



Juana & Lucas

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Fans of Judy Moody and Clarice Bean will love Juana, the spunky young Colombian girl who stars in this playful, abundantly illustrated new series.

Juana loves many things — drawing, eating Brussels sprouts, living in Bogotá, Colombia, and especially her dog, Lucas, the best amigo ever. She does not love wearing her itchy school uniform, solving math problems, or going to dance class. And she especially does not love learning the English. Why is it so important to learn a language that makes so little sense? But when Juana's abuelos tell her about a special trip they are planning—one that Juana will need to speak English to go on—Juana begins to wonder whether learning the English might be a good use of her time after all. Hilarious, energetic, and utterly relatable, Juana will win over los corazones — the hearts — of readers everywhere in her first adventure, presented by namesake Juana Medina.

Juana & Lucas Details

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Author : Juana Medina

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From Reader Review Juana & Lucas for online ebook

Alex Fisher says

This is a nice picture book about a little girl who has to learn how to speak English. It teaches kids that even though learning another language may not always be fun but if it is the main language, it is worth learning so that you can travel and meet a lot of different people.

Agn? says

Juana and Lucas is a sweet, lighthearted, and generously illustrated transitional chapter book with a Colombian heroine, set in contemporary Colombia.

I love the fact that the English text is sprinkled with Spanish words, which are not translated anywhere in the book and thus the readers who do not know any Spanish have to figure out what the Spanish words mean based on the context. While Juana is struggling to learn English, the English-speaking readers are learning some Spanish!

Also, Juana Medina's colorful illustrations and the book's design are great:

However, the story itself is rather uneventful. Also, even though the title of the book suggests that the story is about Juana and her dog, Lucas, Lucas is only one of the supporting characters, while Juana is the sole star of the book.

Mehsi says

I received this book from Netgalley in exchange of an honest review.

Yay! A character, who is a kid, who loves Brussels sprouts! That is really a first in a long time since I saw a kid whose favourite food is this. Normally in books with kids it is all about how they hate it, how they are disgusted by it.

So when I saw this little girl loved Brussels sprouts... well what could possibly go wrong then. And then came the part where she said she loved reading books. A girl who loves books and Brussels sprouts? Wow. That is truly a first I have seen this combination in a book.

I loved how she introduced us to her city, and also told us various fun things about the city. Like the language (Spanish), about the weather and more.

The introduction about her dog Lucas was done really fun (with a drawing of her dog and then all kinds of lines pointing at him, telling us what kind of skills he has, what kind of dog he is). And she did the same for her best friend and several other characters that were important to the story. It is a shame that my tablet broke up the pages, but I am sure in a paper-format this kind of thing looks really nice.

The book is about Juana having to learn English, and how much trouble she is having with it. She also doesn't get why she should learn English, which gave me a chuckle, though I could understand her. So she pops by various characters to see what their view is on English and why she should learn it. Finally she finds one reason, and what that reason is? Well, you will have to read this book to find out. I do have to say that I loved that reason. It is a fun one, and it motivated Juana enormously.

There was one thing I didn't entirely like. The Spanish words that were thrown in at random intervals. While I do know some words in Spanish, I don't know a lot. Some words were just simple and I could easily figure out what they meant, but some of them meant I had to grab my Spanish dictionary (yes, I have one, because a few years back I tried to learn Spanish, and I still want to go back to learning it again).

Also in my copy (pdf) the letters at times turned half invisible which made it really hard to read.

I really loved the illustrations in this one.

All in all? I would recommend this series, and I will be sure to buy the book when it comes out in paperback. Of course I will also keep an eye on the rest of the series (when it comes out) as well.

Review first posted at <https://twirlingbookprincess.com/>

Cecelia says

It's Inauguration Day here in Washington, DC. I have the day off of work because I live a couple of streets away from Arlington National Cemetery and my office is on Pennsylvania Avenue. It's still a Friday, but the library is closed and I don't want to turn on the TV. I do want to do something constructive – something that will make a difference and build up my spirits. So, I'm reviewing a book by a local author – by a Spanish-speaking immigrant, even. I want to share with you a book that is adorable, smart, different, and immensely readable. Let's talk about Juana Medina's *Juana & Lucas*.

Juana is a rambunctious girl who lives in Bogotá, Colombia with her mother and her dog Lucas. Juana loves many things – her abuelos (grandparents), art, her best friend at school, her city (and of course her Mami and Lucas!)... but she does not love learning English. It's difficult, it's boring, and she wonders what the point is. When her grandfather tells her that the family will visit Florida, everything changes. Juana **MUST** learn English!

