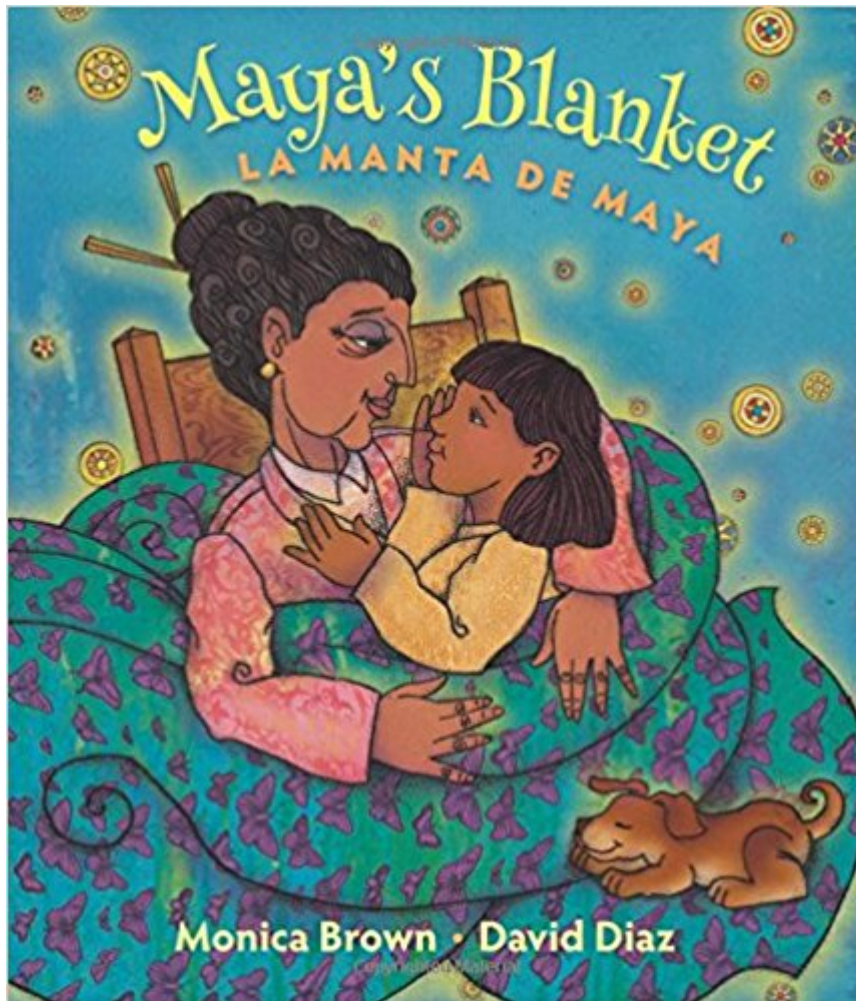




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Maya's Blanket/La Manta De Maya



Synopsis

Little Maya has a special blanket that Grandma stitched with her own two hands. As Maya grows, her blanket becomes worn and frayed, so with Grandma's help, Maya makes it into a dress. Over time the dress is made into a skirt, a shawl, a scarf, a hair ribbon, and finally, a bookmark. Each item has special, magical, meaning for Maya; it animates her adventures, protects her, or helps her in some way. But when Maya loses her bookmark, she preserves her memories by creating a book about her adventures and love of these items. When Maya grows up, she shares her book *Maya's Blanket/La manta de Maya* with her own little daughter while snuggled under her own special blanket. Inspired by the traditional Yiddish folk song *Hob Ikh Mir a Mantl* (I Had a Little Coat), this delightful story puts a child-focused, Latino spin on the tale of an item that is made into smaller and smaller items. *Maya's Blanket/La manta de Maya* charmingly brings to life this celebration creativity, recycling, and enduring family love.

