



# Tomas and the Library Lady

*Pat Mora , Raúl Colón (Illustrator)*

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A young Texan finds refuge in his new Iowa town's library, where the librarian offers him cool comfort from hot summer days and whirlwind adventures through reading. Colon's beautiful scratchboard illustrations, in his textured, glowingly colored, rhythmic style, capture the warmth and the dreams that the boy finds in the world of books.

A 1999-2000 Texas Bluebonnet Award Master List Book.

## Tomas and the Library Lady Details

Date : Published 2000 by Alfred A. Knopf (first published September 23rd 1997)

ISBN : 9780613283625

Author : Pat Mora , Raúl Colón (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 40 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Cultural, Biography

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# **From Reader Review Tomas and the Library Lady for online ebook**

## **September Michaud says**

Includes

- an exploration of a Mexican-American family experience
- a socially conscious librarian who allows a young boy to check out books under her own name
- two individuals from very different cultures working together to build a bridge
- beautiful, imaginative illustrations
- quite a lot of text. Might make for a longer story time.
- Spanish vocabulary

This is a Texas Bluebonnet Award Winner and is inspired by the true story of Tomas Rivera, a chancellor of the University of California Riverside.

Makes me want to find more books written by Pat Mora. Also makes me want to become a librarian!

Grades K-4.

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## **Ms Threlkeld says**

A sweet book about the son of migrant workers who discovers the magic inside a library. The pictures are detailed and done in an interesting style and though the plot is simple, it sends a powerful message. There's a lot of text on each page, so this book would be better for upper elementary readers.

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## **Kathy says**

Tomás and the Library Lady by Pat Mora

Illustrated by Raul Colón

Ages K-4

32p Publisher: Dragonfly Books 2000

This book is based upon the real life experiences of Tomás Rivera, the son of migrant worker parents, who valued education and eventually became the chancellor of the University of California at Riverside. In *Tomás and the Library Lady*, Tomás is the young son of migrant laborers who leave their home in Texas to find work in Iowa. When it became too hot in the fields, Tomas liked to hear his grandfather, Papá Grande, tell stories. One day Papá Grande said, "Tomás, you know all my stories. There are many more in the library. You are big enough to go by yourself. Then you can teach us new stories." The next day, Tomás goes to the library and is welcomed by the librarian. She first shows him to the drinking fountain, where Tomás gets a cool drink of water. She then brings him books on topics he likes. Tomás leaves that day with books the librarian checks out for him in her name. This is the beginning of a beautiful, but brief, friendship. The librarian enriches Tomás with wonderful books, and Tomas teaches the librarian some Spanish. All too soon, he must teach her the meaning of "Adiós," as his family must move again. He gives the librarian some sweet bread, and she gives him a book to keep. Colón's soft tone illustrations beautifully depict the world from

Tomas' adolescent perspective. Colón weaves the illustrations to demonstrate to the reader the stories Tomás is hearing, and the books he is reading. The Spanish language is used throughout the book and lends cultural credibility to the text.

I truly enjoyed reading this book and, even though it is best suited for younger students, I would not hesitate to use it as a discussion starter with my high school students. Viewing challenging life circumstances, such as the conditions of migrant workers, through the eyes of a young child, may help older students identify the emotions experienced by children in these situations. Another book that explores the reality of migrant workers is *Return to Sender* by Julia Alvarez. *Tomás and the Library Lady* may be a gentle way to introduce this book to older students.

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## Jessica Martinez says

Tomás's parents are migrant farm workers who pick vegetables and fruits in Texas during winter and in Iowa during summer. Summer has begun, and Tomás reluctantly boards his family's rusty car and sadly waves goodbye to his Texas home. After traveling in the heat for many hours, Tomás is relieved when his family finally arrives at the home they will share with other migrant workers. Papa Grande, Tomás's grandfather, is the best storyteller Tomás knows. Tomás and his brother, Enrique, enjoy listening to Papa Grande's stories in Spanish whenever it gets too hot. After realizing that Tomás has memorized all his stories by heart, Papa Grande encourages Tomás to visit the library because he will find more stories, and then he can become the family's new storyteller. With a giant library looming in front of him and the windows seemly glaring at him, Tomás hesitates to enter the library, but he finally summons the courage to open the door. Upon entering the library, a friendly librarian welcomes Tomás and offers him cold water. Tomás tells the library lady that he wants to read about dinosaurs and tigers, so the librarian grants his wish and hands him a pile of books. Immediately upon reading the first page, Tomás is pulled into the world of books and forgets about his struggles. Noticing his love of reading, the library lady allows Tomás to take two books home under her name. Now, Tomas is the storyteller and reads to his family in Spanish and English. Sometimes, Tomás's family goes to the dump in order to find items they need; Enrique searches for toys whereas Tomas searches for books. The library lady enjoys reading with Tomás and asks him to teach her Spanish; Tomás feels proud that he can be the teacher. In August, Tomás must teach the library lady the word "adios" because he is heading back to Texas for winter. As Tomás reluctantly boards his family's rusty car and sadly waves goodbye to the library lady, he clutches onto the new book that she gave him as a present.

