

**Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear**

An Educator's Guide

A Picture Book by Dianne de Las Casas

Illustrated by Marita Gentry

Pelican Publishing Company 2012

**About the book**

A lyrical escapade from beginning to end, this book features a cast of funny characters on a mission to procure the precious soody sallyraytus (baking soda) for Maw Maw so that she can bake buttery biscuits. Who knew it would prove to be such a dangerous pursuit? Why, Maw Maw did! She warns her family to beware of the big bad bear. Unfortunately, everyone, including Maw Maw herself falls prey to the bear under the bridge. It's up to Squirrel, the unlikeliest of heroes, to save the day. In the end, Maw Maw gets her sody sallyraytus and the family is rewarded with a big batch of beautiful, buttery biscuits. Bake your own buttery biscuits from the recipe included in the book. Then gobble up this tasty tale, just like that!

Accompanying activities are available on Dianne's website! <http://www.diannedelascasas.com> Click on "Book Activities" and "Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear."



**About the Author**

Dianne de Las Casas is a celebrated author, award-winning storyteller, and recording artist, and Founder of the international literacy initiative, Picture Book Month. Her children's books and professional titles have received awards and rave reviews. She performs arts-in-education programs and residencies at schools, libraries, festivals, and special events. Dianne is a frequent presenter at the International Reading Association, American Library Association, and other literary and education conferences. The author of 19 books, Dianne lives with her family in the New Orleans area. She loves to cook and enjoys making big beautiful, buttery drop biscuits with her daughter, Kid Chef Eliana.



**About the Illustrator**

Marita Gentry is a professional artist and has her own painting and teaching studio, Studio Marita, in southern Louisiana. Her vivid illustrations have earned her numerous awards and commissions. An accomplished teacher, she is involved in several artist-in-residence programs each year, helping schools enliven their walls with magnificent murals. This is the sixth book she has baked with Dianne de Las Casas. Marita loves buttery biscuits with lots of homemade jam!

**Interview with the Author, Dianne de Las Casas**

**How did you come up with the idea for *The Gigantic Sweet Potato*?**

I've always loved the story of "Sody Sallyraytus," an Appalachian mountain folktale. The story is very reminiscent of another one of my favorite stories, "The Three Billy Goats Gruff." The bear under the bridge is similar to the troll. I love the squirrel hero in this tale. I love seeing an unlikely hero save the day. I enjoy audience participation so I came up with the rhythmic chant that everyone sings in the story. I design my books to be "Tell Along Tales" so everyone can join in the telling of the story. It's so much fun.

**What advice do you have for young authors?**

**Step 1: Read!** Explore the world around you through the power of words. Read as much as you can – both fiction and non-fiction. The more you know about the world, the more you have to write about. **Step 2: Listen!** Listen to the world around you? What do you hear? You could be inspired with a story. **Step 3: Write!** Keep a journal and jot down all you thoughts and ideas. **Step 4: Tell out loud!** I read every story I write out loud. It's important to hear the rhythm of the language. Every story has a "heartbeat" that brings it to life. Reading a story out loud allows you to hear that. **Step 5: Rewrite!** Few stories are born "perfect." The best stories are the ones that have been finely tuned with good editing. Ask someone you trust to read your story and offer suggestions. A good editor is so important!

**Interview with the Illustrator, Marita Gentry**

**What inspires you as an artist?**

I am inspired by everyday life and the things I see around me such as animals, my cats, my garden, and my family. Animals as well as people provide great facial expressions through their thoughts and actions. I grew up on a farm so animals are easy to paint. I love giving people funny expressions in the story and exaggerating their actions. When I worked on the paintings for *Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear*, I looked at lots of bears (not in person... hahaha) and squirrels! Art is everywhere. Just take a look around.

**What advice do you have for young artists?**

Draw, draw, draw! Draw things you find around you. Draw what you see. Your art does not have to be realistic. Be okay with your own style. Don't be afraid to stray outside of the lines. You have to learn to break boundaries to really draw. It is also important to use your time in school to learn what you can. Art is about reading, math, and social studies. Reading makes your imagination more vivid. You have to be aware of the world around you to draw it.

**Language Arts**

**Word Whizzling** (Dianne's made-up word for finding words in another word or phrase)

How many words can you whizzle from sody sallyraytus? The words have to be 3 or more letters. We found 30 words but there are more!

