



# Juan Bobo Goes to Work: A Puerto Rican Folk Tale

*Marisa Montes , Joe Cepeda (Illustrations)*

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What can you do with a boy who tries to do things right but only leaves disaster in his wake? Laugh--that's what! Readers everywhere will love to laugh at the hilarious antics of the ever-blundering Juan Bobo, Puerto Rico's most celebrated folk character.

In this rollicking Juan Bobo tale, our hero sets out to find work at the farm and the grocery. Although the tasks are simple and the directions couldn't be clearer, he always find a way to bungle things up as only a character whose name means "Simple John" could!

## Juan Bobo Goes to Work: A Puerto Rican Folk Tale Details

Date : Published September 19th 2000 by HarperCollins Espanol (first published January 1st 1988)

ISBN : 9780688162337

Author : Marisa Montes , Joe Cepeda (Illustrations)

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Folklore, Folk Tales, Fiction, Cultural, International, Humor, European Literature, Spanish Literature, Latin American

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# **From Reader Review Juan Bobo Goes to Work: A Puerto Rican Folk Tale for online ebook**

## **Holly Price says**

“Juan Bobo Goes to work”, retold by Marissa Montess is a great example of a popular Puerto Rican folktale. Juan Bobo is a silly little boy who most always does the wrong thing leaving disaster everywhere he goes. This story will keep you and your students laughing. Juan Bobo’s mom asks him to get a job with the neighboring farmer because they desperately need money for food. He does try to be a good boy for his mama and work hard for the farmer. He listens to the advice he is given from others very specifically, maybe too much so. He manages to lose all of the payments he receives for his work. In the end, you will be surprised to find out he gets one thing right--Human Connection! He is rewarded handsomely for his gift. This book is beautifully illustrated. A wow read for K-2 students. This book would allow for lots of discussion on cause and effect. I loved how this book included lots of Spanish phrases. It also included a glossary in the back of the book. What a great way to highlight your ELL Spanish speaking students native language. Lots of fun to be had with, Juan Bobo!

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## **RLL22017Julia Turnbough says**

Juan Bobo Goes to Work is about a little boy that gets confused when given instructions and does the opposite. I think the little boy has a mental disability and cannot process the instructions correctly. This book takes place in Puerto Rico. I do not think children would not be sympathetic in hearing about Juan Bobo and I am not sure if this would be a good book for children ages 4-8 years because children can be cruel. With some of the words in the book being in Spanish it made it difficult to read unless the children and reader is fluent in Spanish.

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## **Melissa Carroll says**

I grew up with different versions of Juan Bobo and to be quite honest I think there are much better versions in picture book form out there than this one. Also, I didn't care for the ending in this one (I think it changes the meaning of the story and ascribes more European values to Juan Bobo :/)

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## **Nicole Coffey says**

This book to me opens up conversation about how children are different in many way. There are some children that can follow directions with little to no reminders. Then there are some children who need reminders with each and every step of the task. Juan Bobo don't take his mistakes seriously. His mother exhibits so much patience when he messes up. The funny thing is Juan Bobo does hear what his mother is telling him as with all of the other people he comes into contact with. He does things his way. He shows us how he comprehends things. This book allows the students to recall and remember the directions that was given. They can correct Juan Bobo as the story is progressing. I enjoyed how in the midst of Juan Bobo messing up he finds a way to save the day unknowingly. It is a pretty good book.

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## **Sydney Chassion says**

### Summary:

This is a great example of a popular Puerto Rican folktale. Juan Bobo is a silly little boy who seems to always do the wrong thing, leaving disaster everywhere he goes. Juan Bobo's mom asks him to get a job with the neighboring farmer because they desperately need money for food. He tries to be a good boy for his mama and work hard for the farmer. He works hard to listen to the advice he is given from others very specifically - perhaps a bit too much. He manages to lose all of the payments he receives for his work. In the end, you will be surprised to find out he gets one thing right - connecting to others! Ultimately, he is rewarded well for his gift.

