

Nana's Big Surprise/Nana, ¡Que Sorpresa!

Amada Irma Perez

Maya Christina Gonzalez, Illustrator

Maya Christina Gonzales, Illustrator

Children's Book Press (April 2007)

Hardcover \$16.95 (32pp)

978-0-89239-190-5

After Tata's death, Nana comes to live with her family in California. Anxious to help her find her smile, her grandchildren hope a flock of chicks will provide comforting distraction. Based on memories from the author's life, the story follows the family's adventure in learning to raise the chicks while delicately touching on how Nana moves through her grief.

Pérez has written two other books, *My Very Own Room*, winner of the Tomás Rivera Children's Book Award, and *My Diary From Here to There*, which won the Pura Belpré Honor Award. Gonzalez collaborated on both of these, and has illustrated numerous other books, including *Fiesta Feminina*, which was a Booklist Editor's Choice.

At first Nana hesitates to take on the project, but then, "In a sometimes-sad, sometimes-happy voice, she told us about raising chickens as a little girl and gathering fresh eggs every morning, and about her spicy, chocolatey chicken *mole*—Tata's favorite."

The children don't seem to truly comprehend the depth of Nana's grief, but their caring is obvious. In one scene, they hear her crying and try to help. "Raul held a fluffy chick up to Nana's cheek. Victor stood on his head and fell over. I brushed Nana's long silver hair."

The illustrations are fantastically engaging. In addition to the bright colors, and nuanced expressions, using collage introduces a vast range of textures, such as terry cloth, wicker and crochet. This also turns the book into a treasure hunt for found objects.

While the end seems a bit abrupt, in general this book is warm and well-balanced. The transition between languages is uncommonly smooth, and both languages hold equal value. *Nana's Big Surprise* would be helpful to a child trying to understand grief, but is also a wonderful book about the love and support of a family.

(August 18, 2009)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the author for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.