

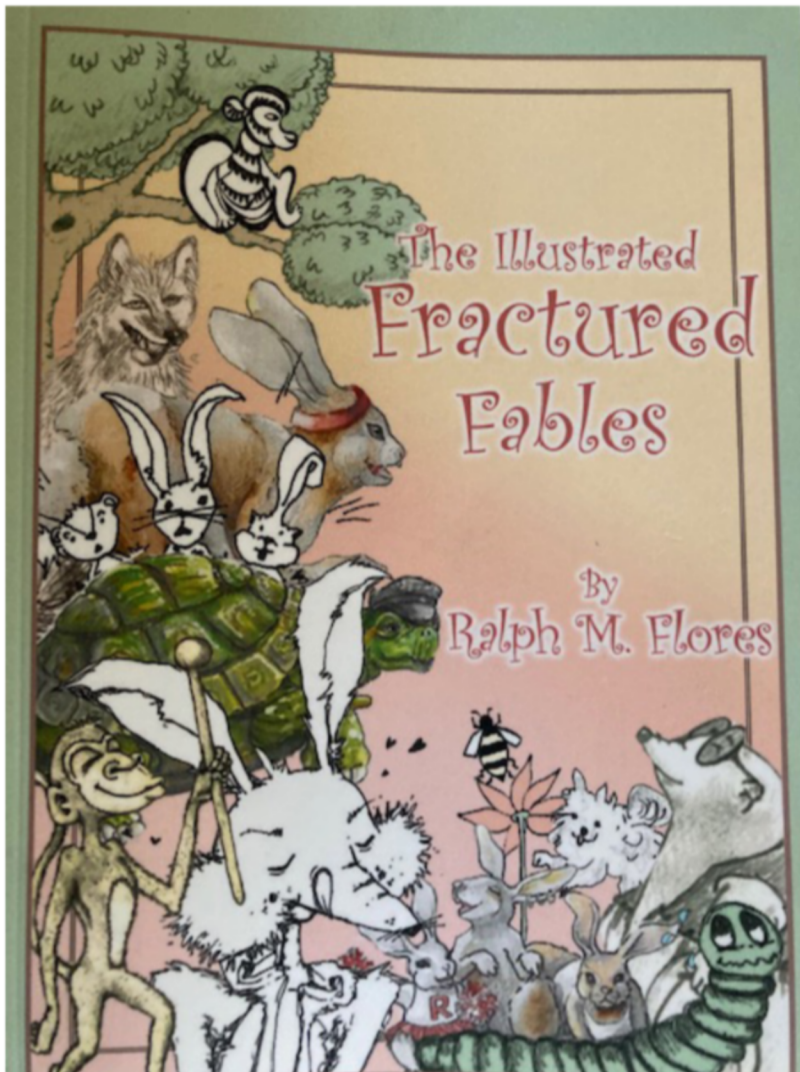
<https://www.abqjournal.com/2388655/stories-you-know-well-get-unexpected-twists-from-late-tomeacute-author-ralph-m-flores.html>

Stories you know well get unexpected twists from late Tomé author Ralph M. Flores

BY DAVID STEINBERG / FOR THE JOURNAL
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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Before Ralph M. Flores of Tomé died in 2017, he had written a book he called “Fractured Fables.”

Written, but not published. Not until his widow, Geri Rhodes, edited and organized her late husband’s text for the now published and retitled “The Illustrated Fractured Fables.”



The 13 fables are accompanied by cheerful illustrations by family members and friends. Flores' thoughtfully worded fables are at the heart of the book.

Fables are generally short and can be prose or verse, with animals and other creatures talking and thinking like humans. Flores writes in prose about members of the animal world.

Perhaps the most famous fable Flores twists is "The Tortoise and the Hare." In the original story, the lumbering Tortoise surprisingly wins a race against the fleet Hare, who naps too long. The moral? Don't give up.

Flores' version is "And the winner is ..." Don't assume the same results.

In fact, Flores has Hare, renamed Rabbit, snoozing, though he barely manages to come out the victor over the older, slower Tortoise. The moral here is as unexpected and as funny as the updated fable itself: "If you're old and in the way, you might consider a bicycle."



Geri Rhodes and (the late) Ralph Flores

Flores has Tortoise re-examining what he might have done differently in his running – or was it waddling? – of the race: Tortoise confesses that he probably shouldn't have stopped to pee!

Flores' Tortoise and Rabbit fable also injects sociopolitical issues, such as ageism. The initial spark for their competition occurs when the much younger Rabbit bumps Tortoise off a trail, almost flipping him over onto his shell.

The upset Tortoise decries that "youth no longer have any respect for their elders." Tortoise further argues that young people have no manners and are too lazy to seek jobs.

Rabbit's retort is that slowpokes shouldn't block the trail. That provokes Tortoise to challenge Rabbit to the foot race. Rhodes said that several years before her husband died, he discussed the possibility of illustrating his fables with Laura F. Sanchez, whose husband Alex was a good friend of Flores. The Sanchezes live in Los Lunas.

One of Laura Sanchez's drawings illustrates "And the winner is ..." She shares her thoughts about the fable in a section of the book that gives illustrators a chance to comment on the fables they illustrated and the drawings they created for them. She writes that her "final image uses felt tip drawing, watercolor, and finish texturing with colored pencil."

Rhodes said the fable that best describes her own behavior is "Treasures," which she said is inspired by her hiding jewelry.

"Treasures" tells how Monkey spies something shiny along a path and stops to look at it. "It was red, about the size of a jelly bean, smooth, and seemed to radiate a fire from within," the fable says.

Monkey shows it to Squirrel, who says it's simply a pretty rock. Owl disagrees; it's a ruby, and humans consider it valuable. So Monkey, fearing it might get stolen, repeatedly uncovers and covers the ruby under a tree. Then Coyote, coming down a mountain, admires the beautiful world, but spots Monkey's strange uncovering-re-covering maneuvers. The moral? A mountain is MUCH bigger than a ruby.

Some of Flores' morals can be enjoyed as stand-alone witticisms. The fable "Stubborn" carries the moral "Many people are stubborn, so always be ready to stand firm and hold your ground." The moral of the cautionary fable "Diligence" advises "The early worm gets eaten by the bird."

The book is a delight for all ages. Copies are available through the website ralphfloresbooks.com by emailing Rhodes at geriraf@nmia.com.

Previously published are Flores' "Tales from La Perla: A Misspent Hippie Youth," mostly recollections of living in the village of La Joya north of Socorro, and "The Horse in the Kitchen: Stories of a Mexican-American Family," based on Flores' father's life. The latter volume is in English and Spanish editions.