

Kirkus Starred Review

BY TERRY CATASÚS JENNINGS ; ILLUSTRATED BY FÁTIMA ANAYA · RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2, 2021

In this chapter-book series opener Dominguita Melendez is on a quest to teach the class bully that girls can most definitely be knights, no matter what he has to say about it.

Really, it's not so much that Dom wants to be an actual knight. She simply wants to read about them in peace. Reading makes her feel close to her abuela, who just left for Florida to live with her sister because she can't remember things like she used to. Reading Abuela's favorite book, Don Quijote, lets the young Cubana feel like they are still together. With the weekend in front of her, Dom sets out as a knight-errant to rescue those in need. With any luck, she will have a daring rescue that her brother, Rafi, can write about, both to prove Ernie Bublassi wrong and to send to Abuela. With some help, Dom finds armor and a lance, and she even picks up a few friends along the way, learning that some adventures are better with a squire and trusty dog—er, steed—by your side. While the plot is carried by Dom's search for knightly deeds, the focus is on the relationships in her vibrant Cuban American community. It's heartwarming to see adults take a young girl's knightly play seriously. Even better are the friendships she builds with her squire, Pancho Sanchez, and her master of the cookies, Steph, who walks with a brace. Dom has olive skin, and Pancho has brown skin; Ernie and Steph seem to be White. Book 2, Captain Dom's Treasure, publishes simultaneously.

A charming adventure that will encourage kids to become knights in their own communities as well. (Fiction. 7-9)

Amazon Editor's Pick Best Books Ages 6-8

https://www.amazon.com/Knight-Cape-1-Definitely-Dominguita/dp/1534465022/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=The+Knight+of+the+Cape&qid=1615250752&s=books&sr=1-1

Kirkus Critic's Picks March 2, 2021

The Washington Post 3/2/2021

http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/kidspost/classic-adventure-stories-inspire-new-definitely-dominguita-series/2021/03/01/fa749b0e-76ce-11eb-948d-19472e683521_story.html

(Full Text at the end of this document)

Family Living (Washington Family)

<http://digital.washingtonfamily.com/issues/March-2021/index.html>

Borneo Bulletin Washington Post Article

Nonieqa Ramos author of *The Disturbed Girl's Dictionary* (2019 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults Selection) and *The Truth Is* (10 of the Best Latinx Young Adult Books of 2019)

What do Don Quixote, a character from a book written by Miguel Cervantes in the early 1600s, and Knight of the Cape Dominguita Melendez have in common? They both love reading, they both have powerful imaginations, and they both make life into a beautiful adventure! A knightly tale of bravery, good deeds, friendship, family, and community, kids are definitely going to adore *The Knight of the Cape*!

Lulu Delacre (Author/Illustrator of *Lucy Soars* with 42 books to her credit. Three time Pura Belpré Award honoree):

Terry Catasús Jennings' *Definitely Dominguita* reads as if lifted from a superhero comic book. Avid readers may find themselves reflected and inspired by spunky Dominguita, determined to star in her own adventures based on the classics she's read. Delightful.

Jon Roth (Author of *Beep* and *Bob Chapter Book Series*):

Definitely Dominguita is a fun and awesome new series about one girl's quixotic quest to help others by putting her love of literature into action. Definitely charming and definitely recommended!

Lezlie Evans (Picture book author of *I'm a Feel-O-Saur*)

Dominguita is a "worthy" protagonist that is both adventuresome and kind! Young readers will delight in her knightly adventures.

Podcasts:

Rose Quinn

<http://rosequinnco.com/author-terry-c-jennings-definitely-dominguita/>

Las Musas

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/56M2Oz2GKcQmyufs0B7tiV?si=bajnU3lYRS6v5MjgeLUlxQ&nd=1>

Blogs:

Deborah Kalb

<http://deborahkalbbooks.blogspot.com/2021/03/q-with-terry-catasus-jennings.html>

Jonathan Roth:

<http://beepandbob.com/blog/>

Kathie McIsaacs

Middle Grade Village

<https://mgbookvillage.org/2021/01/29/fast-forward-friday-terry-catasus-jennings/#comments>

Mom Read It

<https://momreadit.com/2021/03/11/meet-dominguita/>

Julie Phend

<https://groggorg.blogspot.com>

[bookshelfmomma on Instagram](#)

Writing and Illustrating Blog

<https://kathytemean.wordpress.com>

<https://sallysbookshelf.blogspot.com/2021/03/girls-can-too-be-knights.html>

Instagram: Storymamas post. 04/05/21

<https://randomlyreading.blogspot.com/2021/04/knight-of-cape-definitely-dominguita-1.html>

KidsPost

Classic adventure stories inspire new Definitely Dominguita series

As a child in Cuba, Terry Catasús Jennings read “Treasure Island” and “Don Quixote.”



Terry Catasús Jennings is the author of the new Definitely Dominguita series, which stars a girl who yearns to be a hero. The books are based on classics such as “Treasure Island,” which Jennings read as a child in the Caribbean island nation of Cuba. At right, she’s pictured, top, with two neighbor boys in Cuba. (Photos from Lou Jennings, book covers from Simon & Schuster, family photo of Terry C. Jennings as a child/Collage by The Washington Post)

By **Mary Quattlebaum**

March 1, 2021 at 7:59 p.m. EST

Dominguita Melendez is determined to be a knight in “[Knight of the Cape](#),” the first book in the new chapter book series Definitely Dominguita by Terry Catasús Jennings. She yearns to perform brave deeds like the heroes she reads about in books.

But does anyone need rescuing in her friendly American neighborhood? And what can a third-grader do?

With a bucket for a helmet and an old rain poncho for a cape, Dominguita sets out. She comes to the aid of several surprised but ultimately grateful neighbors. But there remain villains to deal with: the two bullies who mock Dominguita and her friends.

Like her character, Jennings had a big imagination as a kid.

“I wasn’t as extreme as Dominguita, though,” said Jennings, who lives in Reston, Virginia.

Read novels as a child in Cuba

Jennings spent her early childhood in Cuba, an island country in the Caribbean Sea. She loved to read classic novels such as “Treasure Island” and “The Three Musketeers.” She and her best friend would act out the adventures.

Dominguita does this, too. In “Knight of the Cape,” she is like the confused knight in “Don Quixote,” one of the oldest novels, written in the early 1600s. Don Quixote tries to fight a windmill he thinks is a giant. Dominguita, too, has a funny battle with a windmill. As a kid, Jennings spent all her allowance on books and comic books, which she read in her native Spanish.

But in 1961, at the age of 12, she had to leave her entire collection behind when she and her family immigrated to the United States. Life in Cuba had become dangerous after a recent revolution, and they needed to find a safer home.

First snowfall in U.S. 'was amazing'

Jennings and her family arrived in Florida with only \$50 and a few suitcases. They moved in with an uncle who lived there.

The next day, Jennings started school.

“That was hard,” she told KidsPost by phone. “I didn’t speak any English, and it took a while to learn [the language]. Luckily my cousins helped me with homework.”

And her new home brought new adventures.

“Snow was amazing,” she said of her first winter storm, when the family finally settled in Richmond, Virginia.

Pirate spyglass in 'Dom's Treasure'

In addition to her child-self, Jennings used her two children (now grown) as models for Dominguita. She saw how they, like many children, could create a whole world in their pretend play.

“You don’t need many props — a stick, a broom, a bucket,” Jennings said. “And now I see my grandchildren playing in that [same] way.”

Broken binoculars become a pirate spyglass in the second book, “[Captain Dom’s Treasure](#).” It came out the same time as the first book and was inspired by “Treasure Island.” And later this year, look for two more Dominguita books, which were inspired by “The Three Musketeers” and the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes.

Writing the series was a “chance to reread all the books I loved as a kid,” Jennings said. And to apply her big imagination to the creation of her own tales.

Virtual events

What: Terry Catasús Jennings talks with NoNieqa Ramos about the first two books, “Knight of the Cape” and “Captain Dom’s Treasure,” in the Definitely Dominguita chapter book series.

Where: One More Page Books in Arlington, Virginia.

When: Tuesday, March 2, at 7 p.m.

How much: Free; must register in advance at bit.ly/3pPZ3dG.

Best for: Ages 6 to 10.

For more information: Visit onemorepagebooks.com/event.

What: Jennings and Erin Teagan talk about their new books and do activities with the audience.

Where: Scrawl in Reston, Virginia.

When: Saturday, March 6, at 11 a.m.

How much: Free; must register in advance at bit.ly/3dIspIv.

Best for: Ages 6 to 11.

For more information: Visit scrawlbooks.com/event.

