

The Treasure of El Dorado

A Reading A-Z Level Z1 Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,854

Connections

Writing

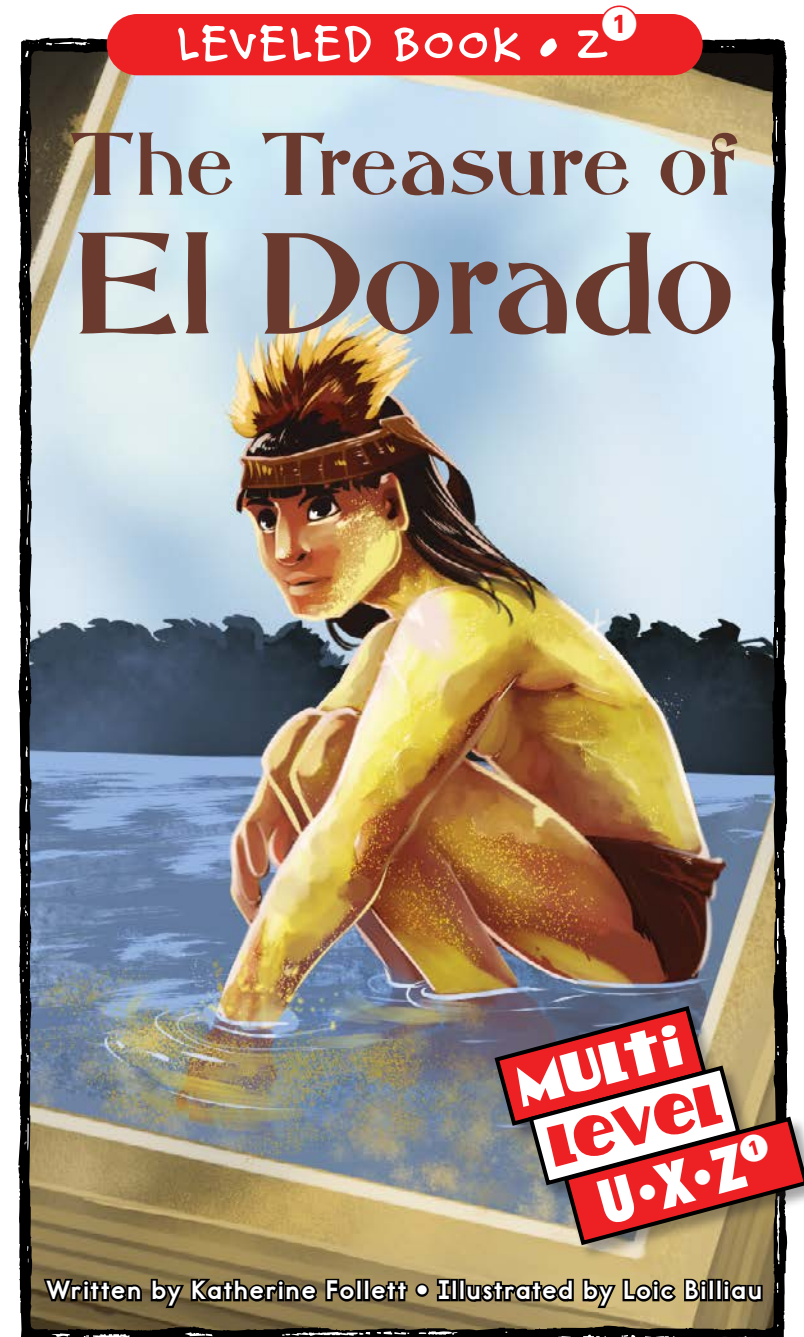
Write a blog entry describing a day in your life that you would like to remember.

