

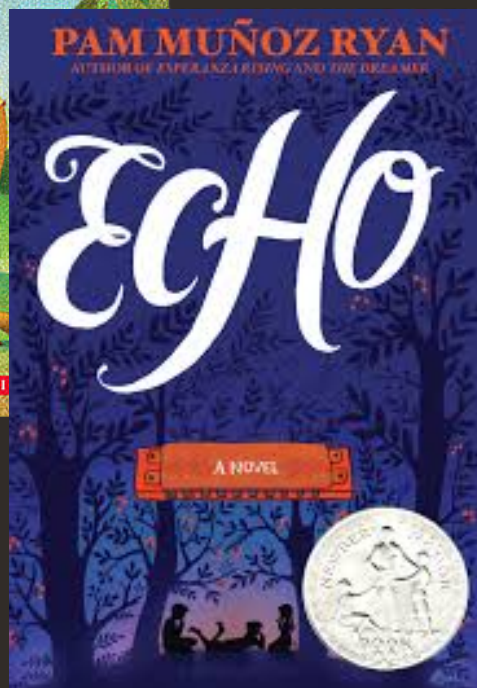
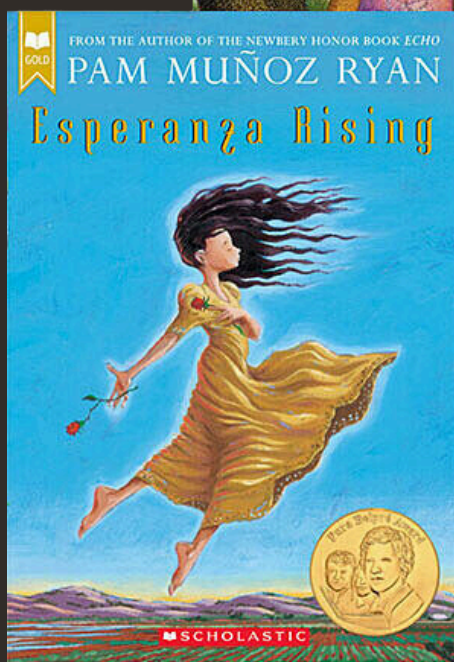
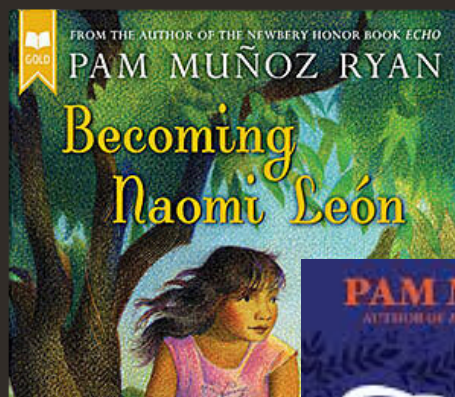


**Pam Muñoz Ryan**



**Hans Christian Andersen Award**

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# BIOGRAPHY

Pam Muñoz Ryan's passion for reading blossomed at an early age as she flipped through her grandmother's set of encyclopedias before she even learned to read. Her favorite volume was "G" with its illustrated Greek myths (Webane, 2024). Pam vividly remembers attempting to copy an entire page in the pursuit of wisdom.

Stories and dramatic play have always played a central role in the life of Pam Muñoz Ryan. She came from a rich oral language history, listening to her grandmothers' Mexican folk tales and Oklahoman superstitions. The oldest of three sisters, with twenty-three cousins, she often led backyard dramatic plays of stories she created. Always a daydreamer, she became deeply invested in the books she read.

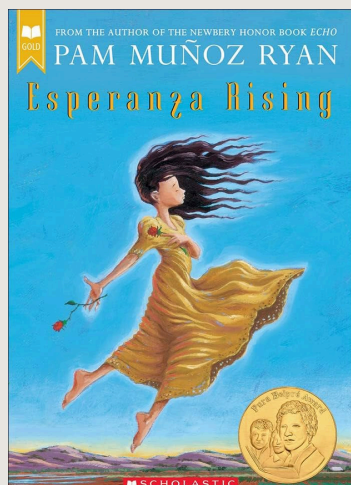
In her 2024 Children's Literature Legacy Award Acceptance speech, Ryan shared, "I didn't grow up in a print-rich environment with books crowding my home. And I didn't discover books, beyond classroom primers or textbooks, until fifth grade. What nurtured my love of story were my grandmothers, who were steeped in proverbs, cautionary tales, and gossip — storytelling in its finest form. What fueled my subsequent obsession with reading was a small branch library a few blocks from my house" (Ryan, 2024).

Born Pamela Jeanne Banducci in Bakersfield, California, on December 25, 1951, she later adopted her stepfather's surname Bell. Her father was a delivery truck driver, and her mother worked as a clerk in a high school library. "My beginnings and belongings were very humble, but I was blessed with a mishmash of cultures and languages and food" (Poe, personal communication, January 10, 2017).

Her upbringing was a blend of cultures: her maternal grandparents, Mexican immigrants, and her stepfather's Oklahoman roots profoundly influenced her life and writing. Her stepfather's parents, Tom and Grace Bell, moved from Oklahoma to California in the 1930s during the Great Depression. Her grandmother Esperanza Bell was an influential part of her life. "Her Oklahoman culture became part of my culture. So many of her sensibilities and sayings were integrated into my life and, in part, into my writings" (Poe, personal communication, January 10, 2017).



Photo Credit: Mike Brown.



Her maternal grandparents, Jesús and Esperanza Ortega Muñoz, immigrated to California from Aguascalientes, Mexico in the 1930s to a farm labor camp in Arvin, California where Pam's mother was born. After Jesús died, her grandmother, Esperanza, was stranded with five young children. No longer able to stay in the camp, her grandmother moved to Bakersfield, California, where she took in laundry to support her family. Esperanza became the hub of the large extended family and Pam's after-school caregiver. When her grandmother remarried, Pam gained a Basque grandfather who integrated the family into the Basque community.

Ryan gained an appreciation for the cultures that formed her heritage. Pam fondly recalls her two grandmothers' contrasting traditions, from Mexican mole and Basque picnics to fried chicken and country music. These rich experiences laid the foundation for her stories, often featuring resilient women overcoming adversity. "My female characters... are often kindred spirits" (Poe, personal communication, 2017).

Before fifth grade, Pam's family moved across town making her the new kid in school where most classmates had known each other since kindergarten. Feeling out of place, she turned to the East Bakersfield Library. "It was through books that I escaped and coped with the changes in my life. I became, what most people would consider, an obsessive reader" (Webane, 2024).

At Washington Junior High, her interest in writing flourished. She became editor of the school's newspaper and joined the school and the all-city choirs, finding a sense of belonging. Reflecting on these years, Ryan (2024) noted, "As I made my way through junior high, books carried me away from the wrath of mean girls, tallness, big feet, and a big, noisy extended family. I coped through books. It is no surprise that I now often write for readers who are the same age that I was when books made the most profound difference in my life."

English and composition were her strongest subjects at Bakersfield High School. After graduation, Pam longed to work with books and literature, despite her parents' puzzlement over her desire for higher education. She began at Bakersfield Community College, then transferred to San Diego State University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in child development. To fund her studies, Pam worked a variety of jobs: babysitter, exercise instructor, salesclerk, secretary, and teaching assistant. She became the first in her family to graduate from college.

After college, Pam served as a Red Cross Coordinator for the Vietnamese and Cambodian play schools at the U.S. Navy base relocation camp for refugees after the Vietnam War. She later became a bilingual Head Start teacher in Escondido, California. In both settings, picture books were an important part of her work with the children. "I always had a sense that there was something yet-to-be-discovered about myself. I still feel that way" (Poe, personal communication, January 10, 2017).

Pam married in 1975, changing her last name to Ryan. She and her husband went on to have four children—two girls and twin boys. When her twins started kindergarten, she accepted a position as director of an early childhood program and returned to school part-time for a master's degree in post-secondary education. Her intent was to continue to connect children and books by teaching children's literature.

As she was finishing her master's degree, a professor encouraged her to pursue professional writing. Intrigued, Ryan began submitting children's stories to publishers, receiving multiple rejections before finding a literary agent. Her first book, *One Hundred is a Family*, was published in 1994. After several picture books, her editor at Scholastic, Tracy Mack, urged her to try a novel resulting in *Riding Freedom*, an award-winning book that broadened the scope of her writing. Reflecting on their partnership, Ryan (2024) noted that “from the first manuscript she acquired, she saw potential in me when I did not... We still have surprises on the horizon for you and can't wait to share them.”

Ryan's body of work expanded to include historical and realistic contemporary fiction, fictionalized biographies, and original fairy tales, as well as picture books featuring biographies, informational books, anthropomorphic animal stories, and reimagined folktales. She considers each book a confluence of ideas, experiences, research, and imagination, noting “I am a reader, writer, author, and pilgrim. Every book is a journey” (Poe, personal communication, January 10, 2017).

While some books spring from her imagination, many require extensive research — exploring library archives, consulting experts, and traveling to key locations. For example, her grandmother's childhood experiences in the agricultural fields of the San Joaquin Valley provided necessary context for the setting of *Esperanza Rising*, reflecting both sides of Ryan's family heritage. Other works demanded different methods. *Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride* involved studying Eleanor Roosevelt, Amelia Earhart, early aviation, and the Great Depression through archival sources. For *When Marian Sang*, she examined Marian Anderson's life by visiting Philadelphia (Anderson's hometown), the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., and the Metropolitan Opera archives in New York City.

*Every book is a journey!*

PAM MUÑOZ RYAN

When preparing to write *Paint the Wind*, a horse story set in Wyoming, Ryan invested in hundreds of horseback riding lessons before two research treks to observe wild horse herds. These journeys through the eastern Sierra Mountains in California and the Red Desert in Wyoming allowed her to witness the horses in their natural habitats, transforming her years of library and online research into vivid experiences. Her journals from these rides richly informed the final story.



In addition to speaking to children through books, Pam Muñoz Ryan has visited students across all 50 U.S. states and in many countries, sharing her passion for reading and writing. She not only inspires them to read and write, but also to dream and challenge themselves to do their best and view failure as a chance to grow. “If you’ve never failed at anything, you’re aiming too low,” she says, urging young people to persevere. Her own journey illustrates this perseverance: “No matter your profession, what magnificence might you have created... had you allowed yourself to fall down and stand back up again?” (Ryan, 2024).

Ryan also speaks frequently at professional conferences and book festivals, addressing teachers and librarians eager for her insights into her creative process. Educators regularly use her works with students, and librarians appreciate that she is an advocate for the We Need Diverse Books Campaign.

As Ryan noted, “We are preparing children to meet not only their neighborhood, but a much broader existence, filled with people from all walks of life, who speak many languages, whose families originated from many different countries. We can’t just look at someone—at their countenance, their clothing, or the color of their skin—and understand him or her. We have to first hear a person’s story. And readers need more than one story. They need many stories about many different families and cultures, traditions and holidays, histories and realities. Reading a breadth of stories nurtures the seeds of understanding” (Poe, personal communication, January 10, 2017).

Ryan inspires fellow children’s authors by speaking at Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators events, an organization dedicated to fostering quality children’s literature worldwide. In 2016, she addressed a broader public audience at the U.S. Library of Congress’s National Book Festival in Washington, D.C. Her influence extends into other art forms as well: in June 2024, the Nashville Opera, through the Tennessee Arts Commission, commissioned over 25 performances of *When Marian Sang*.

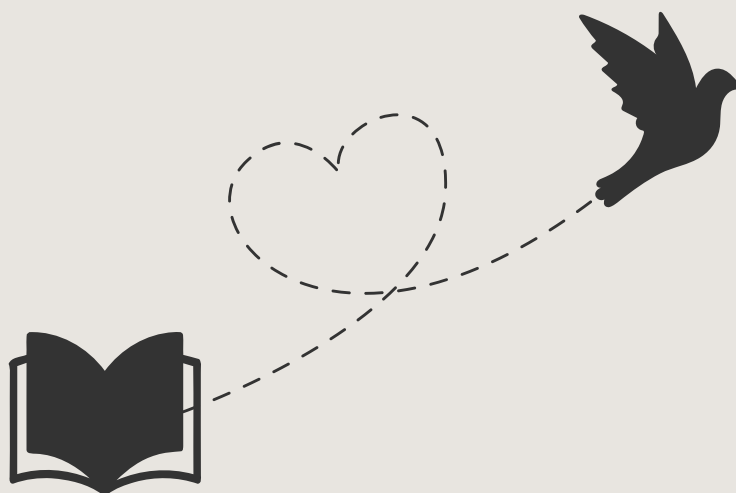
In addition to her speaking engagements, Ryan supports many literacy-focused organizations. Since 2010, she has served on the board of The Lisa Libraries, a nonprofit organization that supplies new children’s books to underserved communities, including those supporting children of incarcerated parents, pediatric wards, day-care centers, Native American reservations, and more. The organization has also helped replenish school and public libraries destroyed by hurricanes and floods. In keeping with her efforts to provide access to books for children, Ryan donated funds to the First Book organization that she received from the USA Educational Book and Media Association. These funds were earmarked for their Migrant Worker Book Distribution Program, serving children in farm working communities.