More in KidsPost

[Author's immigrant story inspires debut novel for kids](#)

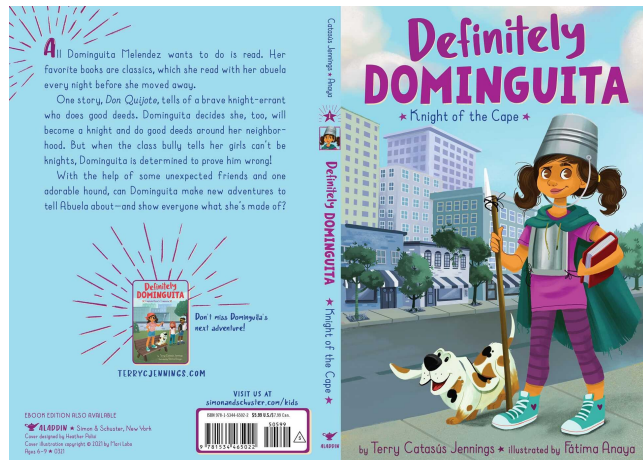
[‘When You Trap a Tiger’ chosen for 2021 Newbery Medal](#)

[Gary Paulsen tells his own survival story in ‘Gone to the Woods’](#)

Jonathan Roth

Getting to Know: Terry Catasus Jennings

Posted February 27, 2021 by [jonmroth](#) & filed under [Getting To Know: Kidlit Authors](#), [News](#).



I've always had a soft spot for kids who love to read. Maybe because I was one of them! But do kids who love to read books make good characters *in* books? They certainly do if their name is Dominguita Melendez, plucky protagonist of the awesome new chapter books series, DEFINITELY DOMINGUITA (Aladdin, 2021). I caught up with author Terry Catasus Jennings to learn more:

Me: How did you get into writing children's books?

Terry: Thank you so much for inviting me. I'm delighted to be here with you. I've always wanted to be a writer, since I was a kid. Especially after I read *Little Women*. And stories are always rolling around in my head. I'm always reporting on what's going on. Often making things come out better than they did in real life. But for many reasons, most of them having to do with being an immigrant and needing a secure job, I didn't pursue a career in writing. That's someone who is really talented pursues. Hemingway, and Louisa Alcott. It's like in my head they were hit by lightning and turned into authors. I never even thought of looking at it as a career. You know, back then, maybe we didn't look at having a career as much as having a job. I knew I would go to college so I could get a job where I could support myself. And I ended up majoring in math and took a lot of science and I actually did land a job in the engineering department of the telephone company. Then when I had children, I decided to stay home with them while having my own tiny bookkeeping company for small businesses.

But stories never stopped rolling around my head. And when my youngest went to middle school and I really didn't need to volunteer anymore, I decided to try my hand at writing and to see if I had what it took. So I started with essays, and some of them were published in *The Washington Post*. And I wrote a family humor column for my local newspaper. Then I tried to get some sort of a steady gig, and I ended up writing educational content for the Smithsonian. Science stuff. But my name was always buried in the next to the last page. So then I tried my hand at science books for kids—creative non-fiction—books that would have my name on the cover. And then some regular non-fiction. I did a lot of work for hire. And each time something was published I wanted a bigger step. Say, going from a small science publisher to a real publisher. And that happened with Dominguita and Simon and Schuster. But it took forever. I'd say about 20 years.

What was your inspiration and process for Definitely Dominguita?

Remember those stories that are rolling around in my head? I was weeding and thinking to myself that what I was doing was as impossible as Don Quijote trying to become a knight. But wait. The idea of a kid trying to become a knight might work. And this little boy showed up in my head dressed in a cape and a make-do helmet. Fortunately for all of us, my daughter reminded me that I am a feminist and it would be a lot better if my protagonist were a girl. Before I finished my weeding, my character had a name and I'd written the beginning of the book in my head.

The process for writing these books was different from writing a regular novel. First I had to read the actual classics. And re-read them. I took notes on the characters speech and mannerisms. I looked at scenes that were iconic to the book, like Don Quijote tilting at a windmill. Or scenes that could translate well into a Dominguita story, like the rescue of the queen's diamonds in *The Three Musketeers*. Once I was sure what parts of the classic book I wanted to echo, then I began to write. The three protagonists don't always take the place of a character in the classic. For instance, in *Captain Dom's Treasure*, there is no Jim Hawkins, but there is a Captain, a doctor, a mate and definitely a Long John Silver. There is also the maroon they find when they get to the island. But the three characters have specific roles in the series. Dom is the big thinker. Pancho is the realist who reels her in. Steph is the peace-maker. I didn't set out to make them that way, but by the time the third book rolled around I realized that they had settled into those roles and that those roles made the books work.



All Dominguita Melendez wanted to do today was read.

Her teacher, Mrs. Kannerpin, had encouraged her to “socialize” during recess. But Dominguita didn’t want to socialize. She always had adventures to go on and new characters to meet. She ought to be able to read, right? Other kids got stars for reading one book, after all. And today, more than any other day, Dominguita just wanted to read.

1

I love that Dominguita is inspired by the books on her grandmother’s shelf. What books inspired you as a kid?

I was in Cuba when I was a kid, so I was a lot like Dominguita’s grandmother. I read the classics. All of them. Particularly, Jules Verne. I loved adventure. My father gave me an allowance. He was a banker and he wanted me to learn to manage money. I don’t exactly remember how much it was, but I could spend it however I wanted to, so long as I accounted for it on this green ledger paper he gave me. I solved that problem very easily. Whatever he gave me was enough to buy a book. How lucky could I get? One entry. I got what I wanted and my bookkeeping was minimized. Now that I think back on that, I wish I had talked to him about that. I did not learn what he wanted me to learn from that experience. But I bought and read all the classics, Robert Louis Stevenson, Jack London, Sir Walter Scott, Mark Twain and all the Louisa May Alcott book, and there were some Spanish books which today we would call graphic novels. I devoured those. They were cheaper. I could get a couple of those for the price of one of the other books. But whatever I read was always adventure.

I draw my own characters, so I’m always curious about that moment when your first see your characters drawn by someone else?

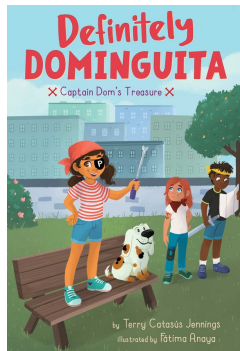
I always cry. Really. It’s just very emotional for me when someone takes my words and translates them to art. With Dominguita, I was very lucky. I had pictured her as a plucky kid. Someone who wasn’t afraid of anything. Someone who would stand up for what was right. And Fátima Anaya portrayed just that. I couldn’t have been happier. If you look at that first inside sketch when Dominguita is reading and recess is happening all around her, she is alone, but not lonely. She has her book, and she doesn’t need anything else. Fátima GOT Dominguita. She sees her the same way that I did. I actually think that Fátima understood Pancho Sanchez, Dom’s sidekick, even better than I did. I love the way she drew him. How he grew from book one to book two. And Steph is perfect. She is the peacemaker. And she looks it. Fátima is a superstar. So far in all my books I’ve been lucky in that the illustrators have made the book even better

than what I envisioned. Their art has brought my text to a higher level. I love Beep and Bob, by the way. I would have been happy with them.

Can you tell us about Dominguita's next adventures?

In Captain Dom's Treasure, Dominguita finds a treasure map in an old copy of *Treasure Island*. The kids are sure it's a real map. But how to prove it? They use logic to solve their problem. Then, once they know there is an actual treasure, they need to follow the map to find it. But the map was dated 1967. It's not easy. And what makes it worse is that a meanie, conveniently called Juan Largo (Long John), insinuates himself into the group trying to find the treasure. Dominguita and her crew have to outwit the intruder and get to the treasure first.

All for One has echoes of *The Three Musketeers*. The three friends have to save a quinceañera party (a fifteenth birthday party) from the dastardly Bublassi gang. It features chocolate covered toilet plungers as Dom's musketeers weapon of choice. Of course, you can figure out what *Sherlock Dom* is all about. The crew tries to find the Lost Goat of Tapperville echoing *The Hound of the Baskervilles*—hound and all. There can be many more Dom stories based on even more classics. I hope I get to write them.



Any advice for young knights and storytellers?

Dominguita never gave up, and storytellers should never give up. It's a long road, but I wouldn't trade it. The good thing about Dominguita is that, in the end, she made friends. And she goes on to live her books with them. I hope that readers see in Dominguita a Cuban-American girl who's just like them and that it opens the door, just a little bit more, to understanding.

Thank you so much, Terry!

Find out more about Terry and her books at TerryCJennings.com and at Facebook: Terry Catasús Jennings, Twitter: @TerryCJennings, Instagram: Terry.C.Jennings and Goodreads: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/54304114-knight-of-the-cape>



Check back often for new Q&As, and for daily historical factoids about books. On Facebook at www.facebook.com/deborahkalbbooks. Follow me on Twitter [@deborahkalb](https://twitter.com/deborahkalb).

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Q&A with Terry Catasús Jennings



Terry Catasús Jennings is the author of *Definitely Dominguita: Knight of the Cape*, the first in a new middle grade series for kids. She lives in Reston, Virginia.

Q: How did you come up with the idea for Definitely Dominguita?

A: The idea for a series about a kid who loves to act out the classics came not long after the idea for Dominguita herself.

Once I had the plot for the first book, in which Dominguita tries to prove that girls can be knights, it wasn't hard to jump to writing books in which she dresses and acts like characters in other classics.

The thing I had to figure out was whether I could come up with a contemporary adventure that she could have within the framework of other classics.

The idea appealed to me because it was a way to introduce children to the classics I enjoyed, and it was also an excuse to reread some of the books that were such a part of my childhood. I was very much like Dominguita, a child who preferred to read to anything else.

