

AMERICAN READING COMPANY

“In defense of quality literature in our classrooms”
Alma Flor Ada *A Magical Encounter: Latino Children’s
Literature in the Classroom*. Allyn & Bacon. 2003.
[Excerpt from the Preface]

“There is no question that literature is the best expression of a language. It is through authentic literature in its varied manifestations □ narrative, poetry, drama, folklore □ that the creative potentials of a language are fully expressed. Furthermore, it is in high-quality literature that the profound quest of the human experience are explored and life issues are looked at in depth and from diverse perspectives. Literature is a medium for questioning behavior, for the discovery of alternatives, and for finding hope for new beginnings and reexamined attitudes.

Children and youth should have access to the best of their culture and the universal human culture. To be meaningful, their education needs to include the best of what has been created specifically for them, and high-quality literature, rich and diverse, needs to have a central place in the education of children and youth.

If literature remains a treat for after-school hours provided by parents, many children and youth will continue to lack equal opportunities and the promise of a better future. It is the schools’ responsibility to ascertain that each and every child is exposed to the best literature and that these books remain forever accessible to them. It is not a matter of making literature prescriptive and robbing it of its magic by making it a subject of instruction; it is about developing creative ways in which children encounter literature and have multiple opportunities for interacting

with books until they become lifelong friends.” [pages xiv-xv]

Why Latino literature?

[...] “Latino children in the United States have suffered a great deal from the ways in which their culture, particularly in its most creative and representative aspects, have been rendered invisible by the mass media and within the school curriculum. The culture of the Hispanic world is vast and rich in creative aspects: architecture, painting, sculpture, music, ballet, philosophy, theatre, and literature. Latino children seldom have an opportunity to see these representations of their culture. This silence not only erodes their self-esteem, but also precludes them from imagining themselves as part of a continuum of creators. Facilitating their encounter with the books mentioned here [the best books written by Latinos] will be honoring them, their families, and their communities as well as providing them with significant role models.” [page xiv]