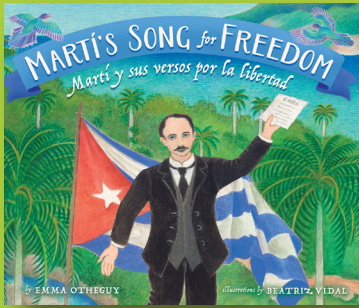


## TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

## Martí's Song for Freedom/ Martí y sus versos por la libertad

written by Emma Otheguy, illustrated by Beatriz Vidal

### About the Book

Genre: Nonfiction  
(Biography)

\*Reading Level: Grade 5

Interest Level: Grades 2–8

Guided Reading Level: T

Spanish Guided Reading  
Level: U

Accelerated Reader®  
Level/Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

\*Reading level based on the  
Spache Readability Formula

**Themes:** Freedom of  
Expression, Colonialism,  
History, Nature, Poetry,  
Political Essay, Bilingual  
Stories, Cuban/Latino  
Interest, Hispanic Interest

### SYNOPSIS

As a boy, José Martí was inspired by the natural world. He found freedom in the river that rushed to the sea and peace in the *palmas reales* that swayed in the wind. Freedom, he believed, was the inherent right of all men and women. But his home island of Cuba was colonized by Spain, and some of the people were enslaved by rich landowners. Enraged, Martí took up his pen and fought against this oppression through his writings. By age seventeen, he was declared an enemy of Spain and forced to leave his beloved island.

Martí traveled the world, speaking out for Cuba's independence. But throughout his exile, he suffered from illness and homesickness. He found solace in New York's Catskill Mountains, where nature inspired him once again to fight for independence.

Written in verse, with excerpts from Martí's seminal *Versos sencillos*, this book is a beautiful tribute to a brilliant political writer and courageous fighter of freedom for all men and women.



## BACKGROUND

### Afterword from Emma Otheguy:

“José Martí, called Pepe (a nickname for “José”) by his friends and family, was born in Cuba in 1853. His father, a former Spanish soldier, struggled to find enough work to support Martí and his seven sisters. From a young age, Martí excelled in school, especially in writing. His mother and father were proud of his aptitude, but they never wanted him to become involved in politics and risk the family’s stability.

Martí’s commitment to emancipation was sparked by his personal observations of slavery. He was also aware of what was happening around the world, especially in the United States. From the docks in Havana, he and his best friend, Fermín Valdés Domínguez, watched the ships of the Union blockade in the Florida Straits, and they read every news story they could find about the Civil War (1861-1865). When President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, they wore hemp bracelets to commemorate his death.

Cuba’s Ten Years’ War started in 1868 when a plantation owner named Carlos Manuel de Céspedes declared he would fight for independence from Spain. He freed the men and women enslaved on his plantation to fight under him. As the war evolved, enslaved people and free blacks organized to fight for emancipation as well as independence. Although the rebels were unsuccessful and Cuba remained a colony, slavery was finally abolished in 1886. The teenage José Martí supported the Ten Years’ War, and his first published work was in praise of the rebels. As a result, Martí was arrested and exiled from Cuba.

Even after the failure of the Ten Years’ War, Martí was unwilling to give up on Cuban independence. He traveled throughout Latin America and the United States, building a network of financial and military

support. In the 1880s and 1890s, Martí lived in Nueva York. He was at once dazzled and horrified by the city, and the sentiment is reflected in his famous essay “Nuestra América.” In the essay, Martí criticized the aggression and incursions of the United States in Latin America, but he also urged Latin Americans to fight colonialism and oppression as the United States had done. During this time, Martí also published the children’s magazine *La edad de oro*. The stories from this collection are widely read to this day and are beloved throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

Martí sometimes visited the Catskill Mountains, a hundred miles north of Nueva York, in the Hudson Valley. His poetry collection *Versos sencillos* was written during one of these trips. In these poems, Martí revealed a love both for the island landscape of Cuba and the mountains of New York State. Martí was as committed to poetry as he was to politics, and he is considered one of the founders of a literary movement called *modernismo*, exemplified by elegant and musical poetry. Today, stanzas from *Versos sencillos* are included in the song, “Guantanamo,” which has been recorded by many famous artists, including Cuban American singer Celia Cruz.

Martí continued to fight for Cuban independence after he returned from the Catskills. He coordinated with other Cubans, particularly veterans of the Ten Years’ War, such as Máximo Gómez and Antonio Maceo, to form the Cuban Revolutionary Party. Their goal was to gain independence from Spain and organize a democracy that protected the rights of all citizens, regardless of skin color or nation of origin.