As I was writing book one, I began thinking about possible other books, rereading them, and making notes about possible adventures.

The plot for book two came fairly easily because it is one of my all-time favorite books and it lent itself to a modern adventure without having to sail in a submarine or travel around the world. By the time I'd finished writing and revising *The Knight of the Cape*, I had six possible additional titles. I'd even started on book two.

The name, Definitely Dominguita, came, literally, from the dictionary. I looked at every D word, but when I got to Definitely, I stopped. That was it. Dominguita is definitely one of a kind. It had to be Definitely Dominguita.



Q: Why did you choose Don Quixote as the first story Dom chooses to follow?

A: It happened while I was weeding, and it was more like Don Quixote chose Dom, rather than her choosing him.

My father was a huge fan of Don Quixote. One of my favorite mementoes from him is a little wooden statue of Don Quixote. I think Don Quixote was in my DNA already.

And that day, as I sweated and grunted over some impossibly resistant weeds, I realized that Don Quixote and I have a lot in common. We both set out to conquer things that have a very low success rate—weeding, writing—still, we carry on.

Another thing that came into play in Dom's birth was the fact that I read so much as a child, that my mother worried about me. I needed more socialization in her eyes. So much so, that she talked the Mother Superior at my school into trying to tell me not to read so much.

Nuts, right? But Mother Superior was more than glad to accommodate her. In no uncertain words Mother Superior told me to stop reading Jules Verne because he'd been excommunicated. I suspect that's the only thing she could hang her hat on, because, really, how do you tell a kid to not read?

As I weeded, this boy character took shape. A reader who loves Don Quixote gets told not to read (like Don Quixote was told). He came clothed in a cape instead of an armor, since armors are a tad unwieldy. He would be Don Capote. Don Quixote was the knight of the sad face, Don Capote would be the knight of the cape. (Capote means cape in Spanish.)

Fortunately for all of us, when I ran the idea by my daughter, she was scandalized. Why a boy? Can't a girl be a knight? Of course that was my story. A girl who has to prove herself a worthy knight.

The first draft had the whole thing where the teacher says you can't read, but my librarian friends and my agent talked me out of it.

It was replaced with the idea that Dominguita's grandmother had read the classics in Spanish to her for bedtime stories. But now Abuela was getting forgetful and couldn't live with Dominguita's family anymore. Reading the classics was a way for her to be close to Abuela.

When she's reading Don Quixote during recess, she ends up on the wrong end of a dare and sets out to prove that indeed, girls can be worthy knights. She is joined in her endeavor by Pancho Sanchez, her also worthy squire, and a freckled, redheaded girl named Steph.

Q: What do you hope kids take away from the story?

A: Even as a young immigrant, I always wanted people to think of me as normal, human, not different. It's so interesting how, where you come from puts you into a different category.

I often found myself telling other kids, "You know, we had big buildings in Cuba." I was always trying to prove that I or those who, like me, came from "away" were not inferior, not even different.

What I hope kids take away from this story is that Dominguita and her sidekick Pancho are both second generation Cuban-Americans and they are regular kids who live in regular homes who just happen to have black beans and rice for dinner more often than other kids.

Their lives are no different than the third child, other than that child, Steph, has a grandmother who makes killer chocolate chip cookies.

I hope they can identify with Dom's love for her grandmother.
Of course, I hope that their curiosity about Don Quixote and other classics is piqued.

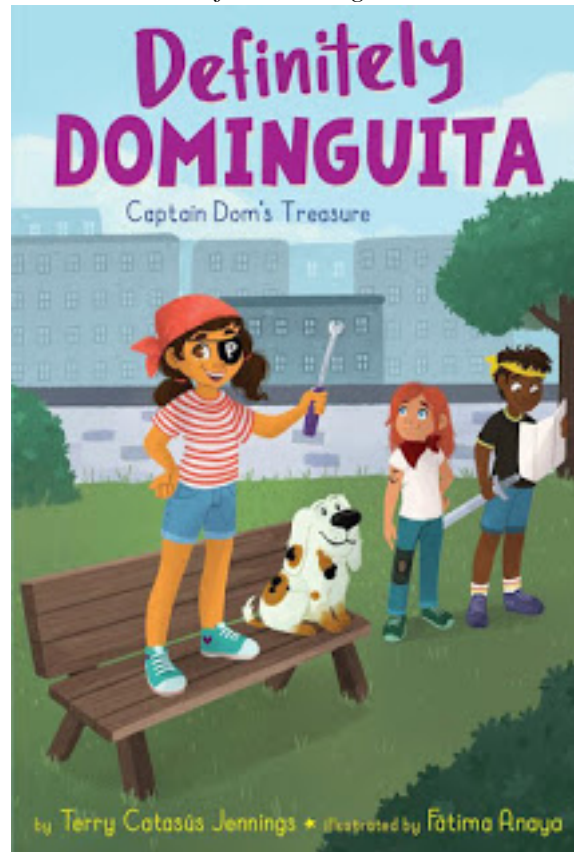
Q: What do you think Fátima Anaya's illustrations add to the book?

A: I loved Fátima's illustrations. Actually, when I saw the first cover, I cried. Dominguita was exactly as I had pictured her.

In the first inside sketch, Fátima catches Dominguita reading at recess, alone, but not lonely. Kids are playing all around her, but she is oblivious. She has all she needs—her Abuela's book.

In the last sketch, and I hope I'm not giving anything away here, I love Dom's face as she is ready to attack a windmill.

Q: This is the first in a series--what's next for Dominguita?



*A: Captain Dom's Treasure comes out on the same day as *Knight of the Cape*, March 2, 2021.*

Dom finds a real map in a copy of *Treasure Island*. Using problem solving skills, the threesome figure out what the treasure is and to whom it belongs. The question is whether they'll be able to find it and return it to its rightful owner before the smooth-talking Juan Largo claims it as his own.

In September, two more books will round out the series.

In *All for One* the threesome fights the dastardly Bublassi brothers who are trying to ruin a quinceañera party. In *The Lost Goat of Tapperville*, Sherlock Dom and her crew go in search of a lost goat on a mire . . . by a moor . . . where the creepy howls of a hound . . . well, I can't give it all away.

Those are the books that are already scheduled for release.

I have notes on least half a dozen more plots of other classics. *The Martians are Coming*, *Around Mundytown in Eight Hours*, an Agatha Christie mystery and more. I have to convince my editor that she wants to publish those.

Q: Anything else we should know?

A: While the kids' adventures are contemporary and they only take on the personae of characters in the classics, there were some books that I thought would work, at first, but in the end didn't pan out.

I couldn't talk myself into doing *Robinson Crusoe*. The way he treats his man Friday definitely gave me pause. There's just way too much water in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, one of my all-time favorites.

On the other hand, at first read, I discounted *The Three Musketeers*—lots of killing, lust, infidelity, and in the end, a woman is beheaded—but I couldn't resist the idea of kids wielding chocolate-covered toilet plungers as their swords. Of the four books coming out this year, I think it's the most fun.

--Interview with Deborah Kalb

Posted by [Deborah Kalb](#) at [9:15 AM](#)

Email This [Blog](#) [This!](#) [Share to Twitter](#) [Share to Facebook](#) [Share to Pinterest](#)

way. As I write, I tend to go back and edit myself pretty heavily. So it's a slow two steps forward and one step back. I have a lot of self-doubt as I draft, and I get very distracted and antsy. But once a draft is complete, I enjoy going back over it and tweaking and polishing and making sure it flows the way I want.

What advice do you have for kids who want to improve their own writing?

I think the best way to improve your writing is to actually do it. That means making sure you write as often as you can, and to get into the habit of letting other read your work and critique it. A writing group, club, or critique partner helps to keep you on track and get you used to getting feedback. Also, read as much as you can! It's the easiest way to become a better writer without even realizing it's happening.

TERRY CATASÚS JENNINGS

Terry Catasús Jennings is the author of a new chapter book series, *Definitely Dominguita*, about a Cuban American girl whose adventures are inspired by the classics she reads with her abuela. The first two titles, "The Knight of the Cape" and "Captain Dom's Treasure," have just been published by Simon and Schuster. She has also written six children's books about science and history. Jennings and her husband live in Reston.

When did you first realize you wanted to be an author?

I have always known that I wanted to be a writer, because there was nothing that I liked better than reading. I didn't pursue it right away, though. It's hard to even think of being an author when you are an immigrant. At least it was for me. My parents wanted me to have a good job. A dependable job. Because of that and for several other reasons, I never considered a writing career. But stories were always rolling around in my head. When my youngest child was in high school and I didn't really need to be volunteering any more, I decided to see if I could actually write. The first essay I ever submitted was published in the Style section of The Washington Post, so that was very encouraging. From then on, I just kept trying to do better and do more.

Where do you get your ideas for your books?

For the science books, if I see something that interests me or that hasn't been covered well for children, I try to find a story to explain it. Many of the ideas that I am working on right now came from the immigrant experience. Trying to show an immigrant or child of



immigrant character who has an adventure or encounters a problem that has to be solved. The character is no different than her peers, and the adventures are those that anyone could have. The stories just take place in a household where Spanish words are used and Cuban food is revered.

