

YHBA Brief Novel Resource 2009 - 2010  
For the Picture Book,

# Martina the Beautiful Cockroach A Cuban Folktale



Written by Carmen Agra Deedy  
Illustrated by Michael Austin

Published by Peachtree Publishers

[www.peachtree-online.com](http://www.peachtree-online.com)

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Martina the Beautiful Cockroach's own website

[www.beautifulmartina.com](http://www.beautifulmartina.com)

## About the Author



### **Carmen Agra Deedy** **[www.carmendeedy.com](http://www.carmendeedy.com)**

Carmen Agra Deedy was born in Havana, Cuba. Her family came to America in 1963 after the Cuban Revolution. She grew up in Decatur, Georgia and resides in Atlanta today with her three daughters. Her family's Cuban heritage and being raised in the South influence Deedy's writings greatly. In fact, the idea for this book came from advice her own Abuela gave her in finding a suitor. Ms. Deedy heard many Cuban folktales and sayings while working in the kitchen with her Cuban relatives as she grew up. In addition to being an author, Carmen Agra Deedy also does storytelling

performances and has contributed to NPR programs such as "Latino USA" and "Weekend All Things Considered."

## **Other Books Written by Carmen Agra Deedy & Their Awards and Nominations**

### Agatha's Feather Bed: *Not Just Another Wild Goose Story*

published in 1994 by Peachtree Publishers

### TreeMan

published in 1993 by Peachtree Publishers

#### *Award received:*

1993 Georgia Author of the Year for Juvenile Literature

### The Secret of Old Zeb

published in 1997 by Peachtree Publishers

#### *Award received:*

1997 Award of Merit, Southern Book Competition, Southeastern Library Association

### The Last Dance

published in 1995 by Peachtree Publishers

Featured in the Children's Book Council's "Not Just for Children Anymore"

### The Library Dragon

published in 1994 by Peachtree Publishers

#### *Awards received:*

2003 Children's title that represented GA at the National Book Festival/GA Center for the Book

2002 Volunteer State Book Award Nominee

2002 Georgia Top 25 Reading List/ Georgia Center for the Book

1999 Wyoming Library Association Children's Book Award (Nominee)

1999 Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Award Nominee

1997 Flicker Tale Children's Book Award (North Dakota)

1997 Florida Reading Association Children's Book Award

1997 Young Hoosier Book Award-Indiana (Nominee)

1997 Colorado Children's Book Award (Nominee)

1996 Washington Children's Choice Picture Book Award (Nominee)

### The Yellow Star: The Legend of Christian X of Denmark

published in 2000 by Peachtree Publishers

#### *Awards received:*

2005 Georgia Children's Picture Book Award (Nominee)  
2003 California Young Reader Medal (Nominee)  
2003 Land of Enchantment (New Mexico) Book Awards (Master List)  
2003 Great Lakes' Great Books Award/Michigan Reading Association (Nominee)  
2002 National Literary Association of England WOW! Award  
2002 Texas Bluebonnet Award Master List Texas Library Association  
2002 South Dakota Prairie Pasque Children's Book Award/S.D. Library Association (Nominee)  
2002 Manhattan Country School (NYC) "Living the Dream" Children's Book Award (Nominee)  
2002 Florida Reading Association Children's Book Award (Nominee)  
2001 Storytelling World Award: Stories for Adolescent Listeners  
2001 Jane Addams Peace Association Honor Book Award  
2001 Christopher Award, "Books for Young People Category"  
2001 Bologna Ragazzi Award for Children's Non-fiction  
2001 Association of Booksellers for Children ABC Children's Booksellers' Choices Award  
2001 Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People "Selector's Choice,"  
2001 International Reading Association/Notable Book for a Global Society  
2001 International Reading Association Teacher's Choice (Intermediate Category)  
2001 American Booksellers Association: Kid's Pick of the Lists & BookSense 76  
2001 Children's Book Council/Combined Book Exhibit: Children's Books Mean Business  
2000 Parent's Choice Gold Award  
2001 Association of Jewish Libraries Notable Book for Children  
2000 Parent's Guide to Children's Media Award  
2000 Best Bets for the Classroom/Virginia Center for Children's Books

## Growing up Cuban in Decatur, Georgia (Audio cassette/CD)

published in 1995 by Peachtree Publishers

### *Award received:*

1996 Parents' Choice Gold Award Winner  
1995 Best Audiobook - Storytelling by *Publishers Weekly*

## **Awards received by Martina the Beautiful Cockroach**

### **English Edition**

2008 Pura Belpre Medal (honor book) / ALA/ALSC, REFORMA, National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos  
2008 Amelia Bloomer Project Nominee / ALA Booklist, Feminist Task Force  
2008 Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People / National Council for the Social Studies and the Children's Book Council

### Spanish Edition

2008 Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People / National Council for the Social Studies and the Children's Book Council

2007 - 2008 Junior Library Guild Selection

2007 Criticas Magazine Starred Review

## About the Illustrator



Michael Austin's website

[www.austinillustration.com](http://www.austinillustration.com)

Michael Austin didn't like to color in the lines of his coloring books as a child. The lines slowed him down. Eventually, his father showed him how to draw things. His father would draw something first and then Michael would recreate them. As a child, he loved "Scooby Doo" and "The Addams Family" on TV. He enjoyed drawing scary and/or creepy characters. He actually got his start in Illustrating when his stepmom met Carmen Agra Deedy (the author of this book) and gave Ms. Deedy a sample of his work. Carmen Agra Deedy encouraged him to contact Peachtree Publishers and put in a good word for him.

