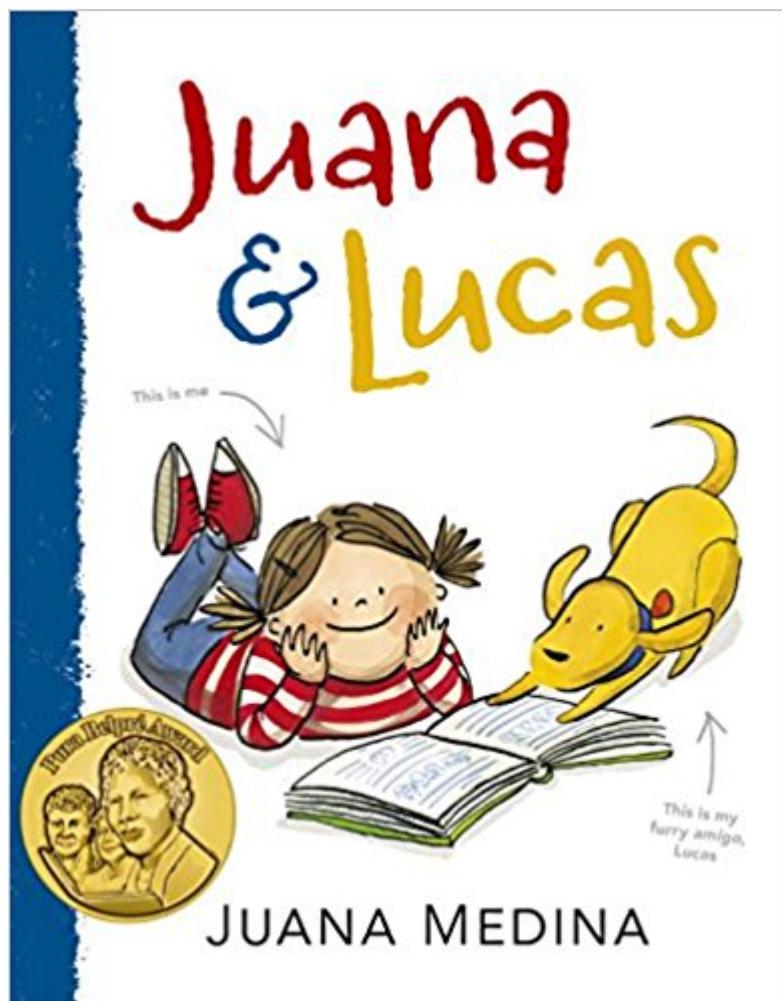


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Juana And Lucas



Synopsis

Winner of the 2017 Pura Belpré© Author AwardFans of Judy Moody and Clarice Bean will love Juana, the spunky young Colombian girl who stars in this playful, abundantly illustrated new series.Juana loves many things â " drawing, eating Brussels sprouts, living in BogotÃ¡, Colombia, and especially her dog, Lucas, the best amigo ever. She does not love wearing her itchy school uniform, solving math problems, or going to dance class. And she especially does not love learning the English. Why is it so important to learn a language that makes so little sense? But when Juanaâ™s abuelos tell her about a special trip they are planningâ "one that Juana will need to speak English to go onâ "Juana begins to wonder whether learning the English might be a good use of her time after all. Hilarious, energetic, and utterly relatable, Juana will win over los corazones â " the hearts â " of readers everywhere in her first adventure, presented by namesake Juana Medina.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0870 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 96 pages

Publisher: Candlewick (September 27, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0763672084

ISBN-13: 978-0763672089

Product Dimensions: 7.4 x 0.5 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 15 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #72,283 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #25 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Central & South America #320 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > New Experiences #859 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > School

Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 3

Customer Reviews

Gr 2â "4â "Juana lives in BogotÃ¡, Colombia, with her dog Lucas. She loves brussels sprouts, drawing, and especially the comic book superhero Astroman. She most definitely does not like learning "the English." When her teacher says learning English is going to be a "ton of fun," Juana knows that it will really be "nada de fun." Her abuelo, or Abue for short, is a brain surgeon and tries

to explain to Juana how learning English can be very useful. He also has a bribeâ "if Juana learns English, he will take her to the Spaceland amusement park in Florida, where only English is spoken, even by her hero Astroman. Medina has written a first-person narrative filled with expressive description. Spanish words are used throughout, and their meaning is made clear through context. As both author and illustrator, Medina is able to integrate the text and illustrations in unique ways, including spreads in which Juana tells us why, for example, she strongly dislikes her school uniform or why Mami is the most important person in her life. Font design is also used creatively, such as when Medina traces the arc of a soccer ball hit hard enough to be sent "across the field." VERDICT An essential selection that creates multicultural awareness, has distinguished and appealing design elements, and has a text that is the stuff of true literature.â "Tim Wadham, formerly at Puyallup Public Library, WA