### Evaluation:

This book is beautifully illustrated and very well written. I would consider this a fantastic tool for K-2 students. It allows space for lots of discussion, specifically pertaining to the concept of cause and effect. This is also a great multicultural resource, with lots of genuine, significant Spanish phrases, even including a glossary in the back of the book. The authenticity of this book gives great highlight to ELL Spanish speaking students native language and cultures. Overall a really fun book and a great classroom resource!

### Application:

This story would best be used in relation to a classroom with ELL Spanish speaking students present. This would be a great way to implement new cultures and languages into the classroom, as well as making ELL students feel included and represented in the classroom. We could also do a compare and contrast to American/Native American folktales to Latinx folktales.

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## **Thalia Ortiz says**

Juan Bobo Goes to Work retold by Marisa Motes is a funny fantasy story/folktale about a poor boy who is sent out by his mother to find work to get paid. He does the jobs, however, he gets some part mixed up and makes silly mistakes whether while working or taking home the payment. I enjoy this book because it reveals the lives of the jibaros (the countryfolk of Puerto Rico) as many stories only focus on the city life. The story also reflects how strong the community is in Puerto Rico and how we try to take care of each other. Juan Bobo is such a relatable character as we have all made silly mistakes like him, especially when we are younger. This folktale is well known, especially with the older generation, so I am glad to see it being passed down. This is a pretty simple story that the little ones would love and laugh at. The images are very cute and help tell the story well. The younger students would have no problem doing a walk through and describing the story based on the images alone. The images illustrate an accurate setting as well as characters.

The folktale is pretty simple and silly. However, as I thought some more I realized it could possibly support the stigmas of jibaros being incompetent and uneducated. It reminded me of some of the conversation we had about Cowhey chapter 2 and stereotypes especially. They portray Juan Bobo, which translates to Simple John, as a jibaro who can't even figure out that putting milk in a sack is a bad idea because it will leak out. This is the same concept of reinforcing stereotypes we discuss in the class of how some of our literature can

enforce certain ideas, whether they are intended to or not. I would have never thought twice about this book until I had to connect it to the readings/class discussions. Upon reflection, this silly tale can rub children from low-income homes the wrong way as it could be perceived as the story is making fun of poor children. If this story is used in class, I believe it would be vital to reiterate that this is merely a folktale told from long ago that blends stories from Spanish, Taino, and African tales and by no means is a representation of the jibaros.

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### **Tawnie says**

In this adaptation of a traditional Puerto Rican fairy tale, Juan Bobo can never seem to do anything right. Each day his mother sends him off to work and give him simple instructions on how to bring the payment home each day. Poor Juan Bobo can never seem to get it right and manages to lose or destroy his payment each day. Luckily for them, he manages to make a sick girl laugh with his silly behavior and earns the gratitude of her rich father.

This book won the Pura Belpre Illustrator Honor Award in 2002. The oil paintings use simple blocks of color, but the texture of the paint is still present and adds an extra dimension to the illustrations. It is also nice how the blue under painting often peeks through and adds some aspects of an outline to the illustrations. The illustrations are very expressionistic with the characters emotions clearly understandable. The bright colors reflect the book's Puerto Rican atmosphere. While the book does use some Spanish phrases to add to that atmosphere, they are not overwhelming. It does include a short glossary at the end of the book of all the phrases used. This book would work well in a storytime or in a classroom visit as children could easily laugh at Juan Bobo's silly actions.

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### **Christine Jensen says**

Approximate Interest Level/Reading Level: Preschool/Early Elementary

Format: Picture Book

Awards: ALA Notable Books for Children (2002), Pura Belpre Honor (2002)

Juan Bobo is young Puerto Rican folk hero, who despite all of his best efforts, gets everything all mixed up. In this humorous tale, he tries his best to help support his family but always manages to lose his pay, no matter how carefully he tries to follow his mom's instructions.

The illustrations are bright, colorful, and engaging, and the author's note on the opening pages adds insight into the history of Juan Bobo and his tales. Primarily written in English, this book would be excellent for building a Spanish and/or English vocabulary, as both languages are intertwined. Students can use context clues, direct translations, and the glossary to learn the meaning of new words and phrases.