What do you love about writing children's books?

I love children, and I love writing something that will help them laugh and maybe bring them to the understanding that we are all the same: all human beings with the same hopes and dreams. But what I really love about writing children's books is that I get to go into their schools and their classrooms and talk to them. And that's the biggest benefit of all. Besides, when else do you get to give your character a chocolate-covered toilet plunger for a weapon?

What does your writing process look like?

Once I get an idea, I start thinking about

it, writing down notes on my phone and the first paragraph in my head. I do a lot of writing on my phone at the beginning. It helps me not to forget good things. I try to get a couple of chapters down so I get to know the character and maybe find out if the problem works. After that, I write a loose outline. Something that lets me know where I want to go. Fairly detailed. Sometimes I run the idea by my agent to see what she thinks. And from there I write my story.

What tips do you have for kids who want to improve their own writing?

The best recommendation to being a good writer is to read. Read, read, read. Understand what makes the books that you like likeable. Then write. The more you write, the better you will write. I am the kind of writer that needs to know where the story is going, so I definitely recommend loose outlines. Don't ever think your story is bad. But don't ever think your story can't be better. Not until you're really, really sure. ■

FAST FORWARD FRIDAY – Terry Catasús Jennings

JANUARY 29, 2021 ~ BOOKVILLAGEADMIN



Thank you so much for joining me on Fast Forward Friday today, Terry. You have two books coming out on March 2nd with Aladdin, KNIGHT OF THE CAPE, and CAPTAIN DOM’S TREASURE. Can you tell us a little about this new series, please?

Kathie, I’m delighted to be with you. Thank you so much for inviting me to Fast Forward Friday. The Definitely Dominguita chapter book series is about a Cuban-American third grader who would rather read than do anything else. That may be because since her friend Miranda moved to Pascagoula in second grade, she hadn’t given a lot of time to finding a new friend—she found that she always had enough friends in her books.

Dominguita lives in the mythical Mundytown, a suburb of a large city, with her mom, dad, older brother Rafi and, up to the point in which the series begins, her Cuban grandmother—Abuela. But Abuela has become forgetful, and it’s no longer safe for her to stay alone during the day. So Abuela moved away to live with her sister. To fill the void that Abuela left, Dominguita decides to re-read the

bedtime stories she and Abuela read together—the classics like Don Quixote and Treasure Island.

On the first day after Abuela leaves, Dominguita is reading Don Quixote during recess, when Ernie Bublassi, the class bully, tells her that she only reads because she has no friends. *Not so*, says our heroine—she is reading because she’s planning to become a knight. *But girls can’t be knights*, says the bully. The rest of the story is Dominguita’s *I’ll show you*, including tilting at a windmill.

In the end, Dominguita finds two friends who love pretending as much as she does. They chose characters from other classics and always manage to have a contemporary adventure which is somehow related to the book at hand.

I would use the word “spunky” to describe Dominguita. Can you give me three other adjectives you would use to tell us more about her, and from where did the inspiration for her character come?

Dominguita is inventive and impulsive, but she is also logical. Which may sound like a contradiction, but it isn’t, really. She is good at following the clues—if this, then that—but rather than thinking things all the way through, she acts first and thinks later. She comes up with the wildest plans which have to be brought down to reality by her sidekicks. Pancho and Steph are the moderating influences. At one point, Dominguita wouldn’t have accepted their help, always trying to rely on herself, but as the friendship develops, the threesome becomes a team.

I think I can say that the inspiration for the first book came from my father. He loved Don Quixote and I’ve always felt that writing is a quixotic occupation—trying to follow a dream that may never come true. One day, the idea came to me to write a book about a youngster who pretends to be Don Quixote. Of course, to do that, the young character had to be steeped in the classics. Needing the classics made room for an Abuela with whom Dominguita could have a wonderful relationship based on their shared love of these books and their time

together reading them. It also made room for the first book to turn into a series. At first the main character was a boy. But my daughter talked me out of that idea. It didn't take much convincing. Of course the main character would have to be a girl. From there, proving that girls could be worthy knights was a no-brainer. Dom is very much like me as a child. I liked nothing better than reading, and I had a very fulfilling life in my own imagination. I, too, am very impulsive. And I'm always trying to prove myself.

What does your writing process look like (do you have the book or series planned ahead of time, or do you see where the story takes you as you write?)

The Knight of the Cape was a little bit of putting something down on paper and seeing where that led me. There were elements of *Don Quijote* that I wanted to include like tilting at windmills and trying to rescue a victim from a bully without success. I also needed to find a squire for her. But that first book, getting to know her family and building the world of Mundytown with its friendly shopkeepers was very much an exploration rather than a planned and outlined process. When I thought that I had a possible series and I began to re-read the classics, I made quick outlines of any I thought would work. *Captain Dom's Treasure* was very much a planned and outlined work, but the plan didn't work out. A second outline with some tweaking became the template for that one. I can say that in this series, since I try to include elements from the original books in the story, I have a really good idea of where the plot will go. I write the first few chapters to see if I can make it work, and then outline the plot. Sometimes it's a chapter by chapter outline. Other times it's a high level plan.

Could you tell us about the illustrator, Fátima Anaya, and the process of working together to enhance the story visually?

Fátima is from San Salvador. She says that she loves projects about diversity, family, and friendship as well as the magic of ordinary stories. What better match could I hope for?

Fátima's first cover made me cry. She made Dominguita as spunky and sassy as I thought she was. The town where she lives was exactly as I pictured it. When you look at the first inside sketch, Dominguita is sitting at recess, reading-alone, but not lonely. She doesn't need anyone else. She has all the friends she needs in her books. Fátima gets Dominguita. She knows her like I know her. And her sense of humor shines through in her art.

We don't work together, though. We always work through the Simon & Schuster editors. In one respect, I would love to work with her directly, In another, I love the idea that Fátima is totally free to bring her own intelligence and perspective to the series. You end up with a much richer work. The process for this series is that Fátima comes up with the cover or her interpretation of a scene and I weigh in on whether the sketch follows the text. After the sketch is approved, I wait until we get the color copy and that's when the happy tears happen. For the cover of the fourth book, Fatima drew such a fun scene that I ditched some of what I had written and wrote a scene to match what she sketched.

What is one thing you discovered about yourself during the process of publishing your books?

I found that I was able to write a chapter book and that I LOVED writing for that audience. The younger characters were so much fun to be with. It was truly a wonderful experience. It has made me think about some other manuscripts which are in my virtual drawers that may benefit from a younger perspective. The other thing that I found was that I really enjoyed world-building. Even though this is a contemporary story, the world of Mundytown is a place all its own and I loved meeting the shopkeepers and other characters in Dominguita's world and making them my friends.

When can we expect the next book in the Definitely Dominguita series?

Terry: Two more books are coming out late summer/early fall; *All for One*, which is inspired by *The Three Musketeers* and *Sherlock Dom*, which is inspired by *The*

Hound of the Baskervilles. In *All for One*, the dastardly Bublassi brothers threaten the quinceañera party of Leni Fuentes, the granddaughter of the junk shop owner who provides Dom's crew with their costumes and tools. *Sherlock Dom* is the search for a lost goat (The Lost Goat of Tapperville) in which the crew uses Sherlock Holmes's methods to find the lost goat and the criminals who took her. I hope there will be many more books in the series. There are many other classics waiting for Dominguita and her crew.

Can you tell us where to find out more about you and your writing, please?

My website is Terrycjennings.com. I am also a member of [Las Musas](#), a collective of Latinx writers.

Thank you so much for joining me today, Terry, and I hope that Dominguita delights young readers, and gives them the inspiration to go on their own adventures.

It was wonderful being here with you, Kathie. I have the same hopes as you have for Dominguita. I hope Latinx readers see themselves in Dom and Pancho and I also hope the book brings all readers the tiniest bit of acceptance of diversity cloaked inside the fun.

On September 11, 1961, Terry Catasús Jennings landed in the United States after a short flight from Cuba. On September 12th, she was enrolled in seventh grade in an American school. Her family, including her father who had been jailed during the Bay of Pigs invasion, was now in a free country. The only catch for twelve-year-old Terry was that she could count in English and recite the days of the week and the months of the year, but not much more. Often being the only Cuban in her school—even through college—Terry knows what it's like to be the new kid on the block. She is delighted to have the opportunity, with Definitely Dominguita, to portray a typical child of immigrants—no different than her peers—other than she loves the classics (like Jennings did as a child) and thinks Cuban food rules.

MOM READ IT

FICTION, FICTION, INTERMEDIATE, MIDDLE GRADE, REALISTIC FICTION **Meet Dominguita!**

Posted on March 11, 2021

Dominguita Melendez is a third grader who loves books! When her abuela (grandmother) has to move to Florida to live with her sister, Dominguita comes up with a way to share their mutual loves of books with one another: by finding adventures in all the books her abuela left her. Definitely Dominguita is a great intermediate series for kids – there's an adventure that introduces them to classics titles in every book, and sets those stories on city streets, where kids can see themselves and even think about recreating their own favorite books.