Ryan also serves on the board of the Authors League Fund, providing support to authors facing medical emergencies, temporary loss of income, or other difficult life circumstances. In addition, she partners with the Rape Treatment Center (RTC) at UCLA in Santa Monica, California. Its children’s program, Stuart House, is a National Child Alliance — accredited Child Advocacy Center offering expert medical care, forensic services, case management, education, and free books to children and their families.

Her commitment to fostering understanding through literature also extends beyond the U.S. borders. Ryan served as the USBBY author for the “Peace Story” project commissioned for NAMOOK 2010 joining twenty-six authors and illustrators in contributing stories about peace. This led her to the Nami Island Children’s Book Festival in South Korea. In addition, a Japanese publisher solicited her to write six books for the Japanese market. She has also had speaking engagements in American Schools in Singapore and Chile, with additional invitations in India and Malaysia. Under contract with the U.S. State Department, Ryan represented American authors at La Feria de los Libros in Guadalajara, Mexico. This visit to the largest book fair in Latin America included engagements at the ambassador’s home, festival events, and embassy-arranged school visits. She attended the Frankfurt Book Festival in Germany where she accepted the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis (German Children’s Literature Prize) for *The Dreamer*. Most recently, in January 2024, Ryan traveled to Ecuador to speak at Academia Cotopaxi and Fundación Colegio Americano de Quito.

Professional travel and public appearances are a natural outgrowth of Ryan’s work as a children’s writer. Her quality work and gracious demeanor make Ryan a respected representative of the United States and as a writer. Her books have done incredibly well in China with over 383K sold in Simplified Chinese, and her titles have sold in 22 languages worldwide: Chinese: Simplified, Chinese: Complex, Bi-lingual Chinese/English, Kyrgyz, Korean, Bahasa Indonesian, Italian, Portuguese, Turkish, French, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, German, Brazilian Portuguese, Romanian, Dutch, Hungarian, Greek, and Ukrainian.

Pam Muñoz Ryan’s journey is one of resilience, creativity, and unwavering belief in the power of story. From a childhood nourished by oral traditions and multicultural influences to a career defined by rigorous research, imaginative exploration, and global engagement, she has forged a path that bridges worlds. Her books have introduced countless young readers to histories, voices, and perspectives they might never otherwise encounter, nurturing empathy and broadening their understanding of what it means to be human. By championing literacy, cultural appreciation, and the value of perseverance, Ryan reminds us that stories are more than entertainment—they are catalysts for change. In sharing her own struggles and triumphs, she challenges everyone, regardless of their background, to open their hearts, expand their minds, and embrace the richer, kinder world that stories can create.



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Artwork from *Nacho and Lolita*. Illustrated by [Claudia Rueda](#)



# CONTRIBUTIONS TO LITERATURE

Pam Munoz Ryan, an acclaimed author of over 40 stunning books for young readers, has built a distinguished career spanning three decades. One of the most celebrated U.S. authors working today, she is a versatile stylist of both prose and poetry, expertly telling stories with elegance and realism, primarily of Latine children, whose authentic voices speak to young readers.

Ryan's profound skill and influence on children's literature have been recognized with the highest honors in the field. These include the 2002 Pura Belpré Author Award and the 2001 Jane Addams Children's Book Award for *Esperanza Rising*; the 2011 Pura Belpré Author Award, the 2010 Boston Globe Horn Book Honor Award and the 2011 Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature for *The Dreamer*. Additionally, she was awarded the 2016 Newbery Honor, the 2015 Kirkus Prize, and the 2015 Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature for *Echo* and a 2003 Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Honor for *When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson*.

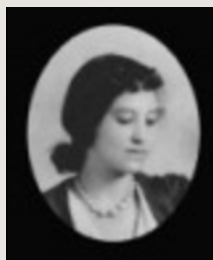


Artwork from *When Marian Sang*.  
Illustrated by Brian Selznick

Among her many accolades, Ryan has been honored with the 2010 Virginia Hamilton Literary Award for Multicultural Literature, the 2013 National Education Association's Civil and Human Rights Award, the 2023 Regina Medal from the Catholic Library Association, and the 2024 Children's Literature Legacy Award from the Association for Library Service to Children. Her enduring impact on children, teachers, and librarians is both profound and far-reaching.

Throughout her writing career, Pam Muñoz Ryan has crafted stories for diverse readers across a range of genres – picture books, beginning readers, biographies, and novels, often published simultaneously in Spanish and English.

Her work, infused with magical realism, reflects her deep respect for her Mexican heritage and often convey a sense of pride in the complexity of the immigrant experience. Social justice themes are seamlessly interwoven into her engaging narratives, inspiring young readers to become engaged, compassionate global citizens.



Ryan's Grandmother..  
Approx. 19 years old.  
(Source 1).

Ryan explains that many of her “novels are about overcoming obstacles, loss, and putting one foot in front of the other during difficult times” (O’Sullivan, 2024). This recurring theme is central in her second novel, *Esperanza Rising*, based on the true story of her maternal grandmother. Since its publication 24 years ago, the book has been translated into 12 languages and is now regarded as a modern classic. Readers around the world have embraced the riches to rags story of 12-year-old Esperanza, a wealthy young girl from Mexico who loses everything after bandits kill her father and her uncles take over the family ranch. Forced to migrate to California with her mother, Esperanza faces the harsh realities as a migrant farm worker.

Ryan vividly contrasts economic classes while offering a message of hope and resilience. As *Esperanza* learns to appreciate small wonders amid the hardships, Ryan counterbalances struggle with heartening representations of perseverance and kindness – a hallmark of her subsequent work.

Pam Muñoz Ryan draws inspiration from her heritage to create stories full of heart and cultural richness. The picture book *Mice and Beans*, for example, was inspired by the large family celebrations in her grandmother’s tiny house. These gatherings shaped the rollicking birthday tale infused with Spanish phrases and the warmth of her signature style. Her grandmother’s refrain, “Where there is room in the heart, there is room in the house” embodies the story’s generous spirit.

Ryan’s versatile repertoire includes beginning readers, a genre notoriously challenging to master. Her popular *Tony Baloney* series features a macaroni penguin navigating the life of a middle child between a bossy big sister and the “Bothersome Babies Baloney.” With her witty prose, Ryan captures Tony’s antics with humor and subtlety, elevating the genre with clever narratives rarely seen in early readers.



Esperanza Ortega Munoz  
and Jesus Munoz pictured  
here on their wedding day.  
(Source 1).



Artwork from *Mice and Beans*.  
Illustrated by Joe Cepeda.

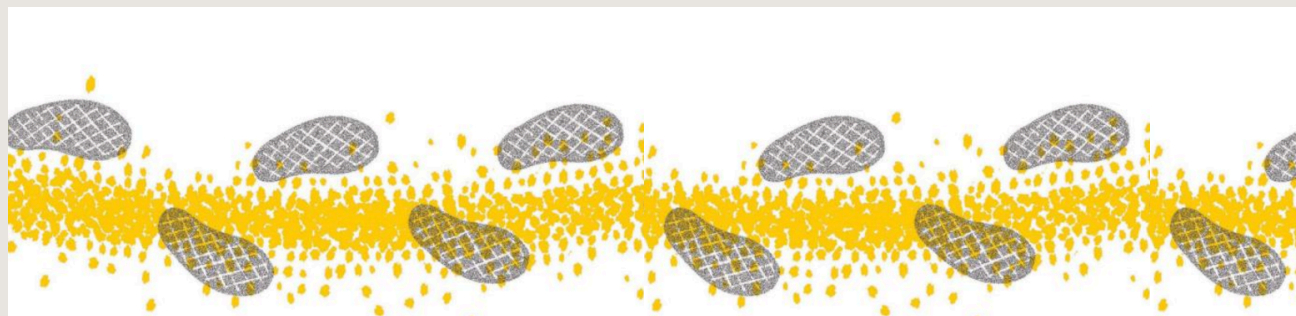
A childhood fascination with mythology and folktales and fables has found its way into the fabric of several of her works. The inspiration for *Nacho and Lolita* came from remembering a folktale about two mythical birds of different species who fall in love. Wrapping this re-imagined folktale in the visually expressive language that characterizes all her writing, *Nacho and Lolita* transports readers into the world of migrating birds, mission festivals, and mysterious transformations. Through vivid imagery, Nacho is “magnificent,” “splendid,” “rare and majestic,” Ryan explores themes of love, friendship, pride, sacrifice, community, and social inclusion. The story’s message of resourcefulness and care for others resonates universally, making it a standout example of her talent.

Ryan describes her writing process as a “confluence of rivers” (Pierpont, 2005). For example, her travels to Oaxaca, Mexico, sparked a story about the amazing Radish Festival. But it would be years later when she met a little girl named Naomi Outlaw at a school visit that the strands of the story came together in *Becoming Naomi León*. Ryan says that she “has always been fascinated with and loved stories where there is a change of station in life...I want to take the character through some sort of emotional growth” (Fabbi & Johnson, 2007). Rich in Mexican culture, the novel follows Naomi’s journey of self-discovery and emotional growth, overcoming the challenges of abandonment, anxiety, and disappointment. It’s a powerful story of finding heritage, embracing talent, and rising above adversity, hallmark themes in Ryan’s work.



Artwork from *Nacho and Lolita*.  
Illustrated by Claudia Rueda.

For both her novels and her nonfiction, Ryan approaches her work with an unwavering dedication to research, immersing herself in the details brings each story to life. She explains, “Whenever I am working on something historical, I am never going to get my information from one tidy place. It’s like being on a scavenger hunt” (Fabbi & Johnson, 2007). For *When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson, the Voice of a Century*, this scavenger hunt led her to Anderson’s humble childhood home in South Philadelphia and archives of the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

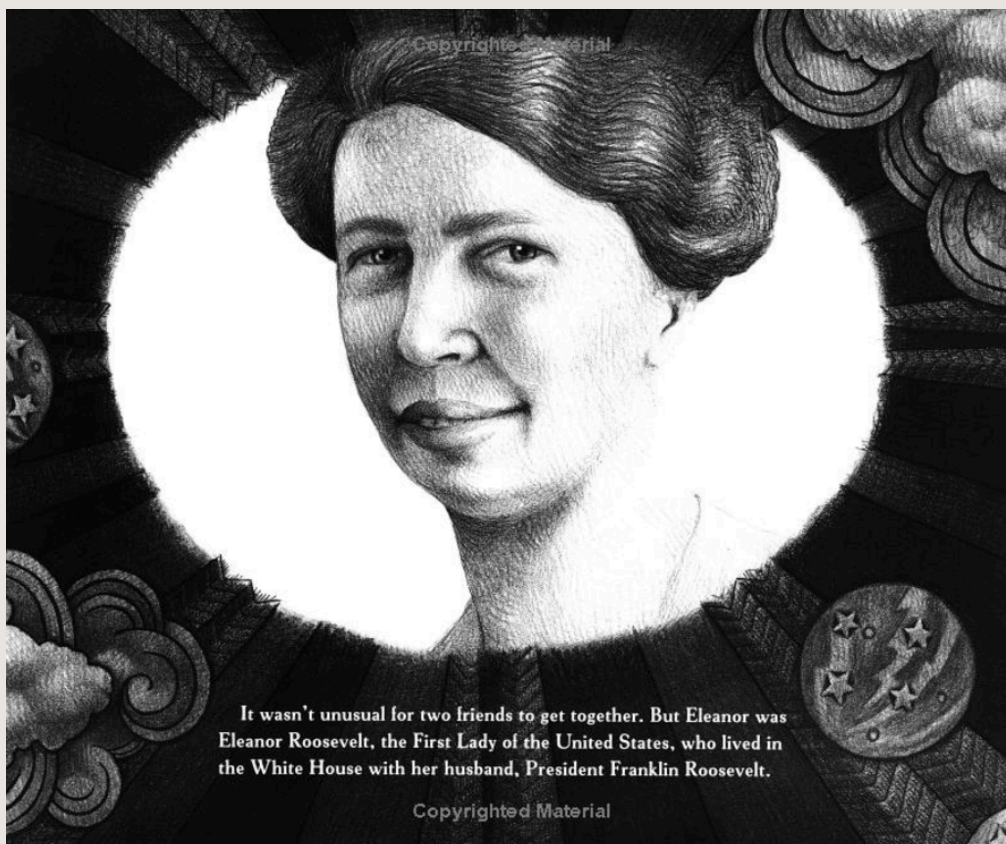


Artwork from *Tony Baloney*.  
Illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham.



Ryan narrates Anderson's life with dignity, respect, and grace, describing the racial prejudice that Anderson encountered as a Negro in pre-Civil Rights America in a way that children can understand. Her evocative language invites the reader to experience the power and beauty of Anderson's voice: "With one breath she sounded like rain, sprinkling high notes in the morning sun. And with the next she was thunder, resounding deep in the dark sky." Utilizing an innovative technique, Ryan intersperses lines from hymns or gospel songs sung by Anderson giving added verisimilitude to the story. Through her shimmering prose and empathetic storytelling, Ryan crafts a moving portrait of an extraordinary musician and cultural icon. Her ability to capture Anderson's resilience and artistry makes *When Marian Sang* a powerful and inspiring tribute to a woman whose voice transcended barriers and inspired generations.

