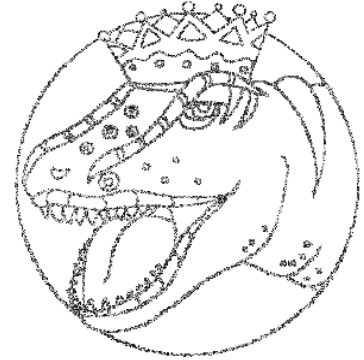


**Dinosaur Mardi Gras**  
An Educator's Guide

A Picture Book by Dianne de Las Casas  
Illustrated by Marita Gentry  
Pelican Publishing Company 2012



**About the book**

It's Carnival time in New Orleans! So get ready to chomp, stomp, and boogie to that mambo beat. As the parade rolls down the route, Brachiosaurus tosses his beads while Triceratops sings the blues and Spinosaurus taps in his blue suede shoes. The big beasts boom and bob to the shouts of "Throw me something, mister!" from the crowd below. Rex, King of Carnivores, takes center stage, roaring through the crowds. This festive book, full of flamboyant illustrations, includes a Mardi Gras glossary and instructions for creating a Mardi Gras shoebox bloat. *Laissez les bon temps rugir!* Let the good times ROAR!

*"It's a roaring reading party! Pass out the sparkly beads, pout on the catchy Mardi Gras tunes, and let the kids CHOMP! CHOMP! and STOMP! STOMP! To the infectious beat of Dinosaur Mardi Gras. A perfect read-aloud!"* – John Schumacher, school librarian, founder of MrSchuReads.com, and 2011 *Library Journal* Mover & Shaker

Watch the book trailer on Dianne's website! <http://www.storyconnection.net>. Click on "Book Activities" and "Dinosaur Mardi Gras."

**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 *Blue Frog: The Legend of Chocolate*, *The House That Witchy Built*, *There's a Dragon in the Library*, *The Gigantic Sweet Potato*, *Madame Poulet* and *Monsieur Roach*, *Mama's Bayou*, *The Cajun Cornbread Boy*, and many other books, Dianne lives with her family in the New Orleans area. She loves to celebrate Mardi Gras, especially when she can get up and bust a move!





### **About the Illustrator**

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 sixth book she has collaborated on with Dianne de Las Casas. She thinks Carnival is cool and the best way to celebrate is to let the good times ROAR!

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

#### **How did you come up with the idea for *Dinosaur Mardi Gras*?**

In New Orleans, it is tradition for school children to build Mardi Gras floats out of shoe boxes. Schools hold contests and host parades. My nephew built a float called “Jurassic Mardi Gras” and I thought it was a great theme for a picture book. What could be better than Mardi Gras and dinosaurs?! Then I had an “ah ha” moment. In New Orleans, Rex is the king of carnival on Mardi Gras Day. T-Rex is the king of carnivores! I penned the story in one sitting. Not all of the dinosaurs in the original story made it to the final story but the book version of *Dinosaur Mardi Gras* is pretty close to the original dino tale.

#### **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 had lots of fun with this book because I got to work with lots of fantastic color and re-invent dinosaurs. Since no one really knows what actual dinosaurs looked like, I was able to use my imagination quite a bit. I did a lot of research, using five dinosaur books and the Internet to find out more about these magnificent monsters. I also came to New Orleans and took a lot of pictures of the city and used Dianne’s pictures of the Rex parade as reference and inspiration for the paintings in the story.

#### **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 Dinosaur Mardi Gras? The words have to be 3 or more letters. We found 25 words but there are more!

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**Rhyme, Rhythm & Writing**

In *Dinosaur Mardi Gras*, there is a rhythmic, rhyming chant that appears throughout the book:

*Dinosaur Mardi Gras, Chomp! Chomp!*  
*Dinosaur Mardi Gras, Stomp! Stomp!*  
*Down in New Orleans*

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: “Chomp on chocolate chip cookies.” (Try saying it three times fast without any mistakes!) Can you make up your own turbo tongue twister?