Book Information

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Age Range: 5 - 9 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 4

Customer Reviews

Gr 1-4 • Following the narrative styles of a traditional Yiddish folk song, *Maya's Blanket/La manta de Maya* tells the story of a child's most beloved possession: her blue and green handmade blanket with purple butterfly stitches. Maya's grandmother made it to protect her from

bad dreams. Yet as time passes and the blanket becomes worn and frayed, it is remade into a dress, a skirt, a shawl, and more. Similar to Nancy Andrews-Goebel's *The Pot that Juan Built* (Lee & Low, 2002), the story repeatedly reminds readers of the creative transformations that Maya and her grandmother employ to turn the beloved blanket into another useful accessory. This book is a great storytime addition for school-aged children due to its sincere and simple writing that translates well in both Spanish and English, the representation of culturally diverse characters, and the underlying message of resourcefulness, imagination, and appreciation for family traditions. Readers will also be entranced by the eye-catching illustrations of Maya's ordinary-to-extraordinary life. Created with mixed media, the graphics are illuminating with rich color and texture. Thanks to the depth of the images and the thoughtful text, readers will thoroughly enjoy wondering what Maya's blanket will be next. VERDICT A Latino-influenced and Yiddish-inspired tale that is recommended for Spanish readers and librarians in diverse communities. —Jessica Espejel, Brooklyn Public Library

Following the narrative styles of a traditional Yiddish folk song, *Maya's Blanket/La manta de Maya* tells the story of a child's most beloved possession: her blue and green handmade blanket with purple butterfly stitches. Maya's grandmother made it to protect her from bad dreams. Yet as time passes and the blanket becomes worn and frayed, it is remade into a dress, a skirt, a shawl, and more. Similar to Nancy Andrews-Goebel's *The Pot that Juan Built* (Lee & Low, 2002), the story repeatedly reminds readers of the creative transformations that Maya and her grandmother employ to turn the beloved blanket into another useful accessory. This book is a great storytime addition for school-aged children due to its sincere and simple writing that translates well in both Spanish and English, the representation of culturally diverse characters, and the underlying message of resourcefulness, imagination, and appreciation for family traditions. Readers will also be entranced by the eye-catching illustrations of Maya's ordinary-to-extraordinary life. Created with mixed media, the graphics are illuminating with rich color and texture. Thanks to the depth of the images and the thoughtful text, readers will thoroughly enjoy wondering what Maya's blanket will be next. VERDICT A Latino-influenced and Yiddish-inspired tale that is recommended for Spanish readers and librarians in diverse communities. --School Library Journal

A familiar tale crosses cultures with almost magical ease. The story is based on the well-known Jewish folk tale in which an old, worn coat is turned into a jacket, then a vest, then a tie, here given a warm, Latino spin. Not only does Brown's text alternate passages in English with sections in Spanish translated by Domínguez, but on some pages, nearly every sentence is written in two languages: "Maya made her manta into a vestido that she loved very much." The effect isn't subtle, and at first, every paragraph feels like a

vocabulary lesson. But as the sentences get longer, the language becomes hypnotic. As Maya's blanket is recut and re sewn, the words begin to sound like an incantation: "So with her own two hands and Abuelita's help, Maya made her rebozo that was her falda that was her vestido that was her manta into a bufanda that she loved very much." It sounds like a magic spell to preserve the garment for all time. Sometimes spells work: Maya turns the blanket into a story, the same picture book that is in readers' hands. Diaz's beautiful, mixed-media illustrations feel like another sort of magic. The moon looks like a pomegranate. A spinning jump rope looks like water shooting from a fountain. As the book ends, Maya's daughter is sleeping under "her own special, magical manta." Readers may be eager to tell their own versions of the story that's how magic works. --Kirkus Reviews