Medinaâ ™s beautiful, vivid prose conjures the Colombian setting with tactile language...Juanaâ ™s narration is also peppered with easy-to-figure-out Spanish words.â "The New York Times Book ReviewThrough this strong, adventurous, and smart female protagonist, Medina presents an extraordinary story about the many opportunities learning a new language can bring. Full-color illustrations provide excellent depictions of Juanaâ ™s life in BogotÃ¡ and allow readers to connect with her character and culture. The artwork playfully interacts with dynamic text, which often arcs across the page, employs large fonts for emphasis, and smoothly incorporates Spanish words. Fans of Judy Moody and Lola Levine will absolutely love Juana. This upbeat new series for young readers is a must-buy.â "Booklist (starred review)As both author and illustrator, Medina is able to integrate the text and illustrations in unique ways, including spreads in which Juana tells us why, for example, she strongly dislikes her school uniform or why Mami is the most important person in her life. Font design is also used creatively, such as when Medina traces the arc of a soccer ball hit hard enough to be sent "across the field." An essential selection that creates multicultural awareness, has distinguished and appealing design elements, and has a text that is the stuff of true literature.â "School Library Journal (starred review)Both comfortably familiar (this will be an easy sell for fans of Pennypackerâ ™s Clementine, for instance) and keenly specific in its setting and characters, Juana & Lucas is much needed for the gap it fills in American childrenâ ™s literature, but it will be much beloved for its warmly depicted family relationships, eminently read-aloud- able high jinks, and sunny protagonist.â "Horn Book (starred review)Told from Juana's point of view with humor and drama, using capitalized words, periods separating words for emphasis, and a good sprinkling of Spanish words throughout, the book makes clear there's a universality to Juana's story.

The ink-and-watercolor cartoon-style illustrations are charming...The real gift of this book comes from presenting a different point of reference to American children who hear only stories of poverty and need coming out of South America. "Kirkus ReviewsA Colombian girl takes on her greatest challenge" "the English language" "in this cheery series opener...Medina's loose, full-color cartoons and interspersed profiles of the people in Juana's life add to the overall playfulness of the story. It's an inviting look at life in Colombia, and readers will probably be struck by just how much they have in common with Juana." "Publishers WeeklyJuana is certain to join spunky, spirited independent young girls like Judy Moody, Junie B. Jones, and Clementine as a beginning chapter book favorite character. A twist on the value of learning multiple languages from a non-American perspective is welcomed." "School Library ConnectionThis delightful easy chapter book has much to recommend it: a lively and likable child narrator (entirely credible in her ambivalence about scholastic endeavors), a strong plot trajectory and quick pacing (and a page count that will pass muster with reluctant readers), and a generous number of engaging illustrations that will be in color in the finished book...Both edifying and entertaining, this solid title is a winner." "Bulletin of the Center for Children's BooksThe author-illustrator grew up in Colombia and draws on fond memories to lend energy and heart to the many vignettes. Juana expands a sometimes limited view of South America." "San Francisco Chronicle"Juana and Lucas" is the kind of book I'd like to see a lot more of." "A Fuse #8 Production (blog)

This is a really lovely story on its own but the fact that it takes place in Colombia is an added plus. I also love that this book scatters Spanish words throughout the chapter book. It is perfect for those of you who are trying to teach/nurture another language to your little ones. My daughter loved it.

I was really hoping for a truly bilingual book that would engage my daughter. This book is cute, but its Spanish is limited to a few words thrown in kind of haphazardly. I appreciate that it is about a little Colombian girl in Bogotá and that there are some cultural elements, but those too are just a few.

Magical, like everything that Juana does.

