

Title: *The Boy Who Touched the Stars / El niño que alcanzó las estrellas*

Author: José M. Hernández **Illustrator:** Steven James Petruccio

Publication Date: May 31, 2019 **Pages:** 32 **Price:** \$18.95 **ISBN-13:** 978-1-55885-882-4

Trim: 11" x 8.5" **Format:** Hardcover **Ages:** 5-9 **Imprint:** Piñata Books

RIGHTS INFORMATION: Amazon produced *A Million Miles Away* (2023), a biopic starring Michael Peña, and it has been available for streaming since September 2023.

Every night when he was a boy, José M. Hernández would look out the window and stare at the stars. They were different colors: blue, yellow and white. Some were larger and brighter than others, and some twinkled as if they were alive. Later, when he saw man land on the moon on TV, he knew he wanted to be an astronaut.

But José struggled in school because his family moved constantly and he didn't speak English. His parents were migrant workers from Mexico; they followed the crops up and down the state of California. José was in second grade when his teacher convinced his parents to stop migrating and stay in the United States. She also encouraged his love of astronomy, books and learning.

José became an electrical engineer, got married and had a family, and though he was very happy, he never stopped thinking about his dream. So he applied to NASA to become an astronaut. His application was rejected eleven times, but he kept applying. He was finally selected for astronaut school and achieved his dream when he flew on the Space Shuttle Discovery to the International Space Station!

With beautiful illustrations by Steven James Petruccio, this heartwarming, bilingual picture book will introduce children ages 5-9 to the concept of space travel. The author's story is sure to motivate kids to set goals and reach for their own dreams.

GENRE: Multicultural children's literature, Hispanic/Latino kids' books, Spanish/bilingual kids' books

SELLING HANDLES:

- This bilingual picture book recounts the author's rise from migrant farm worker to astronaut!
- Emphasizes the importance of education in achieving goals
- The author's story will encourage young readers to reach for their dreams.

AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR CREDENTIALS:

JOSÉ M. HERNÁNDEZ obtained undergraduate and graduate degrees in Electrical Engineering, and in 2004 he was selected to be part of the 19th class of US Astronauts. He achieved his life-long dream to become an astronaut in 2009 when he served as the flight engineer on the Space Shuttle Discovery on the STS-128 fourteen-day mission to the International Space Station. He lives in Stockton, California, where he is president and CEO of an engineering firm.

STEVEN JAMES PETRUCCIO has been a professional artist for more than thirty years, illustrating over eighty picture books, including for the award-winning series, the Smithsonian Oceanic Collection. In 2012, Steven

received the Rip Van Winkle Award from the School Library Media Specialists of Southeastern New York for his contributions to children's literature.

PRAISE FOR *THE BOY WHO TOUCHED THE STARS* / *EL NIÑO QUE ALCANZÓ LAS ESTRELLAS*

- Texas Institute of Letters Best Children's Picture Book
- Northern Lights Book Award Winner, STEM category

"Working the fields of California's Central Valley by day and staring up at the stars by night, young José M. Hernández had an impossible dream: to become an astronaut. Even though the U.S.-born migrant farmworker didn't speak English until he was 12, José swore he would realize that dream. With his Mexican parents' support, he followed his father's "recipe" for success: "Identify my goal, determine how long it would take me to achieve it and create a plan to reach it." His mother added that he should strive for excellence in school, and José contributed his own special ingredient: "never ever give up!" After earning degrees in electrical engineering, he applied to NASA and was rejected—11 times. In order to better his chances of entering the program, he became a pilot, was certified as a scuba diver, and learned Russian. NASA finally accepted his 12th application, and in 2009 he blasted into space. Hernández' descriptive narrative flows effortlessly in both English and Baeza Ventura's Spanish translation and is easily accessible. Petruccio's colorful and detailed paintings bring this amazing adventure to life, hazy backgrounds giving the scenes a pleasing dreamlike quality. Hernández closes his account with a heartfelt exhortation to readers to pursue their own dreams, asking them "Which stars do you want to touch?" This outstanding bilingual autobiography encapsulates the life-changing power of having a goal and the will to achieve it."—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

"In this autobiographical picture book, Hernández recounts his path from child of migrant farmworkers to astronaut. Petruccio's realistic illustrations depict José as an enthusiastic, wide-eyed dreamer, working hard to overcome rejection. While this is a straightforward biography, it is told in an optimistic voice, and Hernández's story will inspire future astronauts as well as children of all ages who may feel that their dreams are unachievable."—*Booklist*