. My American father traveled to the island after seeing National Geographic pictures of my Cuban mother's hometown, Trinidad. Even though they did not speak the same language, they fell in love and got married. I was born and raised in my father's hometown of Los Angeles, California, but we spent summers in Cuba, where I developed a deep bond with my extended family. I also developed a lifelong passion for tropical nature, which led me to study agronomy and botany, along with creative writing" (<http://margaritaengle.com/about.html>).

On winning the Pura Belpré Award for *Hurricane Dancers*:

"Writers are like remote islands. Our daily lives are quiet and solitary. We never know whether our words have been understood, unless a reader tells us. So when an entire committee of the nation's most passionate, dedicated, distinguished readers, called to let me know that *Hurricane Dancers* would receive a Pura Belpré honor, I was astounded. The book was so difficult to research, and so challenging to write. I couldn't believe that such a complex story had somehow met its goal of simple communication." (July 11, 2012: <http://labloga.blogspot.com/>).

Check out [Margarita Engle's website](#) for more information.

USING HURRICANE DANCERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Margarita Engle's *Hurricane Dancers: The First Caribbean Pirate Shipwreck* is a beautifully written novel in verse, similar in many ways to her earlier book *The Surrender Tree* (click [here](#) for our review). Here again, Engle brings to life a lesser known period of Caribbean history through three distinct but intertwined stories: that of Quebrado; Naridó and Caucubú; and Ojeda and Talavera. While many of us are familiar with the history of Christopher Columbus, other stories of the conquest and colonization of the Americas are often overlooked. This book offers

part of that missing perspective.

Set in the early 16th century, *Hurricane Dancers* tells the story of Quebrado, a young boy enslaved on a pirate ship after losing his Taíno mother and Spanish father. In learning about Quebrado's story, we also hear the tales of those around him. Here we learn about Alonso de Ojeda, a contemporary of Columbus, who sailed with Columbus on his second voyage to the Americas. Ojeda became famous for his brutality, both in his settlement of Hispaniola and his later conquest of South America. Yet, in Engle's book we find Ojeda the injured captive of Spanish pirate Bernardino de Talavera. We learn that Talavera is an impoverished conquistador. Once awarded a profitable land grant, Talavera literally worked his indigenous slaves to death, resulting in the loss of all his wealth. In order to avoid debtor's prison, Talavera steals a ship and takes to the seas. And then, on this ship, we are introduced to Quebrado. The sailors name him Quebrado, meaning a broken one, because he is half islander and half outsider. Enslaved and beaten, Quebrado is used by Talavera as a translator because he speaks both Spanish and Taíno. Quebrado eventually gains his freedom when a hurricane sinks the ship and kills most of the crew. After the crash, Quebrado is saved and befriended by Naridó, a Taíno fisherman. Naridó is in love with Caucubú, the daughter of the tribe's leader, who is to be given away in an arranged marriage. Meanwhile, in an interesting twist of fate, Talavera and Ojeda find themselves alive, albeit severely injured, and are forced to depend on each other to survive and find help.

In the prose-poetry that follows, Ojeda and Talavera find themselves among the same villagers who have taken in Quebrado. Banished to an alligator infested swamp, the two Spaniards seem to have the nine lives of a cat, surviving even this. Quebrado is soon banished as well and sent away from his newfound home. Ultimately, Quebrado must find the courage to banish the two from the island forever.

Hurricane Dancers is one of those books with limitless possibilities for classroom use, appropriate across grade levels for read aloud, independent reading or novel study. If you're hesitant to use novel in verse in your classroom, don't be. I'll admit I had my doubts before I read Engle's *Surrender Tree*. But I, along with the other teachers in our monthly book group, loved it. The novelty of this style will be interesting to students not familiar with it. It's also a much simpler read. There's no complicated dialogue to keep track of or dense pages to wade through. Each page is a poem written from one character's perspective which makes it a great book to be read out loud—especially if you have enough copies for each student to have his or her own. Then, students can take turns reading the lines of the different characters as if it was a play. The simple style won't intimidate struggling readers, but the engaging plot and beautiful descriptive imagery will catch the attention of all of your students. Booklist writes in its review, "Engle distills the emotion in each episode with potent rhythms, sounds, and original, unforgettable imagery. Linked together, the poems capture elemental identity questions and the infinite

