



The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora

Pablo Cartaya

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Save the restaurant. Save the town. Get the girl. Make Abuela proud. Can thirteen-year-old Arturo Zamora do it all or is he in for a BIG, EPIC FAIL?

For Arturo, summertime in Miami means playing basketball until dark, sipping mango smoothies, and keeping cool under banyan trees. And maybe a few shifts as junior lunchtime dishwasher at Abuela's restaurant. Maybe. But this summer also includes Carmen, a cute poetry enthusiast who moves into Arturo's apartment complex and turns his stomach into a deep fryer. He almost doesn't notice the smarmy land developer who rolls into town and threatens to change it. Arturo refuses to let his family and community go down without a fight, and as he schemes with Carmen, Arturo discovers the power of poetry and protest through untold family stories and the work of Jose Marti.

The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora Details

Date : Published 2017 by Viking

ISBN :

Author : Pablo Cartaya

Format : Hardcover 236 pages

Genre : Childrens, Middle Grade, Realistic Fiction, Young Adult, Fiction, Family

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From Reader Review The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora for online ebook

Shenwei says

A touching middle grade story about family, food, poetry, community, first crushes, and the fight against gentrification. Loved the incorporation of poetry into the story, notably poems by Cuban revolutionary José Martí.

Shaye Miller says

After reading and enjoying Marcus Vega Doesn't Speak Spanish two weeks ago, this earlier work of Cartaya's was recommended reading. So I didn't skip a beat to get my hands on a copy. Arturo Zamora was born into a close-knit family that runs a well-loved restaurant. During this summer, his mother's goddaughter, Carmen, visits and introduces him to new poetry. But he's suddenly feeling all sorts of awkward and confusing feelings about her (someone he's usually seen like family). At the same time, Wilfrido Pipo is a newcomer to the community and Arturo's family soon realizes that he has big plans for their town — plans that do not include their family restaurant!! I loved the Spanish-American culture in this story. The scene is so well written that it's easy to imagine walking right in to the room. You can just hear the clinking of the dishes in their restaurant, smell the delicious foods, and feel Abuela's warm hugs. What a precious story of family and traditions and crushes and community and loss. For this and more #kidlit, #mglit, and #yalit book reviews, please visit my blog: The Miller Memo.

Cathy says

I loved the cultural aspect of this book -- it makes me want to find out more about Cuba and its people. I loved the families in the book and I loved the way the conflict/s were presented and resolved. The main character -- all the characters -- in the book are wonderful. They are characters that, now that I'm done with the book, I miss them! That's the best indicator of a good book in my view! Great read!

Laurie says

Interest Level: 5-8; Reading Level: 5.7

If you knew that your family home and your family business was in jeopardy of being destroyed, would you have the guts to stand up and fight for it, or would you sit back and watch it happen? Arturo's vastly large family all lives in one apartment complex community within steps from the family restaurant, La Cocina de la Isla. Arturo has his family, his two best friends, and it is summertime which means basketball, working at the restaurant, and his Abuela's mango smoothies. This is supposed to be an amazing summer until nasty, prize-bribing, land developer comes into their small community wanting to build a high-rise, luxurious, amenity-filled apartment building. When Arturo and his family realize the location for this building is in the lot next door to the family restaurant, which they were planning on expanding to, but also was eventually

going to take over and tear down La Cocina de la Isla, the fight is on. Not only does Arturo have all of this to deal with, he also is trying to figure out the feelings he has for a family friend's daughter, Carmen. Can Arturo save his family, save the community, and get the girl? Read this amazing story of a kid who finds his voice and fights for what means the most to him!

I absolutely loved this story! From the very beginning Arturo and his family brings you into their inner-circle of warmth and love. I so wanted to go to La Cocina de la Isla and sit down with them to eat their amazing food. I also wanted to sit in that restaurant and have Arturo's Abuela come and talk to me. I also wanted to stand next to each and every one of them as they fought against injustice. Do not miss this incredible story of family, friends, and love of a community!