The Cuban War for Independence began in 1895. Martí wanted to do more than write: He wanted to fight for his country. Martí traveled to Cuba by boat, and against the advice of General Gómez, he joined the war.



After only a few weeks, Martí died in his first battle, but Cubans kept fighting and formally gained independence in 1902.

In 1945, the mayor of Nueva York, Fiorello H. La Guardia, renamed Sixth Avenue in Manhattan as Avenue of the Americas, and later a statue of José Martí was placed near the entrance of Central Park. Nearby are statues of two other Latin Americans, Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín. These statues honor everyone who fought against slavery and the tyranny of colonialism. Although Cuba is only one island and Martí was only one man, his story speaks to the struggles faced by every nation in the Americas.”

**Author's Note from Emma Otheguy:**

“Martí's passion for poetry, nature, and democracy bridged the values of Latin America and the United States. Martí was a man of both lands who longed for Cuba even as he was inspired by New York State. When I read Martí's poems and think about the links he created between the United States and Latin America, between Nueva York and Havana, I feel that I'm like Martí, from every place and on the road to everywhere: a Latina, and an American.”

**Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War:**

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States. During his presidency, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. This Proclamation declared that all slaves be freed within the Confederacy. Abraham Lincoln was assassinated on April 14, 1865 at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. He is one of the most well-known and venerated presidents in American history. (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/presidents/abrahamlincoln>)

**Additional LEE & LOW titles to teach Biography:**

***Take a Picture of Me, James VanDerZee!***

written by Andrea Loney, illustrated by Keith Mallett

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/take-a-picture-of-me-james-van-der-zee>

***Love to Langston*** written by Lynn Rubright, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/love-to-langston>

***Etched in Clay: The Life of Dave, Enslaved Potter and Poet*** written and illustrated by Andrea Cheng

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/etched-in-clay>

***How We Are Smart*** written by W. Nikola-Lisa, illustrated by Sean Qualls

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/how-we-are-smart>

***The Storyteller's Candle/La velita de los cuentos*** written by Lucía González, illustrated by Lulu Delacre

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-storyteller-s-candle-la-velita-de-los-cuentos>

***Frederick Douglass: The Last Day of Slavery*** written by William Miller, illustrated by Cedric Lucas

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/frederick-douglass>

***John Lewis in the Lead: A Story of the Civil Rights Movement*** written by Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson, illustrated by Benny Andrews

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/john-lewis-in-the-lead>





## VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students.

Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

### Content Specific

Palmas reales, Cuba, sugarcane, Havana, Civil War, Abraham Lincoln, Spain, quarry, shackles, Nueva York, Catskills, helecho

### Academic

swelled, enslaved, burden, sorrows, misery, diversity, indigenous, independence, wealthy, pamphlet, vain, liberty, yearned, weary, crimson, fieriest, homesickness, verses, rile, democracy, slavery

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Ask students if they have ever heard of José Martí. For students who have: ask: What do you know about José Martí? For students who have not: Based on the cover, who do you think José Martí is? Why?
2. Ask students what they know about Cuban history. What do students know about Cuba? How did they learn about Cuba?
3. Ask students what they know about the Civil War. What do students know about the second half of the nineteenth century? What major events occurred during this period? What famous figures do you know?
4. Ask students what freedom means to them. What does freedom mean to you? What about to your family?
5. Have you ever had to stand up for your beliefs? How did you fight for your beliefs? What were you fighting for? Why?

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

1. **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
2. **Read Emma Otheguy's Biography:** Read about Emma Otheguy on the back cover as well as her website [emmaotheguy.com](http://emmaotheguy.com). This is her first book. What do you think the writing process is like, especially for a first-time children's book author?
3. **Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they:** learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.



4. **Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebook during reading.** After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it.
5. **Have students read the Afterword before reading *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*.** This is available at the end of the book. Students will begin the story with more background and knowledge to ground their thinking while they read

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how and why José Martí fought for Cuban independence
- how José Martí inspired others to fight against slavery and the enslavement of Cuban people
- how José Martí's passion for nature influenced his poetry and identity
- how José Martí used poetry to express his feelings and emotions
- how José Martí overcame obstacles and barriers during his quest

Encourage students to consider why the author, Emma Otheguy, would want to share this story with young people about José Martí's courageous fight for Cuban independence.

