



Perla Garcia and the Mystery of La Llorona, the Weeping Woman

Rodolfo Alvarado

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Perla's curiosity and levelheadedness make her an intriguing and inspiring junior sleuth in this paranormal mystery.

When a ghost from folklore is spotted and the children get nervous, the young protagonist of *Perla Garcia and the Mystery of La Llorona, the Weeping Woman* investigates. In this alluring story, author Rodolfo Alvarado introduces the Hispanic legend of *La Llorona* and Spanish words to young children.

When fourth grader Perla Garcia's friends report that they have seen a woman in a long, white dress walking by the stream, and that they have also heard the wails of children, they are convinced that the ghostly figure is *La Llorona*—the mythical weeping woman who throws her babies into the water. Perla is not convinced that the mysterious woman is a ghost at all; she resolves, with the help of her brave and faithful dog, Valiente, to discover the truth behind the sightings. While waiting by the stream, Perla does indeed see the figure in white—and the woman in white sees Perla.

Alvarado integrates Spanish into the story in a fluid way, inserting the English translation right after Spanish words: "He protects me from *fantasmas y monstruos*, ghosts and monsters." As the story progresses, Alvarado gradually omits the English definitions, prompting children to rely on memory or context (or the glossary in the back) to deduce the definition of the word: "It was a woman—a *fantasma* floating along the *arroyo*!"

Perla's curiosity and levelheadedness make her an intriguing and inspiring junior sleuth, while Valiente's ability to literally sniff out clues while providing Perla with a protective presence makes the dog an amiable sidekick.

The heavy, dark lines of the pencil sketches are evocative, effectively creating suspense, mild darkness, and a mood of eeriness. The children's expressions reveal their wide-eyed fearfulness as they describe their observations to Perla. Combined with the legend of *La Llorona*, the effective illustrations could be a little frightening for proficient readers in early elementary school, but the brevity of the story along with its uplifting conclusion may be enough to placate others.

Other useful and interactive features include the glossary at the end of the book, reinforcing the Spanish vocabulary. Also, a sample of a case report offers interview questions and instructs children how to observe; there's also a website link that may inspire wannabe junior sleuths.

Perla Garcia and the Mystery of La Llorona, the Weeping Woman is an enticing introduction to this children's mystery series that blends culture, imagination, and the search for clues to the truth.

MAYA FLEISCHMANN (June 8, 2015)

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