Peachtree Publishers eventually contacted him to do the illustrations for the book, 13 Monsters Who Should Be Avoided.

Thus his career as an illustrator for children's books took off. Michael likes to put his family in many of his illustrations for books. Often you can find his wife and dog in one of the pictures he has illustrated for a picture book.

## Other Books Illustrated by Michael Austin

### Railroad John and the Red Rock Run

By Tony Crunk. Peachtree Publishers 2006

### Late for School

By Mike Reiss. Peachtree Publishers 2003

### Bats, Bats, Bats!

By Amy Levin. Peachtree Publishers 2000

### The Horned Toad Prince

By Jackie Hopkins. Peachtree Publishers 2000

### 13 Monsters Who Should Be Avoided

By Kevin Shortsleeve. Peachtree Publishers 2000

## Annotation

Bringing to life a folktale from her own past and Cuban heritage, Carmen Agra Deedy shares with us the secret to a perfect match with an unusual heroine - a cockroach. However, this isn't any ordinary cockroach. This is Martina "the Beautiful cockroach". She is a vision of loveliness and compassion thanks to the illustrations done in Acrylics by Michael Austin. His paintings make us feel the romance and varied emotions just as strongly as Martina does throughout the story.

What a story we are told about Martina's search for a proper husband! She is sure to have many suitors, but she isn't sure how to pick the right one. Lucky for Martina and us, her Abuela (grandma) shares with her some advice. Martina should spill some coffee on the shoes of each of her suitors. How they react to the spilt coffee will tell Martina how they will treat her when they are married and they are angry with her. The suitors are a varied sort. There is a Rooster who becomes furious with her when his shoes are dirtied. There is a pig who will keep her cleaning up after him. A lizard who becomes so enraged that he slips and threatens to eat her. Finally, a soft spoken mouse wins Martina's heart by turning the tables and spilling the coffee on her shoes. A perfect match indeed!

## **Genre**

Folktale, Family story, Animals, & Romance

## **Point of View**

Third Person

## **Themes**

1. Love
2. Finding your mate where you least expect it
3. Be true to yourself and those around you

## **Conflict**

**Internal Conflict** - Martina is afraid that she won't find her mate.

**External Conflict** - All the different suitors want to be the one to marry Martina, but she is unsure of their true intentions towards her.

## **Conflict Resolution**

**Internal Conflict** - She resolves this conflict by going out to find her mate rather than letting him find her. She takes control of the situation.

**External Conflict** - Martina's Abuela has her test each suitor by spilling coffee on their shoes. Martina does this to see how the suitors will treat Martina when they are married and get angry at her. Martina finds her mate when the mouse spills coffee on her shoes before she can do it to him.

## Characters

**Martina Josefina Catalina Cucaracha** - Martina is the main character of this book. She is the beautiful cockroach that is 21 days old and searching for her mate.

**Tia Cuca** - Martina's aunt who gives her a seashell comb to help her find a husband.

**Mama** - Martina's mother who gives her a lace shawl to help her find a husband.

**Abuela** - Martina's Cuban grandmother who gives her the following advice to find a husband:

"Spill coffee on your suitors shoes to see how they react when they are angry. This will tell you how he will speak to you when he loses his temper."

**Papa** - Martina's father who sends the parrot to tell the other animals that Martina is ready to choose a husband.

**Don Gallo** - A rooster who proposes marriage to Martina. He becomes furious with Martina when she spills coffee on his shoes and yells at her. He is too cocky for Martina to marry.

**Don Cerdo** - A smelly pig that proposes to Martina. He orders Martina to clean up after him when she spills coffee on his shoes.

**Don Lagarto** - A sneaky lizard that proposes marriage to Martina. He threatens to eat Martina when she spills coffee on his shoes.

**Perez** - A shy tiny brown mouse that Martina pursues to see if he is a possible mate for her. Perez turns the tables on Martina and spills coffee on her shoes before she can do it to him. At last, Martina has found her mate.

## **Setting**

The story takes place in the Cucaracha household in Old Havana.

## **Interest Level**

Preschool to Third Grade  
Perma-Bound Resources

## **Reading Level**

3.1  
Perma-Bound Resource

## **BookTalk**

Imagine you're a cockroach. You're not just any cockroach you're the beautiful cockroach who has turned 21 days old.