sorrows of slavery and dislocation. . .” It would be a perfect book to teach elements of literary or poetic analysis. Many students can struggle to understand or analyze the symbolism or imagery of a short poem, but within the context of an entire novel, these things can be easier to uncover and understand. The simple but beautiful imagery will paint amazing pictures in the minds and imaginations of young and old readers alike.

But, it’s not just a book for reading or language arts classes. It could be quite powerful in a social studies or history course. *Hurricane Dancers* could easily be integrated into any study on early exploration and conquest of the Caribbean and South America. An amazing unit could be put together using Engle’s novel along with Michael Dorris’ *Morning Girl*, and the teacher’s guide *Rethinking Columbus* published by Rethinking Schools. (For more of what we’ve written on Rethinking Columbus click [here](#), [here](#), or [here](#)). Quite often our classroom resources focus on the point of view of Columbus or other explorers, but rarely do they give voice to the indigenous groups who inhabited the land or even name those groups. This is not the case with *Hurricane Dancers*. Engle’s “Author’s Note” at the end provides a wealth of information on the background of the historical figures and peoples mentioned in the book. *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years* also has a number of great resources written specifically about the Taíno. While Engle’s book doesn’t focus on current events, it could be an excellent resource for those teaching about more contemporary Social Studies issues, like child slavery. We featured another novel in October, *The Queen of Water*, that, if paired with *Hurricane Dancers*, could provide an excellent means for studying both historical and contemporary issues around child slavery (see here for our resources on [The Queen of Water](#)).

If nothing else, this is a moving story of a young boy’s journey to redemption. His final message is one that I believe we hope all our students understand and accept for themselves: “I no longer feel like Quebrado, a broken place. . .I am free of all those shattered ways of seeing myself. I am whole” (p. 133).

**LESSON
PLANS
& ACTIVITIES**

In addition to the lesson plans and activities included here, check out the other resources below:

- [A reader’s guide created by graduate student Bobbie Johnson found at the Poetry for Children blog](#)

The following lesson plans are divided into a number of categories: History and Social Studies; Geography and Science; Guided Reading Questions; and Reflective Writing Questions.

- The History and Social Studies and Geography and Science sections are project-based activities or suggestions that can be used to introduce the novel, as projects to complete while reading the novel, or as closing assessment activities. We have also created a

thematic guide to accompany *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years*. This novel could be used in conjunction with many of the activities included in that guide. Go to the following address to access a PDF of the guide:

http://www.laii.unm.edu/outreach/common/retanet/thematic/retanet_thematic-guides_rethinking-columbus.pdf. In addition, we also have a series of teacher-created lessons on the conquest of Spanish America. To access a list of links to individual lessons, go to the following address: <http://www.laii.unm.edu/outreach/thematic.php>.

- The detailed Guided Reading Questions accompany each of the six parts of *Hurricane Dancers* to which they pertain.
- The Reflective Writing Questions can be used in multiple ways, including as extended response questions, formal essays or individual closing assessments.

Common Core Standards Addressed:

K-12

Reading

Key Ideas and Details

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Writing

Text Types and Purposes

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive

topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Production and Distribution of Writing

- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

History and Social Studies

The New World:

Both Quebrado and Ojeda refer to the “New World.” Ojeda says, “I am a short man, but strong and agile. I was daring enough to lead the bold expedition that named this entire New World” (p. 21). Quebrado says, “I will help him build a village, and I will find a girl to marry and together, we will plant fields and be farmers, letting our minds grow rooted and leafy. . . . We will create our own peaceful New World” (p. 104). What is the difference between Ojeda’s use of the New World and Quebrado’s? Think about the history of describing the Americas as the New World, especially by explorers and conquistadores. Was it new to indigenous groups like the Taíno?

