

Rocky's Verb Book with His Friends: Photographic/Bilingual (English/Spanish)

M. U. Salas-Tristan

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This children's picture book will help to expand Spanish vocabularies and encourage fluency, providing a few giggles along the way.

M. U. Salas-Tristan introduces children to a wide array of common Spanish verbs via her dog Rocky and her other pets in the excellent photographic picture book *Rocky's Verb Book with His Friends*.

Rocky's Verb Book is written in a bilingual format, with the specific purpose of teaching Spanish to English-speaking children (or adult beginners). Each page features a simple paragraph in English at the top, a related photograph midpage, and the Spanish translation at the bottom. The paragraphs demonstrate the use of nineteen essential verbs, including *eat*, *look*, *open*, and *touch*, and even distinguish between the Spanish verbs *jugar*, meaning “to play,” as with friends, and *tocar*, meaning to play a musical instrument—here, the piano.

By covering the top of the page with a hand, children can test themselves and read the Spanish paragraph independently, peeking at the English translation for help with a difficult word or to check accuracy afterward.

The key to learning Spanish, as with most languages, is developing vocabulary, and *Rocky's Verb Book* excels by introducing a small number of new words on each page while keeping the general format of each paragraph substantially similar. The constant repetition of basic words such as *from*, *maybe*, *of*, and *like* reinforces their meaning, and context clues aid in figuring out some of the more unfamiliar words. Newly introduced verbs are explained at the beginning of each Spanish paragraph: “Hide in Spanish is *esconder*. A Zorro le gusta *esconder* su cabeza y sus ojos.”

With an accompanying photo of Zorro enjoying hiding his head and eyes, children can quickly grasp the meaning of what they're reading, even if they don't yet know that *cabeza* means “head” or that *ojos* are eyes.

Rocky, a Chihuahua, is the star of most of the images, but seven other pets, including dogs, a cat, a bird, and two rabbits, make for plenty of different subjects and settings to discuss. The photos are cute and often funny, perfect for maintaining a child's interest where an all-text book might grow tiresome.

The back of the book features an author biography and a handy one-page guide to the verbs used within. There are a few shortcomings. Verbs are arranged in English and Spanish columns, but their alignment is slightly off. When they don't line up horizontally, comparisons are harder than they need to be.

Building on her previous effort, *Rocky's ABC Book*, Salas-Tristan has put together a children's picture book that will help to expand Spanish vocabularies and encourage fluency, and maybe provide a few giggles along the way.

PETER DABBENE (December 3, 2017)

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