Ryan confesses to be drawn to strong women, so it is no surprise that a reference to Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt triggered extensive research that would become *Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride*. Grounding the text in specific details – she even tracked down the White House dinner menu – Ryan captures the "feeling of independence" that defined these iconic women and highlights how it shaped their personalities.



Artwork from *Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride*.  
Illustrated by Brian Selznick.

Ryan's editor, Tracy Mack (2024), praises her as a 'groundbreaker,' noting that "in book after book, she challenges herself to create new storytelling forms and plays with literary conventions." *The Dreamer* exemplifies this creative experimentation. In this imaginative portrayal of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda's childhood, Ryan weaves magical realism, poetry, and biography into a seamless narrative.

Her original poems, mirroring Neruda's style, encourage readers to think visually and imaginatively, as if Ryan herself is channeling the poet. When young Neftalí first sees the ocean, Ryan writes, "He stood captivated, feeling small and insignificant, and at the same time as if he belonged to something much grander." As Neftalí matures, he becomes increasingly attuned to the struggles of the indigenous Mapuche in Chile, and Ryan skillfully integrates themes of social injustice without overshadowing his personal journey. This delicate balance demonstrates her mastery of embedding profound humanity into her stories, making *The Dreamer* a powerful testament to her literary artistry.

"The blending of magic, myth, and reality is a hallmark of Ryan's novels" (O'Sullivan, 2024) and she brilliantly employs all three in her Newbery Honor-winning *Echo*. Using a multi-layered folkloric framework, Ryan explores the power of music to inspire hope by connecting three poignant stories of children living in historically challenging times. A magical harmonica becomes the tangible thread linking Friedrich, a disfigured outcast; Mike, an impoverished orphan; and Ivy, an itinerant farmer's child. Their struggles unfold against some of the darkest eras in human history: the rise of Nazi Germany, the Great Depression, and World War II. Through faith and perseverance, each character creates a hopeful ending, inspiring readers to believe in their own resilience. Ryan's ability to honor the human spirit amid adversity makes *Echo* a sweeping and compelling epic. In a starred review for the Horn Book Magazine, Nina Lindsay (2015) writes, "Ryan's storytelling prowess and vivid voice lead readers expertly through a hefty tome illuminated by layers of history, adventure, and the seemingly magical but ultimately very human spirit of music."

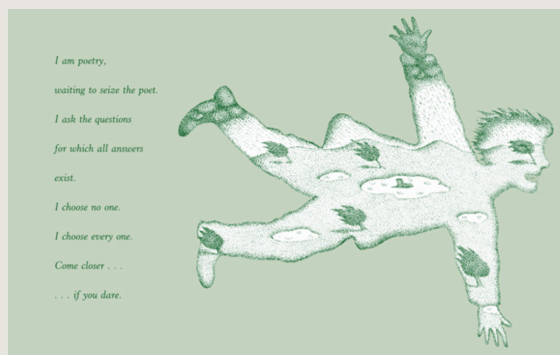
Several of Ryan's books began as picture book manuscripts – *Esperanza Rising*, *The Dreamer*, *Mañanaland*. Editor Mack (2024) observes: "Therein lies some of the genius of Pam's work: she begins with simple ideas and images that contain larger truths." Ryan's lyrical, fable-like style shines in *Mañanaland*, set in a small Spanish-speaking town "somewhere in the Américas." The story follows 11-year-old Max, a soccer-loving boy searching for answers about his long-lost mother. Through local myths, closely guarded family secrets, and a mysterious refugee named Isadora, Max discovers his family's role as "guardians," shepherding refugees to safety. Determined to help Isadora and uncover truths about his mother, Max embarks on a dangerous journey that reveals his own courage and resilience.

While *Mañanaland* was published during a crisis at the US/Mexican border, Ryan emphasizes that it is not an immigrant story. Instead, she "wanted to shine a light on those people who rise up to help others in need, who live and act from their hearts, who model goodness and empathy and the courage to do what is right" (Corbett, 2020). The novel embodies universal themes of love, loss, and the pursuit of safety, showing that humanity's shared desire for freedom and worth transcends borders.

The blending of  
magic, myth, and  
reality is a hallmark  
of Ryan's novels.  
J. O'Sullivan

Like all great writers Ryan demands much from her readers imbuing many of her books with the classic struggle between good and evil. There is great hardship, but also immense hope. And she accomplishes this with an unerring sense of justice. Her editor Mack (2024) notes, “I am struck once again by Pam’s balance in presenting complex social and political ideas. She never burdens her stories with an agenda. Rather, with uncommon depth, nuance, and compassion, she shows multiple viewpoints and lets her readers grapple with their own opinions and understanding. She helps them see that more than one thing can be true simultaneously.”

The universal appeal of Ryan’s work is in her global reach. Her books, translated into 22 languages, resonate with readers far beyond the United States. As Ryan eloquently writes on her website, “I am a reader, writer, author, and pilgrim. Every book is a journey.” Her unparalleled stories offer relatable characters, exquisite language, and profound integrity, guiding children worldwide to discover their own powerful voices.



Artwork from *The Dreamer*. Illustrated by Peter Sís.

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September 18, 2024

Dear Award Committee,

My wife was an elementary school librarian for over 25 years (she retired this last June) and as her spouse I would often hear of great children's books that she was reading to classes during their "library time" at school. One book she was excited about was *Esperanza Rising*, and she actually recommended that I read it because I'm an agricultural consultant doing most of my work in the Central Valley of California.

The book made a great impact on me. Shortly thereafter I met with a client, a ranch manager, down in the Fresno area whose company just landed a huge contract with Walmart to supply stone fruit to 3 of their giant warehouses. Everyone in the "C suite" was driving a new car or truck, had new, expensive watches and suits, etc. Meanwhile, as I congratulated the ranch manager, he explained that the office staff and the field staff hadn't received a raise in some cases in almost 20 years.

That understanding also had a great impact on me, and as I drove home thinking about that inequity I resolved to try and address the needs of those whose hard work was not being rewarded properly. Since I had recently finished reading *Esperanza Rising*, I approached my wife and proposed that we start a charity with that name to help California farm workers, most frequently migrant workers, living below the poverty line.

That is the birth of Esperanza Rising.

We run the charity without any overhead costs, in other words, 100% of every dollar collected to assist farm workers in need goes to farmworkers in need. We currently are funding at \$15,000 per year and when we make this year's (2024, which will be the 16<sup>th</sup> year in a row) donation we will have slightly exceeded \$200,000 of financial assistance.

We were incredibly fortunate and blessed to meet and work with the superintendent of the Delano Union School District, Rosalina Rivera. Rosalina is the daughter of CA farmworkers and she and her counselors (they have special counselors for migrant families in the school district) identify families in need and determine the financial assistance that each one will receive. We write a donation check to the school district, and they then volunteer to divide and distribute the monies appropriately.

We have received some heartbreaking "thank you notes" and photos of families who we have been able to help and have even received reports that the monies have "changed the atmosphere" in Delano. Very frequently the notes can only be written in Spanish and are penned by the children.

As I mentioned, I am an agricultural consultant that has been blessed with the opportunity to make a very good living helping clients, not just in CA but from all over the country. I've seen the "haves and the have nots." *Esperanza Rising* is one way my wife and I can give back to the extremely hardworking men and women in the industry that has been so very generous with me.

All the best,

Chip and Lynne Sundstrom  
<https://www.esperanzarising.org/>

# INTERVIEW

## Pam Muñoz Ryan Talks with Roger

by [Roger Sutton](#)

Mar 26, 2015 | Filed in [Authors & Illustrators](#)



Talks with Roger is a sponsored supplement to our free monthly e-newsletter, Notes from the Horn Book. To receive Notes, sign up [here](#).

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Photo: Sean B. Masterson

**Where to start? *Echo* begins in fairy-tale Germany but swiftly moves to the twentieth century, hopping from the German countryside to Philadelphia to Southern California, all settings tied together by...a harmonica? I called Pam Muñoz Ryan to find out the origin of this unlikely story.**

**Roger Sutton: *Echo* is such an ambitious book. What was your point of entry? Where did you start?**

Pam Muñoz Ryan: Like with many of my books, I set out to start one book, and along the way I get diverted. I was doing research on the nation's first successful desegregation case, in 1931. It's a little-known case, *Roberto Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District*; people don't know much about it because he won in a lower court, so precedent wasn't set. I was at the historical society in Lemon Grove, which is east of San Diego, with this wonderful docent who was helping me go through all these yearbooks. I came across a picture of a country school from the early 1930s. On the steps are integrated classes of children, and each one of them is holding a harmonica. The docent tried to kind of flip past it, saying, "No, no, that was before the segregation issues," and I said, "Wait, wait, wait, what is that, exactly?" And she said, "Oh, you know, that was our elementary



school harmonica band. Everybody had one in the twenties and thirties. You know, during the big harmonica band movement."

**RS: Absolutely.**

PMR: Of course. Why not? Well, that was just dangling a carrot. I asked her more about it, and she said, "Oh, yeah, if we flip forward, you'll find my brother." I went home and couldn't stop thinking about it. I started doing research and found out that there were over 2500 elementary school harmonica bands in the United States during that time, including Albert N. Hoxie's then-famous Philadelphia Harmonica Band of Wizards. They played for Charles Lindbergh's parade, and for three presidents, and at FDR's inauguration.



I love historical fiction. I don't always write it, but I have a huge affection for it, and when I find some little nugget that's a different angle, or something people don't really know about — especially something as endearing and quirky as a harmonica — I'm really taken with it. Two characters started coming to the fore: a girl in this little country school band, maybe in a school that was integrated and then segregated; and a boy in Hoxie's band — through my research I had discovered that the band was full of orphans. So, these two characters, Mike and Ivy, started taking shape, and then I started wondering if the same harmonica could have traveled from one character to the other. And then I wondered who had it before them. In the meantime, I was doing all this research on a particular model of harmonica, the Hohner Marine Band, because it was in both photographs — the picture of Hoxie's band that I found and the one of all the kids in the country school (they're all holding that same model). So then I contacted Hohner in the U.S., and they put me in touch with people in Trossingen, Germany, [who run a harmonica museum](#), and they were just wonderful and gracious. I flew to Germany, and the museum was remarkable. Hohner was a master of marketing, and for every world event, there's a commemorative harmonica.

**RS: After reading your book I went to [the Hohner website](#) to look at the history of some of their models, and there are some really beautiful pieces.**

PMR: It's amazing. The museum was very complete. They have models of what the factory looked like at the time of my book. That's where I learned about the young apprentices who worked there, and about the demise of the six-pointed star engraving. And so, the character of Friedrich started taking shape. Now I had these three characters, but I didn't want the book to just be episodic, having a harmonica that just travels from person to person to person. I wanted a richer thread to hold it all together, so that's how I started imagining the harmonica's backstory. These three characters are living through some of the darkest and most challenging times in history. Friedrich is in Nazi Germany, for Mike it's the Great Depression, and Ivy is living through the era of segregation. There was something in me that wanted to give them some beauty and light that would give them the impetus to carry on.





Something that lifted their self-esteem or gave them some sort of strength and confidence.

**RS: And then how did you get those three sisters in, in the fairy tale that opens the novel?**

PMR: I have always been intrigued by fairy tales. I was one of those obsessive readers as a young girl, very much able to suspend disbelief in whatever I was reading, so I really loved fairy tales. I'd always wanted to write one, but I didn't want to write one just for the sake of it. I wanted it to be organic to whatever it was that I was doing, so I set out to write an original fairy tale where magic became imbued into the harmonica. I studied the genre, and I reread a lot of fairy tales. I also reread Philip Pullman's *Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm*. I love all of his analysis. I think what I love most about fairy tales is that the genre is very different from a novel. In a fairy tale, you tell instead of show. In a novel, you show instead of tell. I had to really adjust my way of thinking, but it was also freeing on some level. I created the fairy tale element so that the harmonica could have the magic it needed, so that each character could feel this euphoric sense of well-being.

**RS: Did you write from page one to page six hundred, or were you concentrating on different parts at different times?**

PMR: I had started working on it, on some level, before I even went to Trossingen, before I had that third character, so I didn't work on it chronologically. But I did understand the chronology that I wanted in the end.

**RS: So, you knew you were going to bring two characters together, you just didn't know about the third?**

PMR: I knew I needed a third story arc, and I found it when I went to Germany. Once I knew the framework, that it would be three stories framed by a fairy tale, then I was able to begin each story. You have to remember this is six years in the making, so it's hard for me to remember precisely the order. I did work on it in chunks, and of course went back and forth with my editor, but there was so much weaving and reweaving that it's hard to distinguish, especially in the last few years. I am sort of a recursive writer, anyway, always going back to the beginning and pulling that thread. I bought a huge seven-foot-long, four-foot-high whiteboard and put it in my office. I wrote the months for each year in which the characters' stories took place, and I had all the leitmotifs—the recurring themes, people, places, and things—in long lists of words and phrases that echoed in each story. Some of them I think the reader will be able to pick out, but many of them I just wanted more on a subconscious level. And then there are these threads of warehousing: in the fairy tale the warehousing of women, in Friedrich's story the warehousing of the Jews, and the warehousing of children in Mike's story, the warehousing of the Japanese and the Mexican Americans in Ivy's story. There were these odd little threads that were woven through the whole book, so it helped me to have this big diagram on the whiteboard, and it helped me to have this visual.