**Math**

**Dino Doubloons**

In the days of pirates and Spanish conquistadors, doubloons were once money, usually gold and silver coins. In Mardi Gras culture, doubloons are aluminum coins thrown from floats as goodies for people to catch.

*Activity: Dinosaur Store*

Make some dino doubloons and give them monetary value. Here are some suggestions.

- Oviraptor - 1¢
- Iguanodon - 5¢
- Allosaurus - 10¢



Seismosaurus - 25¢  
T-Rex - \$1



You can create a Dinosaur Store and use your doubloons to buy Mardi Gras beads and supplies!

### **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**

Here are some cool facts about each of the dinosaurs that appear in the book.

There are four dinosaur periods: Triassic (210-245 million years ago), Jurassic (145-210 million years ago), Cretaceous (65-145 million years ago), and Tertiary (50-65 million years ago).

**Allosaurus** – Allosaurus lived in North America. This dinosaur was one of the largest carnivorous (meat-eating) dinosaurs of the Jurassic period. Until T-Rex and Albertosaurus, Allosaurus was the largest predator on earth.

**Apatosaurus** – Apatosaurus lived in North America during the Jurassic period, about 150 million years ago. Baby apatosaurus hatched out of enormous eggs that measured up to 12 inches across. The apatosaurus was the first complete sauropod (long-necked dinosaur) to go on display at the American Museum of Natural History in New York in 1905. It made history!

**Brachiosaurus** – Brachiosaurus lived in North America and Africa during the Jurassic period, about 150 million years ago. It was a quadrupedal (walked on all fours) herbivore (vegetation-eating animal) with a long, giraffe-like neck that allowed it to stretch up to the highest leaves. The first Brachiosaurus bones were discovered in Colorado, USA in 1900.

**Diplodocus** – Diplodocus lived in North America during the Jurassic period, about 145-150 million years ago. It is one of the longest land animals that has ever lived on earth. In 1905, the Carnegie Museum of Natural History began sending copies of “Dippy” to museums around the world. Until T-Rex appeared, Dippy was the most famous dinosaur in the world.

**Gigantosaurus** – Gigantosaurus lived in South America during the Cretaceous period, about 100 million years ago. In 1995, this dinosaur made history, becoming the largest meat-eating dinosaur discovered.

**Iguanodon** – Iguanodon lived in North America, Africa, and Europe during the Cretaceous period, around 125-130 million years ago. This herbivore is one of the world's best known dinosaurs. It was discovered in 1822 and was the second dinosaur ever named.

**Minmi** – Minmi lived in Australia during the Cretaceous period, about 120 million years ago. It was a small, armored dinosaur with a body covered in bony plates, called scutes. It had a short neck and a turtle-like head.

**Notoceratops** – Notoceratops lived in South America during the Cretaceous period, about 80 million years ago. It had a neck frill and had horns or so scientists presume. The original jawbone is missing from this dinosaur so its true appearance is still a mystery.

**Oviraptor** – Oviraptor lived in Asia during the Cretaceous period, about 80 million years ago. It had a short beak with no teeth but powerful jaw muscles that allowed it to crush hard objects such as bones. Oviraptor means “egg thief.” This dinosaur was named Oviraptor because it was found lying atop eggs thought to have belonged to another dinosaur. In fact, Oviraptor was fossilized lying over its own unhatched young.

**Pterodactyl** – Pterodactyl lived in Europe and Africa during the Jurassic period, about 150 million years ago. It had long wings and small but sharp teeth. Its name means “wing finger” and its wings ranged in size from 14 inches to 8 feet!

**Pteranodon** – Pteranodon lived in North America, Europe and Asia during the Cretaceous period, about 100 million years ago. It was a large flying pterosaur at nearly 7 feet long with a wing span of 23-30 feet! Fur and hair suggest that Pteranodon was a warm-blooded animal.

**Seismosaurus** – Seismosaurus lived in North America during the Jurassic period, about 150 million years ago. It was one of the largest animals to have ever lived on land. In 1999, a full model of the dinosaur was made out of Styrofoam at a cost of US\$350,000!

