



Library Book: Alejandro's Gift (Rise and Shine)

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Alejandro is lonely until a garden and a water hole bring the many animals of the desert into his life.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In his first children's book, octogenarian Albert uses the appealing story of a lonely man as the framework for an edifying lesson on desert wildlife. Living in a remote adobe house, with only his burro for a companion, Alejandro is delighted when a squirrel appears in his garden one day and eventually returns with more visitors--jackrabbits, roadrunners, cactus wrens--all realistically portrayed by Long (*Ten Little Rabbits*; *Fire Race*). Realizing that it is the water in his garden that attracts the small creatures, Alejandro decides to dig a water hole to accommodate the larger desert animals, like the coyotes, javelinas and bobcats. Puzzled when they seem to ignore the water, Alejandro finally realizes that the hole is too close to his house and the road. So the kind man digs another, more sheltered, water hole, and his offering to the animals and their inadvertent gift of company are mutually appreciated. Detailed pictures and descriptions of Alejandro's animal neighbors are provided on the final spread, allowing readers to become better acquainted with the creatures that Long works into her polished paintings, which impressively recreate the muted colors and varied textures of the desert. Ages 3-8.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 1-4-Alejandro, a man in his 60s, lives in a small adobe house beside an isolated desert road. His only companion is a burro. To ease his loneliness, he tends to his garden. One day, a ground squirrel approaches the garden to drink from its furrows, followed by wood rats, pocket gophers, jackrabbits, kangaroo rats, pocket mice, roadrunners, gila woodpeckers, and thrashers. Time passes more quickly, and Alejandro enjoys his new companions. However, he soon realizes that they come to him for water, not for company, and sets out to dig a water hole for them. Albert's simple and poetic text evokes the silence and emptiness in Alejandro's life. He grows to understand his interdependence with the land and its creatures as he lives among them. Long's rich, detailed, and realistically rendered pictures provide the perfect visual setting to an already memorable tale. The colorfully illustrated glossary of flora and fauna is informative. An ideal book to develop in readers an appreciation for the beauty of the desert and its inhabitants.

Graciela Italiano, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

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From Booklist

Ages 5-8. This tender story by an elderly writer about an old man who lives alone in the desert has an autobiographical ring. After Alejandro plants a lush vegetable garden to help pass the time, he is thrilled by the many small animals that come to drink in its furrows. But when he realizes that there are many larger creatures going thirsty, he generously builds a sheltered waterhole away from his adobe home. The handsome watercolors by Long (*Fire Race*, *Ten Little Rabbits*) are well served by the oversize format. Realistically detailed and brightly colored, the pictures shatter the myth of the desert as a barren, inhospitable habitat. This lovely story can be used to lead kids to nonfiction books about the desert's secrets. *Julie Corsaro*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bernard Lewis:

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