

An illustration of a woman with curly brown hair, wearing a purple long-sleeved dress, lighting a candle in a silver holder. She is surrounded by a group of diverse children. One girl in a blue dress holds a book titled 'PEREZ MARTINA'. In the background, a globe sits on a table. The top of the image shows a street scene with a 'HOTEL' sign and buildings.

Librarians Light the Way

Iluminando el Camino
los bibliotecarios en nuestra comunidad

CHILDREN'S BOOK PRESS CELEBRATES LIBRARIANS and their work to build strong, healthy, informed communities



The Storyteller's Candle / La velita de los cuentos
Story by Lucía González • Illustrations by Lulu Delacre
Juvenile Fiction / People & Places / United States / Hispanic & Latino
ISBN-10: 0-89239-222-3 • ISBN-13: 978-0-89239-222-3
Ages 6 & up • \$16.95 • 9 3/4 x 11 • 32 pages
Publication Date: Spring 2008

ABOUT PURA BELPRÉ

Pura Belpré was born sometime between 1899 and 1903 in the little town of Cidra, Puerto Rico, in a home full of storytellers. The stories she heard from her grandmother had been handed down by word of mouth for generations. These stories came with her to the United States in the early 1920s.

Pura Belpré began her career as a children's librarian when she became the first Puerto Rican librarian to be hired by the New York Public Library system. She had a great passion for library work, and her passion lasted a lifetime. Pura Belpré was also a magnificent storyteller and puppeteer with a deep and evocative voice. Her story *Pérez and Martina*, first published in 1932, remains a classic of children's literature. In 1996, the Pura Belpré Award was established to honor Latino writers and illustrators whose children's books celebrate the Latino cultural experience.

Over the course of her long career as a writer, storyteller, and librarian, Pura Belpré inspired generations of young people in the communities she served.

WAYS TO MAKE YOUR LIBRARY IMMIGRANT FRIENDLY

- Locate Spanish-language books and other materials for children and adults in visible areas and not in dark corners or at the back of the library.

Bilingual signage helps increase patronage: Post bilingual flyers in conspicuous places within the library, in neighborhood stores, churches, and distribute to local media.

Provide bilingual forms to customers, including library card applications. Publish a basic document in Spanish (or other languages spoken by community members) to present and explain programs and services offered by the library.

Prepare a permanent display with books and materials about life in America to attract newcomers to the United States looking for help on starting a new life.

Provide cultural awareness workshops to library staff.

Create displays to reflect residents' different cultures: Make a list of the different holidays and religious observations celebrated by people within your community.

Add a Spanish-language interface to your library website, or other languages according to the demographic composition of your library services area.

Provide materials that the Spanish-speaking community and patrons want, not just what staff think they want. Invite feedback by providing bilingual forms for customers to tell you what type of books, materials, programs, and services they would like to see at the library.

Develop and maintain strong links with community leaders and organizations. Distribute information about programs and services via customized mailing lists to schools, media, and community organizations.

Promote recruitment of a diverse workforce.

THE STORYTELLER'S CANDLE

The winter of 1929 feels especially cold to cousins Hildamar and Santiago—they arrived in New York City from sunny Puerto Rico only months before. Their island home feels very far away indeed, especially with Three Kings' Day rapidly approaching. But then a magical thing happened. A visitor appears in their class, a gifted storyteller and librarian by the name of Pura Belpré. She opens the children's eyes to the public library and its potential to be the living, breathing heart of the community. The library, after all, belongs to everyone. Through the vision and dedication of Pura Belpré, New York City's first Latina librarian, the warmth of Puerto Rico came to the island of Manhattan in a most unexpected way.



MEET THE AUTHOR: LUCÍA GONZALEZ

Lucía González was born in Cuba. She is an author, children's librarian, bilingual storyteller and puppeteer. A recipient of the Pura Belpré Honor Medal, Lucía's goal has been to bring the legends of Hispanic cultures to American children.

What inspired you to write *The Storyteller's Candle*?

I was inspired by the memory of Pura Belpré, a loving, devoted, and talented librarian, author and storyteller who became, in 1921, New York Public Library's first Puerto Rican librarian. I was also inspired by New York Public Library's storytelling tradition and the visionary children's librarians who were pioneers in providing services to immigrant families and who understood the importance of honoring the immigrants' languages and preserving their stories.

How much research went into *The Storyteller's Candle*?

In order to write the book, I dedicated weeks to doing original research. I stayed in the heart of El Barrio in New York City, visited various library branches where Pura Belpré worked, spoke to people who knew her, spent days listening to her voice telling stories, perused through original letters written to her by children who attended her programs, as well as letters written by Pura Belpré herself. I went to New York City for the first time when I started research for this book. From the moment I arrived in New York everything happened by serendipity. The spirit of Pura Belpré guided me by the hand to the places where I needed to be.

What would you like children to learn from your book?

With this book, I would like to bring back to the classroom the joy and excitement of storytelling. I would like children to learn, or remember, that the public library is a wonderful place for them and for everyone in the family. I also would like children to meet Pura Belpré, a woman who made a difference in the lives of so many children who listened to her stories.

MEET THE ARTIST: LULU DELACRE

Lulu Delacre was born in Puerto Rico. She has written and illustrated many award-winning books for children. A common thread in her work is the celebration of her Latino heritage.



What made illustrating *The Storyteller's Candle* different from other projects?

The Storyteller's Candle is the first historical picture book that I have illustrated. To be able to set the art in the right period was very important to me. I knew I could achieve that by doing research that would allow me to picture the right clothing, cars, artifacts, architecture, and interiors. I wanted to imbue the pictures with a definite sense of time and place. Since the story happens in Spanish Harlem in 1930, I thought the addition of a newspaper of the times might work. I contacted a rare newspapers store and purchased an original issue of the New York Times from January 6, 1930. I was thrilled to find articles that would actually set the time beautifully if I was able to paste bits and pieces in strategic places for the reader to discover later.

Why is the authenticity of your art important?

It is extremely important to be accurate when dealing with children as your audience; children trust that the pictures in a book depict accurately what the text says. I find it is my duty to be truthful, to do my best so the art reflects time, place, and culture in the most interesting and unusual way I can come up with.