**RS: Did I make up the shout-out to *Holes*?**

PMR: You know, you are not the first person to see that. But if I did, it was completely — you mean Louis Sachar's *Holes*?

**RS: Yup. There are peaches.**

PMR: What?

**RS: You have a jar of peaches in there.**

PMR: Oh my god. That is really interesting. I guess as a writer there are so many things you do subconsciously.

**RS: Well, I thought of it because you have the same kind of mythic base, and then these braiding stories coming together.**

PMR: And I do have that jar of peaches. I didn't do it consciously, though, to be honest.

**RS: I think of a book of yours I love, *The Dreamer*, which is really beautifully contained, kind of gemlike. And now with *Echo* we have this huge canvas. How was it different to work on?**

PMR: Number one, it takes a lot longer. *The Dreamer* was about one person's life, Pablo Neruda, and it was more linear. This one was just bigger. It's three stories and they needed to have some threads that held them together. Also, because *The Dreamer* is illustrated, I knew in the back of my mind that Peter Sís was going to say things in his art that I didn't need to say in the book.

**RS: It's funny, you keep saying three stories, and I'm thinking about the three stories in the book, but I'm also thinking about the three stories of a house, because they're really built on top of each other.**

PMR: Oh, interesting!

**RS: The three stories aren't working at the same time. Each one depends upon the one before.**

PMR: Right. That's very true. I love that. Whether I ever accomplish it or not, as a writer I want all of that to happen, but I want it to feel organic and integrated. At the end, more than anything, I think my most ardent goal is I want the reader to turn the page.

**RS: I remember when Lizette Serrano [from Scholastic] handed the book to me at ALA, and I thought, "Oh, it looks so long." And I started on my diatribe about long books, and**



**Lizette said, "Don't worry. It goes really quickly."**

PMR: Did you find that it went quickly?

**RS: I did.**

PMR: Oh, good. I was happy when I saw the book, because the leading is easy on the eyes, too. There's enough space. It doesn't feel really burdensome.

**RS: We old folks bless you.**

PMR: Do you want to ask me if I play the harmonica?

**RS: Do you play the harmonica?**

PMR: I kind of learned how to play some of the songs in the book. It's very easy to do, but I'm not really a musician. I will tell you something interesting that has happened after writing this book. Everywhere I go, I am almost always asked if I still play the cello. It took a long time to figure out why people were asking me that. I think they thought because of how I wrote about the cello music in Friedrich's story that I play the cello.

**RS: You're a very accomplished woman. Harmonica, cello, writing.**

PMR: Maybe I should say, "Oh, no, I gave that up years ago."

**RS: "I gave it up for the harmonica."**

PMR: Yes. But I will say this: the wonderful thing about music is you don't have to be a musician to love music, and you don't have to be a writer to love and appreciate books, and you don't have to be an artist to love and dedicate your life to art. That's what I wanted for the story. I wanted that beauty to illuminate my characters' tasks.

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Roger Sutton

Editor Emeritus Roger Sutton was editor in chief of The Horn Book, Inc., from 1996-2021. He was previously editor of *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* and a children's and young adult librarian. He received his MA in library science from the University of Chicago in 1982 and a BA from Pitzer College in 1978.

From: <https://www.hbook.com/story/pam-munoz->



# APPRECIATION ESSAY

## Big Life: A Profile of 2024 Children's Literature Legacy Award winner Pam Muñoz Ryan

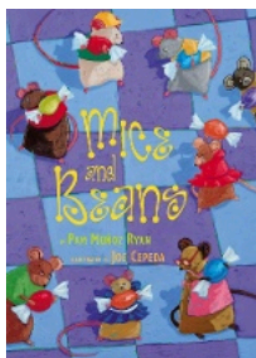
by [Tracy Mack](#)

Jul 24, 2024 | Filed in [Book Awards](#)



Tracy Mack and Pam Muñoz Ryan.

Photo courtesy of Pam Muñoz Ryan.



"When there's room in the heart, there's room in the house," Rosa Maria proclaims in [Pam Muñoz Ryan's](#) picture book *Mice and Beans*, illustrated by [Joe Cepeda](#). Much like this lovable character, Pam makes space for all the people and passions she holds most dear, and they all influence her work as a writer. She lives a big life, and it's one of the things I have always admired most about her. Our creative partnership over nearly thirty years — and the eighteen bookmaking journeys we have taken together — have enriched and enlarged my own life.

Pam has a big family, to whom she is deeply devoted. She is a big traveler, having globetrotted through myriad countries and taking each of her four children and six grandchildren on trips of their choosing when they reach a certain age.

She is a big researcher, devouring books, movies, plays, exhibits, articles, and firsthand experiences in the wilderness or far-flung cities so she can inhabit her characters and bring them faithfully alive on the page. She visited Oaxaca, Mexico (with me!), to see Noche de Rábanos



(Night of the Radishes) for *Becoming Naomi León*; traversed the Wyoming backcountry on horseback for *Paint the Wind*; explored Temuco, Chile, for *The Dreamer*; and toured the Hohner harmonica factory in Trossingen, Germany, for *Echo*.

She is of course a big reader, with wide but discriminating taste, soaking in stories of diverse genres as a true writer must.

She is a big rewriter, drafting and revising limitless times until her plot and prose are as smooth as ocean-washed stones.

She is a big groundbreaker. Book after book, she challenges herself to create new storytelling forms and plays with literary conventions. She was one of the first Latine children's book writers to lovingly shine a light on her Mexican culture, forging a path for the next generation.

She has a big career, having received countless awards and honors — Newbery, Pura Belpré, Sibert, Schneider, Kirkus, PEN America, BGHB, National Education Association Human and Civil Rights, and perhaps most special of all, the Children's Literature Legacy Award for her body of work — but you could never tell from her graciousness and humility. True to Pam's pioneering spirit, this recognition that might signal to some the sunset of her career is a sunrise instead, a springboard to deepened creativity and expansion. Never has that been more evident than in her forthcoming novel *El Niño*, which I can't wait for you to read.

She is big-hearted, as anyone who knows her or has read even a chapter of her novels feels on a cellular level. She has spoken to hundreds of thousands of children, teachers, librarians, writers, and booksellers in all fifty states and around the world. She personally answers every fan letter or email she receives. She generously shares recipes, shoe-shopping advice, and parenting wisdom, and has a related story at the ready to commiserate in nearly any situation.

She sees the big picture: books are small treasures to be lived and nurtured into being, each one deserving of that same affection and focused attention she bestows on her family. As with her children and grandchildren, she allows them space to blossom in their own time. She and I have both learned to heed Papa's wisdom in *Esperanza Rising*, "Aguántate tantito y la fruta caerá en su mano...Wait a little while and the fruit will fall into your hand."

Perhaps that's why each time Pam gifts a new story to the world, it feels like a big event.

\* \* \*

I first encountered Pam's work through a picture book manuscript entitled *Zig Zag Rows*, sent to me by her agent, Kendra Marcus at BookStop Literary. I was a young editor at the time, so young it came through the mail in a manila envelope. The story — about a Mexican American farm-laboring family, the crooked crops they tended, and a crocheted blanket — enveloped me with its lyrical prose and vivid imagery. But it felt bigger, older, with more layers than could be sufficiently unearthed in a picture book. I wrote to Kendra and asked to see more from this promising writer.

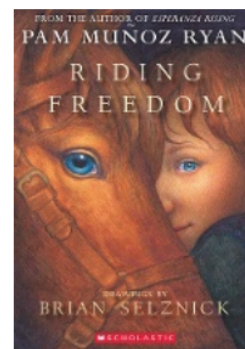




I soon received another picture book text, titled *One-Eyed Charley*, about legendary stagecoach driver Charlotte Parkhurst, who lived her life as a man and after death became known as the first woman registered to vote in the state of California. Again, the story felt rich and layered and too big to be contained in thirty-two pages. But this time I was inspired to ask Kendra if Pam would consider expanding the story into a novel. Though Pam had never before attempted one, she took a leap of faith and swiftly said yes.

This moment not only marked the beginning point of our partnership, but also set the tone for how we would work together: endless discussion via phone calls and letters (we were not yet using email), deep trust in each other's instincts (the kind of trust you feel with your most treasured relative), and faith that the road would always lead us where the story needed to go. A union that began as love at first sight quickly deepened into a long, devoted marriage.

*One-Eyed Charley* became *Riding Freedom*, exquisitely illustrated by a young [Brian Selznick](#). I was delighted to dig up the first editorial letter I wrote to Pam, dated November 30, 1995. It was eleven pages long — *single-spaced* — daunting to a first-time novelist, to be sure! But much to Pam's credit, she channeled her energy into getting right to work and crafted multiple revisions until the story "move[d] along at a gallop," as *Publishers Weekly* raved in her very first starred review. In addition to winning awards, the book also stood out because it challenged gender stereotypes and celebrated gender nonconformity long before those topics were being more openly explored in children's literature.



We had such a wonderful time working on *Riding Freedom* that once I learned more about the origins of *Zig Zag Rows*, I felt emboldened to ask Pam to expand that story into a novel as well. You may have guessed that it ultimately became Pam's most defining work, *Esperanza Rising*, inspired by her grandmother's journey from Mexico to the United States during the Great Depression. In the almost twenty-five years since, it has become a modern classic embedded in curricula across the country and treasured by generations of readers. It is as relevant today as when it was first published and resonates with new meaning.

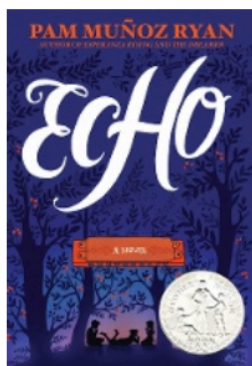
We are now working on the graphic novel edition illustrated by Andrés Vera Martínez. As I reread the book and script, I am struck once again by Pam's balance in presenting complex social and political ideas. She never burdens her stories with agenda. Rather, with uncommon depth, nuance, and compassion, she shows multiple viewpoints and lets her readers grapple with their own opinions and understanding. She helps them see that more than one thing can be true simultaneously. This is part of what makes her books so special and enduring: they respect the intelligence of their audience; make them feel held, valued, and broadened; and provide intellectual and emotional steadiness — something we need more than ever in our increasingly -



polarized society. That she can do this over and over again in each of her books demonstrates a boundless imagination, a voluminous heart, an unwavering commitment to children, and a steadfast belief in their capacity.

\* \* \*

Three of the next five novels that followed *Esperanza Rising* — *Becoming Naomi León*; *The Dreamer*, illustrated by Peter Sis; and *Mañanaland* — also began as picture books. I have - wondered if that says something about Pam's intrinsic modesty. Perhaps she doesn't see from the outset her stories' potential expansiveness or *her* own capacity. She never begins with lofty goals. She simply wants to tell a good story and compel readers to turn the page.



Even her Newbery Honor Book *Echo*, which spans two centuries, two continents, and four historical time periods, began as a simple idea: a single harmonica that travels to four children and changes their lives. That it spawned a 585-page tour de force exemplifies Pam's genius. Who else could organically create distinct characters, in distinct times and places, inhabiting distinct, standalone stories that converge to create a harmonious whole? She is like a conductor orchestrating winds and strings, percussion and brass into a seamless symphony. She has infused some of the darkest periods in our history with an indomitable sense of hope, which characterizes her work above all else. As the prophecy in *Echo* assures us, "Your fate is not yet sealed. / Even in the darkest night, a star will shine, / a bell will chime, a path will be revealed."

Pam's tireless faith in the possibility of light and healing has been an abiding comfort and inspiration to readers all over the world. Though Pam could not have known it at the time when she crafted the transcendent final words of *The Dreamer*, they express best of all her unique gifts: "The books traveled over fences...and bridges...and across borders...soaring from continent to continent...until [she] had passed thousands of gifts through a hole in the fence to a multitude of people in every corner of the world...their wings beating with the same pulse, their hearts eager to feel all that [she] could dream."

From the *July/August 2024* issue of The Horn Book Magazine: Special Issue: ALA Awards. For more speeches, profiles, and articles, click the tag [ALA 2024](#).



### Tracy Mack

Tracy Mack is vice president and publisher at Scholastic Press. Books she's acquired and edited have been #1 *New York Times* bestsellers and recognized with Newbery, Caldecott, National Book Award, Pura Belpré, Coretta Scott King, Schneider, Boston Globe-Horn Book, and Kirkus Prize medals and/or honors.



# AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

## LIFETIME

- 2024** Children's Literature Legacy Award\*, Association for Library Service to Children, a Division of the American Library Association.
- 2023** Regina Medal, Catholic Library Association.
- 2013** Human and Civil Rights Award, National Education Assoc.
- 2010** The Virginia Hamilton Literary Award for multicultural literature, Kent State University.



\*Honors an author whose books have made a significant and lasting contribution to literature for children.

