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Martina The Beautiful Cockroach



Synopsis

Martina the beautiful cockroach doesn't know coffee beans about love and marriage. That's where her Cuban family comes in. While some of the Cucarachas offer her gifts to make her more attractive, only Abuela, her grandmother, gives her something really useful: un consejo increíble, some shocking advice. "You want me to do what?" Martina gasps. At first, Martina is skeptical of her Abuela's unorthodox suggestion, but when suitor after suitor fails the Coffee Test, she wonders if a little green cockroach can ever find true love. Soon, only the gardener Pérez, a tiny brown mouse, is left. But what will happen when Martina offers him café cubano? After reading this sweet and witty retelling of the Cuban folktale, you'll never look at a cockroach the same way again.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 610 (What's this?)

Paperback: 32 pages

Publisher: Peachtree Publishers; Reprint edition (March 1, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1561457876

ISBN-13: 978-1561457878

Product Dimensions: 0.2 x 10.5 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

Customer Reviews

"A friendly sprinkling of Spanish words, warmly drawn relationships and a lot of puns all widen the audience for this spirited story." --Publishers Weekly
"Deedy's masterful retelling of this Latino folktale has a rollicking voice imbued with sly tongue-in-cheek humor. A scattering of Spanish words adds zest to this fine read-aloud." --Booklist
"Deedy's text sparkles with sly humor. The stunning acrylic illustrations are full of color, light, and humor. This wonderful book will delight children." --School Library Journal, March 2013

Carmen Agra Deedy is a New York Times bestselling author and has been writing and traveling around the world telling stories for more than twenty years. Her books have received numerous awards and honors. Carmen has performed in many prestigious venues, but children are her favorite audience. Born in Havana, Cuba, she came to the United States as a refugee and like most immigrants sees the world from multiple perspectives.

While visiting Cuba, a group of school children performed a version of this cute story. Since the play was in Cuban, it was nice to find the English version of this story when I got home. The book was affordable so I could add it to my keepsakes of my trip to Cuba.

The award-winning Cuban-born author retells the story of a green cockroach indigenous to her native country. When it is time for beautiful young Martina to find a husband, her grandmother gives her some wise advice: to always spill coffee on her suitor's shoes to test his temper. Martina uses the coffee test on her first three suitors-a rooster, a pig, and a lizard-and is not pleased by their insulting and rude behavior. When Martina immediately likes her fourth suitor-the humble gardener mouse-she refuses to apply the coffee test. Her grandmother insists, but before she can spill coffee on the gardener's shoes, he spills some on hers. They both have a good laugh when the mouse reminds her he also has a Cuban grandmother. The skillfully crafted acrylic illustrations capture the island's ambience-its colonial architecture, baroque ironworks, and wardrobe details like the floral design on Martina's lace scarf. The cockroach and her grandmother share eye-pleasing, human characteristics, and their whimsical expressions make them lovable. The text flows easily, and the few Cuban colloquialisms do not get in the way of understanding the entertaining story.

This story has a good message and colorful characters.

My wife purchased this for her first-grade classroom. She told me she loved it.

This is absolutely one of my favorite read aloud books for my fourth grade classroom. There are several great lessons woven throughout along with humor and beautiful illustrations. The students enjoy hearing the story, and I truly love reading it.

Bought the book in Spanish but needed it in English

This is one of our favorite stories!! I love children's books, and since my husband and I work with children, we are always looking for another good book. Thanks for the book! ;0

This is a delightful Cuban folk tale, well illustrated, that is entertaining and enlightening for both adults and children. The message of what you should look for in a partner and what you should and should not accept is very clear. The loving respect Martina shows to her Grandmother is an equally good lesson. I first learned about this book from my son, a 6th grade teacher, who tells his students that sometimes a book should be enjoyed for its simple humor and clarity. I recommend this book for read aloud sessions for grades 1 through 5 and of course those times when a student just wants a good read.

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