Knight of the Cape (Definitely Dominguita #1), by Terry Catasús Jennings/Illustrated by Fátima Anaya, (March 2021, Aladdin), \$17.99, ISBN: 9781534465039

Ages 6-9

Dominguita misses her abuela and her best friend, both of whom have moved away. She spends her recess time reading in the schoolyard until the school bully makes fun of her, her choice of reading – *Don Quixote* by Miguel Cervantes – and tells her girls can't be knights. Incensed, Dominguita is determined to become a knight AND have her brother Rafi write about her adventures to share with Abuela! She and Rafi put together an outfit worthy of a knight, and transforms into Dom Capote: Knight of the Cape! Along her travels, she gains a steed (the local stray dog, Roco) and a companion, Pancho Sanchez, who sees through her grand plans to keep things real. In this wonderful re-imagining of *Don Quixote*, a young girl uses her creativity and her love of books to see herself in her own stories, based on the classics. Dom is fun, likable, and smart; all of the characters receive backgrounds with a foundation to build future adventures, and black and white illustrations add visual reference for readers. A great new series to introduce to intermediate readers.



"No way!"

Dominguita told her brother what had happened. "He can't get away with saying that girls can't be knights," she told him, then lowered her voice. "And he said I was weird."

"No!"

Dominguita nodded.

"Holy cow! You definitely have to show him."

Dominguita had Rafi's attention now. "Rico Bublassi's in my grade and he's the biggest jerk ever. I love this!"

She had him! He was going to help her!

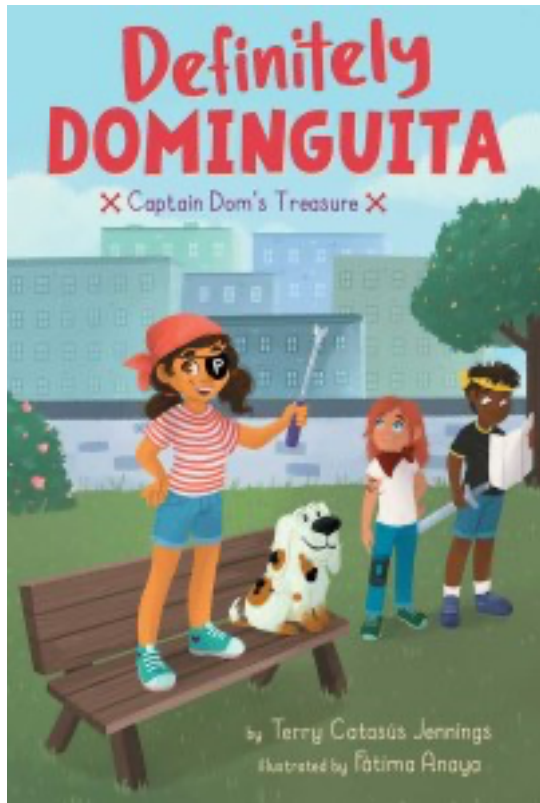
But he sat back down.

"Any Bublassi I know won't read a book."

He had her there. But she had already figured that out too.

She pulled out her phone. "Remember? Mami gave me a phone since Abuela's not here. It's so I can call her at work if I'm abducted by aliens or she needs to know I'm home."

Rafi gave one very slow nod.



Captain Dom's Treasure (Definitely Dominguita #2), by Terry Catasús Jennings/Illustrated by Fátima Anaya, (March 2021, Aladdin), \$17.99, ISBN: 9781534465060

Ages 6-9

Dominguita and her friends, Pancho and Sarah, are back in their second adventure! This time, inspired by Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, Dom goes from Dom Capote to Captain Dom and discovers a treasure map on a trip to the library! After some quick research, Dom and her friends discover that the map is linked to a robbery that happened in her neighborhood back in 1967 – a mystery that she and her friends need to solve and put things to rights! But a boy Pancho refers to as “Juan Largo” (Long John) has been following them around, saying he's there to be a babysitter... a story that the group finds a lot of holes in. Can Dom and her friends find the treasure and save the day, or will Long John beat them to it? While it's not necessary to read

these books in order, it's much more fun to see the progression of the characters from the first story to the second. The action unfolds with parallels to *Treasure Island*, and gives us an idea as to what the next adventure will be. Kids are going to love getting to know these characters and figuring out the mysteries with them. How much fun would a kids' book club be, using Dom's adventure as a jumping-off point for young reader versions of the featured classics?

Psst... *All for One* is due in August and *Sherlock Dom* is coming in November. You may want to start booktalking *The Three Musketeers* and *Sherlock Holmes* now.



1 What Dom Found in the Book

Dom was at the Mundytown library when it opened. She wore a bandanna around her head, squishing her pigtails. And a leather eye patch with a shiny gold *P* for "pirate" covered her eye. Her brother, Rafi, had given her the patch before she left home. Along with a compass.

"Nice look, Dominguita!" Mrs. Booker, the librarian, looked up over reading glasses. "What can I do for you?"

Definitely Dominguita—An Interview with Author Terry Catasús Jennings by Julie Phend



Meet Dominguita Melendez, intrepid knight of the neighborhood, who, along with her squire, Pancho Sanchez, have brave adventures and do good deeds just like Don Quixote in Dom's favorite book.

Definitely Dominguita is a delightful chapter book series for ages 6-9 released this month by Aladdin/Simon & Schuster. In a starred review, Kirkus called it "a charming adventure that will encourage kids to become knights in their own communities as well."

In *Dominguita*, better known as Dom Capote, Cuban-American author Terry Catasús Jennings has created a character who is determined, independent and resourceful, and who just happens to be a child of immigrant parents.



Terry Catasús Jennings

Terry Catasús Jennings knows what it's like to feel different. Her family, including her father who had been jailed during the Bay of Pigs invasion, emigrated from Cuba in 1961 when she was twelve years old. Terry was immediately enrolled in an American school. The problem was that she only knew enough English to recite the days of the week and months of the year. Like Dominguita, Terry found refuge in books, especially the classics she read with her abuela.

Each book in the *Dominguita* series is based on a beloved classic: *Knight of the Cape* on *Don Quixote*, *Captain Dom's Treasure* on *Treasure Island*, *All for One* on *The Three Musketeers*, and *Sherlock Dom* on—you guessed it—Sherlock Holmes and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

I had the pleasure of chatting with Terry about the series and her writing career.

Tell us a little about your journey as a writer and how it led to this series.

I always dreamed of being an author, but family pressure led me to a more “practical” career. I majored in math and physics and worked in finance for many years before I decided to give writing a chance. At first, I wrote articles and essays. The first essay I ever submitted—about teaching my daughter to drive—was published by *The Washington Post*. Then I moved on to writing educational content for the Smithsonian Science Education Center and non-fiction books for children. Finally, I decided to try my hand at writing a novel, an upper MG book about a Cuban girl.

Submitting that novel (still unpublished) led me to my agent, Natolie Lakosil. I pitched the idea for the Dominguita books to her in 2018. She was enthusiastic, so I got right to work. The series sold rather quickly. I signed the contract in May of 2019, and the first two books are being released this month, March 2021.

Tell us about the illustrator.



The books are illustrated by Fátima Anaya, who lives in El Salvador. I LOVE the illustrations. Fátima got the characters just right—Dom’s spunky face and the wonderful Roco, the dog whose belly is so low it almost touches the ground and whose ears are so long that they do. The costumes are so creative—and the colors she uses are wonderfully vivid. Her work is just terrific.

In the first book, *Knight of the Cape*, Dominguita is reading *Don Quixote* to stay close to her Abuela who’s had to move to Florida because she’s getting forgetful. When the class bully says Dominguita reads because she doesn’t have any friends, she has to come up with a better idea: she’s studying to be knight. He laughs. “Girls can’t be knights.” Dominguita decides to prove him wrong. She adopts the name Dom Capote, Knight of the Cape.

How is Dom like Don Quixote?

Both Don Quixote and Dom Capote failed spectacularly! But both eventually transition from fantasy to reality. They come to understand and accept themselves as they are, including their shortcomings and failures. They both recognize the value of love and friendship.

Having based the characters on those in *Don Quixote*, how does that work in the rest of the series, where the books are based on other classics?

In each book, the character relationships stay the same. Dom is the visionary, Pancho brings her down to reality, and their friend Steph is the even keel rule-follower. The events and key scenes echo the classics but the novels are each a contemporary story. For example, in *Captain Dom's Treasure*, Dom finds an old map in a library book with a telltale X marking an unknown place. She and her crew set off to find treasure like Jim Hawkins did in *Treasure Island*.



These books are filled with the kind of humor that kids love. Give us an example.

In *All for One*, inspired by *The Three Musketeers*, Dom and her friends set out to foil a villain's dastardly intention to spoil their friend Leni's quincerañera party. They use the ultimate musketeer weapons—chocolate covered toilet plungers.

I know you're a big fan of writers' critique groups. Did you work with a critique group on these books?

I sure did. I belong to two critique groups, and at one point, I was writing too fast to be able to wait for the meetings. So one group critiqued the second book, and the other did the third. They were a big help!

(For more information on Terry's work with critique groups, see <https://www.blogger.com/blog/post/edit/1295379888006925064/3563527391626195485>)

What do you find most rewarding about writing children's books?