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Brandy Painter says

Originally posted here at Random Musings of a Bibliophile.

The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora by Pablo Cartaya is a book I found via the new arrival shelf at the library. (Yay libraries!) I am so happy I found it too. It is an excellent book about family and community centered around the Cuban restaurant Arturo's family owns.

Arturo has high hopes for the summer. He will be working in his family's restaurant earning money. His mom's goddaughter, Carmen, is visiting and suddenly he is feeling all kinds of things in his gut he is unused to. When a greasy developer tries to convince the city council that what Arturo's Miami neighborhood needs is a high rise, the restaurant his family owns and runs (but is in a building they lease) is threatened. Arturo is determined to save the day, win the girl, and make his Abuela, who pours her heart into the restaurant, community and its people, proud.

The kids in this book, with Arturo in the lead, are wonderful. I loved the entire cast of characters. Arturo is definitely going to be a favorite of mine for a while. His inner voice is perfect. Confused, frustrated, impatient, cocky, snarky, insecure—it runs the gamut of middle school emotions perfectly. His two best friends are foils for him in different ways and help the reader get to know Arturo quickly and well. The interactions between the three are amusing and realistic. Carmen is also wonderful. She and her father are staying in Miami for the summer following the death of Carmen's mother. She is still grieving, but is also a vibrant girl full of plans. She is reading poetry by Cuban revolutionary José Martí, which sparks an interest in the same in Arturo. Through this Arturo finds a connection to his Abuelo, who he discovers was a fan of

Marti and even tried his hand at poetry himself.

Unlike a lot of MG novels, the adults are incredibly important in this book. The kids aren't fighting on their own. They aren't left to figure everything out and grieve and move on by themselves. There are times when Arturo takes matters into his own hands, but it isn't because the adults aren't present. And when those matters blow up in his face, he faces consequences and is loved by those adults. His entire family is wonderful and incredibly close. Several scenes take place during the family's Sunday dinners.

The plot of the book follows Arturo as he discovers what the land developer is up to and then tries to stop him. There is laughter, tears, anger, fights, and reconciliation. It is a story about friendship, first crushes, and community. At its core, it is a story about a boy who finds a connection between his present and his past. The main part of that centers on the relationship between Arturo and his Abuela, which is a beautiful story. I'm impressed by how well Cartaya was able to juggle all of this so well. He did an amazing job of balancing all these, while writing a book that is both fun and layered.

The setting of the book is crucial. The restaurant Arturo's family owns is the heart of their community. People come there to talk to Abuela as much as they come for the excellent food. Cartaya's descriptions of the restaurant bring it to vibrant life. I have to give him extra credit for describing how a restaurant kitchen works so well in a MG book. No idealization here. Another plus of this book is the untranslated Spanish it contains. The conversations between Arturo and his Abuela occur with her speaking Spanish and him responding in English. Through context, non-Spanish speakers (like me) can figure out what is being said. The inclusion of the Spanish is essential to making the book realistic and given the population of America's schools, we need more books that do this.

This book covers so many areas that MG age readers are looking for regularly in books, it is a must have for those who deal regularly with those kids.

Jillian Heise says

I adored this book & Arturo's journey! I was surrounded by warm feelings about family and community and culture and the power of speaking out and sticking up for who and what you love, and how much more difficult that is as an adolescent.

Paula says

So here's an unintended consequence of our Tangerine Hitler in Chief -- you can now make the villain in a children's book just as grotesque and childish as you like.

Where previously I might have read the soulless real estate developer bent on destroying Arturo's family's restaurant as cartoonish and unrealistic, now I get that someone just like "Wilfrido Pipo" has surely been taking down honest businesses for decades, and with the same lack of subtlety.

Also, this is a fantastic book.

