

The Treasure of El Dorado

A Reading A-Z Level X Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,482

Connections

Writing

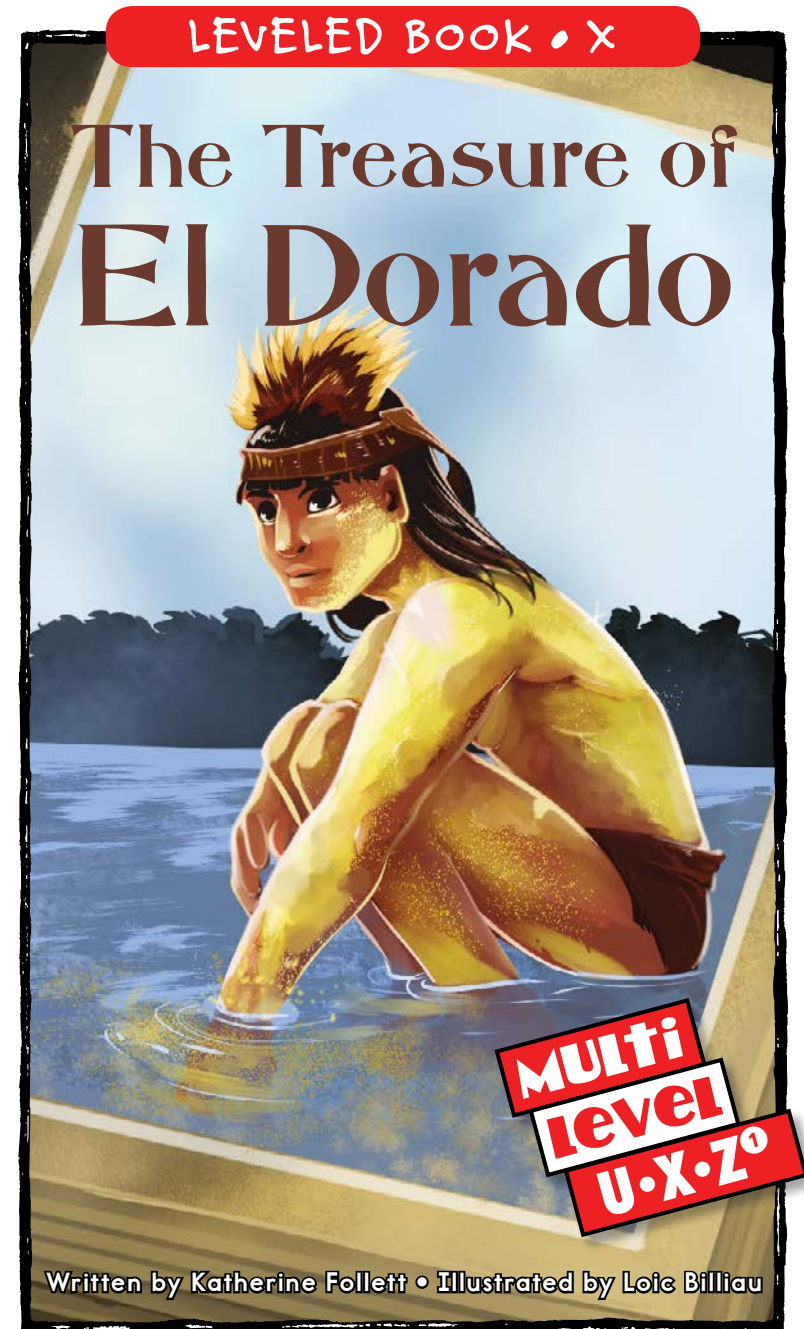
Write a blog entry describing a day in your life that you would like to remember.

Social Studies

Research to learn more about the Muisca people of ancient Colombia. Choose one element of their culture or traditions to present in a diorama to your class.

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Glossary

archaeological (<i>adj.</i>)	of or related to the study of the remains of ancient cultures (p. 3)
artifacts (<i>n.</i>)	objects made or used by humans long ago (p. 14)
blog (<i>n.</i>)	a website on which someone writes about his or her thoughts, opinions, or experiences (p. 3)
drone (<i>n.</i>)	an unmanned aircraft or ship that is operated remotely (p. 6)
expedition (<i>n.</i>)	a journey or voyage taken for a specific purpose (p. 3)
Muisca (<i>n.</i>)	South American Indians, also known as Chibcha, who lived in the highlands of modern-day Colombia (p. 3)
obsession (<i>n.</i>)	an extreme interest that results in thinking about someone or something far more often than usual (p. 4)
sacred (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to a god, religion, or spiritual purpose; holy (p. 6)
solstice (<i>n.</i>)	either of the two times of the year when the Sun is farthest from the equator (p. 8)
sonar (<i>n.</i>)	a system that sends high-frequency sound waves through water and registers the vibrations bounced back by an object (p. 6)
submersible (<i>adj.</i>)	designed for use underwater (p. 5)
zipa (<i>n.</i>)	one of two rulers of the ancient Muisca civilization that inhabited modern-day Colombia (p. 4)

The Treasure of El Dorado



Written by Katherine Follett

Illustrated by Loic Billiau

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Focus Question

Andre finds two kinds of treasure in this story. What are they?

