



Noche Buena: Hispanic American Christmas Stories

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A family seated round the fireplace

Singing and making merry;

A sprightly waltz played with grace

Noche Buena brings us all the magic of the Christmas season as seen through the eyes of the Hispanic Americans who celebrate it. Christmas is at times a universal story, and many of the images here are recognizable across cultures. We hear and see proud, joyful singing; the adoration of the Infant Jesus; and the peaceful strains of *Adeste Fidelis*. But here as well are the rich traditions and legends specific to the Hispanic culture, such as the celebration of the *posadas* for nine nights leading up to Christmas, with candy raining down from colorful swinging *piñatas*, egg shells filled with confetti, and beautiful paper lanterns crafted to illuminate the town on Christmas Eve. There is the "Legend of the Poinsettia" where a poor child embarrassed by the modesty of his gift for the Christ Child sheds tears on the dull green leaves of the familiar plant, thereby miraculously transforming them to a brilliant red. And here too are hopeful children singing "If You Give Me Meat Pies," asking for the reward of warm meat pies and rice pudding in return for their sweet caroling.

Thirty-six inspiring literary selections comprise this enchanting collection of works from Mexican, Colombian, Cuban, and Puerto Rican writers--writers who represent the range of Hispanic minority groups in the United States. Through these stories, traditional tales, songs, and poetry, readers gain a true understanding of the importance of the Christmas holiday within the Hispanic community, and begin to grasp the issues that inform the Hispanic American creative process--issues such as communal identity, patriotism, poverty, assimilation, and religion. With vivid illustrations and original Spanish text for all poetry, this fascinating anthology will inform readers of all cultural backgrounds, and give them the opportunity to celebrate this cherished time with a newly extended family.

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