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3; and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What did José and his father do when they went to the countryside?
2. What did José see that made him angry and shake with rage?
3. What president in the United States did José admire?
4. Which country ruled Cuba?
5. What crop was grown in Cuba? Who picked the crop? Who benefited from the crop?
6. What did José want for the Cuban people?
7. Which country started a war in 1868?
8. Why did Spain fight to keep Cuba?
9. What did José start to do to express his beliefs about the Spanish?
10. What happened to José after he published his thoughts in newspapers?
11. When the Spanish agreed to release José, where did he go?
12. What did José do to continue to fight for Cuba's independence in the United States?
13. What bothered José about the United States? What did he think about the city and its people in New York?
14. When José was tired and wanted to get out of the city, where did he go? What did he do there? How did it make him feel?
15. Why did José return to Cuba? What did he do once he returned?
16. How did José die?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3; and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3; and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)



★ **VERDICT:** “A sensitive and poignant tribute to one of Latin American’s most important historical figures that will encourage readers of all ages to fight for freedom and peace.”

– *School Library Journal*

★ “In bringing an important life back into the conversation during divided political times, this book spotlights a steadfast hero and brilliant writer still worth admiring today.”

–*Kirkus Reviews*

★ “Excerpts from Martí’s *Versos sencillos* thoughtfully underscore this moving account of this crusade for justice.

–*Publisher’s Weekly*

1. What does the title *Martí’s Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad* mean to you after reading? Why do you think the author chose this particular title?
2. How did José fall in love with Cuba? Why do you think that? Why do you think the author, Emma Otheguy, chose to write about José’s love for his country?
3. What did Cuba mean to José? How did his thoughts and beliefs differ from the Spanish rulers? Why?
4. Why do you think José continued to fight for Cuba’s independence? José encountered a lot of obstacles in his life. After being exiled and living in New York, why was he still fighting for Cuba’s freedom?
5. How did nature influence José’s poetry? Why do you think nature was so meaningful to him?
6. What kind of symbols does Emma Otheguy use throughout *Martí’s Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*? How do you identify symbols in text? What do you think of the intentional choices of the illustrations on the pages with text (for example, the caged bird)? What do you think the symbols represent? Why?
7. Why did Emma Otheguy choose to write this book in verse? What do you think was important about that decision? How do you think this book would be different if it was not

written in verse? How would it be different if it was not a picture book?

8. Why did Emma Otheguy choose to include excerpts from *Versos sencillos*? How do the excerpts from *Versos sencillos* change the way you engaged with the book? What if Emma Otheguy did not use excerpts from *Versos sencillos*? How would that change your reaction after reading the book?
9. How do you think José Martí’s words apply to our society today? Do you think his emotions and feelings about the United States government apply to our world now? Why or why not?

### Reader’s Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

1. **What is one big thought that you have after reading this book?** Think about José’s personal and historical journey for Cuban freedom. What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. **What do you think Emma Otheguy’s message to the reader is?** Think about possible motivations behind Emma Otheguy’s intentions to write the book. What do you think she wanted to tell her readers?
3. **Have students make a text-to-self connection.** What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do José’s



experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you? José Martí was a very inspiring and heroic historical figure. Who are your heroes in your own life? Why are they important to you?

- 4. Have students make a text-to-text connection.** Did you think of any other books while you read *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*? Why did you make those connections?
- 5. Have students make a text-to-world connection.** What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world, such as on television or in a newspaper? Why did this book make you think of that?
- 6. What does freedom mean to students after reading?** After reading *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*, what does freedom mean to you? Why? How does the meaning of freedom change before and after reading *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*?

### ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

- 1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers.** Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
- 2. The high quality bilingual text presents ample opportunity here to encourage students to engage with both languages.** Have one student read the English translation and one student read Spanish translation (if applicable in your classroom). Both students who are reading the translations should be biliterate in both English and Spanish. Ask students to compare their experiences. What was it like reading the story in English? What was it like reading the story in Spanish? Have students discuss the different translations and how they are similar/different.

- 3. Have each student write three questions about the story.** Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
- 4. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:**
  - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
- 5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students.** Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
- 6. Have students consult a map when they are reading the story, or present a map to the whole class.** Identify where Cuba is relative to New York and the Catskills. Also point out where the Civil War took place in the United States. Have students locate their school and discuss its relation to these places presented in *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*.