Words to Know

archaeological	obsession
artifacts	sacred
blog	solstice
drone	sonar
expedition	submersible
Muisca	zipa



ANDRE: Wait, it's real?

ABUELO: Most of the gold is gone, but as a child it was my treasure—a vestige of how rich our people once were. I couldn't bear to take her from her home when I came to the United States, so I sank her, for Guatavita, like the zipas did. I thought I would go back, but I never got the chance.

After all these years, it's still so beautiful. Here, I want you to have it.

ANDRE: You should keep it, Abuelo—it's your treasure.

ABUELO: Our treasure. I pass her to you.

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Level X Leveled Book
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Correlation

LEVEL X	
Fountas & Pinnell	S
Reading Recovery	40
DRA	40

Video Blog Update, June 29, 4:50 p.m.

ANDRE: We're heading up the walk to my abuelo's house. I figured since you all joined me in finding his "greatest treasure," you might as well see it returned to the man it meant so much to.

[Opens door]

Hola, Abuelo? You in the living room?

ABUELO: Who's hiding behind that camera?
Andre, my boy!

ANDRE: No, no—don't get up. I brought you something. I meant to tell you before I left, but my archaeology class went to Colombia—

ABUELO: Really? You went to my home!

ANDRE: We were looking for Muisca **artifacts**, and . . . we did find a big stone jaguar in Lake Guatavita. My professor will be returning to check it out, but this was all I brought back. Let me help you with that bubble wrap. I covered it in tape so it wouldn't break on the trip home.

Don't cry, Abuelo.

ABUELO: How did you ever . . .?! My padre passed this down from his padre, from many generations back. It's jaguar bone, and gold dust from the mountains.



Andre's Personal Blog

Draft Saved June 13, 1:45 a.m.

This **blog** may seem a bit insane, but I feel a sense of obligation to document this—just in case. I'll be embarking on an **expedition** to Colombia in a few days to explore Lake Guatavita, which supposedly contains **archaeological** remains of the **Muisca**.

That may sound like the crazy part, but it's not. Here it is: I have a treasure map that my grandpa used to show me as a kid (if you're reading this, sorry for taking it, Abuelo!). It seems ancient, but there's not much to go on—just a sketchy drawing and this obscure little guide that I translated:



*On the brightest day,
with the shortest night,
the full moon will rise in the keyhole of the crater.
Wade into the waters as far as you can, farther
still, and there you will find the treasure.*

Given my abuelo's mild **obsession**, I have reason to believe that this may lead to some clue or perhaps even the concealed location of one of the greatest myths in history: El Dorado.

You see, in the era around 1000 BCE, the Muisca **zipa** would cover his body with gold and rinse it into Lake Guatavita. All the gold and gemstones would just settle to the bottom, year after year.

So dark down there; I had to feel around. This box was all I could find . . .

It's . . . it's a cheap toy! Just an old jaguar figurine. There's a metal tube in its mouth. It has a screw cap—don't think the Muisca had those.

There's a note inside. It's in Spanish . . . "You have found . . . my greatest . . . treasure . . . of my ancestors . . . the symbol . . . from my grandfather, of the Muisca people. On the day June 22, 1954, Mario Fernandez."

Abuelo . . . my grandpa. He was just a kid who buried his "treasure," and I was just a kid when he told me, so I believed him.

El Dorado, indeed.



Video Blog Update: June 21, 8:15 p.m.

ANDRE: I got the camera working, and the rain stopped.

Check that out! The moon is lined up in that V-shaped notch in the crater. “In the keyhole of the crater; wade into the waters as far as you can, farther still.” Jacques or no, let’s do this.

I’m going to set you down on this rock. It’s dark, so I’ll try to let you know what’s happening.

[Splashing water]

I’m in. It’s freezing! Going under.

[Splashing water]



My abuelo told me that his grandfather told him stories containing the secret of where that gold lay. I hope to use Jacques, the **submersible** robot, to explore the lake using this map and find the gold while everyone else is none the wiser.