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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The Treasure of El Dorado



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Focus Question

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

Words to Know

aesthetically	footage
archaeological	monumental
artifacts	Muisca
blog	obsession
coincided	sacred
coordinates	solstice
corroborate	sonar
currency	submersible
drudgery	tribute
egalitarian	zipa
expedition	

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Correlation

LEVEL Z1

Fountas & Pinnell	W-X
Reading Recovery	N/A
DRA	60



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 below:



*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.

2017 Colombia Expedition Liveblog

Archaeology 579

June 19, 10:12 a.m.

ANDRE [panting]: Hey guys, Andre here from the Muisca research expedition. We flew into Bogotá late last night in order to get to the lake by sunrise, and this is our reward!

The video doesn't do it justice, but the sky at this altitude is an incredible blue, and the lake keeps changing color—silver, green, aqua—depending on the wind and clouds. The water sits in this bowl-shaped crater with a weird notch on one side, almost like a drinking vessel. It's not hard to comprehend why it was **sacred** to the Muisca people.

According to what we know, right out there, the Muisca **zipa** covered himself in gold dust and gems, and then rinsed everything into the waters, year after year. Unimaginable wealth, emeralds, jewelry, hundreds of pounds of gold—so far, no one has discovered anything to **corroborate** this story except for a few little figurines, so they all gave up.

But they didn't have Jacques!



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

ANDRE: All right, thought I'd give you guys a taste of how we do this whole underwater archaeology thing. As you can see, we're loading our inflatable rowboat. This box that looks like it's from an old Batman episode 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, tirelessly plugging away on the **drudgery** that is essential to the glorious occupation of research assistant.

JAMIE: Man, I did not sleep well last night, so go easy. We're virtually sitting on the equator, it's practically the summer **solstice**, and my feet were still freezing!

ANDRE: And that scorpion-shaped robot is Jacques Cousteau, a sonar- and video-equipped **submersible** drone, pincher arms, a scoop for sampling sediment, the whole nine yards—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 tomorrow, after the sonar scans indicate where to send him.

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

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

KAT: Oh, this is very interesting! See the parallel ditches here, leading out from the depression? They're probably part of an irrigation system. Mark the **coordinates** on the GPS for Jacques.

ANDRE: Small potatoes, literally. Maybe agricultural **artifacts** are all we can hope for.

JAMIE: Evidence of agricultural methods could hold significant archaeological . . .

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: Mark the GPS, dude—sounds like a spot for Jacques. For those of you watching at home, tune in next time—same archaeological expedition time, same archaeological expedition place!

JAMIE: You're such a loser.

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 were wood with thatched roofs and would have rotted away hundreds of years ago. I suspect it's Spanish, or possibly even later.

JAMIE: It seems odd that the Maya, the Inca, the Aztec all had **monumental** stone architecture, and even though the Muisca had all this gold—

KAT: Those were empires, though—conquerors who demanded **tribute** and labor from their subjects. The Muisca cooperated instead of conquering and lived a simpler, **egalitarian** life.

They didn't think of gold as **currency**. It was precious, yes, but symbolically and **aesthetically** rather than financially, which is why they—plop!—dropped so much of it in the lake. Living in this lovely place, they probably gave it away with gratitude.

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 simultaneously. Those haven't **coincided** for almost seventy-five years.

KAT: Is that right?

ANDRE: Is it possible to take Jacques out and explore the site, like, now, in the moonlight?



KAT: I mean, he has lights and infrared for working in the darkness of deep water, but why would you ever want to paddle out there now?

ANDRE: But theoretically . . .

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

ANDRE: No, ma'am.

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

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

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

JAMIE: Careful not to whack the edge of the boat.

KAT: Bon voyage, Jacques! Lights . . . and we have video feed . . . gosh, this water is so murky! Something is coming into focus.

[Kat and Jamie gasp.]

ANDRE: What? What is it? What's happening?

KAT: 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 approaching fast.

ANDRE: Are you kidding? It's been crystal clear the entire time, and today it decides to cloud over?

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!

KAT: Grab those oars, Andre—row, row!

ANDRE: I'm rowing as fast as I can!

