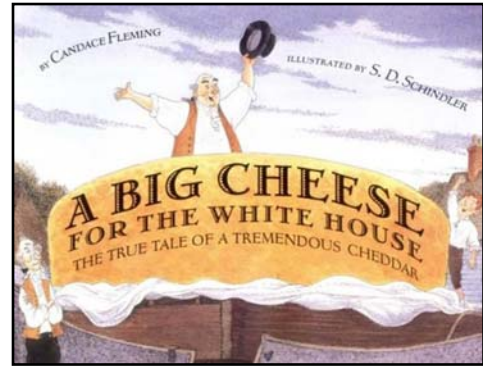


## Classroom Guide

### *A Big Cheese for the White House: the true tale of a tremendous Cheddar*

written by Candace Fleming  
and illustrated by S.D. Schindler  
published by Farrar Straus Giroux, 1999

*A note to the teacher:* This book can be used in a variety of ways for both older and younger students.



#### Themes:

- ◆ Everything Cheese
- ◆ Thomas Jefferson Early 1800s
- ◆ The White House

#### About the Book

There are many golden nuggets of history that get lost, but thanks to Candace Fleming's picture book, *A Big Cheese for the White House: the true tale of a tremendous Cheddar*, the amazing accomplishment of the people of Cheshire is not. In the early 1800s, every cow in the area contributed milk for a 1,235-pound wheel of cheese as a gift for President Thomas Jefferson. The true facts are outlined on the back page.

Fleming's characters have engaging and often humorous personalities. Elder John is optimistic and gives the town the energy it needs to keep going while Phineas Dobbs can only see the problems. The reader is soon cheering the town on to success as they milk the cows, press the curds, and age the cheese. S.D. Schindler's watercolor and pen-and-ink illustrations add to the sense of playfulness. His cartoon-like artwork integrates well with the witty text.

#### About the Author

Candace Fleming is the author of numerous books for children, including *Ben Franklin's Almanac*, an ALA Notable Book and an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, as well as *Tippy*, *Tippy, Tippy, Hide!*, *Gabriella's Song*, and *When Agnes Caws*, all ALA Notable Books.

#### About the Illustrator

S.D. Schindler has collaborated with Fleming on an earlier book, *Madame LaGrande and Her So High, to the Sky, Uproarious Pompadour*, and once again delivers illustrations that are fun and engaging. He has illustrated over 50 books for children in the last three decades and is a Newbery Honor winner (2005) for *Whittington* and ALA notable book winner for *Don't Fidget a Feather* by Erica Silverman.

## Things to think about before you read the book

- ◆ Do you know how cheese is made?
- ◆ How many different kinds of cheese have you tasted? How many can you name?
- ◆ How often do you eat cheese? Did you know that there are many countries that eat cheese with bread for breakfast almost every day?
- ◆ This story is about a town having an idea and then making it happen, even though it seemed impossible. Can you think of any other things that exist now that someone once thought impossible? (Note to the teacher: For example, computers and cell phones, frozen foods, and space travel. Everything begins as an idea.)
- ◆ Have you ever heard of Thomas Jefferson? Who was he? (Third President of the United States from 1801-1809).
- ◆ The people in this story had to travel by horse and wagon to get from their town to Washington D.C. in the middle of the winter. How many ways of travel/transportation can you list? (Note to the teacher: include things like walking, sleds, canoes, bicycles etc... Challenge the students to think of ways people travel/transport goods in other countries as well; i.e., rickshaws, gondolas, camels).

## *Everything Cheese*

### The History of Cheese

There's a story that many tell about the origins of cheese. An Arabian nomad was traveling through the desert about 7000 B.C. He had filled a sheep's stomach with milk (an old-fashioned thermos) and hours later when he stopped to take a drink, he discovered that the milk had turned into solid white lumps. Hungry and curious, he tried these curds and the rest, as they say, is history.

Something like this is probable since around that time humans were beginning to breed livestock and milk domestic animals. It's also likely that the first type of cheese was a form of sour milk. A similar cheese is still eaten in the Middle East today. Making cheese is a good way to preserve milk in hot climates, when animals aren't producing and transporting milk is difficult. Archeologists have found tall jars used for storing cheese as far back as 6000BC. Milk-curdling containers dating back to 5000 BC have been found on the shores of Lake Neufchatel, Switzerland.

The Bible has many references to cheese, as do early Roman texts. Though cheese production came to a bit of a standstill when the Roman Empire fell (about 400 AD), European monks began making it again during the Middle Ages and soon it was available throughout Europe. Soon individual towns became known for the particular type of cheese they made there. The first recorded cooperative (farmers pooling their resources so they can have a larger production) came together in Déservilliers, France in 1267.