Juana & Lucas is an illustrated chapter book with a lot of heart. Juana has the same sort of thoughts and worries and dreams as any kid – she's relatable, and she's smart and fun. While Juana is hilariously lamenting how boring English is, she drops many little tidbits about life in Colombia, and the reader learns a bit of Spanish too – all Spanish words are italicized and understandable in the context of the story. Juana's happy, functioning family (in a unique environment) is also important, as oftentimes parents in children's lit are absent, dead, or worse.

Author Juana Medina both wrote and illustrated the text, and her art is a colorful mix of black lines and watercolor. The effect is cheery and vibrant, and the simplicity of the figures and outlines is likely to inspire her grade-school readers to imitate and carry on telling Juana's future adventures. My favorite page spreads were the ones where Juana identifies every item by name.

In all, *Juana & Lucas* is a vibrant, fun early picture book for any kid or kid-at-heart.

Recommended for: early readers, reluctant readers, fans of comics and art, and... anyone, really!

Terrance Franklin says

This book was truly a delight to read. "Juana and Lucas" follows the story of Juana Medina (the author) and her "furry amigo" Lucas (her dog). Juana is beginning to learn English in school but, she's having problems. Her story persists with Juana and Lucas as they go through her daily life; playing soccer (Futbol), going to school, playing with family and learning how important learning English can be.

Each page, is filled with a parts of Juana's experiences and that resonated with me personally, and she has a way with words that allow readers to truly empathize with what she's saying. The author uses various forms of typography to help illustrate her feelings for example, increasing the font when she feels REALLY strongly about something. Juana is very much like other kids I know: she has fun, loves her family, gets bored and gets irritated and she expresses this in a certain way in the story. In several pages she uses "Idea webs", centering certain people like her Mami and Abuelo telling us, the readers, how she feels about them. This was very interesting, as I had never seen something like this done in a book before and it really helped me feel how important they were in her life. I also loved how the author mixed Spanish words into the text when Juana spoke it made her words feel natural and made Juana's character very genuine. Overall Juana and Lucas was a fantastic book that very much earns its high praise, very enjoyable read!

Dawn Keys says

Juana and Lucas is a contemporary realistic fiction work written by Juana Medina for young readers ages 5-8. I was excited to add this to my library collection because we don't have a lot of early chapter books that depict characters from South America. This book also received the Pura Belpre Award.

The protagonist in this story is a Juana, a young girl that is not a fan of school and learning English. She loves her family, her dog, and her favorite class at school is recess, so she can play futbol. The story deals with the struggles she goes through with understanding why she should learn English. Eventually, she is influenced by her Grandfather and finds out she can go to Spaceland in the U.S. if she learns English, so she becomes motivated.

Juana Medina is an author and an illustrator, so this book is filled with lots of beautiful pictures. It isn't set up like a traditional chapter book. It infuses the words with the illustrations. I think that makes it interesting for children. The author also includes many Spanish words through out the text. The words are easy enough to figure out through the context of the story. I think this would appeal to bilingual students. The main character is also relatable to those students who are learning English as another language.

I gave this 4 stars instead of 5 because I would have liked to see a little more plot development. Overall I enjoyed the book and I liked Juana as a character. I look forward to seeing how the series will develop.

Molly says

Oh my goodness, this is just adorable! I read it for my Children's Lit class, and honestly it's not something I would have picked up on my own because it's just a little too young for jr high students (which is a shame, because it reminds me of "Barrio Boy" and "Names/Nombres", both of which we teach during the memoir

unit, which could use some updating!). Anyway, it's about an adorable, pigtailed Columbian 4th grade girl who has to learn English. And she hates it, because let's be honest, English is a ridiculous language. There's a great line in *Barrio Boy* about the "awful idiocies" of the English language (that I often reference when teaching grammar) and Medina just nails so many of those. The illustrations are also adorable, and the general enthusiasm and likability of this character just leaps off the page. I also love that Medina includes so much Spanish vocabulary throughout the novel, and doesn't bother to translate any of it. If you're paying attention to context or the illustrations, it's all pretty clear, so it doesn't *need* to be translated. And in the end, yes, Juana learns English, but she also realizes that she wants to travel, which means she will need to learn *more* languages too. I like that the message is about learning and having a global perspective, rather than just, "isn't life so much better now that you can talk American?!"

Also, the dog is adorable, but to be honest I'm not 100% sure why he's part of the title. I thought it might be a girl and her dog on grand adventures, but he's not super important to the story. Weird.