*Tomás and the Library Lady* is historical fiction. This book is based on the life of a Mexican-American educator named Tomás Rivera. He was the son of migrant workers and eventually became the first minority Chancellor of the University of California.

The collaborative work of Pat Mora and Raul Colón in creating *Tomás and the Library Lady* is an exceptional masterpiece, like all of their other previous books. Both Pat Mora and Raul Colón are Hispanic, proving that they provide accurate representations of the Hispanic culture. Raul Colón's scratch board drawings and soft toned colors portray the caring relationships between Tomás and his family and Tomás and the library lady. With about four sentences on each page and simple vocabulary, the book is appropriate for children ages four through nine. This book is ideal for a read aloud because it offers children many perspectives and ideas to think about. One major idea represented in *Tomás and the Library Lady* is the idea of respecting another person's culture and accepting diversity. Because American schools are more diverse more than ever before, discussing the idea of accepting and respecting people from diverse backgrounds is crucial. When the library lady first meets Tomás, she kindly welcomes him despite the fact that she is a white

American, and he is Hispanic. Although the library lady did not know Tomás, she nonetheless trusted him to bring back the books that she had checked out under her name. The library lady shows interest and respect for Tomás's language by asking him to teach her words in Spanish. On their last day together, Tomás brings Papa Grande to the library. Rather than greeting Papa Grande in English, the library lady respects his culture and instead says "buenas tardes, señor." Thus, the library lady is an ideal example for both teachers and students to respect and accept people who are different from them.

Because the book does not oversimplify the experience of migrant workers, it can launch discussions with older elementary students as well. *Tomás and the Library Lady* gives children a glimpse into the challenging living conditions and struggles of migrant workers. Since Tomás is a child, young children may better sympathize with his situation, enabling students to consider different perspectives.

Also, the book encourages reading. Tomás's love of reading allows him to place himself in stories and get lost within the world of books. Similarly, children can learn that they also can discover new worlds by reading books.

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### **Emmy says**

Tomas is young boy who loves stories. His parents are migrant farm workers who spend the winter in Texas and the summer in Iowa. Tomas meets a friendly librarian and discovers a world of imagination in books.

Founder of El Dia de los Ninos, Pat Mora is a Mexican-American author. This book explores the Mexican-American family experience. Tomas is an authentic character. His story was written by a Chicana and is based on the true story of Tomas Rivera, a national education leader. The vivid illustrations by Raul Colon, compliment the story perfectly.

This is an excellent book for all beginning readers because it encourages literacy. It is equally delightful for future librarians who get excited when they read about kids getting hooked on books.

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### **Linda Lipko says**

A librarian who reinforced a love of reading, changed my life. And, such is the case with Tomas Rivera who was born in Texas to a migrant working family. Becoming a success later in life, Tomas never forgot the importance of libraries and librarians. Valuing education, he became a professor and a university administrator.

This book tells the story of Tomas who discovered libraries and through reading, doors opened into his imagination.

Sharing the stories in the books with his family at night reinforced reading habits and a love of books.

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## **Dolly says**

This is a true story about a little boy who gained inspiration, support and knowledge from a kindly library lady. His family members were migrant farmers and they moved around a lot. But for one summer, he was able to see the wonders of reading and how great it is to spend time in a library. And that was the start of a remarkable education and a successful career that touched many student's lives.

This story was selected as one of the books for the May 2010 - Latino reads at the Picture-Book Club in the Children's Books Group here at Goodreads.

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## **Jim says**

YES YES YES

6 star book

this one made my cry. there is a one paragraph afterward that tells the truth of this story.

an immigrant boy, his family following the harvesting seasons from texas to iowa to texas and back is told by his grandfather he is old enough to go to the library. the boy, tomas, is invited in and encouraged in his readings by the library lady. encouraged to the point that the campus library at u.c. riverside wears the boy's name - the boy that would grow up to be Dr Tomas, uc riverside's chacellor.

raul colon, an artist that could draw a straight line worth framing, did his usual brilliant art.

(because of the big fuss in d.c. right now between the president and the republicans and the republicans and the republicans this comment; this book shows why we don't want THEM crawling across the river into our country, THEY might end up being educators and job creators.)

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## **Crystal Marcos says**

I enjoyed reading it. The book's dedication was written in memory of Tomas Rivera, who loved books, and for librarians who lure us in. I appreciate that the author dedicated it to librarians. They play a very important role in the world of books with children. I like how the author also makes a point that you don't have to have money to enjoy books. As for the illustrations I found them interesting. I don't recall a book off the top of my head that I have seen illustrated quite like this. I like the use of texture. It was fun learning Spanish words with the English version.