## INTERNATIONAL

- 2017** Sakura Medal Award Nominee, Japan. *Echo*.
- 2015** Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, Germany. *The Dreamer*.
- 2012** Premio Letteratura Ragazzi, Italy. *The Dreamer*.
- 2011** Scelte di Classe Prize, Italy. *The Dreamer*.
- 2011** White Ravens Outstanding International Book Award, Germany. *The Dreamer*.



## BOOK AWARDS

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### *Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride*

**2000** NAIBA Book of the Year Award

**2000** American Booksellers Book Sense Book of the Year  
Finalist

### *Becoming Naomi León*

**2004** Bank Street Best Children's Books of the Year

**2004** Parents' Choice Silver Award

**2005** Americas Award Commendation Book

**2005** Book Sense Book of the Year Award, Honor Book

**2005** ALA Schneider Family Book Award

**2005** Skipping Stones Honor Award

**2005** Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award

**2005** ILA Notable Books for a Global Society

**2005** ALA Notable Children's Books

**2005** Book Sense Book of the Year Award, Honor Book

**2006** Pura Belpré Honor Award

**2004-2006** 19 Different "Best Books" Lists

ex. 2005 Amelia Bloomer List, CCBC Choices

### *The Dreamer*

**2010** Oppenheim Portfolio Gold Award

**2010** Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, Honor Book

**2010** NAIBA Carla Cohen Free Speech Award

**2010** Kirkus Best Children's Books

**2010** Scelte di Class Prize-Italy

**2010** NAPPA Gold Award

**2011** Pura Belpré Award

**2011** Americas Award Commendation Book

**2011** PEN Center USA Literary Award for Children's and YAL

**2011** Nautilus Book Award

**2010-2014** 18 Different "Best Books" Lists

ex. 2010 Kirkus Best Children's Books

2011 Notable Books for a Global Society

**2011-2013** 6 Different State and Provincial Awards Lists



## ***Echo***

- 2015** Kirkus Prize for Young Readers' Literature
- 2015** Parents' Choice Gold Award
- 2015** New York Times Notable Children's Books
- 2015** New York Historical Society Book Prize
- 2015** NAPPA Gold Award
- 2016** Odyssey Award, Honor Book
- 2016** John Newbery Medal, Honor Book
- 2016** Américas Award
- 2016** Audie Award
- 2016** Children's Literature Council of Southern CA Award
- 2016** International Latino Book Award, Honorable Mention
- 2019** California Young Readers Medal Winner
- 2015-2021** 28 Different "Best Books" Lists  
ex. 2016 2001 Notable Books for a Global Society
- 2016-2022** 26 Different State and Provincial Awards Lists

## ***Esperanza Rising***

- 2000** Américas Award, Honor Book
- 2001** Jane Addams Children's Book Award
- 2001** Judy Lopez Memorial Award for Children's Literature
- 2001** WILLA Literary Award
- 2001** ILA Notable Books for a Global Society
- 2001** Los Angeles Times Book Prize Finalist
- 2001** Southern California Judy Lopez Award
- 2001** Arizona Young Adult Book Award
- 2001** Jefferson Cup Award
- 2001** NCSS/CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Books for  
Young People
- 2002** Pura Belpré Award
- 2003** Massachusetts Children's Book Award Honor
- 2008** Friends of Children's Literature Award
- 2000-2020** 39 Different "Best Books" Lists  
ex. 2001 *Publishers Weekly* Best Books  
2001 Smithsonian Best Book of the Year
- 2001-2023** 36 Different State and Provincial Awards List

***How Do You Raise a Raisin?***

**2001** Best Books for Children

***Mañanaland***

**2020** Golden Poppy Award

**2020** International Latino Book Award, 1st Place

**2020** New York Public Library's 100 Notable Titles

**2021** Bank Street Best Children's Books of the Year

**2021** Capitol Choices Best Book List

**2021** CCBC Choices University of Wisconsin-Madison

**2021** SCBWI Golden Kite Award, Finalist

**2021** Horace Mann Upstanders Book Award

**2001-2023** 36 Different State and Provincial Awards Lists

***Mice and Beans***

**2002** ALA Notable Children's Books

**2002** Children's Literature Council of Southern CA Award

**2002** Notable Children's Books

**2002-2004** 7 Different "Best Books" Lists

***Mud is Cake?***

**2001** Best Children's Books of the Year

***Nacho and Lolita***

**2006** Western Writers of America Spur Award, Finalist

***Our California***

**2008** Cybils Awards, Finalist

***Paint the Wind***

**2009** Keystone to Reading Book Award

**2008** Nautilus Book Award, Silver

**2008- 2011** 18 Different State and Provincial Awards Lists

### ***Riding Freedom***

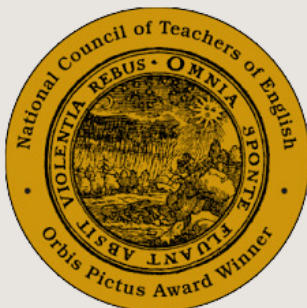
- 1998** Parenting Magazine's Reading Magic Award
- 1999** WILLA Literary Award (Women Writing the West)
- 1999** ILA Children's Choices Reading List
- 1999** ILA Teachers' Choices Reading List
- 2000** California Young Readers Medal
- 2000** Arizona Grand Canyon Reader Award
- 2000** Arkansas Simon Young Reader Honor
- 2001** Charlie May Simon Children's Book Award, Honor
- 2001** Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award
- 2001** Golden Sower Award
- 2005** Voice of Youth Award

### ***Solimar: The Sword of the Monarchs***

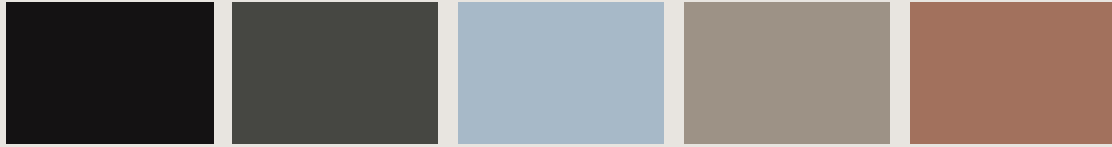
- 2023** Best Children's Books of the Year

### ***When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson***

- 2003** Flora Stieglitz Straus Award
- 2003** Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children
- 2003** Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal, Honor
- 2003** ALA Notable Children's Books
- 2003** NCSS/CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People
- 2004** Norman Sugarman Award for Distinguished Biography



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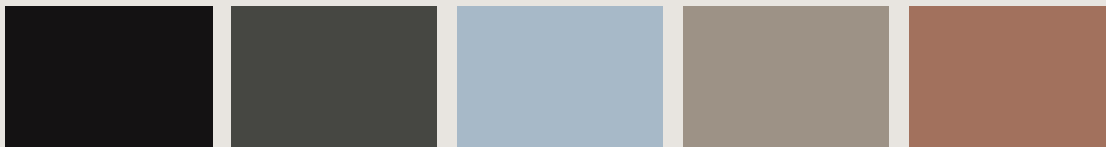
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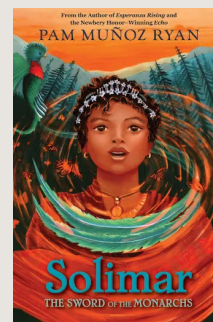
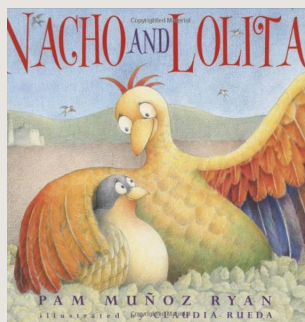
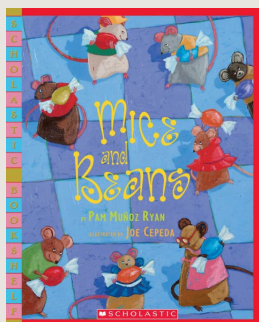
***Paint the Wind***. Scholastic, 2007.

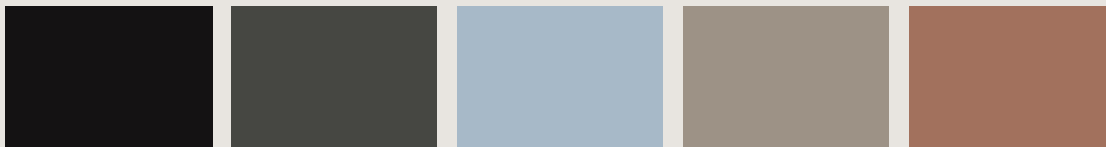
***A Plum for Peace***. In R. Aguirre, M. Auer, S. Parkinson, & V. Coghlan (Eds.). *Peace Story*. NamiBooks, 2010.

***A Pinky is a Baby Mouse, and Other Baby Animal Names*** (D. De Groat, Illus.). Disney Hyperion Books for Children, 1997.

***Riding Freedom*** (B. Selznick, Illus.). Scholastic, 1998.

***Solimar: The Sword of the Monarchs***. Disney Hyperion Books for Children, 2022.





*There Was No Show on Christmas Eve.* (D. Nolan, Illus.). Disney, 2005.

*Tony Baloney* (E. Fotheringham, Illus.). Scholastic, 2011.

*Tony Baloney: Buddy Trouble* (E. Fotheringham, Illus.). Scholastic, 2014.

*Tony Baloney: Pen Pal* (E. Fotheringham, Illus.). Scholastic, 2015.

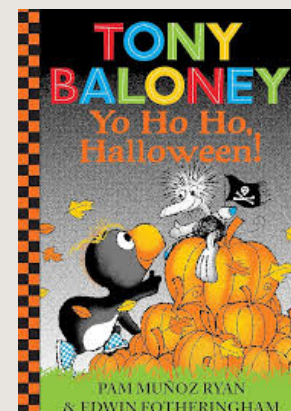
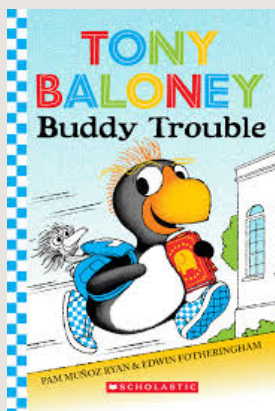
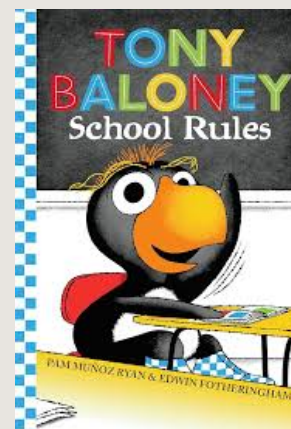
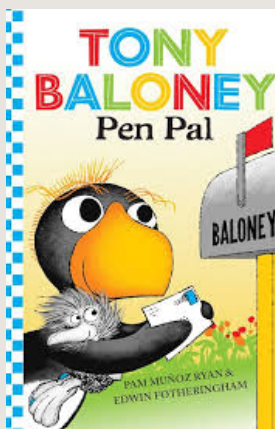
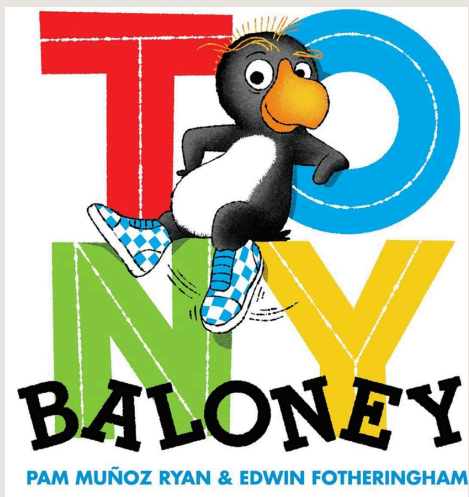
*Tony Baloney: School Rules* (E. Fotheringham, Illus.). Scholastic, 2013.

*Tony Baloney: Yo Ho Ho, Halloween!* (E. Fotheringham, Illus.). Scholastic, 2016.

*What Makes a Family?* Houghton, Mifflin Harcourt, 2004.

*When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson* (B. Selznick, Illus.). Scholastic, 2002.

*Where's Porkchop?* (Jumbo Pictures, Illus.). Mouse Works, 1999.



# Novel Translations

## BECOMING NAOMI LEÓN (2004)

**Braille:** *Becoming Naomi León*. (2004). Scholastic Press, New York.

**French:** *Les racines de Naomi*. (2006). Actes Sud junior, Arles Bouches-du-Rhône.

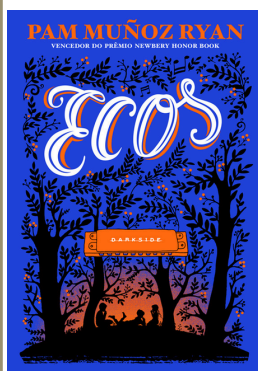
**Japanese:** メキシコへ わたしをさがして / *Mekishiko e watashi*. (2017). 偕成社, Tōkyō, 2017 / Kaiseisha, Tōkyō.