The reward is connecting with a reader and making a difference. My hope is to reach children and cement the belief that there are no "others." Dominguita is every child. Whether she is American, Cuban or the descendant of a purple popsicle, she loves and misses her grandmother, tries to manipulate her brother, sometimes disobeys her parents, loves sweets. She has moments of brilliance and moments of sheer folly. She is just a kid who happens to live in a household where black beans and rice with a side of plantains are a staple.

Thanks, Terry, for sharing your journey with us. We wish you every success with *Definitely Dominguita*.

BookshelfMamma on Instagram

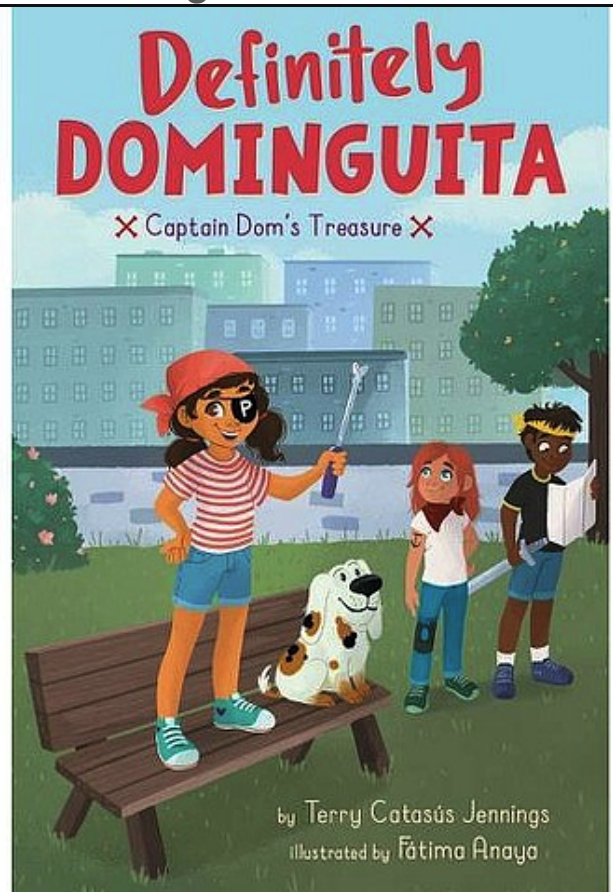
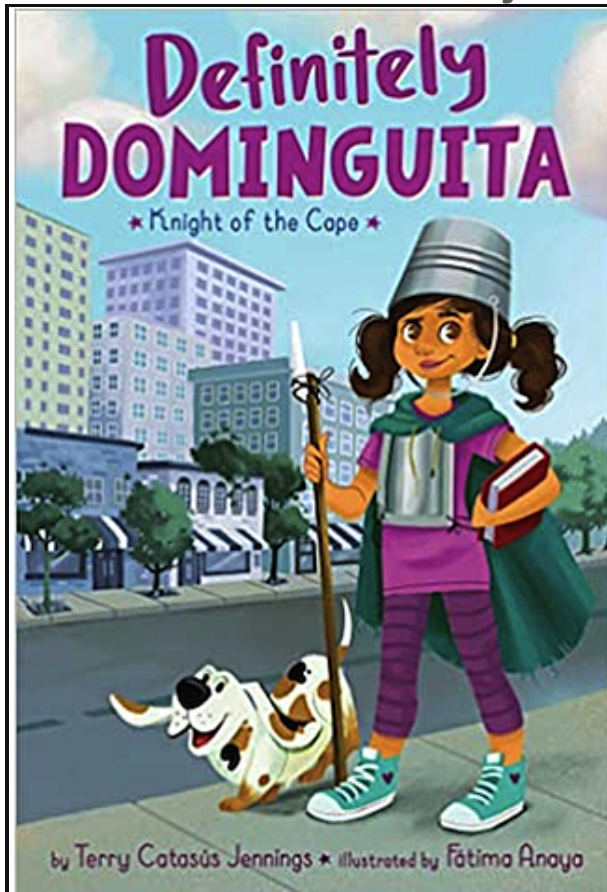
Thank you @terry.c.jennings@blue_slip_media for this gifted copy. My daughters loved these books!

The Definitely Dominguita series is about a young girl who is an outsider. She is a bookworm who loves adventures. She was read the classics by her Abuela and these fun books are about her adventures. These are great stories with a strong Cuban female character! They are early chapter books that my daughters got through quickly!!

[#definitelydominguita](#) [#knighofthecape#captaindomstreasure](#) [#donquijote#treasureisland](#) [#chapterbooks#backyard](#) [#chickencoop](#) [#sistersister#sisters](#) [#booklover#earlychapterbooks](#) [#whattoread#booksforkids](#) [#booksforchildren#booksforearlyreaders](#) [#ilovetoread#lovetoread](#) [#bookstagram#bookstagrammer](#) [#kidbookstagram#diversifyyourbookshe](#) [lf](#) [#booksforgirls#funread](#) [#bookrecommendations#read](#) [#love](#) [#readmorebooks#readoutside](#) [#readtoyourkids](#)

Heritage Lost Reclaimed in Chapter Book Series

Interview with author Terry Catasús Jennings of Reston



Terry Catasús Jennings is the author of the new chapter book series, 'Definitely Dominguita,' for young readers. Book 1 – Knight of the Cape; Book 2 – Captain Dom's Treasure.

By [Mercia Hobson](#)

[Tuesday, March 16, 2021](#)

- [Sign in to favorite this](#)
- [Discuss](#)[Comment](#), [Blog about](#)
- [Share this](#)[Email](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)



Photo contributed

Author Terry Catasús Jennings of Reston, at work on her next book.

[#Terry Catasús Jennings of Reston](#) is the author of the newly released children's chapter book series, "[Definitely Dominguita](#)," published by Simon & Schuster. It is available in English and Spanish.

<#>"I knew from the moment that Terry sent 'Definitely Dominguita' to me that it was a special and important book. Seeing a Cuban-American girl as the center and hero of not just one, but a series of stories, fills my heart with joy. It's so important that the books our children are reading reflect and open windows and doors for everyone in America. And Terry's writing is just spectacular," said Natalie M. Lakosil, Bradford Literary Agency and Jennings' agent.

<#>The series for reading age 6-9 years features a young Cuban American girl, an avid reader, who finds adventures based on classics she reads with her Abuela, Grandmother. As a child in Cuba, Jennings said she loved to read classic novels. Forced to leave Cuba after her father was imprisoned, Jennings said they immigrated to the United States, and she left her "skin behind." It is only through writing this acclaimed series Jennings rediscovered her heritage.

[#AS A CUBAN IMMIGRANT](#) arriving at age 12, Jennings said her goal was to assimilate. "I wanted to be the same as everybody else because sometimes being Cuban meant being uncomfortable and sometimes meant being hurt." Jennings said she tried to learn English "really, really well."

<#>When Jennings started to write in 2000, her characters were blond and blue-eyed or red-headed and freckled, not Cuban characters. "I didn't think that story was worth telling." It wasn't until 2008 when at a workshop, an editor told Jennings that she needed to write her own stories; she worked on one. However, it never got published.

<#>As time passed and Jennings saw everybody else writing Latinx characters, she told herself, "By golly, this is the right time." The main character of her new series, "Definitely Dominguita," came to her one day as a little guy dressed in a cape. At first, the boy was named Don Quixote. "He just lent himself to being a Cuban American kid," Jennings said. Fortunately, Jennings' "very pushy daughter" told her she couldn't write the story with a boy character. It had to be a strong girl, hence Dominguita.

#For Jennings, the characters she creates steal her heart. Jennings said she had forced herself as a young Cuban in America to leave “her skin behind.” While she’s very grateful that the United States took them because they didn’t have anywhere else to go, be a family, and be safe. Still, while she is grateful to be an American citizen, she gave up her heritage by becoming so much American.

#“A lot of the richness I’m discovering, I’m reclaiming now...I’m not as much a Cuban as I should be,” Jennings said. According to Jennings, the series is close to her heart because it goes back to her childhood, and it gives validity to who she is. Jennings is glad things have changed for little kids, like her character, Dominguita. They are accepted. Jennings said, “The whole point of the book is so little kids like Dominguita can see themselves in her. And little kids who are blond and blue-eyed or read-headed and freckled can also see what Dominguita is like, see she is no different than they are.”

#JENNINGS said she loves her characters; they are just fun. Writing a book series allows her to finish one manuscript and then start another with her friends. “I like the way these little guys are, the way they act, and how they bring each other down to reality, but then they also support each other. I’m really enjoying the three of them,” Jennings said.

#“Definitely Dominguita” by Terry Catasús Jennings (Author), Fatima Anaya (Illustrator) is a four-book series by publisher Simon & Schuster: Knight of the Cape and Captain Dom’s Treasure, Books 1 and 2, previous books in the series, Book 3, All for One, on sale Aug. 17, 21, and Book four, Sherlock Dom, on sale Nov. 16, 21. The series is available on [Amazon](#).

[652 likes](#)

[bookshelfmomma](#)

Something I have loved about my Bookstagram journey has been the way it has excited my kids about reading. We’ve always been big on books but when we receive booksmail it gets them even more excited and they gobble up the books and tell others!