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## **Zainab Faridi says**

This text deals with a child named Tomas who lives with his extended family including his grandfather, Papa

Grande. Tomas enjoys listening to his grandfather's stories but he yearns for more, so Papa Grande tells him about the library. Tomas meets the "library lady" who introduces him to all types of stories and books. She gives Tomas a book to keep for his own and forever ignites his interest in reading. The story has a rich plot and will keep young readers interested until the end. This is also a great book for teachers to have because it introduces concepts such as immigration, extended families, bilingualism and history. The story of Tomas is based on the real-life story of Tomas Rivera. Children can engage with this book to make text-to-self and text-to-world connections. The characters are multifaceted and not over-generalized. The illustrations use deep, earthy tones to bring the story to life and give it more context. I also liked how the language style and dialogue is representative of the Hispanic heritage and gives readers more insight into this culture.

*"Early the next morning Mama and Papa went out to pick corn in the green fields. All day they worked in the hot sun. Tomas and Enrique carried water to them. Then the boys played with a ball Mama had sewn from an old teddy bear."*

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## **Manybooks says**

I think what I appreciate most about Pat Mora's biographical Tomas and the Library Lady is how sensitive, caring and culturally aware the so called Library Lady is towards young Tomas. She not only inspires his love of books, she is very much aware of potential problems and requirements. The first time Tomas arrives at the library, the Library Lady gives him a cool glass of water to drink, and she actually signs out the library books for him in her own name. Not only does this show her sensitivities to the possible needs of migrant farm workers (lack of money, that Tomas would likely not have a library card, and that he would also be hot and thirsty after his long walk), the Library Lady also trusts that Tomas will return the books that she has signed out in her own name (a less sympathetic and sensitive person might well have had negative attitudes towards migrant farm workers and Latinos/Latinas, so this part of the story really touched me, and continues to touch me).

The Library Lady also shows interest in Tomas' mother tongue, asking Tomas to teach her some Spanish words. For her Spanish is a language, a beautiful language to be learned. Both she and Tomas respect each other's traditions, and the Library Lady never assumes that English and/or Anglo-American culture is in any way superior. And a final wonderful touch is the fact that when Tomas brings his (probably uni-lingual) grandfather to the library, the Library Lady greets him respectfully in his own language, in Spanish. I absolutely love Tomas and the Library Lady, and even the accompanying illustrations are warm, enticing and really capture both the magic of books and the feelings and emotions of the presented characters.

Finally and for me, very if not even most importantly, I also I firmly consider that Tomas and the Library Lady also and clearly demonstrates the very many and important responsibilities and obligations that teachers, librarians and the like have or should have towards making the educational experience wonderful and rewarding for everyone. For if a librarian or a teacher acts respectfully to a stranger, to a recent immigrant, to a member of a visible minority, this might very well cause others to imitate this behaviour (or to at least learn from this behaviour). Conversely, a bigoted teacher or librarian might also cause his/her students and others to imitate and accept bigotry. Tomas' Library Lady should be seen as a wonderful role model, of how strangers, members of visible minorities, immigrants should be approached, namely with respect, kindness, and acceptance.

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## **Lisa Vegan says**

This is a lovely and inspiring story. If not for the note about the story at the end of the book, which gives information about Tomás Rivera's life, I'd have thought the ending of the story was sad though.

I loved the illustrations. The way color is used is wonderful, and I like the muted quality of the pictures.

I appreciated how this migrant worker boy was helped by a librarian to find so much joy in books. Both the story and illustrations do a fabulous job of showing how the stories in books can come alive for their readers. the note at the end of the story also shows the power books and reading have: they can be life changing.

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## **Kathryn says**

I really appreciated the kind and wise library lady in Tomás and the Library Lady. I love how perceptive she was about Tomás' circumstances, always making sure he got something cool to drink, and being so encouraging of him sharing his language with her--it made it so they were equal learners in the process and I think that is just so darn important! Kids need to know that they can share things with adults! I also loved the sharing across generations, with the grandfather telling his stories and then Tomás reading books to his family! Wonderful! I also think this book highlighted the struggles of migrant workers and of course it was great that it's a true story and that the real Tomás grew up to be so passionate about (and influential in) education.

In terms of capturing the dawning love-of-reading, I thought this wasn't quite as strong as the book I had, coincidentally, read just a day or two before (That Book Woman which I thought was just magical!) but I still really enjoyed this one.

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## **Dena says**

This beautifully illustrated picture book tells the story of a boy named Tomas whose working family travels from Texas through Iowa following the crops. Tomas' enjoys listening to his grandfather tell his stories each day as they rest in the shade of the tree. One day Grandfather suggests that Tomas check out the library for some new stories. The librarian welcomes him and Tomas finds himself far away from the crops and in places only books can take you. Tomas shares his new stories with his family.

This story portrays the power of books and the stories they tell. This book literally brought tears to my eyes and immediately made it on my top 10 favorite picture book list

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## **Karol says**

I absolutely and totally love this book. The illustrations are beautiful, as is the story. It is about how a librarian touches the life of a young boy - the son of a migrant worker.

It's based on a true story, and a biographical note is included at the end. If you ever wonder about the possibility of making a difference in a young person's life, pick up this book. It will encourage you. Who



would have guessed the impact that one librarian would have on a migrant, and where it would lead him.

The beauty of this book brought tears to my eyes.

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