**Spinosaurus** – Spinosaurus lived in Africa during the late Cretaceous period, about 70 million years ago. It was a huge meat-eating dinosaur and a formidable predator. A sail sticking up out of its back was made up of spike-shaped spines of bone joined together by a layer of skin.

**Stegosaurus** – Stegosaurus lived in North America during the early Cretaceous period, about 145 million years ago. It was a quadrupedal herbivore. It was discovered in 1877 by Professor Othniel Marsh. Its large, bony plates on its back reminded the professor of roof tiles so he named the dinosaur “Stegosaurus,” meaning “roofed lizard.” Its horned tail was used to defend itself against carnivorous predators.



**Triceratops** – Triceratops lived in North America during the late Cretaceous period, about 70 million years ago. The name “Triceratops” means “three-horned face.” It was a quadrupedal herbivore and used its horns as defensive weapons.

**Tyrannosaurus Rex** – T-Rex lived in North America and Asia. This bipedal (walks on two feet) carnivore is the most famous of all dinosaurs. In 1997, Sothebys of New York auctioned a female T-Rex named Sue. Sue was a dinosaur found in South Dakota in 1990 and was one of the most complete T-Rex skeletons ever found. She was sold for a whopping \$8,362,500!

**Velociraptor** – Velociraptor lived in Asia during the late Cretaceous period, about 70 million years ago. This dinosaur was made famous by the movie “Jurassic Park.” It was discovered in 1925 by an expedition to Mongolia. These vicious predators hunted in packs and had sharp teeth for feeding.

**Zigongosaurus** – Zigongosaurus lived in Asia during the Jurassic period, about 150 million years ago. It had a long neck for feasting on tall vegetation. It is believed to have lived and traveled in herds. Its long tail was used to knock predators down.

*Activity: Dinosaur Doubloon Trivia*

Use the doubloons in the “Book Activities” section of Dianne’s website, [www.storyconnection.net](http://www.storyconnection.net). Click on “Dinosaur Mardi Gras.” Print out the doubloons, color them, cut them out, and glue them to the outside of the paper plate. On the inside of the paper plate, place dinosaur trivia (hint: you can use the facts above). Quiz your classmates. How much do you know about dinosaurs?

## **Social Studies**

### **Mardi Gras History**

Mardi Gras means “Fat Tuesday.” In the Catholic tradition, it is the last day of feasting before the solemnity of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. In 1704, Mobile, Alabama established a secret society (Masque de la Mobile). In 1710, a society called “Boeuf Graf Society” (“fat bull”) paraded through 1861 on Fat Tuesday.

In 1718, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne established a Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans. Lavish society balls were held but there wasn’t a parade until the 1730s. By the late 1830s, maskers and carriages formed parades to celebrate Mardi Gras. In 1871, the krewe “Twelfth Night Revelers” was formed. In 1872, a group of business men invented Rex, the Carnival King. Rex became the first daytime parade. They also introduced the Mardi Gras colors of purple, green and gold, the Mardi Gras song, and a Mardi Gras flag.

In 1873, floats were constructed entirely in Louisiana instead of France. In 1875, the Governor of Louisiana signed Mardi Gras into a legal holiday, which it still is today.

*Activity: Design a Mardi Gras Shoebox Float*

In the New Orleans area, it is tradition for school children to build Mardi Gras floats out of shoe boxes. Make your float roar with creativity!

**Materials:**

Shoe box  
Paint  
Glue  
Beads, sequins, or other decorations

**Directions:**

Paint or spray paint your shoebox and the shoebox top in a color of your choice. Turn the shoebox upside down and glue the top to one end of the shoebox, creating a backdrop. The rest is easy. Decorate! Use your imagination and create a Mardi Gras sensation. Laissez les bon temps rugir! Let the good times ROAR!

**Drama/Theater**

Act out the story of *Dinosaur Mardi Gras* 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 "Dinosaur Mardi Gras."

**Art*****Dinosaur Mardi Gras Masks***

Create Dinosaur Mardi Gras Masks from templates available on Dianne's website <http://www.storyconnection.net> in the "Book Activities" and "Dinosaur Mardi Gras." These masks are Mega Monster Marvelous!