Historical analysis of the characters:

Many of Engle’s characters are real historical figures. Research Alonso de Ojeda using appropriate online resources. Who was he? What was his relationship to Christopher Columbus? What is he famous for? Write a short essay on Ojeda and present your findings to the class.

Timeline:

Using appropriate online and print resources or information available in a textbook, create a timeline of early Spanish conquest and colonization. Begin with Columbus’ first voyage in 1492. Think about what happened in the almost 20 years between 1492 and 1510 when *Hurricane Dancers* takes place. How do you think life changed for the Taíno? (think about

Geography and Science

what happened to Quebrado). What happened in the following 200 years? Based on the historical information you gather, predict what you think would have happened to Quebrado, Naridó and Caucubú in the years following 1510.

Hurricanes and the Caribbean:

The story takes place in the Caribbean. Point out this geographical area on a map, explaining what countries make up the Caribbean. Then, as a class research the history of hurricanes in this area. As students find out that there have been numerous devastating hurricanes in this area throughout history, ask them to research hurricanes—how are hurricanes created? Scientifically speaking, what happens during a hurricane? What are the effects of a hurricane? Extend the activity by asking students to research major hurricanes in the Caribbean and the effects they've had on the countries they've hit.

Literary Interpretation: Guided Reading Questions and Writing Prompts

Part One: Wild Sea

Pages 1-30

1. What do you think Quebrado means when he says he hears a “mourning moan as this old ship remembers her true self, her tree self, rooted and growing, alive, on shore” (p. 3). What is a “tree self” for a ship?
2. What does “el quebrado” mean? Why do the pirates call Quebrado this? (p. 5)
3. Who are Quebrado’s parents? What happened to them? (p. 6)
4. How did Quebrado end up on a pirate ship? (p. 7)
5. What can Quebrado do for the pirates? (p. 7)
6. Who are the ‘naturales’ that Bernardino de Talavera owned? (p. 9)
7. How did Talavera end up on the ship? (p. 9)
8. What does he do to Ojeda? (p. 9-10)
9. What do you think Talavera means when he says he offered Ojeda “the illusion of mercy”?(p. 10)
10. What did Quebrado’s mother believe about the dolphins? (p. 11)
11. How does Talavera convince Ojeda that he will have no mercy on him? (p. 12)
12. How has Ojeda’s life changed? What did he do on the isle of Hispaniola? (p. 13)
13. Why do you think he says “all those dead spirits haunt me” (p. 13)? Who are the dead spirits and why would they be haunting Ojeda?
14. What do you think life is like for Quebrado? Would you want to be him?
15. Why do you think Quebrado dreams what he dreams? (p. 14) Hint: Think about what his life is like now.
16. How did Quebrado learn to speak? (p. 15)
17. Why do you think Ojeda says “I feel as helpless as a turtle flipped on its back, awaiting the cook’s probing knife”?
18. Do you think Talavera is a good, experienced sailor? Why or why

- not? (p. 18)
19. What do you think Quebrado means when he says the sky is alive with cloud dragons and wind spirits? (p. 19) Draw a picture of what you think the sky looks like based upon Quebrado's description.
 20. Why is Quebrado carrying the brass bell? (p. 20)
 21. What expedition did Ojeda lead? (p. 21)
 22. Based upon what we've read about Ojeda, why do you think a mapmaker wouldn't name the American continent after him? Who does the mapmaker choose to name the continent after? (p. 21)
 23. Ojeda says that "the true honor of claiming this vast wilderness still rightfully belongs to me" (p. 21). Do you think you can claim something that already belongs to someone else? Who did the lands of the Americas belong to?
 24. The author uses a number of similes and metaphors throughout the book. One example is how Quebrado describes the storm: "I feel the storm breathing around me like an enormous creature in a nightmare where beasts growl and chase. . ." (p. 22). Descriptions like this help to paint a picture in the mind of the reader. Draw a picture of Quebrado in the storm based on his simile or write your own simile to describe what you think the storm is like.
 25. Who do the sailors believe can save them? (p. 24, 26)
 26. How does Part One end? What has happened to the ship? To Quebrado? (p. 29-30)

