Plenty has been written about addressing multiculturalism in the classroom and making students aware of different cultures and their customs and traditions. A very useful tool to introduce that concept is literature. International literature can start children in their explorations about cultures different from their own. *Doña Flor*, written by Pat Mora and illustrated by Raul Colón, is a beautiful example that can be used to address multicultural issues of the Spanish language and cultural tall tales. Both Colón and Mora live in the U.S. and both have created other award-winning children’s books.

Doña Flor is a giant woman who grows because her mother’s beautiful voice makes her grow tall: “When Flor’s mother sang to her corn plants, they grew as tall as trees, and when she sang to her baby, her sweet flower, well, Flor grew and grew too.” Doña Flor lives in a town where at first people—especially the children—have problems accepting her. Later, they learn to love her and appreciate her for what she is, regardless of the fact that she is different from the other people living in the pueblo. They only learn her true value when the town’s peaceful life is threatened and Doña Flor steps up to help them all by taming the wild puma that is “just a kitten” to her. Pat Mora’s humorous tall tale concerns mutual trust and friendship.

Raul Colón’s iridescent illustrations combine soft blue tones with the warmth of golden earth tones, creating a temperate landscape for Mora’s heroine. Mora places Spanish phrases and idioms throughout her tale, ones that are usually followed with English translations carefully woven into the meter of the storytelling. This bilingualism is natural and appealing. Al-
though the author does not tell us where she found her story, we accept its authenticity, whether it first came from a cultural tall tale or her own imagination. *Doña Flor: A Tall Tale about a Giant Woman with a Great Big Heart* takes youngsters who have never traveled to the American southwest on a very pleasant journey.

**A SECOND REACTION**

**Preschool Spanish Immersion Children**

*Dana Adamson, Graduate Student, Purdue University and Preschool Teacher*

*Doña Flor,* written by Pat Mora and illustrated by Raul Colón, is a magical tall tale about a giant who befriends and is befriended by a tiny village in the high desert of the American Southwest. *Doña Flor* becomes a benevolent guardian for the villagers as well as a neighbor. When a very loud roar is heard echoing off a nearby mesa, the terrified villagers turn to *Doña Flor* for help. The larger-than-life Flor consults her animal friends, with whom she can speak, to solve the puzzle of the horrible roar. In the end, she discovers a small mischievous puma who is playing a trick by amplifying his voice to frighten the villagers.

I shared this book with a mixed-age group of children, ages 3-5, who attend a Spanish immersion preschool class three afternoons a week. I began with a picture walk, which was helpful and particularly necessary with my group of young readers. They were stumped by the illustration on the book jacket. “Is she hugging a walrus?” one child asked. In fact, in this scene Flor is hugging the wind who bears a striking resemblance to Neptune. Mora’s story lent itself to sharing in several ways. The illustrations are lovely and dreamy, and they both support and help to carry the story’s plot. My group particularly liked Flor’s intimate relationship with the wild animals. Pat Mora’s use of Spanish words and phrases embedded within her English narrative illustrates the value she sees not only in Spanish, but also in Spanish/English bilingualism. This group enjoyed picking out the intermittent Spanish phrases in the text, an important element in Mora’s tale.

I would use this book again, though perhaps it would have more resonance with an older group of students in grades K-4, or those with more experience or familiarity with the genre of tall tales. *Doña Flor: A Tall Tale about a Giant Woman with a Great Big Heart* would be a useful addition to any number of studies, such as an in-depth genre study, a study of community helpers, or a unit on the American Southwest. This is an authentic piece of children’s literature written by a Mexican-American author who speaks to the Mexican-American community as well as a larger audience. She values both first and second languages, family and extended family such as neighbors and friends, and the communal preparation and sharing of food.