

SAN MATEO COUNTY POET LAUREATE



Poetry Reading *by* **San Mateo County Poet Laureate** **Jorge Tetl Argueta** **Tuesday, October 3, 2023**

About the poet:

Jorge Tetl Argueta is a prizewinning poet and author of more than twenty children's picture books, including *Una película en mi almohada / A Movie in My Pillow* (Children's Book Press, 2001); *Guacamole: Un poema para cocinar / A Cooking Poem* (Groundwood Books, 2016); *Agua, Agüita / Water, Little Water* (Piñata Books, 2017); *Fuego, Fuegoito / Fire, Little Fire* (Piñata Books, 2019); and *Somos como las nubes / We Are Like the Clouds* (Groundwood Books, 2016), which won the Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award and was named to USBBY's Outstanding International Book List, the ALA Notable Children's Books and the Cooperative Children's Book Center Choices. The California Association for Bilingual Education honored him with its Courage to Act Award and his trilingual picture book, *Agua, Agüita / Water, Little Water / At Achichipiga At*, won the inaugural CampoyAda Award in Children's Poetry given by the Academia Norteamericana de la Lengua Española. A Pipil Nahua Indian, Jorge is also the founder of The Library of Dreams, a nonprofit organization that promotes reading in both rural and metropolitan areas in his native country through an annual Poetry Festival called "Manyula". Starting January 2023, he has the honor to be the San Mateo County Poet Laureate. He divides his time between the Bay Area, California, and El Salvador.

About the poem:

Poet Laureate Jorge Argueta explains: "When I started writing these poems, I said to myself: I'm going to write a text about the lives of these people who are living in the street. Meaning write portraits of life on the streets. The reality of this sad national problem is deeper than I'd thought. The streets are full of pain, hopelessness, anguish, indifference. I found streets ridden with vandalism and drug addiction, hundreds of thousands of people. Poetry is only a way to reveal something, these people need help from professionals: psychologists, doctors, teams of trainees who can dialogue with them and help them, they need medical attention and social justice."

19 - Los super heroes

Hoy ví a Superman tirado en la calle
La capa que le sirve para volar estaba rota y vomitada le había crecido la barba
Tenia las botas rotas, y el pelo alborotado
Lo reconocí por la camiseta, ahí decía claramente Super Man

Super Man esta jodido ha perdido sus poderes y hasta sus dientes
Agarro el crack y ahora no tiene casa
No tiene amigos, no tiene nada, ni a nadie, ni país que lo quiera
Los demás super heroes también están todos igual de jodidos

La mujer maravilla, ya no hace maravillas
Apenas puede caminar arrastrando sus tristezas
Apenas puede empujar su carrito donde amontona bolsas y ropa vieja
La mujer maravilla es la más triste de todas las mujeres, es una virgen María que va llorando

Batman y Robin entran a robar a los centros comerciales
Roban y venden lo que roban para comprar su droga
Batman y Robin andan perdidos por las calles
No manejan, no hablan, caminan como zombis por las calles, son muertos en vida

El hombre araña, ya no trepa edificios, se arrastra por las calles
Vive en las cunetas, vive doblado escondido debajo de una sabana
Se inyecta heroína y fuma crack, el hombre araña
Se ha quedado sin poderes se le ve solo por las calles llorando, quejandose, hablando solo

El Capitan America empeño su escudo
De justiciero para comprar fentanil,
Cansado quiso rentar una noche en un hotel,
Lo encontraron apuñalado en la calle 16

Ayyy ayyy ayyyy claman
Los lamentos de los super heroes
Y de los heroes y heroínas de toda América
La America del Norte, donde acaba de pasar el invierno
y aun hay en las nubes gotitas de lluvia que de vez en cuando lloran como cuando llora el invierno

19 - Super heroes

Today I saw Superman sprawled on the street
His cape torn and streaked with vomit, stubble of a beard
Holes in his boots, disheveled hair
I recognized him by his T-shirt, it clearly said Superman

Superman is fucked, he's lost his powers, even his teeth
He's into crack, he's got no home
He's got no friends, he's got nothing, nobody, no country that cares about him
The other super heroes are just as fucked up

Wonder Woman can't make wonders anymore
She can barely walk, dragging her heartaches
She can barely push her little cart piled-up with bags and old clothes
Wonder Woman is the saddest woman of all, a weeping Virgin Mary of the streets

Batman and Robin steal from chain stores
They rob them and sell what they rob to buy drugs
Batman and Robin wander the streets lost
Can't keep it together, can't talk, they walk like zombies, living dead

Spider Man doesn't scale buildings now, he crawls through the streets
He lives in the gutter, crouched over, underneath a sheet
Injecting heroin and smoking crack, Spider Man
Has lost his powers, you see him alone on the sidewalk, crying, moaning, talking to himself

Captain America has pawned his Shield of Justice
To buy fentanyl
He's tired, he wants a night in a motel
They find him stabbed on 16th Street

Ayyy ayyy ayyyy
Ring the laments of the super heroes
And the heroes and heroines everywhere in America
North America, where winter is over now

And still little droplets of rain in the clouds sometimes weep the way winter weeps