



## **Blue Frog: The Legend of Chocolate**

An Educator's Guide

A Picture Book by Dianne de Las Casas

Illustrated by Holly Stone-Barker

Pelican Publishing Company 2011

### **About the book**

Sun God savors his rich, dark cacao beans, but Wind God believes Sun God should share *su tesoro*, his treasure, with the people of the earth. When Sun God refuses, Wind God transforms into *una rana azul*, a blue frog, and spies on the greedy god. While disguised as Rana Azul, Wind God spreads the word about Sun God's secret stash of cacao to the village children. *Los niños* alert their mothers and fathers, and they all begin to search for the sweet-tasting treat and soon make a divine discovery. They name the tasty substance from the cacao pod "cacahuatl," which we know today as chocolate. Aztec- and Mayan-inspired illustrations and a recipe for a steaming mug of Mexican hot cocoa complete this tasty tale. ¡*Delicioso!*

Watch the book trailer on Dianne's website! <http://www.storyconnection.net>. Click on "Book Activities" and "*Blue Frog: The Legend of Chocolate.*"

### **About the Author**



Dianne de Las Casas is an award-winning author, storyteller, and recording artist. Her work has earned rave reviews from *School Library Journal*, *Booklist*, and *Kirkus*. She performs at schools, libraries, festivals, and special events and is a sought-after speaker and at state, national, and international library and education conferences. The author of *The House That Witchy Built*, *There's a Dragon in the Library*, *The Gigantic Sweet Potato*, *Madame Poulet and Monsieur Roach*, *The Cajun Cornbread Boy*, *Mama's Bayou* and many other books, Dianne lives with her family in the New Orleans area. A self-confessed chocoholic, she is glad that Rana Azul told Earth's people about cacao because she absolutely loves this delightful food of the gods.

### **About the Illustrator**



Holly Stone-Barker is a cut-paper and collage artist, and a graduate of the prestigious Pratt Institute in New York City. A skilled illustrator, she has created logos, coloring books, and magazine covers. She is an art instructor as well as a teaching artist in schools. This is her third book with Dianne de Las Casas. Stone-Barker lives in Zachary, Louisiana with her family. She loves a good, steaming cup of hot cocoa and chocolate is one of her favorite foods!

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

**How did you come up with the idea for *Blue Frog: The Legend of Chocolate*?**

In New Orleans, there is a small, gourmet chocolate boutique on Magazine Street called Blue Frog Chocolates. The shop is named after the legend of Blue Frog and how chocolate came to the world. I loved the story and thought that it would make a fantastic children's book. Because the story is an ancient legend, the story details were sketchy. I had to do a lot of research and filled in many of the details myself, imagining how the story unfolded. I also visited Mexico a couple of times, visited the Central American rainforest, and toured a cacao farm and two chocolate factories. I am lucky that Holly Stone-Barker had such a wonderful vision for the illustrations!

**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, Holly Stone-Barker**

**What inspires you as an artist?**

I am inspired by textures, paper and color. My eyes always gravitate to items that have strong textures. I love looking at woven baskets, tapestries, bugs, tree bark, grass, architecture, and items with intricate detail. When I see these things I often wonder how I could recreate that texture with paint, paper, and a Xacto knife.

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

My advice for young artist is to always explore. Spend time investigating things around you by snapping pictures with your mind. This will expand your visual knowledge so when you sit down to create art you will have a basket of information to draw from. Keep in mind there are different materials used to create art. So make sure you explore all of them!

**LANGUAGE ARTS**

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

How many words can you whizzle from Blue Frog? The words have to be 3 or more letters. We found 35 words but there are more!

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**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: "Chuck upchucked a chocolate chip cookie." (Try saying it three times fast without any mistakes!) Can you make up your own turbo tongue twister?

**Retelling Tales Writing Exercise**

*Blue Frog: The Legend of Chocolate* 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)

**Reading: Check Out Chocolate Books**

Check out these awesome chocolate books. The first one is my childhood favorite!

- *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl
- *The Chocolate Touch* by Patrick Skene Catling
- *Chocolatina* by Erik Kraft
- *Chocolate Fever* by Robert Kimmel Smith

**SCIENCE**

**How Chocolate Is Made**

Who can resist a the sweet, velvety taste of delicious chocolate? I know I can't! So how is chocolate made? Here are the steps!

1. Ripe cacao pods are harvested by hand, cut gently from the branches of the cacao tree.
2. The cacao pods are then cut open, revealing the cacao beans, which are covered in a white flesh.
3. The raw beans are then fermented for a few days where they shed their coating. Inside is a dark brown bean.
4. The beans are then placed on drying racks where they roast and dry naturally in the sun.
5. The sun-dried beans are then sent to a winnower, a machine that removes the hard shell and breaks the beans into small "nibs." Nibs have a nutty, roasted flavor.
6. The nibs are taken to a machine called a conch. They are ground for a couple of hours and create a concentrated liquid called cocoa mass.
7. Vanilla and lecithin (an emulsifier) are added. The cocoa is conched more many more hours until it has a creamy, velvety texture.
8. The cocoa is brought to the temperer, where it cools down and can be poured into chocolate molds.
9. Once the molds cool, the chocolate is packaged and ready for the consumer!

