

My Name is Gabito (Me llamo Gabito)

Monica Brown

Raul Colon, Illustrator

Luna Rising (October 2007)

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Just as Gabriel García Márquez does in his own stories, award-winning Brown blends the real and fanciful aspects of the Nobel Prize winner's history into a portrait of life and writing. This bilingual book refers to García Márquez by his nickname, Gabito, and invites readers to imagine some of the things he has written about, asking: "Can you imagine a trail of yellow butterflies fluttering their wings to songs of love? / Can you imagine gold and silver fish swimming in the air?"

Raised by his grandparents in Colombia, Gabito grew up listening to their stories. He was especially close to his grandfather, and Brown includes touching details, like Gabito and his grandfather walking hand in hand wearing matching hats to join a friend for lunch; at lunch Gabito was allowed to dip his fingers into the pitcher of water and pick out ice cubes to crunch.

Brown does not gloss over a topic that played a big role in Gabito's life as a journalist and novelist: his sadness over seeing workers on banana plantations toil for little pay and no benefits.

Colón's beautifully textured illustrations are often literal: after Gabito's grandmother says their house is haunted, he's shown looking at the empty rocking chair where he believes the ghost sits. In other spreads, the drawings are figurative: when the author tells of how Gabito loved learning words from his grandfather's dictionary, Colón draws people and animals springing forth from the pages of an open book.

My Name is Gabito is part of a series of biographies of Latin American luminaries; Brown has also written books on Celia Cruz and Gabriela Mistral. The publisher notes that this is a character study; the emphasis is not on events and action, but instead serves to introduce children to the persona of García Marquez, allowing them to peek into the life of the renowned author.

This is a book that about the power of imagination.

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