Can you tell who my ham is?? I hope you all have a fantastic weekend!

Thank you [@terry.c.jennings@blue slip media](#) for this gifted copy. My daughters loved these books!

The Definitely Dominguita series is about a young girl who is an outsider. She is a bookworm who loves adventures. She was read the classics by her Abuela and these fun books are about her adventures. These are great stories with a strong Cuban female character! They are early chapter books that my daughters got through quickly!!

Writing and Illustrating by Kathy Temean

Book Giveaway: DEFINITELY DOMINGUITA Series by Terry Jennings

Terry Jennings has written a new chapter book series, **DEFINITELY DOMINGUITA** illustrated by Fatima Anaya and published by Aladdin. It is available in bookstores now. **There will be two winners.**

Terry has agreed to send a copy of the first book, *Knight of the Cape* to one winner and send *Captain Dom's Treasure* to a second lucky winner living in the United States.

All you have to do to get in the running is leave a comment. Reblog, tweet, or talk about it on Facebook with a link and you will get additional chances to win. Just let me know other things you do to share the good news, so I can put the right amount of tickets in my basket for you. Sharing on Facebook, Twitter or reblogging really helps spread the word for a new book. So, thanks for helping Angie and Rachel.

If you have signed up to follow my blog and it is delivered to you everyday, please let me know when you leave a comment and I will give you an extra ticket. Thanks!

Definitely DOMINGUITA

★ Knight of the Cape ★



by Terry Catasús Jennings ★ illustrated by Fátima Anaya

BOOK DESCRIPTION FOR KNIGHT OF THE CAPE:

Judy Moody meets Netflix's *One Day at a Time* in this first book in a new chapter book series featuring a young Cuban American girl who tries to find adventure based on the classics she read with her beloved abuela—can Dominguita become a noble knight?

All Dominguita wants to do is read. Especially the books in Spanish that Abuela gave to her just before she moved away. They were classics that Abuela and Dominguita read together, classics her abuela brought with her all the way from Cuba when she was a young girl. It helps Dominguita feel like Abuela's still there with her.

One of her favorites, Don Quixote, tells of a brave knight errant who tries to do good deeds. Dominguita decides that she, too, will become a knight and do good deeds around her community, creating a grand adventure for her to share with her abuela. And when the class bully tells Dominguita that girls can't be knights, Dom is determined to prove him wrong. With a team of new friends, can Dominguita learn how to be the hero of her own story?

Definitely DOMINGUITA

✕ Captain Dom's Treasure ✕



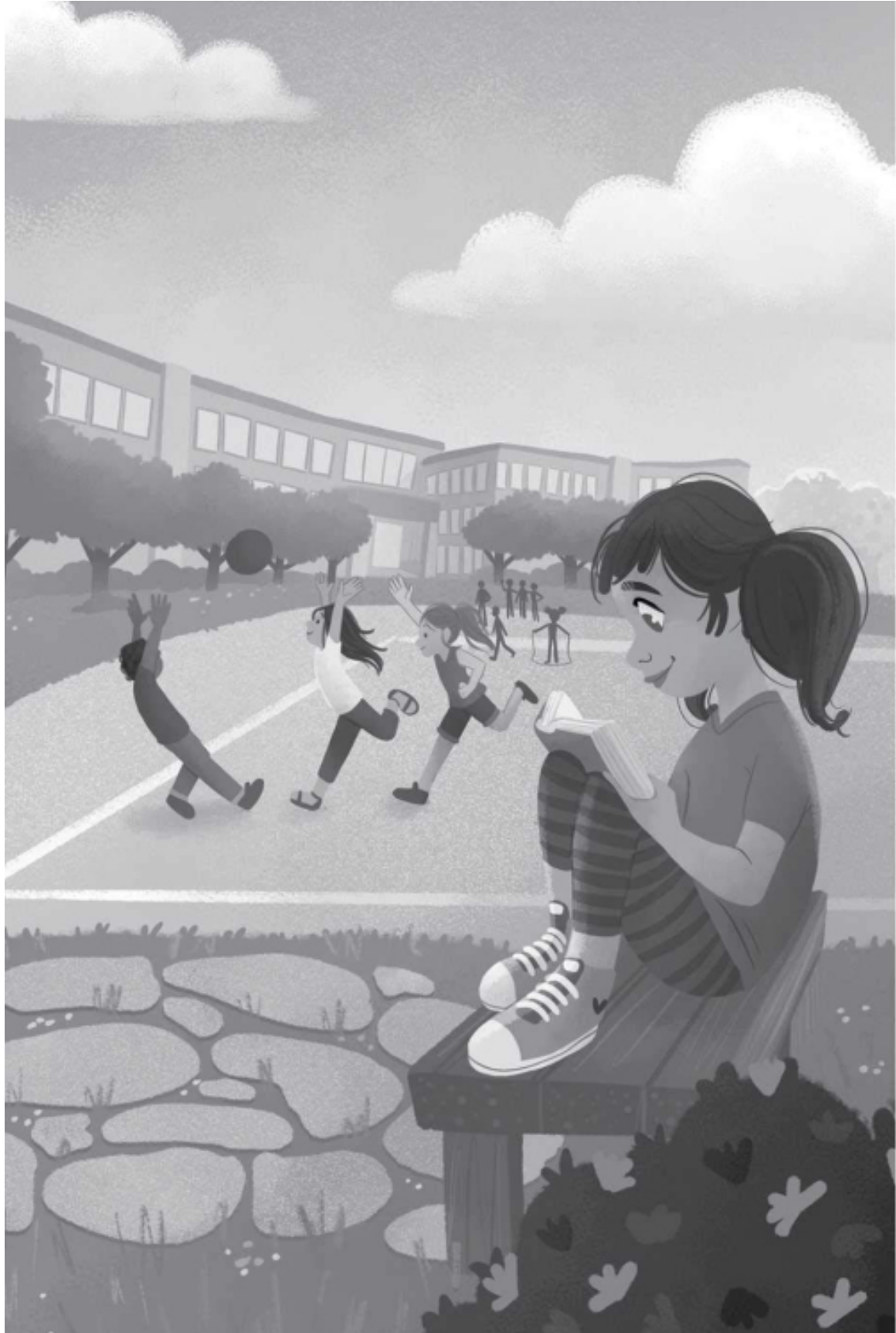
by Terry Catasús Jennings
illustrated by Fátima Anaya

BOOK DESCRIPTION FOR CAPTAIN DOM'S TREASURE:

In this second book of the charming and heartfelt chapter series that is Judy Moody meets Netflix's *One Day at a Time*, will Dominguita find that X marks the spot?

When Dominguita finds an old map in the back of an even older book in her beloved library, she is excited to see a telltale X marking an unknown place. Everyone knows that X marks the spot for treasure—and Dom knows that means a new adventure for her, Pancho, and Steph!

But everyone seems to think that the map, while fun, probably isn't real. Dom is determined to prove them wrong. And as the trio starts to uncover the mystery of the map, they realize that it has closer ties to the community they love than they could have imagined.



BOOK'S JOURNEY:

The journey of this book started with another book, Kathy ,and it involved you and SCBWI New Jersey. It began in 2008 with what I call my Cuba Book—a book about a kid who lives through the Cuban revolution. I think you might recognize that one, because I almost took it to your retreat at the beach. That would have been 2015. I say I almost took it because I had a family emergency and couldn't attend, but both agents requested fulls. And I worked with one of them for a bit, changing things. That happened with that book about four times. An agent was excited, asked for changes, but it never quite got there.



By 2016, though at the June New Jersey conference, I submitted to Natalie Lakosil. I love what you guys do, of allowing a person to try to choose the agent or editor to whom they want to pitch. And I really liked Natalie. Turns out she liked my work. And at the conference we mostly talked about everything other than the Cuba book. When I submitted the full, she offered representation. And I couldn't be happier.

We worked on the Cuba book and got it perfect and danged if it didn't bomb. My goodness. Natalie pulled it back after two rounds and we're still working on that, although we are close.



Meanwhile, she sold a picture book, *La Casita de Esperanza (The Little House of Hope)* to Neal Porter at Holiday House. That comes out next February and is being illustrated by Raúl Colón. Meanwhile in 2018 I pitched the idea about a kid who pretends to be a character in the classics to Natalie. Some of my writer group folks had said that a book about kids who pretend wouldn't appeal to second graders. But thank goodness, Natalie agreed with me. She and I are both pretenders. So I charged on. *The Knight of the Cape* was ready for prime time in March of 2019 along with a pretty good draft of *Captain Dom's Treasure* and short pitches for four or six other books.

We got interest from one company in early May and when Natalie checked with the other folks to whom she had submitted, Simon and Schuster made a preemptive offer. So that was a story book kind of journey if you just think of that book. But if you think of the whole journey, then you can put it in perspective. And thank you for the part you played in it and to New Jersey SCBWI. You guys have always been so supportive.



TERRY'S BIO:

On September 11, 1961, Terry Catasús Jennings landed in the United States after a short flight from Cuba. On September 12th, she was enrolled in seventh grade in an American school. Her family, including her father who had been jailed during the Bay of Pigs invasion, was now in a free country. The only catch for twelve-year-old Terry was that she could count in

English and recite the days of the week and the months of the year, but not much more. Often being the only Cuban in her school—even through college—Terry knows what it's like to be the new kid on the block. She is delighted to have the opportunity, with *Definitely Dominguita*, to portray a typical child of immigrants—no different than her peers—other than she loves the classics (like Jennings did as a child) and thinks Cuban food rules.



