

RUTH NULTON MOORE. *TOMÁS AND THE TALKING BIRDS*.  
Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1979, 120 pp., \$3.95 hard,  
\$2.95 paper.

Children's literature should be of great importance to all of us, regardless of whether we are parents. The opinions and social views assimilated in childhood will often have long-lasting and far-reaching effects. Western novels as well as cowboy movies bear a great deal of the responsibility for the attitude of many Americans that Indians are, for the most part, treacherous savages and, at best, the sidekick to a masked white man. *Tomás and the Talking Birds* is at once both encouraging and disappointing. It is encouraging because it is responding to a great need in our society, but it is disappointing because of its poor execution.

The germinal idea of the story is quite clever. Tomás, a Spanish-speaking boy of some nine or ten years of age, and his mother go to live in Pennsylvania with her brother after the death of Tomás' father. The boy attends school, but he has problems making friends because he does not speak English. In his loneliness, he befriends a pet shop owner and his birds. Tomás is fascinated by the talking birds and tries to get a homesick parrot to talk. When he discovers that the bird only speaks Spanish, Tomás takes on the job of teaching the parrot English. In order to do so, he must first learn that language himself. With this added incentive, he makes rapid progress in school and quickly makes new friends.

The identification of the parrot with the boy, which the reader easily makes, serves to present the problems of the non-English-speaking child in the United States in a way which should appeal to the children for whom the book is directed. The use of Spanish words in the text, as well as references to flora and fauna, foods, songs, and customs of Puerto Rico, will help the Puerto Rican child associate with Tomás and will help the Anglo-American reader gain a greater appreciation for Puerto Rican children. In particular, references to *Co-quis* and to *pasteles* could, in a classroom situation, help raise the appreciation for a Puerto Rican classmate who could explain these things to his fellow students.

The disappointment with the work comes from carelessness either on the part of the author or the publisher. The book has numerous inconsistencies and errors. The protagonist's last name is spelled Diaz (without an accent) in some places and Dias in others. There are a number of gender errors in which there is lack of agreement between adjective and noun. In many instances, the syntax and word order are English with a Spanish word inserted without any awareness of the patterns of code switching used by bilingual speakers, or the word order in Spanish, for that matter,

e.g., "How could he ever begin to learn the difficult *americano* words." In some cases, the errors in the book could discredit a Spanish-speaking child in an elementary school reading class. If the book disagrees with the child's speech pattern, even though the child is correct, there would be a tendency for both students and teachers to place more confidence in the book than in their classmate or student.

The potential merits of the book are such that we would encourage the publisher/author to make corrections in the work and reissue it. In corrected form, the story would be a valuable addition to the reading material in any school where there are Puerto Rican children. A twelve-year-old Chicana who read it found the story enjoyable and thought it would help the English-speaking children respect the Spanish-speaking newcomer, while giving the latter a protagonist with whom they could closely identify.

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H. CRAIG MINER and WILLIAM E. UNRAU. *THE END OF INDIAN KANSAS: A STUDY OF CULTURAL REVOLUTION 1854-1871*. Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977, 179 pp., \$12.50.

The forced removal of thousands of Indians from eastern Kansas between 1854 and 1871 adversely affected even more Native Americans and occupied even more government time than did the struggle between the army and the tribesmen of the western plains, who forcibly resisted subjugation.

Other books show the irony that became apparent after the struggle to "save Kansas for freedom" in the 1850's--the whites who did not want slavery did not want blacks either--but this competent study explains that the invaders of Kansas Territory faced another problem, "those troublesome Native Americans who seemed to retreat in response to the white man's advance, only to regroup and once again appear on the horizon." More than ten thousand Kickapoos, Delawares, Sacs and Foxes, Shawnees, Potawatomis, Kansas, Ottawas, Wyandots, Miamis, Osages, and smaller tribes in reservations on the eastern border of the territory presented a "far greater challenge to white settlement than the celebrated warriors of the Great Plains," but by 1875 fewer than one thousand Indians remained there.

The authors (both Wichita State University history professors) accomplish their consistent intention to floodlight the incongruities in Indian policy, land policy, law, and administration, and to detail the manner in which the conflicts were