

The Little “Read” Hen

An Educator’s Guide

A Picture Book by Dianne de Las Casas

Illustrated by Holly Stone-Barker

Pelican Publishing Company 2013

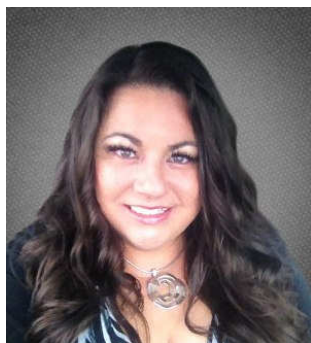
About the book

This fractured spin on a beloved folk tale is perfect for aspiring young writers interested in learning how their own fledgling ideas can hatch into a polished story. When the Little “Read” Hen’s friends won’t help her write a story, she doesn’t let it ruffle her feathers – she just does it herself! Brainstorming, researching, outlining, drafting, editing, and proofing: all the ingredients of a “write” recipe for a well-crafted tale are included in this punny book.

“This fresh take on the traditional folktale gives youngsters sound advice on writing their own stories. Teachers will want to use this pun-filled tale in their writing lessons. Colorful cut-paper illustrations add to the humor.” - School Library Journal

Visit Dianne’s website! <http://www.diannedelascasas.com> for downloadable “Book Activities.”

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*. 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 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*, and many other books, Dianne lives with her family in the New Orleans area. Like the Little “Read” Hen, Dianne LOVES to read and she loves to write!

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 fourth book with Dianne de Las Casas. Stone-Barker lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana with her family. She feathers her nest with paper from all over the world to create her intricate illustrations.

Interview with the Author, Dianne de Las Casas

How did you come up with the idea for *The Little “Read” Hen*?

I do a lot of author visits in schools and students always ask me, “How do you write a story?” For years, I had been thinking about how to answer this question with... a story! Remixing the tale of “The Little Red Hen” was a natural fit because the hen bakes bread and baking has a sequential order, just like story writing. Really, the Little “Read” Hen is me, the determined, unflappable writer! It was so much fun playing with the puns and writing this story and I love Holly’s perfect 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 “Little Read Hen?” The words have to be 3 or more letters. We found 35 words but there are more!

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The Six Steps of Story Writing

The next time you begin a creative writing project, put these steps into practice:

1. **Brainstorm** – This is when you create IDEAS. Write them all down! Create a brainstorm bubble.
2. **Research** – Find out more about your subject matter. Go to the library, power up your eggPad, crack open some books and do your research! Even with fiction stories, authors have to do their research.
3. **Outline** – It’s time to arrange your ideas in a way that makes sense and place them in order.
4. **Draft** – Create a rough draft of your story. Write out the whole story first and then edit. You can go through as many drafts as it takes to get your story right.
5. **Edit** – Now it is time to revise. The best writing comes from rewriting. Correct that grammar and punctuation, and check your spelling!
6. **Proof** – This is your last chance to check over your story to make sure there are no mistakes.
7. **Now you have an “EGG-cellent” story!**

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 what we write.” (Try saying it three times fast without any mistakes!) Can you make up your own turbo tongue twister?

Retelling Tales Writing Exercise

The Little “Read” Hen 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 Chicken Books!

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

- *Big Chickens Go to Town* by Leslie Helakoski and illustrated by Henry Cole
- *Chicken Dance* by Tammi Sauer and illustrated by Dan Santat
- *Chicken Butt!* by Erica S. Perl and illustrated by Henry Cole
- *Madame Poulet and Monsier Roach* by Dianne de Las Casas and illustrated by Marita Gentry

Activity: Find the Fun Puns

Throughout *The Little “Read” Hen*, there are all kinds of puns that relate to chickens and birds. How many puns can you find? Can you create your own funny punny chicken story?