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## **Tessa Duncan says**

When Juan Bobo goes to find work, he ends up messing up his simple job. He is still rewarded with money, which he loses on the way home. The next day he finds new work, which he messes up and still loses his reward. This continues to happen until he makes a rich man's daughter laugh on the way home and is rewarded with dinner for life. A typical Puerto Rican folktale of Juan Bobo and his adventures.

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## **RLL22017 Jackie Reynoso says**

Juan Bobo is a well-known Puerto Rican folk character of a foolish boy who could never get things done the way they ask him to. In this tale "Juan Bobo Goes to Work" his mother orders him to find work with a farmer and grocer. But every time he is paid for his hard work he fails to take it home because he always does something wrong. At the end, due to his foolishness he saves a rich girl's life and because of that her father compensates him with a ham every Sunday. Recommended for grades K-3RD

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## **Linda says**

Montes retells stories about the Puerto Rican folk character of Juan Bobo (or, Simple John). In these stories, Juan Bobo's mother wants him to work. First, he finds work with the farmer, but he doesn't quite do the jobs quite right. Still, the farmer sees him working hard and pays him. Then he finds work with the grocer, who is so impressed by the good job Juan Bobo did sweeping that he pays him nicely. The trouble is, Juan Bobo just can't manage to get the payments home. First, he loses his coins by putting them in his pockets even though they had big holes in them. Then his mother gives him a burlap sack to carry the payment, but then that day's payment was a pail of milk. And so on. Until one day, he makes a mistake that reaps wonderful rewards.

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## **Kylie Narehood says**

b>Title: *Juan Bobo Goes To Work*

**Author:** Marisa Montes

**Illustrator:** Joe Cepeda

**Genre:** Puerto Rican Folktale

**Theme(s):** Jobs, Economic Status, Animals

**Opening line/sentence:**

In the highlands of Puerto Rico lived a silly peasant boy.

**Brief Book Summary:** This book talks about a little Puerto Rican boy named Juan Bobo. In the book Juan is looking for different jobs to do. But Juan does every job the wrong way.

**Professional Recommendation/Review #1:** Linda (BookHive ([www.bookhive.org](http://www.bookhive.org)))

Have you ever been confused or done something that ended in a disaster? Well, meet Juan Bobo, a Puerto Rican peasant boy who can never get anything right. In this series of funny events Juan Bobo misunderstands the directions of the farmer, tries very hard to follow the instruction given by his mother and manages to lose or destroy the payment he earns for his work. Silly Juan Bobo, will he ever be successful at anything?

Brought to life with magnificent full color illustrations, this humorous Puerto Rican Folktale is a story that readers of all ages will enjoy reading again and again. Category: Award Books; Folklore; Humor;

Multicultural; Read Aloud. Grade Level: Primary (K-3rd grade); Intermediate (4th-6th grade). 2000, HarperCollinsPublishers. Ages 5 to 12.  
(PUBLISHER: Harper Collins Publishers (New York:), PUBLISHED: 2000.)

**Professional Recommendation/Review #2:** Montes, Marisa Juan Bobo Goes to Work: A Puerto Rican Folktale

32 pp. HarperCollins 2000. ISBN 0-688-16233-9 LE ISBN 0-688-16234-7

(3) K-3 Illustrated by Joe Cepeda. Juan Bobo (Simple John) sets out to find a job--first with the farmer, then with the grocer. Despite his mother's instructions, the silly peasant boy gets everything wrong and loses his coins and food on the way home every day. But his antics, comically illustrated, are rewarded when he makes an ill rich girl laugh. An author's note gives information about this popular Puerto Rican folktale character. A pronunciation guide is included. Glos.

Folktales/Myths/and Legends; Folklore--Puerto Rico; Juan Bobo (Legendary character)

**Response to Two Professional Reviews:** I believe that these two reviews sum of the books very well. I also think that they give you an insight to how the book is. I think that the first review gives it away how the book plot goes.

