



The House That Santa Built
An Educator's Guide

A Picture Book by Dianne de Las Casas
Illustrated by Holly Stone-Barker
Pelican Publishing Company 2013

About the book

Dianne de Las Casas and Holly Stone-Barker do it again in this delightful Christmas version of the classic *The House That Jack Built*. Everyone is welcome in the house that Santa built! Layers of cut-paper snow blanket the pages of this jolly holiday tale. Join the merry collage of characters as they dance across Santa's front yard, behind ornament-filled trees, around colorfully-wrapped presents, and beside Santa's bright house. Descriptive sounds repeated on each page will enchant even the youngest listeners as they creak, squeak, stomp, and clap with the joyous parade of visitors at Santa's North Pole abode!

About the Author



Dianne de Las Casas

Dianne de Las Casas is an award-winning author, storyteller, recording artist, and founder of Picture Book Month, an international literacy initiative celebrating the print picture book during the month of November. Her work has earned rave reviews from *School Library Journal*, *Booklist*, and *Kirkus*. Recipient of the Ann Martin Book Mark Award, Dianne 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 23 books including *The Little "Read" Hen*, *Beware, Beware of the Big Bad Bear*, *Dinosaur Mardi Gras*, *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*, Dianne lives with her husband and daughter, 13-year-old culinary sensation, Kid Chef Eliana, in the New Orleans area. Dianne absolutely loves holiday sparkles and giving presents!

About the Illustrator



Holly Stone-Barker

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 sixth book with Dianne de Las Casas. Stone-Barker lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana with her family. Holly loves snowmen and a good cup of hot cocoa on a cold wintery day.

Interview with the Author, Dianne de Las Casas

How did you come up with the idea for *The House That Santa Built*?

As a professional storyteller, I am always playing with stories that have a fun rhythm “built-in.” “The House That Jack Built” is an old Mother Goose rhyme that fascinated me with its great cumulative action. I was looking for a fun, participatory Halloween story to tell to young kids and I thought about this old story. I started toying with the tale and came up with a great cast of spooky characters. It was then I created *The House That Witchy Built*. The story was a hit and I knew I had to do a holiday sequel! Holly Stone-Barker made the Christmas characters in *The House That Santa Built* 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, 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. (Warning: Xacto knives are for grown-up use only.)

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 Santa’s House? 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: “We read and write with reindeer.” (Try saying it three times fast without any mistakes!) Can you make up your own turbo tongue twister?

SOCIAL STUDIES

Santa Fun Facts

Santa Claus is based on a real person. Born around the year 270, St. Nicholas was the Bishop of Myra, a town in what is now Turkey. He loved bestowing gifts upon children anonymously. He paid the dowries of poor girls and handed out coins and treats to kids. Children would often find the goodies in their shoes. They began setting their shoes out at night for that very purpose. St. Nicholas was canonized as the patron saint of children.

Activity: Create and Decorate a Santa Hat

Print out the Santa Hat pattern from www.diannedelascasas.com and craft your own jolly headwear. And remember, use your imagination. It doesn't have to be red!

Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer Fun Facts

The 1824 poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas” aka “Twas the Night Before Christmas” by Clement C. Moore popularized the names of 8 reindeer but did you know that “Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer” was created by a department store copywriter by the name of Robert L. May? In 1939, Montgomery Ward, a Chicago- based department store, wanted an inexpensive holiday giveaway. They asked its own marketing department to create an original Christmas storybook from scratch. Robert May, a man with a four-year-old daughter, got the job. The story that May wrote was given away to more than 2 million Montgomery Ward customers in 1939. When May's brother-in-law turned the story into a song nearly 10 years later, Rudolph became the “most famous reindeer of all.” In 1947, “Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer” was the #1 song on the U.S. Pop Charts!

Activity: Craft a Handprint Reindeer

Materials needed:

- Brown construction paper
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Red paint
- White paint
- Black paint
- Black marker

Directions:

Have students trace one hand on brown construction paper and cut it out. Be sure that their fingers are spread apart. These will be the "antlers." Dip the thumb in red paint and press it at the bottom of the palm, creating a "nose." Dip the pointer finger in white paint and press it on the construction paper, creating two eyes. When the white dries, dip the pinky finger in black paint and create a pupil inside the white eye. Draw two curved lines up on each side of the red nose, creating a smile.

Colorful Cats

In *The House That Witchy Built*, there is a cute orange tabby cat. Most people think of Halloween cats as being black. In the United States, there is a superstition that says black cats are bad luck. However, in Great Britain, Scotland, and Japan, black cats are considered good luck!

Activity: Create Santa's House

In *The House That Santa Built*, Holly creates Santa's house by collaging textured paper. What can you do to make a creative Christmas cottage? Make a merry collage by using different kinds of papers. Explore textures and layer your papers to create a holiday house!

MATH**It's Time for Christmas Fun!**

In *The House That Santa Built*, there are snowflakes on every page. How many snowflakes are in the whole book? Did you know that every single snowflake in nature is different? No two are alike. Create your own snowflake and decorate the classroom or library with snowflakes!

Activity: Countdown to Halloween

How many days are there until Halloween? Create a countdown calendar! Cross off each day that passes until the big day. Here are some activities to include on your countdown calendar:

7 Days Until Christmas: Word whizzle "Christmas." How many words can you make? Remember, each word has to have three letters in it.

6 Days Until Christmas: Make a jingle bell necklace. Get a jingle bell and string it on some pretty holiday ribbon. Wear it and sing your favorite holiday jingle tune.

5 Days Until Christmas: Make elf hats out of construction paper and hang them in your windows.

4 Days Until Christmas: Create Christmas cards and pass them out to your family. You can print the Christmas cards from our book activities on the website! www.diannedelascasas.com

3 Days Until Christmas: Create a Christmas tree out of construction paper. Decorate it with sequins and glitter. Hang it where someone will see it first thing in the morning (like the bathroom mirror).

2 Days Until Christmas: Create a marshmallow snowman. Use marshmallow cream, peanut butter, or frosting to make the marshmallows stick together. Be sure to have chocolate chip eyes. Yes, you can eat him...

1 Day Until Christmas: Write your letter to Santa. Bake your cookies for his visit. Leave carrots for the reindeer. Hang up your stocking. Drink some hot cocoa. Go to bed early!

Christmas: Open presents and celebrate with family and friends. Read *The House That Santa Built!*

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 make 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

The Science of Snowflakes

No two snowflakes are alike! In 1925, a man by the name of Wilson A. Bentley in Jericho, Vermont photographed snowflakes and discovered that each snowflake was different.

"Under the microscope, I found that snowflakes were miracles of beauty; and it seemed a shame that this beauty should not be seen and appreciated by others. Every crystal was a masterpiece of design and no one design was ever repeated." – Wilson A. Bentley

Activity: Coffee Filter Snowflakes

Flatten a large white coffee filter. Fold it in half. Fold it in half again. It will look like a "teepee." With the tip of the triangle at the top, cut a triangle at the bottom middle of the "teepee." Cut off the top tip. Cut a triangle on either side of the middle triangle at the bottom. Cut a triangle on the right side of the "teepee." Cut a triangle on the left side of the "teepee." Open it up. You have a snowflake! Now raise it above your head and drop it. It will float to the floor like a snowflake!

Drama/Theater

Act out the story of *The House That Santa Built* 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 "The House That Santa Built."