ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

The Park Our Town Built: El parque que nuestro pueblo construyo
Diane Gonzales Bertand
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Tanja Bauerle, illustrator
Raven Tree Press
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The US Census Bureau reports there are 17.3 million Spanish-speaking residents in the United States today—thus expanding the market for bilingual illustrated children's offerings to 4,900 books in print today. *The Park Our Town Built/El Parque Que Nuestro Pueblo Construyó*, by Diane Gonzales Bertrand, enters the genre with a twist.

The author's unique format is akin to age-old songs, many relating to holidays, that zigzag across cultural and religious boundaries, each verse building on the one before. *The Twelve Days of Christmas* and the Passover song, *Dayenu*, are well-known examples from Judeo Christian songbooks. In *The Park Our Town Built*, each page's vocabulary builds on the preceding page in sync with the story development, using Spanish for significant concept words.

Generally, bilingual books are set up with a clear separation between the languages, with one on the left and the other on the right. A second style displays one language throughout a story to the end, with a second language version available when the reader flips the book over. Gonzales Bertrand's convention of accumulation enhances the readability factor in this title.

In addition to the language lesson, the sweet story line encourages cooperation as the public and private citizens of the town unite to build a public park. The narrative conveys some important points to young readers. The female Alcaldesa (the mayor) character, sends the message that jobs are not gender-specific; a woman in a wheelchair enjoying the celebration of the park opening shows a handicapped person fully participating in the festivities; a well-off resident donating the land for the park; another contributing the tools and the children and adults working in unison for a common goal.

Tanja Bauerle's colorful, spirited illustrations convey a strong sense of community, showcasing adults, children, and animals in various hairstyles, manner of dress, and ethnicities dancing and playing together. A town where prejudice of all kinds is outmoded, the pueblo in this story is inspirational. Both text and illustrations are joyful and energetic, entertaining for

children and hopeful to an adult reading aloud.

A Vocabulary Page at the end of the story gives readers a concise an accurate translation between English and Spanish terminology. The location of this resource at the back of the book adds to the fun as the reader learns to place the words in context, a vital critical thinking skill.

Dindy Yokel