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## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with





other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

## English Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4-6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9; Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9; Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- 1. Show students “Latino Americans: José Martí PBS Documentary.”** This 8-minute PBS video shows how José Martí is celebrated and venerated as the father of Cuban independence as well as a renowned poet and journalist. Have students write down any new information they learned in a journal entry. Have students compare the information learned in the documentary to information learned in *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*. How do the two formats differ in the way you learn information? (<http://www.pbs.org/video/latino-americans-jose-marti/>)
- 2. For students in a bilingual/dual language Spanish program or students who prefer or want to read a Spanish article, have them read, “En EE. UU. publican libros para niños, inspirados en José Martí.”** (<http://www.elpais.com.co/entretenimiento/cultura/en-ee-uu-publican-libros-para-ninos-inspirados-en-jose-marti.html>) Have students examine the different features of the news article. How do the headings and photographs help students to understand what the article is about? Why is it important to publish more books about historical figures like José Martí?
- 3. Have students read the interview featured on LEE & LOW'S blog about the translation process with Emma Otheguy and editor Jessica Echeverria.** (<http://blog.leeandlow.com/2017/08/31/interview-behind-the-translation-process-martis-song-for-freedommarti-y-sus-versos-por-la-libertad/>) Why do you think the translation is so

important for readers? Why are bilingual books needed in the classroom? Have students think about the nature of the translation: What works well in the translation? What suggestions would they have for both versions- English and/or Spanish? How would this translation be different if it was done through Google translate and not a native Spanish speaker?

- 4. Have students select a few sentences from the book or from José's Versos sencillos to write about featuring José's actions and feelings.** Why did they choose to write about that particular quote? What are their reactions to those statements?
- 5. Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author of Martí's Song for Freedom/ Martí y sus versos por la libertad, Emma Otheguy.** Have students brainstorm a list of interview questions for Emma Otheguy. What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did she conduct her research on José Martí? Why did she want to write a book about José Martí? Consider contacting Emma and inviting her to your school for an author visit.
- 6. Have students analyze the historical contexts in the book.** *The Reading Strategies Book* (<http://www.heinemann.com/products/e07433.aspx>) suggests that students create a chart that has a column for “environmental condition” and “definition.” Underneath “environmental condition,” create rows for “social,” “economic” and “political.” In the right column, define what those mean (i.e. “social” is interactions between people). Have students brainstorm on sticky notes the different social, economic, and political conditions during the time period of Cuba's fight for independence.
- 7. Have students write a poem about a cause they are passionate about today in the style of Martí's Versos sencillos.** Brainstorm a list of the qualities that students observed in *Versos sencillos*. Then, have students write a poem, evoking José Martí's style, about something





they are passionate about. Why did they choose to write about that particular topic?

8. **For students who are Spanish-speakers, have them read the first poem in *Versos sencillos*.** (<http://www.literatura.us/marti/sencillos.html>) After reading, have students write a reaction to the poem. What was it like reading the whole poem, and not just an excerpt? How did they relate to that particular poem? How did they feel when they read the poem? Did the poem remind them of anything in their life today? Why or why not?

### Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9; Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9; and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

1. **Conduct a “Social Change” project in your classroom.** After reading *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*, have students pick a cause they believe in. Have students brainstorm a list of different causes that they would want to fight for. Then, have students pick their top three choices and arrange groups according to interest. In the groups, have students research the topic (i.e. *Black Lives Matter*) and come up with a way to enact change, whether it's a letter, a flyer, a petition, etc.
2. **Have students conduct a research project on *Versos sencillos*.** Encourage students to use the following questions to guide their research process: Why are *Versos sencillos* important to Cuban people? How did they change Cuba and Cuban literature? Why are they still read all over the world today? After presenting to the whole class or a small group, have students select a meaningful excerpt from *Versos sencillos* and read in front of the whole class or small group (if applicable or relevant in the classroom). Ask students to explain why they chose to read that particular excerpt and what it means to them.

