

**The House That Witchy Built**  
An Educator's Guide

A Picture Book by Dianne de Las Casas  
Illustrated by Holly Stone-Barker  
Pelican Publishing Company 2011

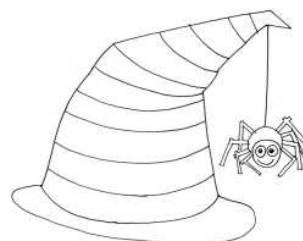


**About the book**

*“Can a picture book inspired by ‘The House that Jack Built’ do anything new? Storyteller de las Casas gives it her all in converting one of her favorite stories to the printed page. Pairing sound effects or movements to each introduced line of text results in a lively, interactive experience that begs any audience to join the fun. Beginning with ‘This is the house (creak, creak) / That Witchy built (clap, clap, clap, clap),’ it will soon have readers meowing with a cat, flapping with the bat, booing with a ghost and rattling like a skeleton. A boy is introduced with ‘(yuck, yuck)’ because he is picking his nose, poor mom wags her finger as she says ‘(no, no)’ and dad plants a ‘(smooch, smooch)’ on mom. The finale ‘...is the / witch (cackle, cackle) / That spooked / them all / (cackle, cackle).’ The collage illustrations are truly impressive. Stone-Barker manipulates various papers to create palpable textures for the house's roof, swishy broom, furry cat and transparent ghost. Witchy definitely rocks this house! Use it to get the (Halloween) party started.” – Kirkus Reviews*

*“‘Creak, Creak.’ Here lies the haunted house version of ‘The House That Jack Built.’ Cumulative verses and onomatopoeia build on a lighthearted Halloween theme (the sound of each object or character is represented in text next to its image) while a collection of cut- and torn-paper collages and variation of colorful fonts create textured and detailed cartoons. Readers may simply search for the smiling spider on each page or follow the tombstones for a bit of graveside humor, e.g., ‘RIP - Imma Star, who lived life with a sparkle.’ Repetition of each verse - a creaking house, black spider, booing ghost, flapping bat, rolling pumpkin, rattling skeleton, and a genial green witch (warts included) - completes the usual list of spooky images accompanying an adventure shared by a boy (with finger in nose), a scolding mom, and an affectionate dad. An additional purchase with a solid language-arts connection for libraries in need of seasonal fare.” – School Library Journal*

Watch the book trailer on Dianne's website! <http://www.storyconnection.net>. Click on “Book Activities” and “The House That Witchy Built.”





**About the Author**

Bewitching 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*, *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. She loves a good spooky tale and would definitely dare to enter the house that Witchy Built!



**About the Illustrator**

Enchanting 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. Stone-Barker lives in Zachary, Louisiana with her family. During Halloween, if you enter Holly's house, you'll find it decorated with tons of spooktacular creatures!

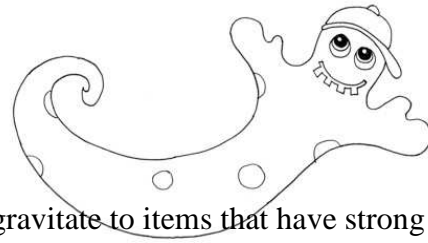
**Interview with the Author, Dianne de Las Casas**

**How did you come up with the idea for *The House That Witchy 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. The story was a hit with kids and I knew it would make a great picture book. 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 your 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 Witchy'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: "Just draw jack-o-lanterns." (Try saying it three times fast without any mistakes!) Can you make up your own turbo tongue twister?

**Onomatopoeia... Boo!**

Onomatopoeia (oh-noh-MAH-toh-pee-ah) is a word that imitates the sound it represents. *The House That Witchy Built* has several: creak, meow, flap, boo, rattle, yum, yuck, smooch, and cackle. Can you think of any onomatopoeia? Use that word in a sentence. What other Halloween words or sounds are onomatopoeia?

**SOCIAL STUDIES**

**Halloween History**

The Halloween tradition goes back some 2,000 years! It is thought to be based on an ancient ceremony performed by the Druids, who were Celtic priests. During the ceremony, they honored the souls of the departed who returned to earth that night. As part of the celebration, they lit bonfires and wore costumes.

**Jumpin Jack O'Lanterns!**

Long ago, in Great Britain, the very first “jack-o-lanterns” were carved from turnips and other gourd vegetables. They were created as watchmen to scare away bad spirits. When immigrants came to America, they brought their carving tradition with them. Pumpkins were plentiful and proved easier to carve, becoming a staple during Halloween. It was in the 1830s that the term “jack-o-lantern” came into use. Modern day jack-o-lanterns are intricately carved with both spooky and funny faces.

**Activity: Craft a Mini Jack-O-Lantern**

Materials needed:

Plastic sandwich bag

Thinly shredded orange paper

Green chenille stick

Black marker



Directions:

With black marker, have students draw a jack-o-lantern face on a plastic sandwich bag. Fill bag with shredded orange paper. Gather the bag at the top and wrap a green chenille stick around it, curling the excess with a pencil.

**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 a Cat Collage**

In *The House That Witchy Built*, Holly creates a cat by collaging textured paper. What color is your favorite cat? Create a cat collage by using different kinds of papers. Explore textures and layer your papers to create a cool cat!

**MATH**

**It's Time for Halloween Fun!**

In *The House That Witchy Built*, there is a clock on each page where the cat is sitting on the stairs. What time is it in the picture? Look at the little hand. Where is it? What about the big hand?

**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 Halloween:** Word whizzle “Halloween.” How many words can you make?

Remember, each word has to have three letters in it.

**6 Days Until Halloween:** Make a glue ghost necklace. Pull apart a bobby pin slightly. Tie a long piece of thread to the top of the bobby pin. Place the pin on a piece of plastic coated with non-stick cooking spray. Fill the inside of the bobby pin with white school glue. Let it dry overnight. When it is completely dry, draw eyes and a mouth with a permanent marker. Tie the thread around your neck for a cool necklace.

**5 Days Until Halloween:** Make bats out of construction paper and hang them in your windows.

**4 Days Until Halloween:** Decorate a witch's hat.

**3 Days Until Halloween:** Carve or paint a jack-o-lantern.

**2 Days Until Halloween:** Create a skull (skeleton's head) out of a paper plate. Draw the eyes, nose socket, and teeth. Look at the book for inspiration. Our skeleton is a pirate! Argh!

**1 Day Until Halloween:** Get your flashlight ready and make sure the batteries work. Check your trick-or-treat bag to make sure there are no holes. Put reflective tape on your costume if you plan on going trick-or-treating.

**Halloween:** Dress up and celebrate with friends. Read *The House That Witchy Built!* Decorate a Witchy Hat. You can find a template for a child-size hat in the Book Activities section of <http://www.storyconnection.net>.

### **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**

### **The Science of Spiders**

Spiders are not insects. Spiders have eight legs and two body parts, the abdomen and the thorax. They belong to the Arachnid family. Spiders have silk spinning glands called spinnerets, at the tip of their abdomen. There are more than 30,000 species of spiders. Most spiders have either six or eight eyes. Most spiders have fangs, through which venom is ejected. One of the most popular children's books of all time, *Charlotte's Web*, features an intelligent, precocious spider who befriends a naïve pig named Wilbur.

*Activity: Spider Snacks*

Using round crackers, peanut butter, and pretzel sticks, create a spider snack. Does your spider have the abdomen and thorax? Are there eight legs? Now eat your edible arachnid!

**Drama/Theater**

Act out the story of *The House That Witchy 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.storyconnection.net> Click on "Book Activities" and "The House That Witchy Built."