Windows. Mirrors. Mirrors. Windows. Windowy mirrors. Mirrory windows. Windows. Mirrors. Sliding doors! Mirrors. Windows.In the world of 21st century children's literature, diversity should be the name of the game. We want books for our children that reflect the worlds they know and the worlds they have yet to greet. We want them to see themselves in their books (mirrors), see others

unlike themselves (windows), and have a way to get from one place to another (sliding doors). To accomplish this, all you have to do is publish a whole bunch of books about kids of different races, religions, abilities, persuasions, you name it. Great strides have been made over the last few years in the general consciousness of the publishing industry (the publishers, the librarians, the teachers, and even the parents) even as teeny tiny, itty bitty, itsy bitsy tiptoes have been made in terms of what actually is getting published. Much of the credit for spearheading efforts to bring to light more and more books for all children can be given to the We Need Diverse Books movement. That said, our children's rooms are still filled with monumental gaps. Contemporary Jewish characters are rare. Muslim characters rarer still. And don't even TALK to me about the state of kids in wheelchairs these days. Interestingly enough, the area where diversity has increased the most is in early chapter books. Whether it's *Anna Hibiscus*, *Lola Levine*, *Alvin Ho*, or any of the other new and interesting characters out there, there is comfort to be found in those books that transition children from easy readers to full-blown novels. Into this world comes Juana Medina and her semi-autobiographical series *Juana & Lucas*. Short chapters meet universal headaches (with details only available in Bogota, Colombia) ultimately combining to bring us a gal who will strike you as both remarkably familiar and bracingly original. You might think that Juana has it pretty good, and for the most part you'd be right. She lives in Bogota, Colombia — the city that's closest to my heart — with her Mami. She has a good furry best friend (her dog, Lucas) and a good not-so-furry best friend (Juli). And hey, it's the first day of school! Cool, right? Only nothing goes the way Juana planned. The whole unfortunate day is capped off when one of her teachers informs the class that they will be learning — the English — this year. Could anything be more unfair? Yet as Juana searches for sympathy amongst her friends and relatives, she realizes that everyone seems to think that learning English is a good thing. Are they crazy? It isn't until an opportunity comes up to visit somewhere fantastic, far away, and English speaking that she finally takes what everyone has told her to heart. In a big way. I love, first and foremost, the fact that the emotional crux of this book is fixated on Juana's detestation of learning — the English. Now already I've heard some commenters online complain that Juana's problem isn't something that English-speaking children will identify with. Bull. Any child that has ever learned to read will know where Juana is coming from. What English speaker would fail to sympathize when she asks, "Why are read and read written the same way but sound different? How can I know when people are talking about eyes or ice when they sound about the same? And what about left hand and left the room? So many words, so little sense?" Some

kids reading this book may have experience learning another language too. For them, Juana's complaints will ring true and clear. That's a key aspect of her personality. She's sympathetic, even when she's whining. For all that we've seen books like Juana's, *Lola Levine*, *Zapato Power*, *Pedro*, *First Grade Hero*, and a handful of others, interestingly this increase in Latino early chapter book is relatively recent. For a long time it was *Zapato Power* or nothing. The change is great, but it's significant to note that all the books I've mentioned here are set in the United States. American books set in South American countries where the kids just live their daily lives and don't have to deal with civil wars or invasions or coyotes or drug runners are difficult to find. What makes *Juana and Lucas* so unique is that it's about a child living her life, having the kinds of problems that Ramona or Ruby Lu or Dyamonde Daniel could relate to. And like *Anna Hibiscus* or *The Great Cake Mystery* I love books for younger children that go through daily life in other present day countries. Windows indeed. Early chapter books are interesting because publishers see them as far more series-driven than their writers might. An author can crank out title after title after title to feed the needs of their young readers, always assuming the demand is there, and they can do it easier with books under 100 pages than above. Juana could fit the bill in this regard. Her personality is likable, for starters. She's not rude like Junie B. Jones or willfully headstrong in the same way as Ramona, but she does screw up. She does complain wildly. There are aspects of her personality you can identify with right from the start. I'd be pleased to see more of her in the future, and young readers will undoubtedly feel the same way. Plus, she has one particular feature that puts her heads and tails above a lot of the competition: She's in color. Created in ink and watercolor, Medina illustrates as well as writes her books. This art actually puts the book in a coveted place few titles can brag. You might ask if there's a middle point between easy books and, say, *Magic Tree House* titles. I'd say this book was it. Containing a multitude of full-color pictures and spreads, it offers kids the comfort of picture books with the sensibility and sophistication of chapter book literature. And since she's already got the art in place, why not work in some snazzy typography as well? Medina will often integrate individual words into the art. They swoop and soar around the characters, increasing and decreasing in size, according to their wont. Periodically a character will be pulled out and surrounded by fun little descriptor tidbits about their personage in a tiny font. Other times sentences move to imitate what their words say, like when Juana discusses how Escanilberto can kick the ball, *hard enough to send it across the field*. That sentence moves from his foot to a point just above his opponent's head, the ball just out of