3. **Have students read the article, “Here’s why Obama honored hero José Martí in Havana.”** ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/23/heres-why-obama-honored-cuban-hero-jose-marti-in-havana/?utm\\_term=.b2d5fdb17e0c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/23/heres-why-obama-honored-cuban-hero-jose-marti-in-havana/?utm_term=.b2d5fdb17e0c)) Provide students with a copy of the poem that former President Obama cited, “Cultivo una rosa blanca” ([https://allpoetry.com/I-Have-a-White-Rose-to-Tend-\(Verse-XXXIX\)](https://allpoetry.com/I-Have-a-White-Rose-to-Tend-(Verse-XXXIX))) Why do they think President Obama chose to read from that poem? Additionally, have students investigate the relationship between the United States and Cuba. How did José Martí’s thoughts about the United States foreshadow a future tumultuous relationship between the two countries?
4. **Ask students to create a T-chart with José Martí and Abraham Lincoln if students have studied the Civil War.** List traits of these two important figures. Ask students how they think they are similar in their beliefs. How did they fight for what they believed in?
5. **Have students create a timeline of Cuba’s independence from Spain.** Students can conduct research online and use the sources mentioned in the book to complete a list of dates and events relevant to Cuba’s quest for freedom.
6. **Create a map of José’s journey.** Identify places José lived and traveled throughout his life on a map. Have students identify Cuba, New York, and the Catskills. Have students research and investigate other places where José Martí lived during his lifetime. Consider addressing Cuba and the United States relationship over the past hundred years if doing a unit on Cuban history in the classroom. The New York Times blog post, “Thawing Relations: Teaching About Cuba and the U.S.” (<https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/15/thawing-relations-teaching-about-cuba-and-the-u-s/>) contains videos and different research activities to engage students in.



## Science/STEM

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9; Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9; and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. **Have students research the geography of Cuba.** Where in the world is the island located? What is the climate like? What physical features does the island have? What kinds of plants and animals live there? What makes Cuba unique from nearby islands? What are Cuba's resources and most popular exports (today and historically)? Using the research to these questions, have students answer in an essay this question: How might the island's geography make it attractive to other countries and people who want to settle there?
2. **Have students study the terrain in Cuba presented in *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*.** Have students examine the illustration on the first page and identify the different geographical elements in the illustration. Then, have students look at photographs of terrain in Cuba now and compare the photographs with the illustration. Why do you think the landscape was so appealing and adored by José Martí?
3. **Have students investigate the *palmas reales* in Cuba and their cultural significance.** How is this plant important to both Cuban culture and geography?

## Arts/Performing Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. **Have students sketch or complete drawings after reading an excerpt from *Versos sencillos***

that is provided in the back of *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*. Why did students pick that particular verse? What inspired their art?

2. **Have students listen to the song, “Guantanamo” and then examine the lines from *Versos sencillos* in the song.** Why do you think those particular lines from *Versos sencillos* were chosen for the song?
3. **Have students come up with questions to interview the illustrator, Beatriz Vidal.** What is the process behind creating the illustrations with a children's book? Why did she choose a particular medium (“gouache”) to create the illustrations?

## Home-School Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. **Interview a family member(s) about an important historical figure from their country of origin.** What historical figure from their country do they admire? Why? Did that person fight for the country's independence at any point?
2. **Have students bring home a copy of *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*.** Have students read with adults at home in English or in Spanish. Encourage conversation and discussion after reading. Why is José Martí an important historical figure?



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Emma Otheguy** is a children's book author and a historian of Spain and colonial Latin America. Her picture book debut, *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*, has received starred reviews from *School Library Journal*, *Booklist*, *Kirkus*, and *Publishers Weekly* and is a Junior Library Guild selection. She is a member of the Bank Street Writers Lab, and her short story "Fairies in Town" was awarded a Magazine Merit Honor by the Society of Children's Book Illustrators (SCBWI). Otheguy lives with her husband in New York City. You can find her online at [www.emmaotheguy.com](http://www.emmaotheguy.com).

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Beatriz Vidal** is an award-winning painter, illustrator, and teacher. Her work has appeared in well-known publications such as *The New York Times Magazine*, *Woman's Day*, and the *New Yorker*. Her artwork has also been featured on PBS programs and in numerous exhibitions around the world, including the International Exhibition of Illustrations for Children in Italy and the Society of Illustrators in New York. Vidal divides her time between New York City and Buenos Aires, Argentina. You can visit her online at [beatrizvidal.com](http://beatrizvidal.com).

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

**LEE & LOW BOOKS** is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](http://leeandlow.com).

## ORDERING INFORMATION

### On the Web:

[www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](http://www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering) (general order information)

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/marti-s-song-for-freedom-marti-y-sus-versos-por-la-libertad> (secure online ordering)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25 | **By Fax:** 212-683-1894

**By Mail:** Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

## Book Information for *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad*



\$17.95, HARDCOVER

978-0-89239-375-6

32 pages, 11 X 9-1/4

\*Reading Level: Grade 5

Interest Level: Grades 2–8

Guided Reading Level: V

Spanish Guided Reading Level: U

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

**THEMES:** Freedom of Expression, Colonialism, History, Nature, Poetry, Political Essay, Bilingual Stories, Cuban/Latino Interest, Hispanic Interest

### RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/marti-s-song-for-freedom-marti-y-sus-versos-por-la-libertad>

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.