Terry has written educational content for the Smithsonian Science Education Center and internet sources. From that, she transitioned to writing award-winning science and history-based nonfiction books for children. With *Definitely Dominguita*, she has fulfilled her dream of writing fiction for children.

What Terry loves about working on the *Definitely Dominguita* series is revisiting books she loved as a child and imagining a modern, but similar, adventure for Dominguita and her friends. Most fun was creating the mythical suburban town of Mundytown—a fun place full of caring characters—where Dom and her crew have freedom to roam.

Terry lives with her husband in Reston, Virginia and enjoys spending winters hiking and biking in Southern Utah. She enjoys visiting with her four grandchildren and often encourages them to bring their parents along. She is a member of SCBWI, Las Musas Latinx Collective and the Children's Book Guild of Washington, DC.

FATIMA'S BIO:

Fátima Anaya is a graphic designer and children illustrator based in El Salvador. She loves working on projects about diversity, family, love, and friendship. The Bright Agency has represented her since 2016, working on various books, magazines, and projects for kids.



Born in the tiniest country of Central America, I always wanted to write the magic of ordinary stories but being too young and inexperienced in literature, I started to illustrate every magical moment. My inspiration comes from love, peace, childhood and a little bit of historical events.

This passion of drawing motivated me to achieve a bachelor degree in Graphic Design at Don Bosco University in El Salvador, always trying to combine illustration and graphic design.

Fatima Anaya is represented by [Lucie Luddington](#) — to work with Fatima please [email Lucie](#)



Terry, thank you for sharing your chapter book series with us. I look forward to sharing the third with everyone in August this year. I love how you are sharing your Cuban heritage through your stories, while providing a strong female character for little girls to emulate. Fatima did a really nice job with the cover and the B&W interior art. Good luck with the book!

Talk tomorrow,

Kathy

Sally's Bookshelf

By Sue Heavenrich March 19, 2021

Girls Can Too be knights!

I love sharing books written by friends. I met Terry around a decade ago at the Highlights children's writers workshop in Chautauqua. We sat in on many of the same workshops, and talked STEM writing during lunches. So when she told me she was working on a chapter book series, I couldn't wait to read it!



Definitely Dominguita: Knight of the Cape

by Terry Catasus Jennings; illus. by Fatima Anaya

144 pages; ages 6-9

Aladdin, 2021

Dominguita Melendez is definitely a girl after my own heart. She loves to read, especially tales of adventure and chivalry in her grandmother's books. So rather than playing, she spends her recess period reading *Don Quijote*.

So when the bully sneers that girls can't be knights, Dominguita sets out to prove him wrong. After all, Joan of Arc was a knight. Right?

With a helmet and cape and sense of justice, Dom sets off to seek adventure, even if that

means helping people carry groceries along the way. She acquires a squire, aptly named Pancho Sanchez, and a trusty steed (of sorts), scrounges some armor and manages to convince a neighbor to knight her with his trusty sword. Then she is definitely 100% ready for heroic adventures...

... which turn out a bit differently than expected. I don't want to spoil the story, but let me just say lots of cookies are involved, Dom gains a crew of stout-hearted friends, and there is a real brave and true rescue.



All Dominguita Melendez wanted to do today was read.

Her teacher, Mrs. Kannerpin, had encouraged her to "socialize" during recess. But Dominguita didn't want to socialize. She always had adventures to go on and new characters to meet. She ought to be able to read, right? Other kids got stars for reading one book, after all. And today, more than any other day, Dominguita just wanted to read.

1

This is a fun book that kicks off a new series about Dom and her friends. The stories are based on classic tales: *Treasure Island*, *The Three Musketeers*... I'm sure there will be more, as abuela had many tales to share.

Want a taste of the story? Visit Terry's [website](#) and check out the trailer. She's also got some book-related classroom activities. Then, head over to the [GROG Blog for an interview with Terry](#).

Instagram Post storymamas

A cute new series about a girl with big dreams. The series is great for first through fourth graders who enjoy a story about strong characters, adventure, friendship, family and helping others.



In the first book Cuban American, heroine, Dominguita wants to prove that she is strong, brave and can do anything. She decides to be a knight like Don Quixote who she used to

read about with her Abuela, who has now moved away. She misses the special time she spent reading with her Abuela and becomes determined to help whenever someone is in need in order to share her own stories with Abuela. She doesn't let anything get in the way and with the help of her family and some new friends, she feels proud.



In the second book, Dominguita is inspired by a book she finds in the library that has a map marked with an X. She is excited to take on a new adventure and knows it must be a special map that leads to a treasure. With her new friends she discovers even more than she originally thought she would!

The third book comes out in August and the fourth in November but you can preorder now!

🌟GIVEAWAY🌟

One lucky winner will receive a copy of the first two Definitely Dominguita books courtesy of [@blue slip media](#) (U.S. addresses only please).

To enter:

1. Save and like this post
2. Follow us [@storymamas@terry.c.jennings](#) and [@ladyalouette](#)
3. Tag your friends! Please tag in separate comments, each tag is an entry.

Giveaway ends 4.9.21 [@11pm](#) CST

*Head to our Facebook and Twitter pages for extra entries!

Giveaway not affiliated with Instagram/Facebook.

Thanks [@blue slip media](#) for sending us the books for review. All opinions are our own. [#partner](#)

[#storymamasbookaday](#) [#mgmonday](#) [#middlegrade](#) [#mglit](#) [#middlegradefiction](#) [#middlegrade](#) [#demonday](#) [#stronggirls](#) [#definitelydominguita](#) [#firstgrade](#) [#secondgrade](#) [#thirdgrade](#) [#fourthgrade](#) [#chapterbookseries](#) [#chapterbooksforkids](#)

<https://randomlyreading.blogspot.com/2021/04/knight-of-cape-definitely-dominguita-1.html>

Friday, April 2, 2021

Knight of the Cape (Definitely Dominguita #1) by Terry Catasús Jennings, illustrated by Fatima Anaya



Knight of the Cape (Definitely Dominguita #1)
by Terry Catasús Jennings, illustrated by Fatima Anaya
Aladdin/Simon & Schuster, 2021, 144 pages

There's a new chapter book series in town and it's all about a girl with a great big imagination. Cuban American Dominguita Melendez loves to read even more than playing with the other kids in her class during recess. Lately, she's been reading *Don Quixote*, a book her grandmother loves, to feel closer to her abuela who has recently moved to Florida. But when the class bully, Ernie Bublassi, demands to know why she's reading it, she tells him she's studying to become a knight. Throwing the book into the playground dirt, he tells her girls can't be knights, making Dominguita all that much more

determined to do exactly that and go questing for adventure...and to help people in distress.



Dominguita turns to her older brother Rafi for help. Maybe he could write a book about her knightly deeds to send to their abuela? Rafi agrees after finding out that one of the Bublassi bullies is behind Dominguita's idea - he has had run-ins of his own with Ernie's older brothers. The Bublassi's are the biggest bullies in otherwise quiet and friendly Mundytown.



Before long, Dominguita has acquired a lance, a helmet, some armor, and a cape and is transformed into Dom Capote. She also adds a squire named Pancho Sanchez and a trusty steed/stray dog named Rocinante or Roco for short, but will they find adventure on their quests besides rescuing stray bunnies from cats? Yes, indeed. Leave it to the Bublassi bullies to help Dom and Pancho find a new addition to their quests - Stephanie, after one of the Bublassi takes her leg brace. The three new friends roam around Mundytown and perform good deeds, but can they finally put an end to the Bublassi's bullying once and for all?

This is a charming story about a young girl's adventures and how she finds new friends. Dom had also hoped that asking Rafi to help her write her adventures who serve to bring them close together again. Ever since he began high school, Rafi has had not time for Dom and they used to have so much fun together.

I liked that both of Dominguita's parents and her brother Rafi are supportive of her adventures, though they encourage her to make new friends, too. Mundytown is such a friendly place to live. Even when Dom can't pay for her lunch at Pancho's uncle's

restaurant, he gives her a job to do to work off the cost instead of getting mad. And the grocery store owner, Mr. Kowalski, is more than willing to go along with things and knight Dom with his heirloom sword.

This is the first book in a new series, and like all first books, much of this one is spent setting the premise for future books. In fact, Book #2, *Captain Dom's Treasure* is already available (watch this space) and in August, Book #3, *All for One*, will also be available. These are sure to provide some good reading for younger elementary school kids looking for some fun books.

And just in case you are wondering, yes, *Knight of the Cape* does include a windmill.



This book is recommended for readers age 7+

This book was an ARC gratefully received from Barbara Fisch at [Blue Slip Media](#)



Posted by [Randomly Reading](#) at [11:50 AM](#)

[Email This](#)[BlogThis!](#)[Share to Twitter](#)[Share to Facebook](#)

Labels: [Adventure](#), [Chapter Book](#), [Imagination](#), [Series Book](#)