**Spanish:** *Yo, Naomi León*. (2005). Scholastic, New York.

**UK Edition:** *Becoming Naomi León*. Dorling Kindersley. London.



Japanese Translation



Portuguese Translation

## ECHO (2015)

**Chinese:** 口琴使者 / *Kou qin shi zhe*. (2016). 親子天下股份有限公司 ; 大和圖書有限公司, Taipei Shi, [Xin bei shi].

**Italian:** *Echo*. (2016). Mondadori, Milano.

**Portuguese:** *Ecós*. (2017). Darkside, Rio de Janeiro, RJ.

**Russian:** *Exo / Ekho*. (2019). Эксмо, Moskva, 2019 / Ёксмо, Moskva, 2019.

**Spanish:** *Eco*. (2017). Grantravesía, Ciudad de México.

## ESPERANZA RISING (2000)

**Braille:** *Esperanza Rising*. (2004). Scholastic Press, New York.

**Chinese:** 風中玫瑰 / *Feng zhong mei gui*. (2004). 台灣東方出版社股份有限公司, Taipei Shi.

**French:** *Les Roses du Mexique*. (2003). Actes Sud junior, Arles Bouches-du-Rhône.

**Korean:** 에스페란사의 골짜기. (2006). 아침이슬, 서울.

**Russian:** *Эсперанса : повесть / Éesperansa: Povest*. (2008). "Текст," Moskva.

**Spanish:** *Esperanza Renace*. (2002). Scholastic Inc., New York.

**UK Edition:** *Esperanza Rising*. (2003). Egmont, London.

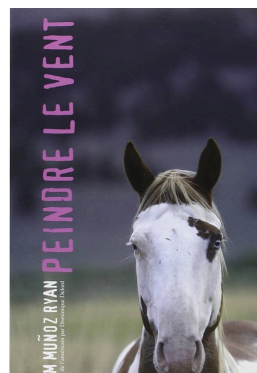


Russian Translation





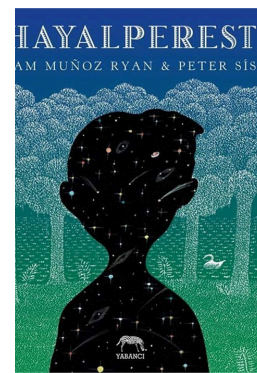
Chinese Translation



French Translation



Russian Translation



Turkish Translation

## MAÑANALAND (2020)

**Chinese:** 巨人皇后的秘密: 通往自由的明日之地. (2021). 台灣東方出版社股份有限公司, Tai bei shi.

**Spanish:** *Mañanaland*. (2020). Scholastic Inc., New York, NY.

## PAINT THE WIND (2007)

**Braille:** *Paint the Wind*. (2007). Scholastic Press, New York

**Chinese:** 为风上色的女孩. (2019). 晨光出版社, Kunming

**French:** *Peindre le vent*. (2009). Actes Sud junior, Arles

**Korean:** 바람의 아르테미시아. (2012). 실천문학, 서울.

**Spanish:** *Pinta el viento*. (2008). Scholastic Inc., New York.

## RIDING FREEDOM (1998)

**Braille:** *Riding Freedom*. (1998). Scholastic Press, New York.

**Chinese:** 自由驰骋. (2017). Ming tian chu ban she, Jinan.

**Dutch:** *Op weg naar vrijheid*. (1999). Callenbach, Kampen

**French:** *Les éperons de la liberté*. (2000). Actes sud junior, Arles (Bouches-du-Rhône).

**Japanese:** ライディング・フリーダム: 嵐の中をかけぬけて. (2001). ポプラ社, Tokyo

**Korean:** 나는 자유다. (2012). 나는 자유다.

**Spanish:** *Un caballo llamado libertad*. (2001). Scholastic, New York, NY.

## THE DREAMER (2010)

**Chinese:** 追梦的孩子. (2019). 晨光出版社, Kunming.

**French:** *Le Rêveur*. (2013). Bayard Jeunesse, Montrouge. Hauts-de-Seine, DL.

**German:** *Der Träumer*. (2014). Aladin-Verl, Hamburg.

**Italian:** *Il sognatore: storia del ragazzo che diventò*. (2010). Milano.

**Korean:** 별이 된 소년. (2012). 비룡소, 서울.

**Japanese:** 夢見る人. (2019). 岩波書店, 東京都.

**Korean:** 별이 된 소년. (2012). 비룡소, 서울.

**Turkish:** *Hayalperest*. (2011). ithaki, İstanbul.

**Spanish:** *El soñador*. (2010). Scholastic Inc., New York.



# PICTURE BOOK TRANSLATIONS

## A BOX OF FRIENDS (2002)

**Japanese:** 友だちという名の宝箱. (2001). Yokohama, Tokyo.

## A PINKY IS A BABY MOUSE (1997)

**Braille:** *A Pinky is a Baby Mouse, and Other Baby Animal Names.* (1999).  
Hyperion Paperbacks for Children, New York.

## THE FLAG WE LOVE (1996)

**Braille:** *The Flag We Love.* (1996). Charlesbridge, Watertown, MA.

**Spanish:** *La Bandera que Amamos.* (2002). Charlesbridge, Watertown, MA.

## MICE AND BEANS (2001)

**Spanish:** *Arroz con frijoles...y unos amables ratones.* (2001). Scholastic Inc.,  
New York.

## MUD IS CAKE (2001)

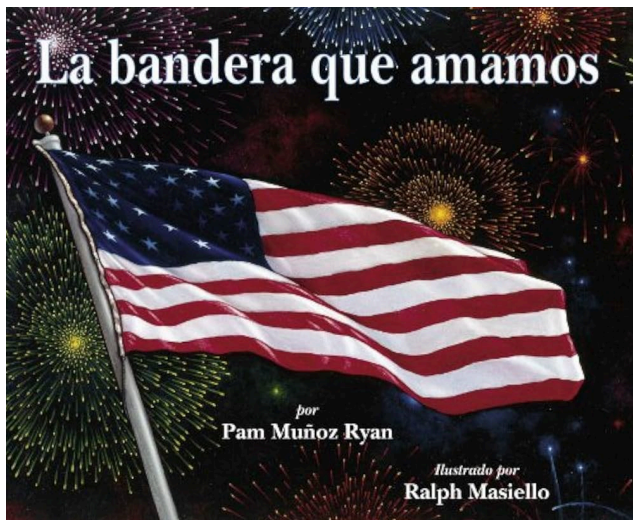
**Korean:** 진흙은 케이크야~. (2008). 한국빼아제, 고양

## ONE HUNDRED IS A FAMILY (1994)

**Braille:** *One Hundred is a Family.* (1994). Hyperion Books for Children, New  
York.

## THE ONE AND ONLY YOU (1994)

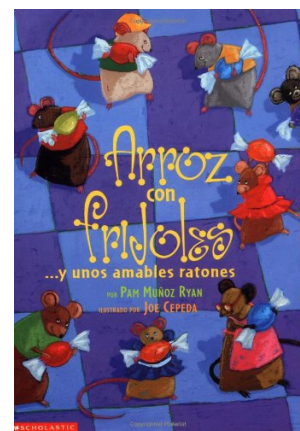
**Japanese:** *The One and Only You.* (2000). NTS, Inc. Kanagawa, Japan.



Spanish Translation



Korean Translation



Spanish Translation

Spanish Translation

# NONFICTION TRANSLATIONS

*CALIFORNIA, HERE WE COME!* (1991)

**Spanish:** *¡California, Aquí Vamos!* (1997). Charlesbridge Pub., Watertown, MA.

*OUR CALIFORNIA* (2008)

**Spanish:** *Nuestra California.* (2011). Charlesbridge Pub., Watertown, MA.

*WHEN MARIAN SANG* (2002)

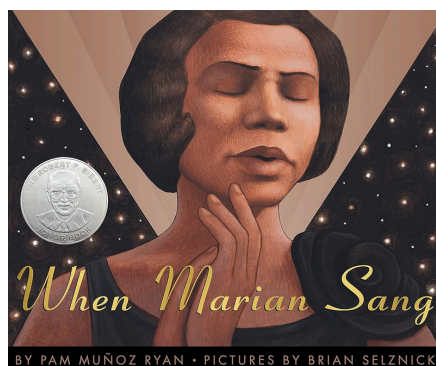
**Braille:** *When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian.* (2003). Scholastic Press, New York.

**Chinese:** 勇者的歌聲：瑪麗安·安德森的故事。 (2007). 磐石出版；道聲發行, Jianada, Taipei Shi.

**Japanese:** マリアンは歌う：マリアン・アンダーソン100年に一度の歌声。 (2013). 光村教育図書.

*WHAT MAKES A FAMILY* (2004)

**Spanish:** *¿Qué hace a una familia?* (2004). Scholastic Press, New York.



## A Note from the Publisher

Ryan's titles have done incredibly well in China with over 383K sold in Simplified Chinese. Her titles have sold in 22 languages worldwide: Chinese: Simplified, Chinese: Complex, Bi-lingual Chinese/English, Kyrgyz, Korean, Bahasa Indonesian, Italian, Portuguese, Turkish, French, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, German, Brazilian, Portuguese, Romanian, Dutch, Hungarian, Greek, and Ukrainian.

# 10 MOST IMPORTANT TITLES

## ***AMELIA & ELEANOR GO FOR A RIDE***

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 1999

Illustrated by Brian Selznick



**1999** Scholastic

**2000** Scholastic, digital book

## ***BECOMING NAOMI LEÓN***

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2004

**2004** Scholastic

**2004** Scholastic, digital book

**2005** Scholastic, digital book

**2006** Actes Sud junior, Arles

**2008** Paw Prints

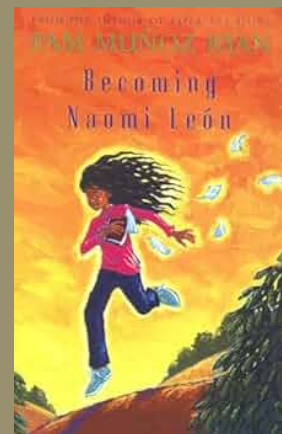
**2006** Listening Library, digital book

**2013** Scholastic, digital book

**2015** Scholastic, digital book

**2017** 偕成社, Tōkyō

**2019** Scholastic



**THE DREAMER**

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2010

Illustrated by Peter Sis

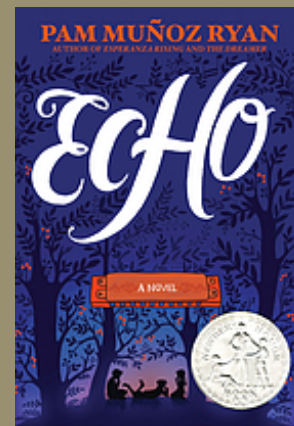


- 2010** Scholastic
- 2010** Scholastic, audio
- 2010** Mondadori, Milano
- 2012** Scholastic
- 2012** Perfection Learning
- 2012** Paw Prints
- 2013** Scholastic, digital book
- 2014** Aladin-Verl, Hamburg
- 2015** Aladin, Hamburg
- 2018** Aladin, Hamburg

**ECHO**

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2015

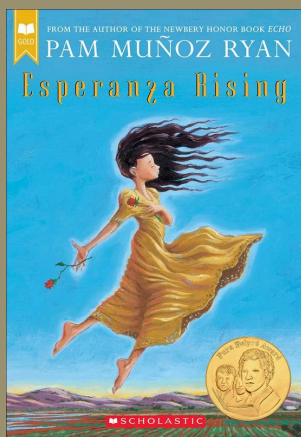
- 2015** Scholastic
- 2015** Scholastic, digital book
- 2015** Scholastic, digital book
- 2015** Mondadori, audio book
- 2016** Mondadori, audio book
- 2017** Grantavesía
- 2017** Grantavesía
- 2017** Mondadori
- 2017** Darkside
- 2017** Darkside
- 2019** Oceano, Barcelona
- 2019** Oceano, Barcelona
- 2019** Oceano exprés, digital book
- 2019** Oceano exprés, digital book





## **ESPERANZA RISING**

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2000



- 2000** Scholastic
- 2000** Scholastic, digital book
- 2000** Scholastic, large print
- 2000** Holt, Rinehart and Winston
- 2000** Hampton-Brown
- 2000** Houghton Mifflin
- 2001** Listening Library
- 2002** Scholastic
- 2002** Turtleback Books
- 2003** Actes Sud junior
- 2003** The Chicken House
- 2003** Egmont
- 2004** Scholastic, braille
- 2006** Listening Library
- 2007** Scholastic
- 2008** SRA/McGraw Hill,
- 2009** Kendall/Hunt
- 2012** Scholastic
- 2013** Scholastic
- 2013** Scholastic, digital book
- 2019** Scholastic
- 2018** Thorndike Press, large print
- 2019** Thorndike Press, large print
- 2024** Thorndike Press, large print

## **MAÑANALAND**

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2020

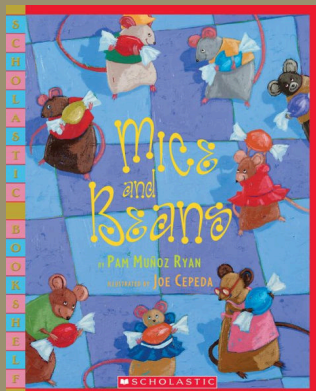
- 2020** Scholastic
- 2020** Scholastic Press, digital book
- 2020** Thorndike Press, large print
- 2020** Thorndike Striving Reader
- 2024** Scholastic