Abby Johnson says

Why did I wait so long to pick up this book?! I really enjoyed it. Teresa tried to tell me. This is a funny and heartfelt story about a Cuban American family trying to save their restaurant when developers want to move in and gentrify their neighborhood. Hand to middle schoolers who like character-driven books that are both funny and serious and any kids who are driven to make a difference in their world. The audiobook is read by the author who is also an actor and he reads it really well with subtle but effective voices for the characters. Would listen again.

Julie says

The warm sense of family and values that emanates from this book is wonderful. Great plot, colorful, perfectly flawed characters. Highly recommend

Elif says

[When Abuela passes away, your heart shatters and you feel bad for all the Zamora's. Also, did anyone find themselves supporting Carturo all the way? (hide spoiler)]

Tori says

The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora by Pablo Cartaya, is about a boy named Arturo who has a huge family. Their family owns the restaurant La Cocina in Miami. This summer was going to be the best summer ever before Carmen, a beautiful girl who loves poetry, and Pipo, a salesman with a mysterious business, shows up and flips Arturo's feelings and life upside down. Will he be able to do it all or will it be an epic fail. This book is amazing Pablo Cartaya is an amazing writer and I suggest this book for anyone and everyone because this book is awesome.

Joan says

I like the way we are beginning to get good nice families back in kids' lit. such as the family in The Hate You Give. This "Epic Fail" one has an extended family that is just plain close and accepting of each other. Sure, they get on each other's nerves but push comes to shove, the family is there for each other. However, that is about all I can praise the book for. I rounded this up from 2.5 stars. The success does not make logical sense. One minute they are talking to the council members who decide not to decide. The next minute they are dealing with an illegally placed sign which apparently is what got the battle won. Huh? I'm skipping a few things but my point is that it is unclear what won the battle. After it being the focus of the whole book, it was rather disconcerting to just have it understood that of course they won. I do get the author's point, that the family is the most important part of their lives. Nonetheless, the denouement really was lacking in this book. I also found the Spanish translations into English rather erratic. I understand that it is hard to make the translations not stop the action of the story, but I've seen it done more smoothly than in this story. There are

many characters where I feel by the end of the story that I could meet them and have a pretty good idea what makes them tick. I never got that feeling with Arturo. Other than his intense love of family, I don't really know what makes him unique. I can remember the plot at the moment, since I just finished reading about 15 minutes ago. I'm not too sure I'll remember the plot by tomorrow. This book is just pretty unremarkable. That last line I wrote cues the coming rant: I do wish that the award committees would simply not award a prize at all if there isn't high quality titles! This one simply shouldn't have won. The villain is completely one dimensional. Even abuela is not all that distinctive a character, although I do get a better feel for her than anyone else. I have this problem with other ALA awards as well. There was one year when the committee did announce they were not handing out any awards that year but would next year. That is definitely a way to improve the general writing quality! I wish they would have the courage to disappoint the community again if nothing special is written!

Not recommended.

Brenda Kahn says

Reading this debut was like being enfolded into Arturo's Abuela's warm hugs. It was like meeting a family for the first time and feeling as comfortable as if you've known them forever. Arturo's voice is earnest and awkward and at times, hilarious but always genuine.

Reread this with my ears when I heard the author was the narrator. Well done performance. Still love the book.

Donalyn says

Great book for 5-8 graders!

Westminster Library says

Arturo Zamora is looking forward to another chill summer working at his family restaurant La Cocina but then a few things occur. First he gets "promoted" to assistant prep kitchen dishwasher and then a strange guy called Wilfrido Pipo starts hanging around the neighborhood and letting people know he has big plans for the area- plans that may or may not include La Cocina. If this wasn't enough, Arturo's mom's goddaughter is visiting from Spain and Arturo finds himself acting weird around her for some reason. This was a funny, charming read that managed to bring together themes such as family, gentrification, and the importance of community while also mentioning the main character's burgeoning first crush.

Find The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora at the Westminster Public Library!