In a tender bilingual story inspired by a Yiddish folksong, Maya's beloved butterfly-laden blanket, made by her abuelita passes through numerous incarnations. When the blanket frays, Maya and her grandmother fashion it into a dress and, later, a skirt. From there, it becomes a shawl, scarf, bookmark, and a story to pass down. In English and Spanish, Brown describes these transitions using a House That Jack Built structure: So with her own two hands and Abuelita's help, Maya made her vestido that was her manta into a falda that she loved very much. The angular poses and vivid colors of Diaz's illustrations evoke the feeling of stained-glass windows in this uplifting story of passing time, enduring love, and creative reuse. --Publishers Weekly

My Kindergarten students enjoyed the many metamorphosis of the fabric. they understood the message of valuing something so much you want to keep it forever. Beautiful illustrations too

Sweet and magical.

This heartwarming story puts an imaginative and seemingly magical spin on the practice of recycling, reinforcing the creativity and importance of repurposing old things. Brown is of Peruvian and Jewish descent and this story not only emphasizes the environmental necessity in recycling and repurposing, but also elaborates on those cultures' traditions associated with old objects. As Brown states in her author's note, this story was inspired by a Yiddish folk song that was "written long before Earth Day came into being, but celebrates both creativity and recycling." According to Brown, this story follows the old Yiddish folk song, "Hob Ikh Mir a Mantl" ("I Had a Little Coat"), which is "about an old overcoat that is continually repurposed as smaller and smaller items. Indeed, the story of

Maya's blanket traces the many phases of her beloved manta, from blanket, to skirt, to scarf, and so on. The story begins with a lovely, two-page spread of little Maya sleeping with her blanket while her abuelita stitches purple butterflies onto it. The butterflies seem slightly elevated from the rest of the blanket, as though they're about to fly off the blanket and out the window. This visual effect nicely complements the narrative: "Her manta was magical too—it protected her from bad dreams." Many of Diaz's illustrations, outlined in thick, black contour lines, give the impression of something handmade—an effect that reinforces the values of heritage, memory and identity conveyed through the book's text. This opening scene also introduces the sentimental value of the blanket, which Brown confirms in her author's note: "I think of my mother tucking me in each night, telling me stories of her childhood in Peru as I snuggled under my yellow blanket decorated with orange butterflies. I also think of my nana, who, with infinite patience and love, taught me how to sew and embroider." Brown's author's note is provided in both English and Spanish, and on the same page she includes a glossary of Spanish words, such as manta (blanket), bufanda (scarf) and cinta (ribbon), that are found interspersed throughout the English text. The lovely two-page spread that begins the book also allows young readers to notice and remember the distinct pattern of Maya's blanket (it takes up nearly half the page). As the story progresses, they will be able to point it out when the same unique fabric appears again as a dress, a skirt, a scarf, etc., on the following pages. This could be a fun game for young readers as they read along, as well as a visual exercise in observation. At Maya's cousin's quinceañera, for example, parents and educators could ask their children: "where is Maya's blanket now?" This also contributes to the magical aura of Maya's blanket, and the fantasy in this lively tale, as the blanket seems to magically mold to fit any situation. Even at Maya's cousin's quinceañera, the blanket (now in the form of a vestido, or a dress) functions as a sort of guardian angel that prevents her from falling as she twirls on the dance floor: "The purple butterflies whirled and swirled as Maya danced with her friends. When Maya twirled so fast that she got dizzy, her magical vestido didn't let her fall." Indeed the "magical vestido" starts to emerge as its own character in the story, harboring cultural traditions and family memories, while continuing to transform and adapt to the demands of the present day. With each phase that Maya's blanket takes on, Abuelita is there to help Maya sew, embroider and