**Evaluation of Literary Elements:** I believe that this book was written very well. It was a book to keep the interest. Besides that, it was a page turner wanting to know what will happen next.

**Consideration of Instructional Application:** I would use this book in my classroom to show children how things can go wrong. I think that this book is a good example of how problems happen and how bad things can go wrong. But that in the end something's work out the way they are supposed to.

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## Djamison says

*Juan Bobo Goes To Work* is a great Puerto Rican folktale that adults and children would enjoy alike. Most traditional folk tales consist of a trickster, but in the case of Juan Bobo he is not a trickster; more like a silly boy with well intentions. In this story, Juan's mother asked him to find work and Juan does exactly what his mother asked. Before Juan left to go see the farmer, his mother told him him to hold the money in his hand and to not put the money in his pockets. He starts working with the farmer who give him clear cut directions on what his task was for that day. Do you think Juan did what the farmer asked? Of course....NOT! Actually, Juan did do what the farmer had asked of him, but it just wasn't the way the farmer had intended for it to be done. Seeing that Juan had worked so hard the farmer still decided to pay him for the days work. Juan slipped the money into his pocket, like his mother had asked him not to, and set out for home. When he arrived, he soon noticed that all his hard earned money was now missing from his pockets. All that was left was two empty pockets with large holes. Throughout the story, Juan encounters many more mixed up situations such as this one that I know the reader will find humorous yet educational. This culturally relevant text would be a great addition into a classroom or anyone's home. This text could be used for grades K-3 with students taking a look at directions and seeing how you could get two results from the same set of directions. Students could also do a comparison activity with this folktale and another to look at the different aspects of the culture presented through the folktale genre. I really hope you enjoy this book and make it a part of your permanent library like I have. Happy Readings!!!

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## Crystal Bandel says

*Juan Bobo Goes to Work: A Puerto Rican Folk Tale* by Marisa Montes, published 2000.

Nonfiction, folktale.

Picture book.

Grades K-3.

Found via *School Library Journal*, reviewed by Grace Oliff.

Juan Bobo ("Foolish Jack" in English) is a young boy in traditional Puerto Rican stories who never manages to follow directions. Every day, he dutifully goes off to look for work to support his mother, and every day he loses his payment on the way home in increasingly silly ways. One day, though, Juan Bobo's ridiculous situation on the way home makes a rich man's daughter laugh, and after that Juan and his mother receive a ham every Sunday in thanks. This story is a strong one, as Juan is both earnest and silly, which makes him easy for children to identify with, and his ridiculous situations will make children laugh. The illustrations also strengthen the book, as the illustrator uses "distinctive, vibrantly colored acrylics [to] creat[e] a character whose innocence, confusion, and contrition are endearing," as the reviewer states. Altogether, this book is an excellent introduction to Puerto Rican folktales for children, as it is both fun and educational, with many Spanish phrases included throughout and a glossary in the back.

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## **529\_Amalia says**

*Juan Bobo Goes to Work* retold by Marisa Montes and illustrated by Joe Cepeda. Montes tells us in the author's note that in addition to her translating the original Spanish (she did leave some Spanish in the story) and retelling in her own style she made a few minor changes. She also tells us this is how folktales have evolved through the years. She has changed the ending. Juan Bobo tries to do everything the way he is told, but always seems to get things mixed up. Juan Bobo, "Simple John", is the Puerto Rican version of the town fool. Juan Bobo goes to the farmer and the local grocer to find work. His jobs are easy and the directions are clear but he always finds a way to mix things up. The beans on the ground instead of the wheel barrow, his payment in his pockets that have holes instead of in his hand and so on. On his way home trying to follow the directions his mother told him, he of course messed things up. But because of his mess up he changes a little girl's life forever.

I really enjoyed this book. It made me smile through the whole thing. He may be "Simple John" but how can you be upset with someone who tries very hard to get things right.

Pre-K-3, this picture is good read-aloud for the younger children. The oil painting pictures done by Cepeda are wonderful. I would use this book for the younger grades to help teach following directions. It would also be a good book to share "Is there a better way to do that?"

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