To see pictures of my visit to a real chocolate factory in Hawaii, visit my blog. <http://storyconnection.net/blog/2011/06/22/big-island-hawaii-day-8-glass-bottom-boat-original-hawaiian-chocolate-kona-joe-coffee-magic-sands-beach-monday-june-13-2011/>

*Activity: Make No Bake Chocolate Cream Pie*

Ingredients:

- 1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 6 oz. melted bittersweet chocolate chips
- 3 heaping tbsp. powdered sugar
- 1 8 oz. tub whipped topping
- 1 ready-made graham pie crust

Directions:

Pour melted chocolate on cream cheese in a large bowl and blend. Gradually add powdered sugar. Fold in whipped topping a little at a time until smoothly blended. Place filling into pie crust, smoothing bubbles and holds. Refrigerate and serve chilled. Serves 8

### **Poison! Blue Frog in the Rain Forest**

Did you know that blue frogs from the South American rainforest are actually called poison dart frogs? They are easily recognized by their bright blue color. Their skin releases a toxin that is lethal to would-be predators. The toxins are so powerful that they are used to poison the tips of darts from blowguns by native Indians. They are active during the day and can be found near boulders and debris, but never in water since they are not strong swimmers. Spot a blue frog? Stay far away from this poisonous amphibian!

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

### **Chocolate Fun Facts: The History of Chocolate**

- The Mayans valued cacao beans so much that they used the beans as currency! “That’ll be five beans, please...”
- Counterfeiting existed even back then! A clever Mayan crook created fake currency by carving cacao beans out of clay. Can you imagine?!
- The Mayans and the Aztecs used chocolate strictly for drinking. When the Spaniards brought cacao back to Europe, sugar was added. That was the beginning of modern-day chocolate.
- In 1519, The Spanish explorer Cortez tasted chocolate from the Aztecs and hated it. Without sugar, it is very bitter.
- Cacao was the first caffeine to reach Europe, beating coffee and tea by a few years.
- 90% of today’s chocolate is made of forastero cacao, because it is easier to grow. Criollo cacao is the best and is now considered premium chocolate since it is rare.
- In the early 1800s Coenraad Van Houten, a Dutch man, created the cocoa press. This machine smashed the cacao beans and expelled the cocoa butter (fat), leaving the cocoa behind. He also invented a way to wash the cocoa in an alkali solution to make it easier to mix with water.

- In the 1850s, an English man named Joseph Fry added more cocoa butter, rather than hot water, to the cocoa powder and sugar. This created the the world's first solid chocolate.
- In 1875, two men named Daniel Peter and Henri Nestle added condensed milk to solid chocolate, creating a milk chocolate bar.
- It was in 1879 that Rudolphe Lindt, a Swiss man, invented the conch, a machine that rotated and mixed the chocolate to a creamy smooth consistency. The conch is still used in modern-day chocolate making.
- In 1905, Milton Hershey finished the Hershey manufacturing facility in the “company town” of Hershey, Pennsylvania. At the time, it was the world's largest chocolate manufacturing plant. By 1907, the plant manufactured 33 million chocolate kisses per day! Hershey was the first person to market chocolate on a national scale. The world has never been the same.

*Activity: Create a Chocolate Timeline*

Get five different kinds of chocolates (examples: Lindt Truffles, Hershey's Bar, Nestle Crunch, Kit Kat, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, Milky Way). Do some research. When was each of these kinds of chocolates invented? Create a timeline with the chocolate and add a few fun facts. Hint: Look at the fun facts above and add to it! Be sure to bring enough chocolate to share with your class, especially your teacher or librarian! ☺

## **MATH**

### **Cooking Up Some Math**

In *Blue Frog: The Legend of Chocolate*, there is a recipe for Mexican Hot Cocoa. Cooking is a great way to learn about math. Cooking teaches geometry, fractions, measurements, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Here is the recipe for **Mexican Hot Cocoa**.

*Activity: Make Mexican Hot Cocoa*

The Aztec people learned to make a hot drink using the cacao bean. We know this drink as hot cocoa. The Aztecs used chile in their hot cocoa. When the Conquistadors brought cacao back to Spain, sugar was added to the drink. Try this delicious recipe, which combines the best of both worlds. If you like your cocoa sweet, without spice, omit the chile powder. If you want it rich, substitute boiling milk for the boiling water.

**Ingredients:**

3 tsp. cocoa powder  
1 tsp. vanilla  
4 tsp. brown sugar  
2/3 cup boiling water  
Chile or chipotle powder, to taste

**Directions:**

Place cocoa powder, vanilla, and brown sugar in a mug. Pour in boiling water. Mix thoroughly. Add a dash of chile powder and mix. Let cool, Enjoy! ¡Delicioso!



**The Math of a Picture Book**

Did you know that a standard picture book has 32 pages? They are put together in what are called "signatures." Each signature has 8 pages. How many signatures makes up a picture book?  
Answer: 4

Although you have 32 pages in a picture book, not all 32 pages are filled with story. Several pages are dedicated to "front matter" such as title pages and copyright pages. Check out these templates for picture books. <http://taralazar.wordpress.com/2009/02/22/picture-book-construction-know-your-layout/> Write a story and divide it up, creating a "dummy" for your picture book. How many pages did you use to write the actual story? Did you place illustrations on single pages or did you use a "double page spread," two pages to illustrate one picture? There is a lot of math involved in creating a picture book!

**Drama/Theater**

Act out the story of *Blue Frog: The Legend of Chocolate* 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.storyconnection.net> Click on "Book Activities" and "Blue Frog: The Legend of Chocolate."

