

Lupe Vargas y Su Super Mejor Amiga / Lupe Vargas and Her Super Best Friend

Amy Costales

Alexandra Artigas, Illustrator

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Maritza García and Lupe Vargas are confident, adventurous, and unstoppable. That may be why they're super best friends. On any given day in their sunny suburban neighborhood, the pair might be spotted doing anything from riding the seven seas from the mast of an oak tree to pretending to be research scientists searching for frog mutations in Mrs. Ramírez's fishpond.

It seems the imaginative pair are inseparable until a dispute over a magic potion they've concocted arises: "Maritza complained, but Lupe insisted. Then she insisted a little bit more. Actually, she pushed Maritza. So Maritza took the potions and dumped them on Lupe. And Lupe, with magic potion dripping from her braids, threw a pitcher at her super best friend Maritza García." Lupe must figure out how to apologize, and Maritza how to forgive the offense.

This is the author's first book. She has taught Spanish and bilingual education for eleven years, and says she was inspired to write books one day while spontaneously translating *Ira Sleeps Over* to a bilingual class. She realized how little the story correlated with her students' lives and decided to tell the stories of the kids she knew. "These kids shared rooms, shared beds, drank *horchata*, sucked on *tamarind* candy, spoke Spanish, wore cowboy boots, danced, and sometimes crossed borders without papers," she wrote.

The story is told in English and Spanish, with a straightforward narrative style that focuses on describing the various games the girls invent. The majority of the character development and intrigue occurs in the illustrations. The bright watercolors give the girls emotive faces and animated postures, and are filled with fun details. In the scene where the girls are hunting frogs, Lupe carries a pouch of tableware while a magnifying glass with an articulated handle somehow floats above Maritza's head like a halo. Artigas has been an illustrator for fourteen years. Her most recent children's books include *Rebecca and the Great Goat Getaway* and *Memorial Day Surprise*.

This book is a Junior Library Guild selection, and will be especially appealing to young girls, and adults looking for narratives in which girls are strong characters with intelligence and spunk. Maritza and Lupe, and young readers like them, are playful troublemakers and imaginative problem-solvers who will one day grow up to be the leaders and innovators of their communities.

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