2017 Colombia Expedition Liveblog

Archaeology 579

June 19, 10:12 a.m.

ANDRE [panting]: Hey guys, Andre here from the Muisca research expedition. We’ve arrived at the lake, and it’s beautiful! The video doesn’t do it justice.



The water sits in this bowl-shaped crater with a weird notch on one side, almost like a pitcher. It's not hard to understand why it was **sacred** to the Muisca people.

Video Update, June 20, 10:38 a.m.

ANDRE: I thought I'd give you guys a taste of how we do this underwater archaeology thing. As you can see, we're loading our inflatable rowboat. This box is a **sonar** unit, which we'll use to survey the lake bottom and note anything interesting. That lump there is Jamie, the other research assistant.

JAMIE: Man, I did not sleep well, so go easy. How is it freezing cold in June?

ANDRE: And that scorpion-shaped robot is Jacques Cousteau, a sonar- and video-equipped underwater **drone**. I don't even want to know how much he cost. [Whispering] I'm guessing more than the entire rest of the expedition.

KAT: You'd be right. Jacques will be hanging out until the sonar shows where to send him.

ANDRE: That, of course, is our professor, Kat. This part of the process is pretty dull, rowing back and forth to cover the whole lake, so goodbye for now, unless—until—we find something . . .

KAT: Grab those oars, Andre—row, row!

ANDRE: What's happening to the lake? It looks like someone's shooting into the water. OW!

KAT: It's hail! Jamie, cover the equipment—Andre, row, row!

ANDRE: Ow, I'm rowing! I'm—

Audio Update, June 21, 6:03 p.m.

[Sound of rain]

ANDRE: Sorry for the poor sound. I'm sitting in my tent, and it's still raining a bit.

Things are kind of a mess here. There's a hole in the boat, our laptops are totally soaked, and we're still trying to get Jacques online, though he won't be much use without a boat. Obviously, my camera is shot since this is an audio-only recording.

Rumor is, the trip is over.

It's still cloudy, so I won't be able to see the moonrise anyway. Unbelievable . . . I've been dreaming of this since I was ten, and the whole thing gets ruined by the stupid weather.

Maybe it's for the best. Maybe I should give up on the idea of El Dorado.



KAT: These storms pass quickly, but we should get off the water. I'm surfacing Jacques, boys, so get ready to grab him.

JAMIE: Here comes the wind! Okay—ready, Andre? On three—one, two, LIFT!

Video Update, June 20, 11:52 a.m.

KAT: Oh, this is very interesting! See the parallel ditches here? They're probably part of an irrigation system. Can we mark this on the GPS for Jacques?

ANDRE: What is that?!

KAT: Oh my . . . that's . . . that looks like cut stone. That is very unexpected.

JAMIE: There's another one, parallel, like the walls of a building or something!

ANDRE: Looks like we're on to something. Tune in tomorrow, when we launch Jacques!

Video Update, June 20, 11:12 p.m.

JAMIE: Do you think it could be some kind of temple?

KAT: Even the Muisca's temples would have rotted away hundreds of years ago. It's likely Spanish, or possibly even later.

JAMIE: It seems odd that the Maya, the Inca, the Aztec all had stone architecture, and even though the Muisca had all this gold, they still lived in wood houses.

KAT: Those were empires—they made their people build those structures. The Muisca cooperated instead of taking over and lived a simpler life. Gold was precious, yes, but only religiously, which is why they dropped so much of it in the lake. Living in this lovely place, they probably gave it away happily.

JAMIE: I can see that—being happy to live under the moon and stars like this.

ANDRE: Tomorrow night is the summer **solstice** and a full moon at the same time. That hasn't happened for almost seventy-five years.

KAT: Is that right?

ANDRE: Is it possible to take Jacques out and explore the site at night?



KAT: He has lights and infrared for working in deep water, but we wouldn't paddle out there now.

ANDRE: But he could . . .

KAT: Sure, I suppose. Don't get any ideas, though.

ANDRE: No, ma'am.

Video Blog Update, June 21, 5:35 p.m.

KAT: Five meters . . . two meters . . . okay, boys, wrestle him overboard!

ANDRE: Ugh, Jacques needs to go on a diet.

JAMIE: Careful not to hit the boat.

KAT: Lights . . . and we have video feed . . . gosh, this water is so murky! Wait, I see something.

It's a jaguar carving . . . it certainly looks pre-Columbian, and definitely stone! My goodness, this is something big . . .

[Thunder claps.]

JAMIE: A storm is coming up fast.

ANDRE: Are you kidding? Today it decides to cloud over?