

## Roland Colastica

# Fireworks in My Head

A heart-warming story about the many colours of Curaçao and a friendship between two boys from different backgrounds

**In his first children's book written in Dutch, Antillean writer and dramatist Roland Colastica makes it abundantly clear that Curaçao is more than an exotic paradise, using evocative language to sketch an island society where young and old are still burdened by the colonial past, and black and white are at times diametrically opposed.**

The unspoken friendship between Colastica's black protagonist, thirteen-year-old Jurcell, and the elusive Gerrit, a 'makamba' (white Dutch person), is symbolic of the tensions between the original population of Curaçao and the former Dutch occupier. The boys are classmates, play football together and both have difficult home lives. They get along pretty well, but their background and the colour of their skin makes it impossible for them to admit that. This becomes even more true when they get involved in an armed street war between rival youth gangs.

From the very first pages, this gang war produces action-packed scenes that make *Fireworks in My Head* a genuinely exciting

story. Colastica makes clever use of a number of historical stories to demonstrate how the pain of the people of Curaçao is a direct result of their past of slavery.

Jurcell clearly finds this past difficult to deal with. Colastica's depiction of a boy at the end of his tether is particularly strong, as Jurcell stands in front of the mirror and comes face to face with himself, before exploding with rage and smashing the mirror to pieces, following Bob Marley's maxim: 'Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery.'

Fortunately, Colastica preaches hope and his book is about more than the links between slavery and racism. The Antillean writes naturally and captures realistic, likeable characters on the page. He also succeeds in stimulating the reader's senses. You can feel the magic of this exotic island. You see and smell the lush colours and intoxicating scents of the beautiful blossoms. You hear the splash and roar of the crystal-clear sea: Curaçao is a multi-coloured island in every respect. Colastica has captured its beauty and diversity in this magnificent children's book.

**Roland Colastica** (b. 1960) is a celebrated Antillean writer and dramatist who has devoted his life to storytelling. In 2006, he was awarded the prestigious Cola Debot cultural award for his work

*Fireworks in My Head* is his debut as a children's writer and is one of the few contemporary children's books set in a former Dutch colony. Unlike celebrated author Miep Diekmann, who grew up in Curaçao and wrote a number of books about the Antilles in the 1960s and 70s, Colastica writes from a black perspective, which gives this story a fresh angle.

#### Author

Roland Colastica

Age 10+

Pages 140

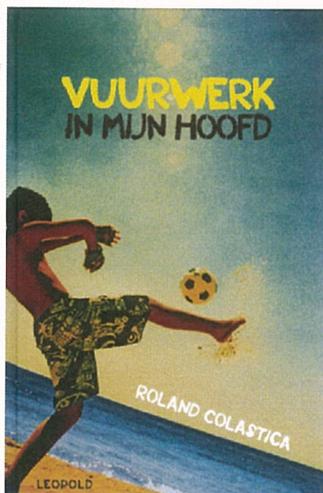
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*Fireworks in My Head* is a charming book that provides an insight into contemporary society on the island of Curaçao in a way that is unique in children's literature.  
— Trow

Roland Colastica has written a book that brings to life Curaçao in all its many aspects [...] a book with a hopeful message, for which we have had to wait a long time.  
— NRC Handelsblad