SCIENCE

Fun & Funky Facts about Dogs, Cats, and Pigs

Dogs:

- You can adopt a dog from the local SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). Visit <http://www.spcai.org>.
- Dogs can be traced as far back as 40 million years ago to an animal called the Miacis. The Miacis evolved into the Tomarctus, a predecessor of the genus Canis. This genus includes the wolf, the jackal, and the dog.
- Dog is often called “man’s best friend” and is the most popular pet in the United States, which has the largest population of dogs in the world.
- Dogs can smell nearly 1,000 times better than humans. Their olfactory (smell) glands are ultra sensitive, containing more than 220 million smelling cells while humans have only 5 million. The area of the dog’s brain that interprets smell is also four times larger than that in a human’s brain.

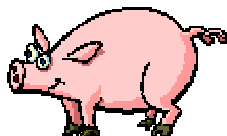
Cats:

- A cat has more bones than a human. Humans have 206 while the cat has 230. A cat’s collarbone does not connect with other bones. It is buried in the muscles of the shoulder region. This allows them to fit through any opening the size of their head.
- In Ancient Egypt, family members shaved their eyebrows when the family cat died as a sign of mourning.
- In Siam, the cat held such a place of high honor that she rode in a chariot at the head of a parade to celebrate an incoming king.
- It was the Pilgrims who first introduced the feline to North America.
- The black cat superstition originated in the United States but in Asia and England, black cats are considered lucky! Meow!

Pigs:

- Pigs are omnivores like humans. They eat both plants and other animals.
- Ever wonder why a pig makes such funny noises when it sniffs? A pig’s snout is an important tool for finding food in the ground and sensing the world around them.
- Pigs have an excellent sense of smell.
- There are around 2 billion pigs in the world.
- Pigs are actually more intelligent than dogs! They are the world’s fourth most intelligent mammal in the world behind humans, primates, and whales/dolphins.

Activity: Draw a daring dog, a cool cat, or a petulant pig. Give your character its own personality with a fun and funky pattern. Does it have stripes, polka dots, or checkers? What is its name? Around your drawing, list some fun and funky facts about your animal.



SOCIAL STUDIES

The Evolution of the Book

- Writing was invented in Iraq. It was once all drawn by hand, a character at a time. When people needed a copy of a book, a scribe had to copy it for them by hand. This made books very expensive and only the wealthy could afford them.
- In about 650 AD, a member of the Tang Dynasty invented the process of carving wooden blocks with a page of text, then inking it, and pressing the paper onto the block to print a page. The oldest printed scroll comes from northwest China. This scroll of Buddhist sayings was printed about 700 AD.
- An alchemist named Pi Sheng in China had invented a more flexible system of moveable type in the 1000s AD. This method carved each Chinese character separately on small fired clay blocks and arranged them to make words. The blocks could then be reused and rearranged to create many different texts.
- About five hundred years later, people in Europe and Asia began using moveable type made out of metal. Then, in the 1400s AD in Europe, Gutenberg used moveable metal type to print a Christian Bible. This was the real beginning of the modern-day printed book.
- A hornbook was what children of the 14th through 18th centuries used to learn their ABCs. It wasn’t really a book at all. The hornbook was made of a sheet of parchment or paper with the alphabet, phonics and a prayer printed and then mounted on a small, wooden paddle board. It was protected by a thin sheet of transparent animal horn that was attached with metal strips and nails.
- Now, the advent of modern technology like computers and digital printing makes creating printed books easier, faster, and less expensive.

Activity: Create a Handmade Book

There are many types of books you can create! Do some research and create a hornbook, a scroll book, a folded book, or an origami book.

MATH



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 *The Little “Read” Hen* 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 Little “Read” Hen.”

Picture Book Month

Dianne de Las Casas is the founder of Picture Book Month, an international literacy initiative that celebrates the print picture book during the month of November. Your school can participate. Register online and download the free materials. Set a goal and commit to reading picture books during the month of November. You can also visit the website to read essays about the importance of picture books by prominent author, illustrators, and movers and shakers in the picture book world. Every day in November, a new essay is featured by luminaries like Peter Brown, Doreen Cronin, Tomie dePaola, E.B. Lewis, Chris Raschka, Jerry Pinkney, Jon Scieszka, Karma Wilson, and Paul O. Zelinsky. <http://www.picturebookmonth.com>

November is Picture Book Month. Read * Share * Celebrate!

