

A Sample of Hispanic Books for Adults

One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez from Colombia

The brilliant, bestselling, landmark novel that tells the story of the Buendia family, and chronicles the irreconcilable conflict between the desire for solitude and the need for love—in rich, imaginative prose that has come to define an entire genre known as “magical realism.”

Ficciones by Jorge Luis Borges from Argentina

The seventeen pieces in *Ficciones* demonstrate the whirlwind of Borges’s genius and mirror the precision and potency of his intellect and inventiveness, his piercing irony, his skepticism, and his obsession with fantasy. Borges sends us on a journey into a compelling, bizarre, and profoundly resonant realm; we enter the fearful sphere of Pascal’s abyss, the surreal and literal labyrinth of books, and the iconography of eternal return.

The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings by Octavio Paz from Mexico

Octavio Paz has long been acknowledged as Mexico’s foremost writer and critic. In this international classic, Paz has written one of the most enduring and powerful works ever created on Mexico and its people, character, and culture.

The House of the Spirits by Isabel Allende from Chile

In one of the most important and beloved Latin American works of the twentieth century, Isabel Allende weaves a luminous tapestry of three generations of the Trueba family, revealing both triumphs and tragedies. *The House of the Spirits* is an enthralling saga that spans decades and lives, twining the personal and the political into an epic novel of love, magic, and fate.

Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair by Pablo Neruda from Chile

Drawn from the most intimate and personal associations, Pablo Neruda’s most beloved collection of poetry juxtaposes the exuberance of youthful passion with the desolation of grief, the sensuality of the body with the metaphorical nuances of nature.

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros from the USA

Acclaimed by critics, beloved by readers of all ages, taught everywhere from inner-city grade schools to universities across the country, and translated all over the world, *The House on Mango Street* is the remarkable story of Esperanza Cordero. It is the story of a young Latina girl growing up in Chicago, inventing for herself who and what she will become.

How the García Girls Lost their accents by Julia Alvarez from the USA

It’s the 1960’s and the García family is part of upper class Dominican Republic society. Dr. Carlos, his wife Laura, and their daughters Carla, Sandra, Yolanda, and Sofia enjoy a modest life

of luxury until trouble strikes. Due to Dr. Carlos's involvement in an attempted coup against President Rafael Trujillo, the family is forced to flee the country to save their lives.

The book explores the four sisters' journey of adapting to American life as they struggle with their identity in the chaos of New York City. While their parents attempt to keep their Dominican traditional ways, the girls share the hardships faced in their adaptation to American culture, which ultimately leads them to forgetting their Spanish.

How the García Girls Lost Their Accents is a beautifully written collection of short stories that focuses on each of the characters' points of view and sums up the struggle many Hispanic families faced after having been affected by military dictatorship.

I found myself captivated by the journey that leads each of the characters to a different life in the United States. The collection of the sister's childhood memories from their home country provoke a feeling of invaluable Hispanic nostalgia that uncovers the universal impact a new location and culture may have on a person.

Like Water for Chocolate (Como Agua para Chocolate) by Laura Esquivel from Mexico

This magnificent book integrates one of my favorite things about Hispanic culture: the food. *Like Water for Chocolate* tells the story of Tita de la Garza, the youngest daughter of an all-female family living in Mexico, as she pursues her independence from the family and seeks out her true love—a local boy named Pedro.

Tita's empowering story is divided into twelve chapters for every month of the year, and each chapter starts with a recipe from Mexico. Meanwhile, the preparation of these recipes seamlessly blends into the narrative of the story.

As is customary for the youngest daughter, Tita is forbidden to marry and instead must dedicate her life to taking care of her mother. This means she must forsake her true love, to make it worse, Pedro still becomes part of her family because of one of her sisters.

This novel shows the traditional way of life that's still unique to Hispanic families, as many young girls in Hispanic households face scenarios like Tita's.

I love how food is a big part of the love story, since the smells and flavors of Mexico are delicious and carry plenty of emotions. The magical realism of the book will keep you interested, as well as its dark humor and periodic telenovela feels. Ultimately, *Like Water for Chocolate* is a must-have in my list of Hispanic culture books to read.

Knitting the Fog (Tejiendo la Niebla) by Claudia D. Hernandez from Guatemala

Knitting the Fog hit a soft spot for me because I'm Guatemalan and I have borne witness to stories similar to Claudia's, the main character. One day, seven-year-old Claudia wakes up to discover that her mother, a victim of domestic abuse, has left for the United States in pursuit of a better life. At first Claudia feels abandoned, and struggles to stay strong for her two sisters as they move back and forth between her aunt and grandmother's houses. Eventually Claudia's mother returns to Guatemala and they begin the journey to el norte (the north), placing the family's trust in coyotes (smugglers) for the following months until they reach California.

The author highlights the intense conditions that Central American immigrants face in their journey to the United States. It shows the life-threatening extent to which some families go in order to protect their loved ones and provide a better life.

For me, this book awoke empathy and admiration for the millions of Hispanics whose courage was enough to make this journey—even when it meant leaving their loved ones behind. Reading this book provides further understanding of many Hispanics' resilience and strength as they endured frightfully harsh conditions to make it to the United States.

Next Year in Havana (El próxima año en La Habana) by Channel Cleeton from Cuba

Next Year in Havana was written by Cuban-American author, Channel Cleeton. She grew up in Florida nurtured by stories of her family's exodus from Cuba in the wake of the revolution. The book alternates between 2017 and the late 1950's, and is inspired by her family experiences.

The main character is Cuban-American author Marisol Ferrera who's on a mission to fulfill her grandmother Elisa's dying wish of scattering her ashes in her homeland. Upon arrival in Cuba, she unravels her family history as she becomes overwhelmed by the contrast in Cuba's beautiful tropical scenery and its terribly dangerous political climate. Marisol soon learns her grandmother was the daughter of a sugar-baron who belonged to Cuba's high society. Her grandmother was banished from this society when she had an affair with a passionate revolutionary.

I like this book for its exploration of courage and its loveable characters. I enjoy how the author dives into Cuba's complex history, including the battles that continue to rage on in the region. It brings you along the journey of Hispanic people getting in touch with their roots and heritage. While this book has some elements of romance, excitement, and suspense, it also explores politics in an educational and eye-opening way.

Mexican Gothic (Gótica Mexicana) by Silvia Moreno-Garcia from Mexico

Set in the 1950's, Noemí Taboada—a Mexico City socialite—arrives at High Place, an ancient house in the Mexican countryside, to help her cousin, Catalina, who recently married a mysterious English man. Before she embarks on her journey, she learns in a letter that something's not right in her cousin's residence, her constant fear alarms Noemí, as her cousin's sure her new husband is poisoning her. The story takes place in a town colonized by the British family of Catalina's mystery husband.

Throughout the story, Noemí faces sinister individuals, violence, and madness along with colonialism and racism while she crafts an escape plan. Her main advantage against the antagonist is that he cannot understand Spanish, which I find to be utterly powerful and heroic. Her hispanic heritage and culture become her strength and allow her to protect herself before it's too late.

This thriller will keep you alert and curious as it touches a subject often overlooked in Mexican history: the presence of English-speaking settlers in Mexico.

Some Books for Children

Dia de los Muertos by Roseanne Greenfield Thong

Abuela by Arthur Dorros

Round is a Tortilla by Roseanne Thong

Paletero Man/Que Paletero tan cool by Lucky Diaz