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**Retelling Tales Writing Exercise**

*Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear* is a folktale retelling.

- How would you “retell” a folktale? Find a lesser known folktale and rewrite it. Tip: Look in the 398.2 section of the library for folk and fairy tales.
- Take a traditional tale (i.e., Little Red Riding Hood, 3 Little Pigs, Goldilocks & the 3 Bears) and twist the tale. Think of how to “redo” the title (i.e., Goldie Bears & the 3 Locks)

**Characters with Character**

In *Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear*, Maw Maw needs to make buttery biscuits. After the bear bullies everyone and gobbles them up, the little squirrel comes to the rescue, demonstrating *courage*. In the end, the squirrel is a *hero* and everyone is rewarded with big beautiful, buttery biscuits. The squirrel demonstrates good *character*.

*Activity: Create Characters with Character*

Name other good character traits. Draw pictures of the people in your family. Next to them, write down their *character traits* (kind, helpful, funny, etc.). Now draw a picture of yourself. Exchange your picture with a partner. Each partner will list *character traits* next to the picture. Discuss what it means to have *good character*.

*Activity: Big Bad Bear Paper Bag Puppet*

Using the Big Bad Bear Paper Bag Puppet template in Book Activities (go to <http://www.diannedelascasas.com> and click on “Book Activities” and “Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear”), make the bear. In the story, he is a bully. How would you make him different? What kind of different character traits could you give him?

**Rhythm & Writing**

In *Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear*, there is a rhythmic chant that appears throughout the book:

“I need sody sallyraytus lickety-split  
Maw Maw’s going to make some biscuits with it.”

Can you write your own lyrics and set them to a familiar tune? Common songs like “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” and “Jingle Bells” are fun to change around with your own words.

**Turbo Tongue Twisters**

A *tongue twister* is a phrase that is designed to be difficult to say properly. Some tongue twisters are natural (cinnamon or spaghetti are often tongue twisters for young children) while others are deliberate and used for fun. Example: “Betty Botter bought a bit of bitter butter.” (Try saying it three times fast without any mistakes!) Can you make up your own turbo tongue twister?

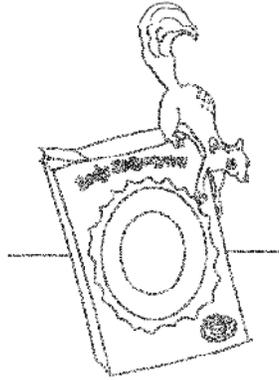
## Math

### **Cooking Up Some Math**

In *Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear*, Maw Maw bakes buttery biscuits. Cooking is a great way to learn about math. Cooking teaches geometry, fractions, measurements, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Here is the recipe for **Maw Maw's Simple Sody Biscuits**.

#### **Ingredients:**

2 c. flour  
3/4 tsp. baking soda  
1 tsp. sugar  
1 stick (1/2 cup) cold butter  
1/4 c. apple cider vinegar  
1/2 c. milk



#### **Directions:**

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking soda, sugar, and salt. Cut in butter. Add vinegar and milk. Stir until dough is sticky. Using a tablespoon, drop heaping spoonfuls onto greased cookie sheet. Bake for 12-14 minutes or until golden brown. Makes 10-12 biscuits.

#### **Math Challenge:**

- What if you wanted to make 2 batches of biscuits? **Double** (X2) the recipe. Write the doubled recipe.
- If you were to share a biscuit with 3 friends, how many cuts would you need? Answer: 4 (although they would be small pieces and who wants to share a buttery biscuit?! LOL)
- About how many biscuits does 3 batches make? Answer: 30-36
- How many batches are needed to give everyone in the class one biscuit each? Will there be leftovers?

### **Create a Recipe and Design a Cookbook**

Using the this template <http://www.instructables.com/id/How-to-Make-a-One-Sheet-of-Paper-Book/>, create a new recipe or write down an old family recipe. Following the directions, cut and fold the paper to create a cool cookbook! The folding requires a little bit of geometry!