Turrean says

Perfect for my kiddos learning Spanish! They'll absolute sympathize with what Juana is going through.

Julie Seifert says

LOVE

Danielle says

One of the many things I like about this book—the format that uses introductions, the illustrations, the voice!—is the way Juana is learning English while the reader, reading a book in English, is subtly learning the Spanish words weaved in. Clever and effective.

Margie says

Navigating through life, even if you tend to be an optimist, is much better when shared with a friend. If this friend should happen to be a dog, you could not ask for a better companion and confidant. A dog's affection never wavers plus they probably understand every single thing you say. They are the best secret keepers. They dispense advice with a look, a nudge or a tail wag.

If you happen to be beginning another year of school, a dog can get you through any difficulties you encounter. *Juana & Lucas* (Candlewick Press, September 27, 2016) written and illustrated by Juana Medina provides readers with an up-close and personal view on growing up in Bogota, Colombia through the eyes of a lovable, lively little girl. She gives new meaning to the word energetic.

My full recommendation: <http://librariansquest.blogspot.com/2...>

Alexa Marshall says

Text to World connection

In Juana and Lucas, Juana is a little girl from Colombia. In school, Juana learns that she has to begin to learn English and she is not too happy about it! I made a text to world connection between Juana's story and the fact that so many nations outside of the United States require their students to learn English or another language outside of their own. I truly wish that the United States would put more of an emphasis on other places and languages, because I feel like we are really behind in speaking only one language. My little sister's elementary school in Millard begins teaching Spanish in Kindergarten and I think that if possible, every school in the United States should have a program like that. Being multilingual has a huge amount of positives and benefits, and I think that a lot of other countries have figured that out, whereas we're still a very monolingual-teaching nation.

Betsy says

Windows. Mirrors. Mirrors. Windows. Windowy mirrors. Mirrory windows. Windows. Mirrors. Sliding doors! Mirrors. Windows.

In the world of 21st century children's literature, diversity should be the name of the game. We want books for our children that reflect the worlds they know and the worlds they have yet to greet. We want them to see themselves in their books (mirrors), see others unlike themselves (windows), and have a way to get from one place to another (sliding doors). To accomplish this, all you have to do is publish a whole bunch of books about kids of different races, religions, abilities, persuasions, you name it. Great strides have been made over the last few years in the general consciousness of the publishing industry (the publishers, the librarians, the teachers, and even the parents) even as teeny tiny, itty bitty, itsy bitsy tiptoes have been made in terms of what actually is getting published. Much of the credit for spearheading efforts to bring to light more and more books for all children can be given to the We Need Diverse Books movement. That said, our children's rooms are still filled with monumental gaps. Contemporary Jewish characters are rare. Muslim characters rarer still. And don't even TALK to me about the state of kids in wheelchairs these days. Interestingly enough, the area where diversity has increased the most is in early chapter books. Whether it's Anna Hibiscus, Lola Levine, Alvin Ho, or any of the other new and interesting characters out there, there is comfort to be found in those books that transition children from easy readers to full-blown novels. Into this world comes Juana Medina and her semi-autobiographical series *Juana & Lucas*. Short chapters meet universal headaches (with details only available in Bogota, Colombia) ultimately combining to bring us a gal who will strike you as both remarkably familiar and bracingly original.

You might think that Juana has it pretty good, and for the most part you'd be right. She lives in Bogota, Colombia "the city that's closest to my heart" with her Mami. She has a good furry best friend (her dog, Lucas) and a good not-so-furry best friend (Juli). And hey, it's the first day of school! Cool, right? Only nothing goes the way Juana planned. The whole unfortunate day is capped off when one of her teachers informs the class that they will be learning "the English" this year. Could anything be more unfair? Yet as Juana searches for sympathy amongst her friends and relatives, she realizes that everyone seems to think that learning English is a good thing. Are they crazy? It isn't until an opportunity comes up to visit somewhere fantastic, far away, and English speaking that she finally takes what everyone has told her to heart. In a big way.

I love, first and foremost, the fact that the emotional crux of this book is fixated on Juana's detestation of learning "the English". Now already I've heard some commenters online complain that Juana's problem isn't something that English-speaking children will identify with. Bull. Any child that has ever learned to read will know where Juana is coming from. What English speaker would fail to sympathize when she asks, "Why are read and read written the same way but sound different? How can I know when people are talking about eyes or ice when they sound about the same? And what about left hand and left the room? So many words, so little sense"? Some kids reading this book may have experience learning another language too. For them, Juana's complaints will ring true and clear. That's a key aspect of her personality. She's sympathetic, even when she's whining.

For all that we've seen books like Juana's, *Lola Levine*, *Zapato Power*, *Pedro*, *First Grade Hero*, and a handful of others, interestingly this increase in Latino early chapter book is relatively recent. For a long time it was *Zapato Power* or nothing. The change is great, but it's significant to note that all the books I've mentioned here are set in the United States. American books set in South American countries where the kids just live their daily lives and don't have to deal with civil wars or invasions or coyotes or drug runners are difficult to find. What makes *Juana and Lucas* so unique is that it's about a child living her life, having the kinds of problems that Ramona or Ruby Lu or Dyanonde Daniel could relate to. And like *Anna Hibiscus* or *The Great Cake Mystery* I love books for younger children that go through daily life in other present day countries. Windows indeed.

Early chapter books are interesting because publishers see them as far more series-driven than their writers might. An author can crank out title after title after title to feed the needs of their young readers, always assuming the demand is there, and they can do it easier with books under 100 pages than above. Juana could fit the bill in this regard. Her personality is likable, for starters. She's not rude like Junie B. Jones or willfully headstrong in the same way as Ramona, but she does screw up. She does complain wildly. There are aspects of her personality you can identify with right from the start. I'd be pleased to see more of her in the future, and young readers will undoubtedly feel the same way. Plus, she has one particular feature that puts her heads and tails above a lot of the competition: She's in color.

Created in ink and watercolor, Medina illustrates as well as writes her books. This art actually puts the book in a coveted place few titles can brag. You might ask if there's a middle point between easy books and, say, Magic Tree House titles. I'd say this book was it. Containing a multitude of full-color pictures and spreads, it offers kids the comfort of picture books with the sensibility and sophistication of chapter book literature. And since she's already got the art in place, why not work in some snazzy typography as well? Medina will often integrate individual words into the art. They swoop and soar around the characters, increasing and decreasing in size, according to their wont. Periodically a character will be pulled out and surrounded by fun little descriptor tidbits about their personage in a tiny font. Other times sentences move to imitate what their words say, like when Juana discusses how Escanilberto can kick the ball, "hard enough to send it across the field." That sentence moves from his foot to a point just above his opponent's head, the ball just out of reach. I like to think this radical wordplay plays into the early reader's enjoyment of the book. It's a lot more fun to read a chapter book when you have no idea what the words are going to pull on you next.

The writing is good, though the conclusion struck me as a bit rushed. Admittedly the solution to Juana's problems is tied up pretty quickly. She won't learn, she won't learn, she won't learn. She gets to have a prize? She studies and studies and studies. So rather than have her come to an understanding of English's use on her own, an outside force (in this case, the promise of seeing Astroman) is the true impetus to her change. Sure, at the very end of the book she suddenly hits on the importance of learning other languages and visiting other places around the globe but it's a bit after the fact. Not a big problem in the book, of course, but it would have been cool to have Juana come to this realization without outside influences.

As nutty as it sounds, *Juana and Lucas* is a bit short on the "Lucas" side of that equation. Juana's the true star of the show here, relegating man's best friend to the sidelines. Fortunately, I have faith in this series. I

have faith that it will return for future sequels and that when those sequels arrive they'll have a storyline for Lucas to carry on his own. With Juana nearby, of course. After all, she belongs to the pantheon of strong female early chapter characters out there, ready to teach kids about life in contemporary Colombia even as she navigates her own trials and successes. And it's funny. Did I mention it's funny? You probably got that from context, but it bears saying. "Juana and Lucas" is the kind of book I'd like to see a lot more of. Let's hope Ms. Medina is ready to spearhead a small revolution of early chapter book international diversity of her very own.

For ages 6-9

Mitticus says

+Digital copy gently provided by Netgalley in exchange for a honest review+

I wanted to read something fluffy after my last book, so I grab this. A children book. Cute drawings, btw.

Juana lives in Bogota, Colombia, goes to school, has a dog (Lucas), and talks about her dailies activities , plus likes and dislikes as every child.

I'm not really sure, but the story seems directed to bilingual children, there are spanish words in some points (kind of spanglish), and that confused me a bit. Then the ejem big conflict in the book is because she didn't understand why she has to learn *The English*.

, and the people around her 'enlightened' her, or maybe 'enticed' her would be more apt.

The pdf copy I get has some words not really visible, or maybe a different base color should allow to read it?

And I found an error:

Mrs. Juana, the word in that case is "pensar" and not "pensando".

Sarah Johnson says

Good as a read aloud for kindergarten and 1st grade.