What would you do when you turn 21 days old? Well, you need to go find yourself a husband! How will you ever find a

husband from all the animals to choose from outside your door? Well, that is the situation Martina the beautiful cockroach finds herself in today. Her grandma gives her some shocking advice on how to find a husband. It involves coffee, shoes, and anger. If you want to know what the shocking secret advice is to find a husband, you'll have to read Carmen Agra Deedy's book, Martina the Beautiful Cockroach.

## Language

(Spelling & Vocabulary)

**Cockroach** (page 1) - An insect with rapid movements that is considered a household pest

**Senora** (page 2) - Spanish word for lady

**Tia** (page 2) - Spanish word for Aunt

**Una Peineta** (page 2) - Spanish for seashell comb

**Una Mantilla** (page 2) - Spanish for lace shawl

**Abuela** (page 2) - Spanish for Grandmother

**Un consejo increíble** (page 2) - Spanish for shocking advice

**Papa** (page 6) - Spanish for father

**El perica** (page 6) - Spanish for parrot

**Custom** (page 8) - habit, practice, way of doing things for many generations

**Gallo** (page 10) - Spanish for Rooster, also the rooster's name

**Reflection** (page 10) - What you see in the mirror looking back at you

**Caramba** (page 10) - A Spanish exclamation of surprise  
**Crooned** (page 10) - To sing or speak in a soft soothing voice  
**Muchacha** (page 10) - Spanish for girl  
**Senor** (page 10) - Spanish for sir  
**Mock** (page 11) - pretend, fake  
**Dismay** (page 11) - alarm  
**Humble** (page 12) - modest, politely respectful  
**Cocky** (page 12) - arrogant, conceited  
**Cerdo** (page 14) - Spanish for pig  
**Unimaginable** (page 14) - hard to believe  
**Senorita** (page 14) - Spanish for Miss  
**Disbelief** (page 16) - hard to believe  
**Boorish** (page 16) - unmannered, crude  
**Unsuitable** (page 16) - not right for a person or situation  
**Lagarto** (page 18) - Spanish for Lizard  
**Warbled** (page 18) - to sing with quavers  
**Fuming** (page 21) - so angry or mad  
**Si** (page 21) - Spanish for yes  
**Café Cubano** (page 27) - Spanish for Cuban coffee  
**Mi Amor** (page 28) - Spanish for My Love

# Indiana Academic Standards Met by Novel Content

## Kindergarten

Reading K.1.1, K.1.2, K.1.22, K.3.3, K.3.5,

## First Grade

Reading 1.3.1, 1.3.2, 1.3.3, 1.3.4, 1.3.5, 1.7.1, 1.7.7

## Second Grade

Reading 2.3.3, 2.3.5, 2.3.6, 2.3.7

## Third Grade

Reading 3.1.6, 3.1.7, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.3, 3.3.6, 3.3.7, 3.3.8

## Anticipation Statements

Before		<u><i>Martina the Beautiful Cockroach</i></u> By Carmen Agra Deedy	After	
Agree	disagree		Agree	disagree
		You should always listen to the advice your elders/grandparents give you.		
		You can judge the way someone will act by the way they look.		
		How a person reacts to an accident will tell you a lot about their personality.		
		Cockroaches have feelings too.		
		It is okay to test someone's character.		
		You might find the person for you to love where you least expect to find it.		

## Art Medium

- A. Acrylics are the art medium used in the pictures for Martina the Beautiful Cockroach.
- B. Acrylic paint is used instead of oil paint because it doesn't require as much drying time between layers/coats of paint, but still gives a bold color. Also, Acrylic paint can be thinned with water so that the colors may be painted on like watercolor paint. However, once dried you cannot add a new wet layer to the dry area to create new colors or blends.
- C. & D. This story is a fantasy story about animals having human characteristics such as falling in love. The acrylics provide rich colors that are at times bold yet soft. The acrylics allow the illustrator to provide rich details to the animals, flowers, and immediate surroundings. However, he is able to make the backgrounds soft and dreamy with the acrylics ability to act like a watercolor paint. The acrylics set the mood for this story of animals falling in love.

# Bibliography

Carmen Agra Deedy's website

[www.carmendeedy.com](http://www.carmendeedy.com)

Martina the Beautiful Cockroach - book website

[www.beautifulmartina.com](http://www.beautifulmartina.com)

Carmen Agra Deedy's Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carmen\\_Agra\\_Deedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carmen_Agra_Deedy)

Carmen Agra Deedy's profile from the Decatur Book Festival

<http://www.decaturookfestival.com/2006/Authors/carmen-agra-deedy.html>

Michael Austin's website

[www.austinillustration.com](http://www.austinillustration.com)

Profile page from his website contains an article from The Atlanta - Journal Constitution

About the illustrator - from the Texas Reading Club 2005 manual

<http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ld/projects/trc/2005/manual/about.html>

Amazon

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

Perma-Bound for reading levels

[www.perma-bound.com](http://www.perma-bound.com)

Dictionary

[www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)

Spanish Translations at babelfish

[http://babelfish.yahoo.com/translate\\_txt](http://babelfish.yahoo.com/translate_txt)

Indiana State Standards

<http://dc.doe.in.gov/Standards/AcademicStandards/index.shtml>