## Science

### **Big Bad Bear Fun Facts**

- The bear depicted in the book is a black bear. Despite their name, black bears can be blue-gray, blue-black, brown, cinnamon, or even white in color! However, white black bears are rare.
- Black bears are North America's most familiar and common bears. They typically live in forests but are also found in the mountains and swamps.
- They are excellent tree climbers and swimmers. They can be up to 6 feet long and typically weigh between 150-450 pounds.
- Black bears are the smallest of North American bears. Grizzly bears are much larger.

- American black bears are plantigrade, meaning they are flat-footed. Their front claws are longer than their rear claws.
- During the winter, bears hibernate. They sleep in dens for the duration of the season. Their bodies survive off the fat they accumulated while foraging and hunting during the summer and fall seasons.
- Although black bears are considered carnivores (meat-eating), they are actually omnivores, meaning they eat both meat and vegetation.

*Activity: Identify Bear Tracks*

Print out the tracks of the three North American bear species: black bear, grizzly bear, and polar bear. Write the name of the bear on the back of the print-out. Mix the paw prints up and test yourself. Check out this website for great information on bear tracking. <http://www.bear-tracker.com/bear.html>

### **Funky Facts about Squirrels**

- The word “squirrel” means “shadow tail” in Greek
- Squirrels have long, muscular hind legs and short front legs that work together to help them leap. They can jump up to 20 feet!
- Ever wonder how squirrels can run up and down trees so quickly and easily? Their legs are double-jointed, enabling them to be nimble climbers.
- Squirrels are found on every continent except Antarctica and Australia.
- Can you eat your own body weight in food every week? Well, a squirrel can!
- Ever heard the saying “squirrel away?” It means saving something for later. It is derived from the habits of squirrels to store their nuts and food for the cold season.
- Squirrels have a unique body shape that allows them to see behind them.
- Squirrels have a natural parachute – their tails! They can fall up to 100 feet without harm.

*Activity: Draw a Squirrelly Squirrel*

Squirrelly means restless and unpredictable, which describes how a squirrel often appears to humans. Give your squirrel his/her own personality with a fun and funky pattern. Does it have stripes, polka dots, or checkers? What is its name? Around your drawing, list some fun and funky facts about your animal.

### **Sody Sallyraytus Fun Facts**

- Baking soda is a chemically manufactured combination of sodium chloride (common salt) and calcium carbonate (limestone).
- The first aerated drinks were prepared by adding baking soda to lemonade. The acidity of the lemon reacted with the baking soda to give it “fizz.” Years later, carbonation became the method of choice but the fizzy drinks retained their popular name of “soda.”
- Baking soda is used as a leavening agent in cakes and biscuits. Their property allows baked goods to rise.

*Activity: Make a Baking Soda Volcano*

It's fun to see the properties of baking soda in action. This is a popular science experiment with kids.

**You'll need:**

- Baking Soda (make sure it's not baking powder)
- Vinegar
- A container like a bowl
- Paper towels or a cloth (it might get messy)

**Instructions:**

- Place 1/2 cup of baking soda into your container.
- Slowly pour in the vinegar.
- What happens? Watch as the chemical reaction takes place!

**What is Happening?**

The baking soda is a base while the vinegar is an acid. When combined, they react and form carbonic acid, which is very unstable. It instantly separates into water and carbon dioxide, which creates all the fizzing. Cool, right? Now it's time to clean up that mess...

**Social Studies – The Mountains on the Map**

*Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear* is based on an Appalachian Mountain tale. Where are the mountains? Can you locate them on a map? How many states do the Appalachian Mountains run through?

*Activity: Become a Cartographer*

A cartographer is a creator of maps. Create a map of your own mountains. Where is north, south, east and west? Use a real map key to define the landmarks on your map.

**Drama/Theater**

Act out the story of *Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear* using Dianne de Las Casas' story theater script on her website. Create a puppet play using Dianne de Las Casas' puppet theater script on her website. <http://www.diannedelascasas.com> Click on "Book Activities" and "Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear."

**Art**

*Big Bad Art!*

Draw your own version of the big bad bear and the squirrel. How would they look? Printable puppets and coloring sheets are available on Dianne's website <http://www.diannedelascasas.com> in the "Book Activities" and "Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear."

**Craft**

*Big Bad Bookmarks*

Printable bookmarks are available on Dianne's website <http://www.diannedelascasas.com> in the "Book Activities" and "Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear."