

**There's A Dragon in the Library**  
An Educator's Guide

A Picture Book by Dianne de Las Casas  
Illustrated by Marita Gentry  
Pelican Publishing Company 2011

**About the book**

Max loves story time at the library. But he has no idea how exciting the library can be until the day he spies a large, speckled egg sitting on one of the bookshelves. With a loud *crack*, the egg breaks open to reveal a small, seemingly harmless dragon. However, the dragon has a real appetite for books and doesn't stay small for long. Max is the only one who can see the dragon munching and crunching on the library's books. Will anyone believe his story before it's too late? Fresh, bright illustrations and Max's "Book Care Tips" complete this enchanting adventure.

*"A fantastic tale full of fun and spirit that will soon join the ranks of Harold and the Purple Crayon - a book truly worthy of classic status for generations to come."* – Feather Quill Book Reviews

*"This dragon tale has all the elements to make it a modern classic and a storytelling staple."* – Stephanie Bange, Children's Librarian, Book Reviewer, and Director, Charles & Renate Frydman Educational Resource Center, Wright State University

Watch the book trailer on Dianne's website! <http://www.storyconnection.net>. Click on "Book Activities" and "There's a Dragon in the Library."

**About the Author**



Her Royal Highness 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 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. She believes that libraries are enchanted places and once discovered a dragon's egg on a children's librarian's bookshelf!



**About the Illustrator**

Her Majesty Marita Gentry is a professional artist and illustrator 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 fourth book she has dreamed up with Dianne de Las Casas. She believes that the best way to tame a dragon is to read to him – *really!*

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

**How did you come up with the idea for *There's a Dragon in the Library*?**

I was in a library in Baton Rouge, Louisiana when I discovered a dragon's egg on the children's librarian's bookshelf. That librarian is Donna Dawson and I dedicated the book to her since she inspired the story. I love dragons. They are so whimsical and fun and libraries have always inspired me. I began wondering, "What if a dragon began eating library books?" That "What If" is the beginning of so many of my stories. I design my books to be "Tell Along Tales" so everyone can join in the telling of the story and this tale is no different. There is a fun repeating refrain.

**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. Dewey, the dragon in this book, is parts of lots of different animals. He has eyelashes like giraffe, wings like a bat, a tail similar to an alligator, and horns like a goat. I also love vivid colors so I made Dewey bright and full of fun and funky patterns. Max was inspired by my nephew, Brayden, who served as the model for the character. When I worked on the paintings for *There's a Dragon in the Library*, I even studied libraries and the books on the shelves. 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 Monstrous Dragon? The words have to be 3 or more letters. We found 35 words but there are more!

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**Retelling Tales Writing Exercise**

*There's a Dragon in the Library* is an original story but there are lots of dragons in folktales. Check out St. George and the Dragon or King Arthur tales. Can you retell a dragon tale?

- 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)

**Book a Trip to the Library**

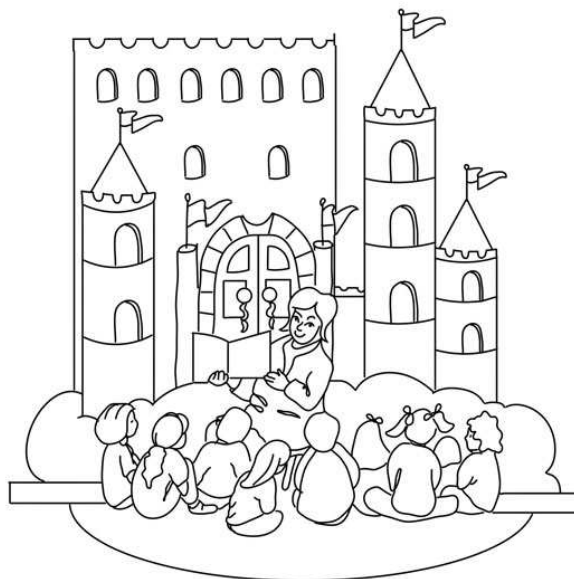
Today's libraries aren't just about books on the shelves (although books are a very important part of the library). Libraries are information centers with computers, Internet, periodicals (magazines), DVDs, and newspapers. Students go to the library to research and study. You can also find fun entertainment at your local library such as story time, puppet shows, craft classes, and movie nights.

*Activity: Learn the Dewey Decimal System*

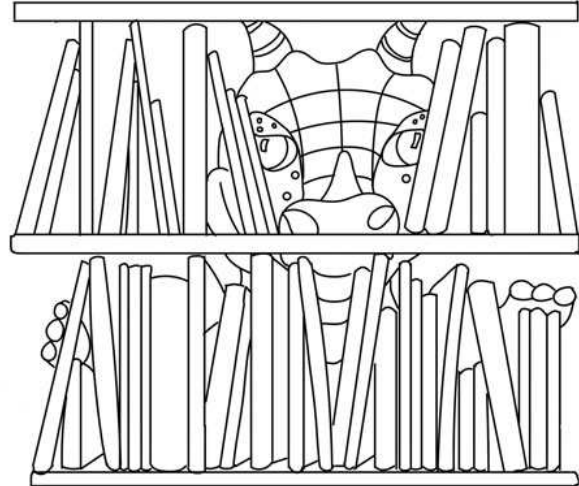
The Dewey decimal system is a number system that places books into organized categories. When you learn this system, it becomes a lot easier to find the books you need. The numbers and letters that classify the books are called "call numbers."

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 000 | <u>GENERALITIES</u>                          |
| 000 | Computers, Loch Ness, Bigfoot, UFO's, Aliens |
| 020 | Internet                                     |

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| 030        | Encyclopedias & Almanacs                                  |
| 060        | Museums   |
| 070        | Newspapers  |
| <u>100</u> | <u>PHILOSOPHY</u>   |
| 130        | Ghosts & the Supernatural                                 |
| 150        | Optical Illusions, Feelings                               |
| 170        | Emotions, Values, Animal Rights                           |
| <u>200</u> | <u>RELIGION</u>   |
| 220        | Old Testament Bible Stories                               |
| 230        | New Testament Bible Stories                               |
| 290        | Mythology, World Religions                                |
| <u>300</u> | <u>SOCIAL SCIENCES</u>                                    |
| 300        | Social Issues - immigration, racism, World Cultures       |
| 320        | Government  |
| 330        | Careers   |
| 340        | Court System, Famous Trials                               |
| 350        | Military Equipment - tanks, submarines                    |
| 360        | Drugs, Environmental Issues, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts       |
| 370        | Education, Phonics  |
| 380        | History of Transportation                                 |
| 390        | Holidays, Scary Stories                                   |
| 398.2      | Folktales, Fairytale                                      |
| <u>400</u> | <u>LANGUAGES</u>  |
| 410        | Sign Language   |
| 420        | Dictionaries, Grammar                                     |
| 490        | Hieroglyphics   |
| <u>500</u> | <u>SCIENCE AND MATH</u>                                   |
| 500        | Science Experiments                                       |
| 510        | Mathematics   |
| 520        | Stars, planets, astronomy                                 |
| 530        | Physical Science - force & motion, electricity, magnetism |
| 540        | Chemistry, Atoms & Molecules                              |
| 550        | Volcanoes, Earthquakes, Weather                           |
| 560        | Dinosaurs, Prehistoric Animals                            |
| 570        | Forests, Deserts, Mountains, Oceans, Evolution            |
| 580        | Plants & Trees  |
| 590        | Animals & Insects   |
| <u>600</u> | <u>APPLIED SCIENCE</u>                                    |
| 600        | Inventions  |



- 610 Human body, Disease
- 620 Space ships, Trains, Cars
- 630 Pets
- 640 Cookbooks, Organizing, Sewing
- 650 Careers, Secret Codes
- 670 Paper Making
- 680 Woodworking
- 690 Building
  
- 700 ART
- 710 Art Appreciation, History of Art
- 720 Architecture
- 730 Origami
- 740 Drawing, Crafts, Sewing, Knitting
- 750 Painting
- 760 Print Making
- 770 Photography
- 780 Music
- 790 Sports, Games, Magic, Camping, Fishing
  
- 800 LITERATURE
- 810 Poetry, Plays, Jokes & Riddles
- 820 Shakespeare
  
- 900 GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY
- 900 American History by Decade & Century
- 910 Explorers, Atlases
- 920 Flags
- 930 Archeology, Ancient Civilizations
- 940 Knights, Castles, World War I & II, European Countries
- 950 Asian & Middle Eastern Countries
- 960 African Countries
- 970 North & Central American Countries, Native American Tribes, American History, States
- 980 South American Countries
- 990 Pacific Islands, Australia



*Activity: Game: Crack Your Friends' Call Number Codes*

Have everyone in your group choose five call numbers that describe their interests. Write the call numbers down out of order. Exchange papers and race to see who can decode the call numbers the fastest. Here are my call number codes. How quickly can you decode them?

- 1) 398.2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) 640 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) 130 \_\_\_\_\_

- 4) 390 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) 740 \_\_\_\_\_

**Rhythm & Writing**

In *There's a Dragon in the Library*, there is a rhythmic chant that appears throughout the book:

*The dragon opened his mouth and began to munch.  
He filled his tummy with books. Crunch. Crunch. Crunch.*

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: “Just draw dragons.” (Try saying it three times fast without any mistakes!) Can you make up your own turbo tongue twister?

**Math**

**Mathemagical Dragons**

Write a dragon story using the symbols for the words “add,” “subtract,” “take away,” “multiply,” “divide,” “sum,” “equals.” Past or present tense may be used. This is called a “rebus” story, a story that uses illustrations in the place of words. For example:

“Sir Reptitious snuck behind the dragon. He ÷ed his loaf of bread in half. He +ed jelly to the bread, knowing the dragon would like it. Perhaps if the dragon ate the jelly sandwiches, Sir Reptitious could gain an +vantage.”

**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!

**Science**

**Drawing from the Dragon...**

Although the dragon is largely considered a mythical beast, it is a creature that is likely a composite drawn from many creatures or possibly inspired by the following:

**Chinese Alligator:** One of the most endangered reptiles in the world, Chinese alligators can grow to a length of about 6 feet, and can often be found floating just below the surface of the water, unbeknownst to their unsuspecting prey.

**Frilled Dragon:** A small lizard found in the forest and woodlands of northern Australia, it has an expandable frill surrounds the dragon's head and neck, which flares like an umbrella when it is frightened.

**Pythons:** A python is constrictor snake, a snake that squeezes its victims to death. It preys upon small mammals and birds. It is one of the largest snakes in the world. There are claims that there are pythons large enough to swallow an elephant.

**Flying Dragon:** In Southeast Asia, there are small lizards that glide between trees using wing-like folds of skin. Using their "wings," they can glide for distances of up to 30 feet. They survive on ants and other small insects.

**Komodo Dragon:** The world's largest living lizard resides in Indonesia. The Komodo can grow up to 10 feet long and can ambush creatures much larger than themselves. They have a thickly muscled tail and a strong bite that can be lethal because of the septic bacteria in their saliva. They were discovered in 1910.

*Activity: Dangerous Dragons*

What animals do you think the dragon resembles? Research 3 animals that could be "mistaken" for a dragon. Write fun facts about these "dragon" creatures.

### **Social Studies**

#### **Dragons Around the World**

Dragons are depicted in nearly every culture of the world. In China, they are amphibious and have long bodies, living in watery worlds such as lakes, rivers, oceans, and even raindrops! In Europe, dragons have snake-like tongues, bat-like wings, and spew fire and smoke. In Mexico and South America, the dragons are feathered creatures that change from gods to dragons and back again. In Africa and Australia, the dragons were depicted as serpentine creatures with slender bodies like snakes.

*Activity: Draw a Dragon*

What would your dragon look like? Would your dragon have claws? Horns? Sharp teeth? A spiky tail? Design a dragon using traits from different animals. Write those traits on your drawing.

#### **Castles: The Medieval Mansion**

Medieval castles were dominant from the early 10th century through the mid 17th century. They were not just buildings. They were fortresses made to protect people during military conflict. These are the main parts of a castle:

- **Moat** – A moat is a ditch with deep water to prevent enemies from entering.
- **Drawbridge** – Drawbridges were wooden structures that could be raised or lowered. Ropes or chains were attached to the end of the bridge and then rigged to a pulley so that guards were able to raise it.
- **Curtain** - Upon crossing the drawbridge, you would reach the **curtain**, or wall. This wall could be anywhere between 8 and 20 feet thick. Try battering that down!
- **Towers** – These tall structure were part of the curtain and allowed guards to keep watch outside the castle's walls.

*Activity: Design a Shoebox Castle*

Using a shoebox, cardboard tubes, string, construction paper, glue, and markers, design a castle. How many towers do you have? How did you design your drawbridge? Does your castle have a moat?

**Drama/Theater**

Act out the story of *There's a Dragon in the Library* 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 "There's a Dragon in the Library."

**Art**

*Accordion Dragon*

Create an accordion dragon puppet from a fun template available on Dianne's website <http://www.storyconnection.net> in the "Book Activities" and "There's a Dragon in the Library." This awesome dragon is monstrous!



*Decorate-a-Dragon*

Using the "Design Your Own Dragon" template in Book Activities (go to <http://www.storyconnection.net> and click on "Book Activities" and "There's a Dragon in the Library, decorate your own dragon. You can make it fun, funky, friendly, fascinating, or fancy!

*Create-a-Crown*

Print out your very own "Library Royalty" crown and color it (go to <http://www.storyconnection.net>. Click on "Book Activities" and "There's a Dragon in the Library." Create a crazy cool crown!