



2017

# The Lightning Dreamer: Cuba's Greatest Abolitionist

Jarrett Bell

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Bell, Jarrett (2017) "The Lightning Dreamer: Cuba's Greatest Abolitionist," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 38 : Iss. 5 , Article 32.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol38/iss5/32>

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# Book Review

**Title:** The Lightning Dreamer: Cuba's Greatest Abolitionist

**Author:** Margarita Engle

**Reviewer:** Jarrett Bell

**Publisher:** Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

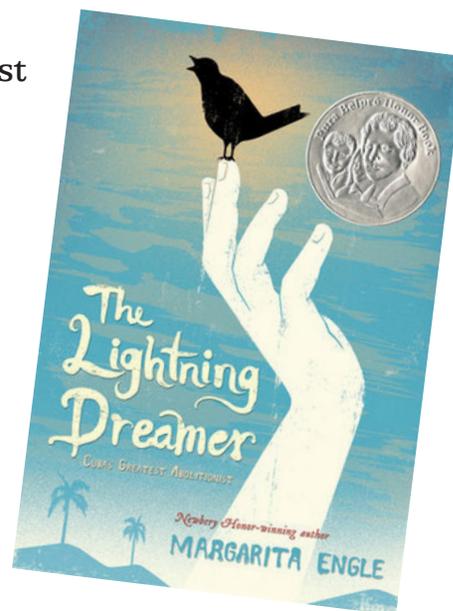
**Publication Year:** 2013

**ISBN:** 9780547807430

**Number of Pages:** 179

**Interest Level:** Intermediate, Young Adult

**Rating:** Outstanding



## Review

Tula, the nickname of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, is a young girl on a plantation in Cuba during the height of the slave trade. As Tula's fourteenth birthday approaches, her grandfather and mother arrange her marriage for financial gain. Tula's impending loss of freedom connects her to the injustice of the enslaved around her. This inspires her to courageously write bold abolitionist and feminist poetry. Engle takes creative liberties in filling in Tula's life to give modern readers an insight to one of history's most daring abolitionists in the nineteenth century.

The *Lightning Dreamer* is a historical non-fiction piece written in free verse, yet has the fluidity of a novel. The unique perspective of the book takes some adjusting to, but as the story progresses readers will not be able to put this book down as they discover what this amazing girl braved in her lifetime, in a world where women and individuals of color were silenced and shamed. Readers who enjoyed *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan or *Love That Dog* by Sharon Creech will also love this book. It does contain a few complex, non-explicit themes such as forbidden interracial love and slavery cruelty. Younger readers may not understand the nuances and implications of these topics hidden within the non-descriptive language of free verse poetry.