Part Two: Brave Earth

Pages 31-48

1. What saves Quebrado from sinking? (p. 33)
2. What is attached to the sea turtle? (p. 33)
3. Are sea turtles big or small? How do you know? (p. 34)
4. Who saves Quebrado? (p. 35)
5. What does Quebrado find in the cave that Naridó leads him to? (p. 39)
6. What does Cacubu say they must keep doing to keep the Woman of Wind from crushing them? (p. 43)
7. What is a *cacique*? (p. 44)
8. What are *behiques*? (p. 44)
9. Who is Naridó? What is he good at? How does he feel about Caucubú?
10. Who is Caucubú? How does she feel about Naridó?

Part Three: Hidden

Pages 49-72

1. What do you think Quebrado means when he says "Calm winds were my hope because I did not yet know that a hurricane could free me"? (p.51)
2. The children call Quebrado Hurará. What does this name mean? Does Quebrado think it is a good description? How does Quebrado describe himself? (p. 52)
3. Do Ojeda and Talavera survive the hurricane? (p. 53-54)

4. Quebrado says “. . .I cannot imagine ever feeling truly safe. . .No matter how invisible I feel, I will always be wrapped in the memory of life as a captive” (p. 55). Imagine that you were enslaved as a child, like Quebrado. Do you think you would ever feel safe again? Why or why not?
5. How is Quebrado changing?
6. What kinds of things do Caucubú and Quebrado plant? (p. 57-58) Do we have these foods in the U.S.? Where do you think these foods originated, the U.S. or the Caribbean?
7. Why does Quebrado fear the water? Is he still afraid of the hurricane or something else? (p. 59)
8. Why does Caucubú flee from her father? Where does she go to? Who meets her there? (p. 62)
9. Why does Naridó fish in the storm? (p. 66)
10. Does Naridó survive the hurricane? (p. 70)
11. Who follows Naridó back to the cave? (p. 71)
12. Why does Quebrado refuse to speak when Talavera commands him to? (p. 72)
13. What do you think is going to happen now that Talavera and Ojeda have made it to the village? Make a prediction.

Part Four: The Sphere Court

Pages 73-96

1. What does Quebrado mean—“. . .humans are capable of living in unimaginably monstrous ways”? (p. 75)
2. The author gives us both Caucubú’s and Naridó’s responses to Quebrado’s story in the poems on pages 77-79. They both hear the same thing, but they do not comment on or remember the same things. What does Caucubú focus on? Naridó? Is there anything the two poems have in common?
3. Why does Quebrado add in things like the talking macaws and his father’s horse? (p. 80)
4. How do you think Talaver plans “. . .to turn newfound courage into terror”? (p. 81)
5. What does Talavera notice about the tribe? What does he want? (p. 83)
6. What does Ojeda want? (p. 84)
7. Why will they play the sphere games according to Caucubú? (p. 85) What are the sphere games according to Quebrado? (p. 86)
8. What is the sphere made out of? (p. 87)
9. What are the rules of the game? (p. 87)
10. What other verdict is made at the sphere game? (p. 91)
11. What verdict is made for Ojeda and Talavera? Will this give Quebrado peace? (p. 93)
12. Where do you think Caucubú is waiting for Naridó? Where does she usually go to wait for him? (p. 95)