repurpose her old blanket. Although Abuelita does not herself appear in the illustrations beyond the first page, the text offers continuous reminders of her role and participation in transforming Maya's blanket, reinforcing the strong emotional attachment that Maya has to the manta. The old blanket becomes the central theme of each page and each illustration, while Abuelita becomes a distant memory. Maya's blanket is treasured because it reminds her of her dear Abuelita, who seems to be fading as the story progresses. Nonetheless, this also explains the magical air of Maya's blanket as it is infused with Abuelita's tender love and care. As her magical blanket, now in the form of a falda (skirt), enables her to "jump higher than anyone else," we can read this as a metaphor for the love and support of Maya's abuelita, protecting her from falling down at her cousin's quinceañera, pushing her to reach for the stars, and keeping her warm in the wintertime. With each phase of the old manta, the narration starts with "So with her own two hands and Abuelita's help," Again, this can be interpreted not necessarily as Abuelita's physical help, but rather as the enduring influence and utility of the skills that she passed on to little Maya. The narration, with each phase of the blanket, also lists all of its past forms: "Maya made her cinta that was her bufanda that was her rebozo that was her falda that was her vestido that was her manta into a marcador de libros (book mark) that she loved very much." This adds a consistent thread throughout the book, too, emphasizing the folkloric nature of the story while also helping young readers remember the new (or familiar) Spanish vocabulary being introduced. Furthermore, the use of Spanish in identifying each phase of the blanket's transformation (the cinta, the bufanda, the rebozo, etc.) provides an interesting association between the Spanish language, Maya's Hispanic heritage, and the magical nature of the blanket. The combination of the Spanish language and the Hispanic heritage of Maya's abuelita is what makes Maya so special and her blanket so memorable. As I observed in a previous post on *Doña Flor* (link), this reminds young readers that our intercultural and/or linguistic differences are what make us unique and special. These differences are a source of immense pride and magic and should be cherished and celebrated, both in our personal lives and in our community. Perhaps needless to say, we think using books like Maya's Blanket, among other multicultural and diverse literature, is a wonderful way to achieve this. Finally, after a little plot twist, Maya decides to write a book about her adventures with her old manta. When she grows older and has a daughter of her own, she spends quality time reading to her from her very own book, passing

along the beautiful memories of Abuelita and the magical manta. The illustration shows grown-up Maya and her daughter in bed reading from a book that bears the exact same cover as *Maya's Blanket*. This little taste of metafiction contributes to Diaz's playful and interactive illustrations throughout, while bringing the story full circle. In general, this story nicely parallels the repurposing and reusing of old objects with the continuous cycles of life, family and heritage, reminding readers that cherishing our belongings and resources, and using them wisely, plays an integral part in sustaining and perpetuating life across generations. This is an important message to ruminate over as Earth Day approaches, and as current events continue to show the magnitude and peril of climate change. Along with Brown's message of intercultural pride and tolerance, this book celebrates the diversity of our world, while highlighting the action we must take to preserve it. For access to the full review and additional resources, check out our *Vamos a Leer* blog at teachinglatinamericathroughliterature.com

Young Maya loves the beautiful blanket Abuelita stitched for her when she was a baby. When the blanket gets old, she and Abuelita make it into a lovely dress. As the years pass by readers see Maya growing up as the blanket changes into many different items, which have their own significance to Maya. What always stays the same is that each newly created item always has the stamp of love placed upon it by Abuelita and Maya. David Diaz's bold, colorful, jewel tone, full page illustrations complement Monica Brown's bilingual picture book about a young girl's love for her grandmother and her gift. "With her own two hands and Abuelita's help" is a refrain repeated during each transformation of the blanket, clearly showing their special relationship. As they read, young children will enjoy reciting it and talking about how they can recycle their own special gifts. Recommended for ages 6-10.

LOVE that the text is in Spanish and English. Beautifully illustrated and written multicultural book with Jewish and Latino influences. The story of the lifetime of a blanket as it becomes other things and ends up as a fond memory in a picture book. Brown's writing makes this an easy book to read aloud in PreK-first grade. This could be used as a launch for conversations and writing about special objects in students' lives or simply enjoyed with a parent or grandparent. My daughter has that same blanket made with love by her great grandmother and may be able to tell the same story some day--universal themes make this easily accessible.

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