### **MICE AND BEANS**

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2001

Illustrated by Joe Cepeda



**2001** Scholastic, NY, USA

**2001** Scholastic, digital book

**2004** Demco Media

**2005** Scholastic, NY, USA

**2005** Perfection Learning

**2011** Scholastic, NY, USA

### **NACHO AND LOLITA**

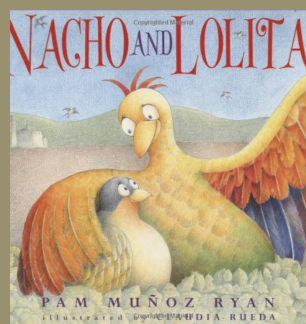
Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2005

Illustrated by Claudia Rueda

**2005** Scholastic, NY, USA

**2005** Demco Media

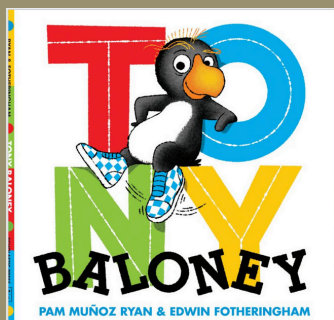
**2005** Scholastic Press, digital book



### **TONY BALONEY**

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2011

Illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham



**2011** Scholastic, NY, USA

**2011** Recorded Books, Prince Frederick, MD

## WHEN MARIAN SANG

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2002

Illustrated by Brian Selznick

- 2002** Scholastic Press, NY, USA
- 2002** Scholastic Press, large print
- 2002** Hampton-Brown, Carmel, CA
- 2002** BMG Special Products, music CD
- 2003** Scholastic Press, NY, USA
- 2003** Scholastic, Braille
- 2004** Live Oak Media
- 2004** Scholastic Press, NY, USA
- 2011** Live Oak Media
- 2013** Zaner-Bloser, Columbus, O.H.
- 2018** Media Rich Learning, film

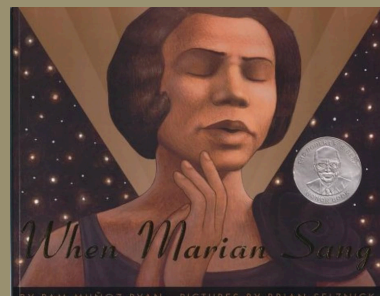


Image Credit: Scholastic Press,  
Pam Muñoz Ryan/Brian Selznick

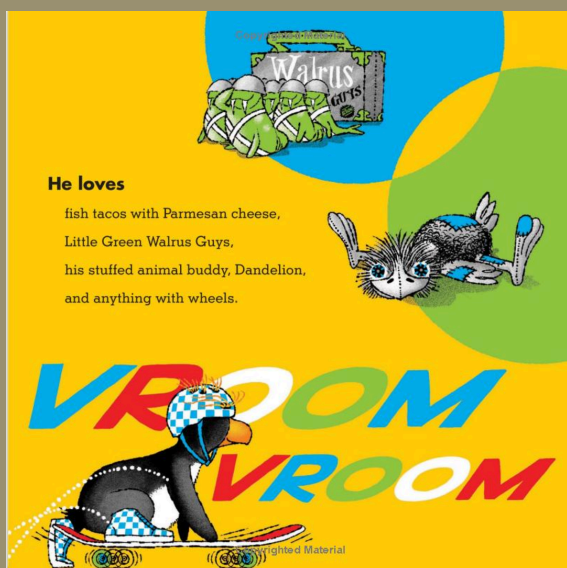


Image Credit: Scholastic Press,  
Pam Muñoz Ryan/Edwin Fotheringham

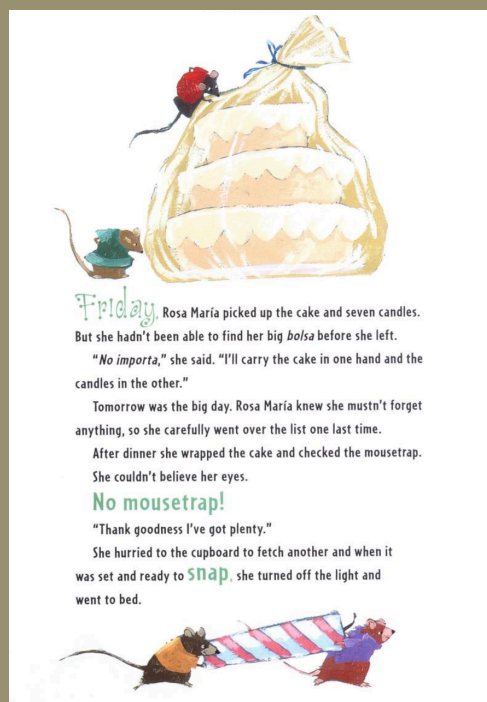
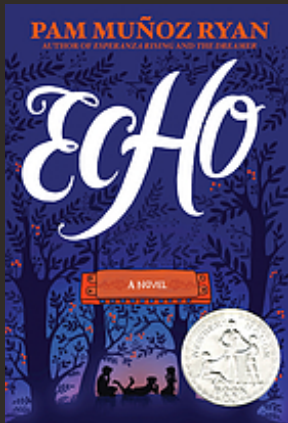
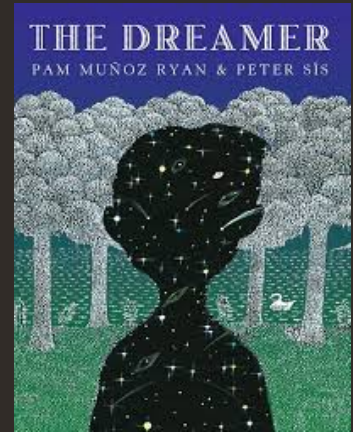


Image Credit: Scholastic Press,  
Pam Muñoz Ryan/Joe Cepeda

# 5 REPRESENTATIVE TITLES

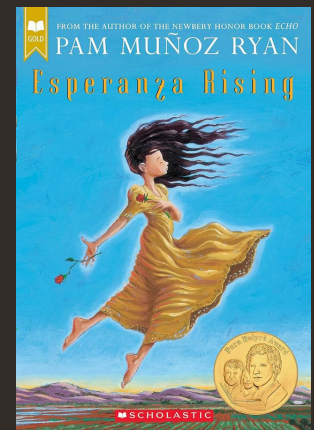
## ***THE DREAMER***

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2010  
Illustrated by Peter Sis



## ***ECHO***

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2015



## ***ESPERANZA RISING***

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2000

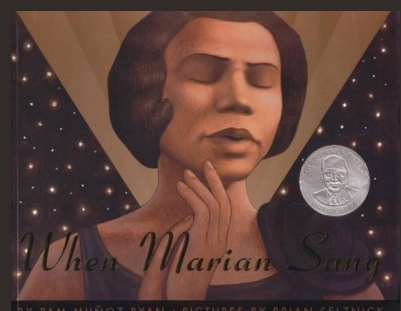


## ***MAÑANALAND***

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2020

## ***WHEN MARIAN SANG***

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2002  
Illustrated by Brian Selznick



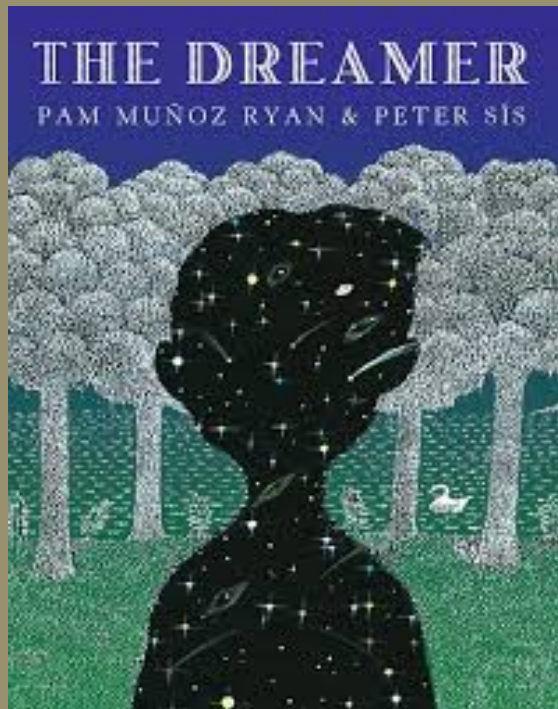


# REVIEWS



## **THE DREAMER**

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan,  
Scholastic, 2010  
Illustrated by Peter Sis



## **Kirkus Reviews**

Ryan's fictional evocation of the boy who would become Pablo Neruda is rich, resonant and enchanting. Simple adventures reveal young Neftalí's painful shyness and spirited determination, his stepmother's love and his siblings' affection and his longing for connection with his formidable, disapproving father. The narrative captures as well rain falling in Temuco, the Chilean town where he was raised, and his first encounters with the forest and the ocean. Childhood moments, gracefully re-created, offer a glimpse of a poet-to-be who treasures stories hidden in objects and who recognizes the delicate mutability of the visible world, while the roots of Neruda's political beliefs are implied in the boy's encounters with struggles for social justice around him. Lines from a poem by Ryan along with Sis's art emphasize scenes and introduce chapters, perfectly conveying the young hero's dreamy questioning. The illustrator's trademark drawings deliver a feeling of boundless thought and imagination, suggesting, with whimsy and warmth, Neftalí's continual transformation of the everyday world into something transcendent. A brief selection of Neruda's poems (in translation), a bibliography and an author's note enrich an inviting and already splendid, beautifully presented work.

(MARCH 15, 2010)

**Horn Book Magazine \*Starred Review\***

As Neftalí Reyes enters university, his wrathful father forbids wasting time on his useless "hobby": writing. So he fashions a pseudonym: "Pablo" from Paolo, in an Italian poem; "Neruda" after a Czech writer. The name fits like a suit: "The lapels were the width that he liked. The color was soft enough not to offend, but bright enough to be remembered. The name was not only a perfect solution, it was a perfect fit." Perfect indeed, like the union that resulted in this novel: the subject, poet Pablo Neruda (1904-73), the Chilean Nobel Prize winner; Ryan, the author who re-creates Neruda's spirit and sensibility; and Sís, the Czech-born illustrator whose escape from oppression (see *The Wall* rev.9/07) so hauntingly resembles Neruda's struggle for creative freedom.

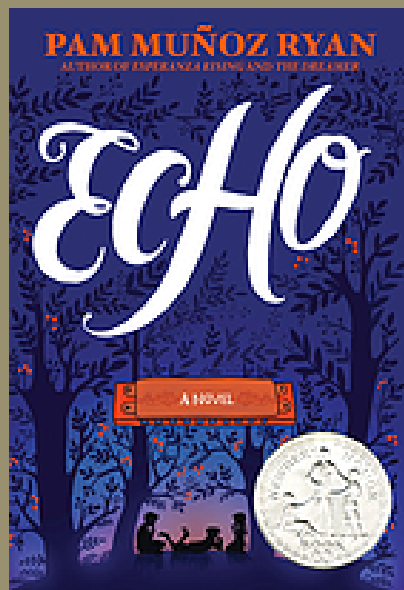
In Ryan's perceptive reconstruction of the poet's early years, Neftalí, at eight, is already logger-heads with an autocratic father who prohibits all creative activities, even reading. Fortunately the boy is unquenchable—a lover of words, books, and ideas; a collector of the small, lovely objects that will always figure in his imagination. The forest yields natural treasures—a pinecone he trades for a toy sheep, a lifelong talisman. At the beach (where Father forces him into the terrifying waves) are shells and a sympathetic librarian who offers him a hideaway for reading. There he feeds a pair of swans who are later shot by a hunter—a tragedy that symbolizes his own frustrations and sorrows while also bonding him more closely with his loving stepmother and sister.

The passing years nourish mind and heart with telling incidents: a girl Neftalí admires recognizes his hand in the love letters a bully forces him to write; with a beloved uncle, he defends indigenous Chileans. Poetic interludes, inspired by Neruda's *Book of Questions*, heighten each event's significance: at the swans' death ("Which is sharper? The hatchet that cuts down dreams? / Or the scythe that clears a path for another?"); after Father burns Neftalí's papers ("Where is the heaven of lost stories?"); on becoming Pablo Neruda ("Does a metamorphosis / begin from the outside in? / Or from the inside out?"). Sís's introspective, emotion-charged drawings spring naturally from this lyrical account of a difficult childhood. Many of his quiet compositions are surreal visions: tiny, frightened children peer up from the ocean waves that dapple their implacable father's outlined form; a child, vulnerably naked, rides a winged pen that resembles a swan in flight. Such imagery adds a dimension of magical realism to a text in which Neftalí's imaginative inner world is so often confronted with a harsher external reality, even while it is nurtured by kindness and natural beauty. Conflicts, injustice, and a promised future make the story compelling; Sís deepens it with dozens of provocative images. Neatly crafted vignettes presage each chapter's events; visual imagery extends Ryan's poems on open spreads of sea and sky; paths beckon and exquisite details reflect the dreamer's maturing imagination, clothing this masterful tribute in art that fits it as ineluctably as Neruda's new name suited his purpose. An author's note and several of Neruda's poems are appended.