reach. I like to think this radical wordplay plays into the early reader's enjoyment of the book. It's a lot more fun to read a chapter book when you have no idea what the words are going to pull on you next. The writing is good, though the conclusion struck me as a bit rushed. Admittedly the solution to Juana's problems is tied up pretty quickly. She won't learn, she won't learn, she won't learn. She gets to have a prize? She studies and studies and studies. So rather than have her come to an understanding of English's use on her own, an outside force (in this case, the promise of seeing Astroman) is the true impetus to her change. Sure, at the very end of the book she suddenly hits on the importance of learning other languages and visiting other places around the globe but it's a bit after the fact. Not a big problem in the book, of course, but it would have been cool to have Juana come to this realization without outside influences. As nutty as it sounds, Juana and Lucas is a bit short on the Lucas side of that equation. Juana's the true star of the show here, relegating man's best friend to the sidelines. Fortunately, I have faith in this series. I have faith that it will return for future sequels and that when those sequels arrive they'll have a storyline for Lucas to carry on his own. With Juana nearby, of course. After all, she belongs to the pantheon of strong female early chapter characters out there, ready to teach kids about life in contemporary Colombia even as she navigates her own trials and successes. And it's funny. Did I mention it's funny? You probably got that from context, but it bears saying. Juana and Lucas is the kind of book I'd like to see a lot more of. Let's hope Ms. Medina is ready to spearhead a small revolution of early chapter book international diversity of her very own. For ages 6-9

Ok, I am the outlier here but, man, I found this book to be painfully boring. I am not a children's literature expert so I am not sure what you call this type of book. It is a cross between a picture book and a chapter book. The illustrations are fine but not so amazing that they invite you to stop and study them. There is definitely a fair amount of text in this book also, eleven chapters in fact. My first grade daughter started reading it and then passed it to me to finish which is usually a bad sign. I think the author was just trying to accomplish too much in one book. The first part of the book basically has Juana cataloging her life in Columbia and all her likes and dislikes. Despite the title, Lucas, the dog, really does not play a strong role in the book. I usually like books that give you a glimpse at how someone lives in another country so I was surprised at how slow paced this felt. I enjoyed the second part of the book more. Perhaps if the book was shorter and rambled less we would have enjoyed it more because it was definitely more interesting once the author added a plot.

Juana had to take English in school but she finds the subject difficult and she does not see the point. Her mother encourages her to ask people around her why she should study English. She asks her next door neighbors, her aunt, the brothers who run a little grocery near her house, and finally her neurosurgeon grandfather. They all give her advice but it is her grandfather who actually gives her a good reason to learn English. He says that next summer he will take her and her mother to Spaceland in Orlando, Florida so she can meet Astroman (Astroman had a page devoted to him at the beginning of the book when Juana was discussing her likes). Apparently, Astroman speaks English so her grandfather encourages her to study hard to learn English so that she can talk to him. This does the trick and Juana becomes a great student of English. When she finally meets Astroman at the end of the story she talks and talks and talks to him only to find out the character does not talk. Yep. That was it. I felt let down after slogging through the whole book. This was not a poorly written book just too long and too boring. This might be one to check out of the library.

Juana is a typical little girl that most readers will identify with, even though she lives in Colombia. She has a family, a dog, a best friend, troubles with school -- typical kid stuff. She struggles to learn English so she can visit the United States. Once she finally begins to feel confident in her English, she feels inspired to learn more languages and see the world. I recommend the series because it's good for children to see how people in other parts of the world may not be very different after all. The added Spanish words throughout serve as a nice introduction to Spanish for children who may become interested in learning more. The illustrations and page design provide a nice introduction to chapter books for young readers. I received this book via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

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