KAT: We might not make it . . . do we have ponchos to protect the monitors?



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 quality. I'm sitting in my tent, and it's still raining a bit, so the ambient noise is pretty bad.

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.

Kat hasn't made it official yet, but rumor is the trip is kaput.

I mean, whatever . . . it's still overcast, 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. I'm kinda obsessed when I'm following Grandpa's map of El Dorado . . . it gets in my dreams.

Rain doesn't sound like it's stopping . . . Well, that's that.

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

ANDRE: Yes—the camera's working! I know I said . . . but, look at that moon coming up through the clouds just over the horizon. "The full moon in the keyhole of the crater . . ."

This is my only chance—I have to try!

[Rustling of underbrush]

ANDRE [panting]: Here . . . I'm lined up right here. The full moon is sitting perfectly in that V-shaped notch in the ridgeline.

Check that out! Now I have to "wade into the waters, as far as you can, farther still." Jacques would have been useful right about now, but oh well. I'll leave you all here on this rock so you can watch, though it might be a bit dark. I'll try to narrate as I go. Wish me luck!

[Splashing water]

Okay, I'm wading in. Yikes, this is freezing. I have . . . to keep . . . going. Up to my neck now . . . so cold . . . the ground is still sloping down. Going to try ducking under and feeling around.

[Splashing water]



So cold, and so . . . dark down there. I found something—a little box. Don't know what this is, but it's all I could find, so let's open it.

I can barely feel my fingers, so this should be . . . oh, there—I got it.

[Long silence]

It's . . . it's a cheap toy! See? It's just this little old jaguar figurine. There's something in the mouth, though. Some kind of metal tube . . . got it. It has a screw cap—don't think the Muisca had many of those. There's a rolled-up piece of paper inside with some writing.



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

Grandpa . . . my grandpa. He was just a kid then, and I was just a kid when he told me, so I believed him.

What am I doing?

Great video **footage**, Andre. El Dorado, indeed.

Video 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]

ANDRE: Hola, Abuelo? You in the living room?

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

ANDRE: No, no—please don't get up, Abuelo.
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, but
we ran into some . . . technical difficulties. We
did find a big stone jaguar in Lake Guatavita.
My professor will be going back 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: Wait, it's real?



ABUELO: Most of the gold is gone, but as a child
it was my treasure—a remnant 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, Nieto.

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

ABUELO: Our treasure. I pass her to you.

Glossary

aesthetically (<i>adv.</i>)	in a way that is beautiful, artistic, or visually pleasing (p. 9)
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. 7)
blog (<i>n.</i>)	a website on which someone writes about his or her thoughts, opinions, or experiences (p. 3)
coincided (<i>v.</i>)	happened at the same time or occurred in the same space; agreed (p. 9)
coordinates (<i>n.</i>)	a set of numbers that locate a point in space (p. 7)
corroborate (<i>v.</i>)	to support or confirm something with evidence or other information (p. 5)
currency (<i>n.</i>)	money, in any acceptable form, used to represent the value of goods and resources (p. 9)
drudgery (<i>n.</i>)	hard, boring work (p. 6)
egalitarian (<i>adj.</i>)	believing in, based on, or promoting the idea that all people should have equal opportunities and privileges (p. 8)
expedition (<i>n.</i>)	a journey or voyage taken for a specific purpose (p. 3)

footage (<i>n.</i>)	images or actions recorded on film or video (p. 16)
monumental (<i>adj.</i>)	relating to or serving as a monument; very great in amount, quality, or size (p. 8)
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. 5)
solstice (<i>n.</i>)	either of the two times of the year when the Sun is farthest from the equator (p. 6)
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. 6)
tribute (<i>n.</i>)	an act or statement that shows gratitude or respect (p. 8)
zipa (<i>n.</i>)	one of two rulers of the ancient Muisca civilization that inhabited modern-day Colombia (p. 5)