JOANNA RUDGE LONG (MARCH/APRIL 2010)

**ECHO**

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2015

**Publishers Weekly**

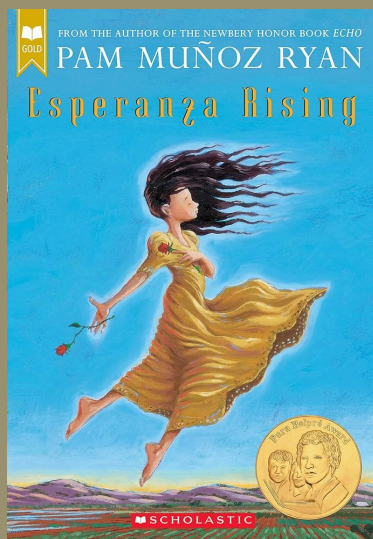
The fairy tale that opens this elegant trio of interconnected stories from Ryan (*The Dreamer*) sets the tone for the rest of the book, in which a mystical harmonica brings together three children growing up before and during WWII. Friedrich, an aspiring conductor whose birthmark makes him an undesirable in Nazi Germany, must try to rescue his father after his Jewish sympathies land him in a prison camp. In Pennsylvania, piano prodigy Mike and his brother, Frankie, get a chance to escape the orphanage for good, but only if they can connect with the eccentric woman who has adopted them. In California, Ivy Maria struggles with her school's segregation as well as the accusations leveled against Japanese landowners who might finally offer her family a home of their own. Each individual story is engaging, but together they harmonize to create a thrilling whole. The book's thematic underpinnings poignantly reveal what Friedrich, Mike, and Ivy truly have in common: not just a love of music, but resourcefulness in the face of change, and a refusal to accept injustice. Ages 10-14. (February 2015)

**Kirkus Reviews**

A multilayered novel set in turbulent times explores music's healing power. Sweeping across years and place, Ryan's full-bodied story is actually five stories that take readers from an enchanted forest to Germany, Pennsylvania, Southern California and finally New York City. Linking the stories is an ethereal-sounding harmonica first introduced in the fairy-tale beginning of the book and marked with a mysterious M. In Nazi Germany, 12-year-old Friedrich finds the harmonica in an abandoned building; playing it fills him with the courage to attempt to free his father from Dachau. Next, the harmonica reaches two brothers in an orphanage in Depression-era Pennsylvania, from which they are adopted by a mysterious wealthy woman who doesn't seem to want them. Just after the United States enters World War II, the harmonica then makes its way to Southern California in a box of used instruments for poor children; as fifth-grader Ivy Lopez learns to play, she discovers she has exceptional musical ability. Ryan weaves these stories together, first, with the theme of music—symbolized by the harmonica—and its ability to empower the disadvantaged and discriminated-against, and then, at the novel's conclusion, as readers learn the intertwined fate of each story's protagonist. A grand narrative that examines the power of music to inspire beauty in a world overrun with fear and intolerance, it's worth every moment of readers' time. (December 2014)

**ESPERANZA RISING**

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2000

**SLJ Reviews**

Ryan uses the experiences of her own Mexican grandmother as the basis for this compelling story of immigration and assimilation, not only to a new country but also into a different social class. Esperanza's expectation that her 13th birthday will be celebrated with all the material pleasures and folk elements of her previous years is shattered when her father is murdered by bandits. His powerful stepbrothers then hold her mother as a social and economic hostage, wanting to force her remarriage to one of them, and go so far as to burn down the family home. Esperanza's mother then decides to join the cook and gardener and their son as they move to the United States and work in California's agricultural industry. They embark on a new way of life, away from the uncles, and Esperanza unwillingly enters a world where she is no longer a princess but a worker. Set against the multiethnic, labor-organizing era of the Depression, the story of Esperanza remaking herself is satisfyingly complete, including dire illness and a difficult romance. Except for the evil uncles, all of the characters are rounded, their motives genuine, with class issues honestly portrayed. Easy to booktalk, useful in classroom discussions, and accessible as pleasure reading, this well-written novel belongs in all collections. (Goldsmith, F. 2000. Berkeley Public Library.)

**Horn Book Magazine**

At times *Esperanza Rising*, although it takes place in Depression-era Mexico and the United States instead of Victorian England, seems a dead ringer for Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess*. Both are dramatic riches-to-rags stories about girls forced to trade fancy dolls and dresses for hard work and ill-fitting hand-me-downs after their beloved fathers die. Thirteen-year-old Esperanza even possesses a touch of Sara Crewe's romantic spirit. The daughter of an affluent Mexican rancher, she had been taught by her father to believe that the "land is alive," that she could lie down beneath the arbors in her family's vineyards, press her ear to the ground, and hear a heart beat. Yet can this still hold true for Esperanza when she no longer reigns as queen of the harvest but labors in the fields of a foreign country, picking grapes on someone else's land for pennies an hour? The transition does not come easily for her, and thus her story ultimately diverges from *The Little Princess's* fairytale script to become a poignant look at the realities of immigration.



### Horn Book Magazine Review continued

Political as well as personal history inform the sometimes florid narrative (loosely based, we are told in an afterword, on the experiences of the author's grandmother). Esperanza's struggles begin amidst class unrest in post-revolutionary Mexico and intersect with labor strikes in the United States, which serve to illustrate the time period's prevailing hostility toward people of Mexican descent. In one of the more glaring injustices she witnesses, striking workers, who were born American citizens and have never set foot on Mexican soil, are loaded onto buses for deportation. Through it all, Esperanza is transformed from a sheltered aristocrat into someone who can take care of herself and others. Although her material wealth is not restored in the end, the way it is for Sara Crewe, she is rich in family, friends, and *esperanza*—the Spanish word for hope.

(January/February, 2001)



5th Graders Reader Response to *Esperanza Rising*  
 Images from Strohl, T. (2022, Sept 12). Raising a Hand for Human Rights. Davis Art.

## MAÑANALAND

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2020

### Booklist \*Starred Review\*

In a small town located “somewhere in the Américas,” eleven-year-old Max has been raised by his no-nonsense father and head-in-the-clouds grandfather, ever since his mother disappeared when he was a baby. Longing to find her, the fútbol-loving protagonist uncovers secrets about his family’s past and embarks on a dangerous mission to help a refugee from a dictator-led neighboring country find her way to Mañanaland. The two traverse rocky terrain, hide from those looking to collect a reward for the missing refugee, and follow the map that Max learned through his grandfather’s nightly bedtime story. In her first book since the Newbery Honor-winning *Echo* (2015), Muñoz Ryan crafts a lyrical, fablelike tale of love, loss, community, and standing up for what is right. The novel is told with evocative and dreamlike writing and features authentic characters who tug at the heartstrings. As the impeccable pacing keeps readers guessing, the timely storyline will resonate, especially bringing to mind the plight of young people who have to travel long distances in unfamiliar lands to find safety. This story, infused with magic, reminds children that humanity thrives when people embrace differences and construct bridges instead of borders. Another unforgettable work from a master storyteller. (January, 2020)



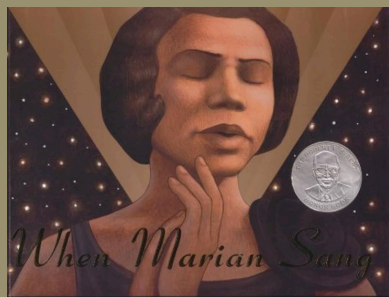
### Kirkus Reviews

A boy journeys to self-discovery through the power of stories and traditions. Eleven-year-old Maximiliano Córdoba is ready for an idyllic summer. He plans to work hard as a builder for his father and train for futbol tryouts. Plus, Max hopes dad will take him to visit the towering ruins of La Reina Gigante, a haunted hideout used in the past by the Guardians to hide refugees as they fled Abismo, a war-torn, neighboring dictatorship. However, when Max must provide his birth certificate to join the team, he feels his dream summer crumble away. The document disappeared years ago, along with his mother, the woman with whom Max shares "leche quemada" eyes. Soon, Papá leaves on a three-week journey to request a new one, and Max finds himself torn between two desires: to know the truth about why his mother left when he was a baby and to make the team. As Max discovers the enchanting stories his grandfather has been telling him for years have an actual foothold in reality, he must choose between his own dreams and those of others. Kirkus Prize winner Ryan ( *Echo*, 2015) beautifully layers thought-provoking topics onto her narrative while keeping readers immersed in the story's world. Although set in the fictional country of Santa Maria, "somewhere in the Américas," the struggles of refugee immigrants and the compassion of those who protect the travelers feel very relevant. This tightly packed, powerful fantasy contains resonant truths. (December, 2019)

**WHEN MARIAN SANG**

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2002

Illustrated by Brian Selznick

**Kirkus Reviews**

In Ryan and Selznick (*Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride*, 1999, etc.) reunite for another magical collaboration, this time presenting Marian Anderson to a young audience. Using the visual metaphor of an operatic presentation, the production opens on the Metropolitan Opera stage just before performance, followed by a spread in which the audience watches as the curtain rises and a street scene reveals a tiny figure singing in a brightly-lit window. The shape of the volume lends itself to the broad sweep of the stage and even the title page reads like the show's program. Anderson's story is perhaps not well known to younger children, but Ryan does a good job of making it accessible. In simply stated prose she acquaints young readers, who may be disbelieving, with a time of social injustice when a person of color could not pursue a professional career in concert music and it was an act of personal courage to sing before racially mixed audiences. Verses of Anderson's most famous songs are included as they have meaningful application for events.

The account includes the most notable episode in her life when, denied access to Washington's Constitution Hall because of her race, Marian sang on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial before a crowd of thousands—black and white. Selznick's carefully researched, sepia-toned, acrylic illustrations dramatize Anderson's strong, handsome face on most pages. That face is faithfully and powerfully rendered, eyes closed when singing, with an intense, almost sublime engagement in her music. The work culminates with another history-making moment when she realizes her dream and becomes the first African-American to perform at the Metropolitan Opera. Selznick depicts her in this spread standing triumphantly in the spotlight, a vivid spot of color in an otherwise monochromatic treatment. A lengthy "encore" includes personal details and history from both author and illustrator; an "ovation" cites resources. Perfectly paced and perfectly pitched, this never loses sight of the fact that Marian Anderson was both a world-class musician and a powerful symbol to her people. A bravura performance.

(September, 2002)

**WHEN MARIN SANG**

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Scholastic, 2002

Illustrated by Brian Selznick

**Booklist \*Starred Review\***

In a lush, operatic style that suits the subject, this large-sized picture-book biography of the great vocalist Marian Anderson captures the story of her triumph in the face of the vicious segregation of her time. The passionate words and beautifully detailed sepia-tone pictures select moments from her life to present a true story that seems like a theatrical Cinderella tale. The extraordinarily gifted child is denied access to music school ("We don't take colored!"), but she is nurtured by home and church and becomes a star. When she returns from wild acclaim abroad, however, she's refused permission to sing at Constitution Hall, where "white performers only" is the rule. The narrative is sometimes overblown, with just too much about Marian's "examining her heart" and feeling sick in her stomach. But the interweaving of the spirituals Anderson sang, which express her trouble and her strength, is exceptionally moving. Selznick's stirring pictures convey the personal and political drama in both the performance scenes and the close-up portraits, and the climactic picture is unforgettable: children see Anderson's concert at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939 from the perspective of the huge mixed audience. A lengthy, detailed afterword, in small type; a discography; and a bibliography (including mention of Anderson's autobiography) are provided for older students who want to know more. (2002)



Artwork from *When Marian Sang*.  
Illustrated by Brian Selznick



# APPENDIX

## Appendix: About Review Sources

Founded in 1905, [Booklist magazine](#) is the review journal of the American Library Association. It comprises two print magazines, an extensive website and database, e-newsletters, webinars, and other resources that support librarians in collection development and readers' advisory. Booklist sponsors the Printz Award, the most distinguished book award for young adults published each year in the U.S., and its editors serve as consultants to many ALA youth book award committees each year.

Bertha Mahony founded [The Horn Book](#) in 1924 to herald the best in children's literature. Today, *The Horn Book Magazine* and *The Horn Book Guide* are among the most distinguished journals in the field of children's and young adult literature.

Founded in 1933, [Kirkus](#) has been an authoritative voice in book discovery for 80 years. *Kirkus Reviews* magazine gives industry professionals a sneak peek at the most notable books being published weeks before they're released. Kirkus serves the book reviews to consumers in a weekly email newsletter and on [Kirkus.com](#), giving readers unbiased, critical recommendations they can trust.

[Publishers Weekly](#) is familiarly known in the book world as "PW." PW is a weekly news magazine focused on the international book publishing business. It is targeted at publishers, booksellers, librarians, literary agents, authors, and the media. It offers feature articles and news on all aspects of the book business, bestsellers lists in a number of categories, and industry statistics, but its best known service is pre-publication book reviews, publishing some 9,000 per year.

[School Library Journal](#) is a premiere publication for librarians and information specialists who work with children and teens. A source of quality journalism and reviews for more than 60 years, *SLJ* produces award-winning features and news coverage on: literacy, best practices, technology, education policy and other issues of interest to the school library and greater educator community. *SLJ* evaluates a broad range of resources, from books and digital content to databases, in 6000+ reviews published annually.

