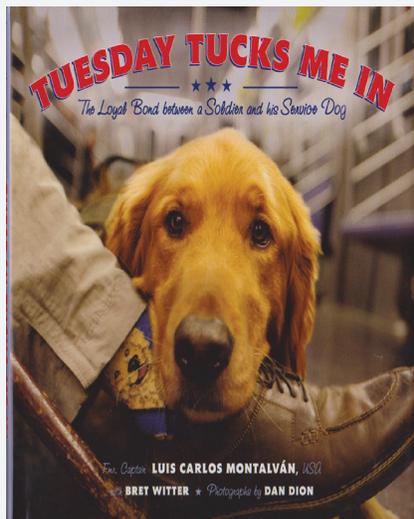


**First Opinion: Look Who's Talking Now:  
The Problem of Narrative Voice in *Tuesday Tucks Me In***

Montalván, Luis Carlos. *Tuesday Tucks Me In: The Loyal Bond Between a Soldier and His Service Dog*. New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2014.

*Rhonda Brock-Servais*



*Tuesday Tucks Me In* (2014) is the second book by Luis Carlos Montalván (in collaboration with Bret Witter); the first was a memoir for adults, *Until Tuesday: A Wounded Warrior and the Golden Retriever Who Saved Him* (2011). Montalván, a seventeen-year Army veteran, returned from the Iraq War a damaged person—not only because of traumatic injuries to his brain and body, but also because of post-traumatic stress disorder. *Until Tuesday* is a story not of the war but of its aftermath; even more particularly, the story centers on the connection Montalván formed with his service dog, Tuesday, and how he credits this relationship with his golden retriever for saving his life.

*Tuesday Tucks Me In* is intended for a much younger audience. A picture book featuring crisp photographs by Dan Dion, it covers a day in the life of Montalván and Tuesday. From waking up in the morning, to traveling for work and play, to dinner at home, *Tuesday Tucks Me In* demonstrates the interdependence of this wounded warrior and his dog. In an afterword, “A Note from Luis,” Montalván talks briefly about service dogs in general and explains Tuesday’s particular abilities.

In the Dewey Decimal system, the book is number 362.4/048—Social Sciences. The Library of Congress designated it an informational book, giving it three subject categories: (1) service

dogs; (2) people with disabilities; and (3) human-animal relationships. What struck me upon my first reading is that this informational book is actually narrated by Tuesday—a dog. While this narrative choice is mentioned in reviews, not one points out the obvious conflict within a piece purporting to be nonfiction. I wonder what effect this anthropomorphism might have on the reader. The title of James Foley's article says it all: "Anthropomorphism in Children's Books Leads to Less Factual Learning about Animals" (Foley). While I've no doubt about the strength of the bond between human and dog, Tuesday's exceptional abilities are learned. He was taught to focus all his attention on his human companion. The text underscores how Tuesday and Luis can read one another's emotions and how Tuesday helps Luis control his panic attacks and nightmares. However, at first, he certainly reacted to Montalván's elevated heart rate and breathing not because of empathy but because of training.

As a narrator, Tuesday seems quite empathic. He is aware of his audience and is easy to relate to—his concerns are the same as many young people's: eating, playing, and friends, specifically "my friend, Luis" (Montalván 2). Tuesday also has a pretty good idea what his young audience might be wondering about. For instance, at the end of a section when he explains that he follows Luis everywhere, including "To breakfast. For coffee. To school. [and] In cabs," there is a picture of Tuesday visible beneath a restroom stall. The text reads, "Yes, even there" (12, 14). On the following page, Tuesday again anticipates what a reader might be wondering. After Luis tells him that "Veterans are my pack," Tuesday helpfully adds, "He means they are his family" (15). This particular passage strikes me as odd—the author/character of Luis explains to the dog in terms the dog will understand (people being a pack) but then the narrator dog (the author has created) explains to the reader (presumably a human) what a pack is, turning the dog-term back into a human one. This same problem surfaces between the title and the text. Clearly, the voice stating "Tuesday tucks me in" is Montalván's, but the character telling the story is Tuesday.

This sort of unintended split awareness exists throughout the book, so much so that I wonder what the book's overall purpose is. Despite the Library of Congress's classification and subject entries, this is neither a book about disability nor service dogs. Other than specific symptoms that Tuesday aids with, PTSD is not really explained. Tuesday calls himself a "service dog"—but not until page 19. Earlier, Tuesday explains that Luis cannot live a "normal life. So I do tasks for him" (9). However, there is no talk of Tuesday's training or background or how his job is different from other working dogs.

Professional reviews also demonstrate the various foci possible. *Booklist* writes that "this is not his [Montalván's] story but that of his golden retriever service dog, Tuesday" (Anderson). Meanwhile, *Kirkus* writes that this is the story of the "author's life" and that the book excels at "conveying the challenges that Montalván faces" (Review *Kirkus*). *School Library Journal* calls the book "well written and informative" (Review *School*), and for all my quibbling, I agree. All in all, it is a hopeful and inspiring book that acknowledges difficult issues, such as the plight

of veterans with PTSD, without minimizing them or miring them in pathos. It reveals the salvation one man has found in the form of a dog. Perhaps my problems with the book lie less with the story than with the LC cataloguing. As guides, they should clearly inform the reader of the book's genre.

### Works Cited

- Anderson, Erin. "Review of *Tuesday Tucks Me In*." *Booklist*. 15 May 2014. Children's Literature Comprehensive Database. Web. 18 August 2014.
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### About the Author

**Rhonda Brock-Servais** is a professor of English at Longwood University where she regularly teaches courses in children's and young adult literature, as well as her favorite, the History of Literature for Young Readers. Her areas of interest include fairy tales, the gothic, and British children's literature, especially of the nineteenth century. Her students will tell you that as a rule she dislikes animal stories and will all be shocked to find out how much she likes Tuesday's story.