Part Five: The Sky Horse

Pages 97-118

1. Where have Caucubú and Naridó gone? How does the village

- know this? Is anyone going to search for them? (p. 99)
2. Who do the villagers blame for what has happened? (p. 100)
 3. What happens to Quebrado? (p. 100-101)
 4. What does Quebrado find that he plans to tell Naridó about? (p. 103)
 5. How long will it take them to build a new boat? How long will it take them to make? When will they need to start? Why? (p. 103)
 6. What does Quebrado hope for his life? (p. 104)
 7. What do Talavera and Ojeda eat in the swamp? Why are they helping each other, even though they hate one another? (p. 105)
 8. What does Quebrado find in the forest? (P. 106)
 9. How does Quebrado get the horse to trust him? (p. 107)
 10. What does the horse feel like to Quebrado? What does he name her? (p. 107)
 11. What does Quebrado worry about, once he thinks about how Turey got lost in the forest? (p. 108)
 12. Who taught Quebrado how to ride a horse? What rules did he teach him? (p. 110)
 13. Who does Ojeda think is going to help him fight? (p. 112)
 14. When Naridó sees Quebrado on the horse how does he describe him? (p. 114)
 15. Do you think that Naridó or Caucubú have seen a horse before? Why? (p. 115)
 16. What do you think we would call the “pictures made by stars” that Quebrado refers to? (p. 117)
 17. How does Part Five end? What is Quebrado thinking about? (p. 118)

Part Six: Far Light

Pages 119-133

1. Who saves Talavera and Ojeda? (p. 121)
2. Ojeda says that they sit around the *barbacoa* fire. Look up the word *barbacoa*. What is *barbacoa*? (p. 122)
3. Think about what Ojeda says, “Soon, I will seize a canoe from this generous tribe. . .” (p. 122). Do you think that Ojeda has learned anything from his experiences? Do you think he is really grateful for the help he has received? Why or why not?
4. As Quebrado heads to warn the villagers on the east coast, is he afraid anymore? Why has he lost his fear? (p. 123)
5. Who does Ojeda think that Quebrado is? Does he realize he is the boy? What does he try to do? (p. 124)
6. How do the warriors respond to Ojeda’s actions? (p. 126)
7. Ojeda and Talavera are thinking about two different things while they watch Quebrado ride the horse and explain his story to the villagers. What is Ojeda thinking about? (p. 128) What is Talavera thinking about? (129) How are they different?
8. Is Quebrado’s decision easy for him to make? (p. 130)
9. What do you think that Quebrado will choose? (p. 130)
10. What does Quebrado choose to do with Talavera and Ojeda? How do we know? (p. 131)

**Reflective
Writing
Questions**

11. What name does Quebrado choose for himself? What does this name mean to Quebrado? (p. 132-133)

1. Quebrado changes a great deal over the course of the novel. Describe the person you think he has become by the end of the novel. How has he changed? Compare and contrast Quebrado in Part One with Quebrado in Part Two.
2. Imagine that the book continued beyond the end of Part Six. Write a story about what happens in following years in the lives of any of the main characters: Quebrado, Naridó and Caucubú, or Talavera and Ojeda.

Hints: Do Naridó and Caucubú ever return to their home village? Do Talaver and Ojeda survive? What becomes of Quebrado—does he ever find his father? Return to the ocean?

**ABOUT US &
THIS GUIDE**

The Latin American & Iberian Institute (LAI) receives resources from the U.S. Department of Education to support K-12 teaching about Latin America. Our goal is to provide a supportive environment for teaching across grade levels and subject areas so educators can bring regional and linguistic knowledge of Latin America into their classrooms. For more information and materials that support teaching about Latin America in the classroom, visit our website at <http://laii.unm.edu/outreach>

Written by staff at the LAI, **Vamos a Leer Educator's Guides** provide an excellent way to teach about Latin America through literacy. Each guide is based upon a book featured in the Vamos a Leer book group. For more on Vamos a Leer, visit our blog at bit.ly/vamosaleer. This guide was prepared 12/ 2012 by Katrina Dillon, LAI Project Assistant.

To complement this guide, the LAI oversees the **Vamos a Leer blog**, which provides a space for exploring how to use literature to teach about Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States. In addition to promoting discussion, the blog shares relevant resources and curriculum materials. Visit the blog at the following address: <http://bit.ly/vamosaleer>.