



# Yuyi Morales

## TeachingBooks Original Movie Transcript

Yuyi Morales, interviewed in her home in Pleasant View, California, May 11 2009.

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I grew up in Mexico. I was born there and I lived in Mexico until I was 24. When I create my books I do bring things that have to do with my country because those are the things I know the best. They are almost always related to my family. They are related to how it is like to speak in Spanish and communicate in Spanish and celebrate in Spanish.

### On Trickster Tales

I have always, always loved the folk tale from my country. Those stories of espantos and spooky things and supernatural things and especially the Trickster Tales, which is always stories of just regular, ordinary people like any of us who can defeat incredible beings. In the story of *Just A Minute*, grandma Beetle actually becomes friends with her own destiny with death when she meets Señor Calavera and she invites him to her birthday party. *Just in Case* is a Trickster book in which this time use the Spanish alphabet to tell the story. So, Señor Calavera is putting together this list of presents based in the alphabet and here is a present that starts with the letter "H" for the word in Spanish is *historieta*, which is a comic book, and "J" for *jaguar*.

### On Señor Calavera and Spooky Things

Señor Calavera comes from the sugar skulls that the children and even the adults eat during the celebration of the Day of the Dead in Mexico. When I came to the United States we have the celebration of Halloween. *Los Gatos Black on Halloween* is a Halloween book and almost they seem very similar and yet they are very, very different. In Mexico where we are celebrated it's not that the spooky things happen are around us, but that the people that we love are still around us no matter where they are. In *Los Gatos Black on Halloween* I put things that I was afraid of. One of the ways I explain to children that I deal with those things are that I put those things in my books. Once you are able to play with the things that you are afraid of, you cannot be afraid of them anymore because now you get to know them.

### On *Harvesting Hope*

*Harvesting Hope* is a story of Cesar Chavez from when he was a child until the time when he asked for the support of the government to sign the first contract for the farm workers in the United States of America. In those places where Cesar Chavez is as child is happy there is a lot

of luminosity and there is a lot of color that I would call them happy colors. But, once they get to the point where they are working the fields and their backs are hurting, I tried to utilize not only the colors but the composition to create this feeling of being engulfed by the earth. But, also I was trying to create this explosion of joy that comes at the celebration at the end when they are all together in front of the capitol and there is a mariachi and there is the charro...

### **On Illustrating with Puppets**

*My Abuelita* is a story that assimilates an alternative family. A family made by a cat and a woman and her grandchild. I made the illustrations for this book in a different way than I've done it before. Everything in the illustrations in the scenes are figures, they are puppets. The head is separated from the body so that I could dress her but also so that I could move the head and put it in different positions. I had to make all the little beds and all the little tables and the spoons and everything they eat with and everything they are wearing from the shoes to their hair, just like when I was a child with my mother.

I do realize that when I create my books I bring into my books the things that I love the most. And of course some of the things that I love the most have to do with those things I loved when I was a child. I wouldn't know how to separate myself from the fact that I am Mexican and that I carry all these things inside. So, every one of my books always has this combination of who I was when I lived there [Mexico] and who I am now and the new learning that I have now living here in the United States.

### **Books by Yuyi Morales**

- MY ABUELITA (written by Tony Johnston), Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009
- JUST IN CASE: A TRICKSTER TALE AND SPANISH ALPHABET BOOK, Roaring Brook Press, 2008
- LITTLE NIGHT, Roaring Brook Press, 2007
- LOS GATOS BLACK ON HALLOWEEN (written by Marisa Montes), Henry Holt and Company, 2006
- SAND SISTER (written by Amanda White), Barefoot Books, 2004
- HARVESTING HOPE: THE STORY OF CESAR CHAVEZ (written by Kathleen Krull), Harcourt, 2003
- JUST A MINUTE: A TRICKSTER TALE AND COUNTING BOOK, Chronicle Books, 2003

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