## How does one make cheese?

There are hundreds of distinct varieties of cheese produced and consumed around the world today. All are made with different recipes and techniques.

### THE PROCESS

1. First you need **milk**. It can come from any kind of animal including cows, sheep, goats, water buffalo, and even camels or reindeer.
2. **Curdling** is next. This process separates the solids (curds) from the liquids (whey). Cheese makers add a lactic starter (a special strain of lactic acid bacteria), rennet (an enzyme which traditionally comes from the lining of a calf's stomach), or both, to begin the curdling process.
3. Next the **liquid** (whey) is **separated from the solids** (curds) and the curd is allowed to **rest** or "set up," allowing the bacteria to multiply and the flavor of the cheese to develop.
4. Most cheeses are then **shaped**. The curds are pressed into a form or mold and squeezed to remove as much liquid as desired by the cheesemaker. Any extra color, herbs or salt is added during this process.
5. Finally it is time to **wait**. This is called **ripening**. The cheese is carefully monitored and experts at cheese aging (called "affineurs") watch the moisture, temperature, and oxygen levels, all of which affect the texture, flavor, and smell of the cheese.

For more on the history of cheese and how to make it, as well as a variety of other cheese related information, go to [www.ilovecheese.co.uk](http://www.ilovecheese.co.uk)

### Fun Facts about Cheese

*Note to the teacher: The facts are listed first, followed by a question relating to the fact written in italics. This is for the classroom activity: "True and False" game.*

- ◆ Each spring, locals from Stilton, Peterborough hold a rolling race with giant wheels of Stilton. (*What is a game or event using cheese?*)
- ◆ Caerphilly cheese was once a traditional lunch for Welsh coal miners. (*Who traditionally ate cheese for lunch?*)
- ◆ In 1987, a 1,400-year-old piece of cheese was unearthed in a Tipperary bog in Ireland. It was still edible. (*What is the oldest cheese ever found and where was it?*)
- ◆ King Henry II declared Cheddar to be the best cheese in Britain. (*What is the best cheese in Britain?*)
- ◆ Cheddar cheese gets its color from "annatto," a natural, flavorless dye that comes from annatto seeds (from a tree in South America). (*How does cheddar cheese get its color?*)

- ◆ More cheese is made in the United States than any other country – about 6,717,000,000 pounds of it per year. (*Which country makes the most cheese and how much do they make a year?*)
- ◆ Eating a piece of cheese after a sugary snack can actually help restore minerals to tooth enamel and protect against tooth decay. (*How is cheese good for you?*)
- ◆ A giant wheel of Cheddar cheese was given to England’s Queen Victoria (1837-1901) for a wedding gift. It weighed over 1000 pounds (a normal wheel of Cheddar cheese weighs 60-75 pounds). (*Who got a gift of cheese and how much did it weigh?*)
- ◆ Almost 90% of all the cheese sold in the United States is classified as some type of Cheddar cheese. (*What is the most common cheese in the United States?*)
- ◆ Carrot juice and marigold petals are sometimes used to color cheeses. (*What plants are used to color cheese?*)
- ◆ Each year, every person in the US eats approximately 33 pounds of cheese (Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN). (*How much cheese does a person in the US eat each year?*)
- ◆ Denmark eats the most cheese: 63 pounds per person per year. Greece is #2 (57 pounds) and France is #3 (54 pounds). (*Which country in the world eats the most cheese?*)

#### **A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: TRUE AND FALSE GAME**

*A note to the teacher: The facts and the questions relating to the facts are found in an earlier section of this teaching guide: “Fun Facts about Cheese.”*

1. Divide the class into small groups and give each group a list of cheese fun facts.
2. Have groups write their facts on a note card, one fact per card. Write true on those cards.
3. Now each group has to come up with a false fact using the question listed after each true fact. Write their new “facts” on a note card, one fact per card. Write false on those note cards.
4. Put the groups together to play the game. Each team takes turns reading their facts and guessing whether it is “true” or “false.” Remind each team to mix up the facts so they aren’t reading them in order and they aren’t reading just true or just false facts together. Each correct answer gets one point. The team with the most points at the end wins.

**Materials Needed:** Note cards

**A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY FOR OLDER STUDENTS:  
CHEESY EXPRESSIONS AND FAMOUS CHEESE**

Match the expression of famous cheese with the correct explanation or definition.

SAY CHEESE	NURSERY RHYMES SAY IT IS MADE OF GREEN CHEESE
LITTLE MISS MUFFET	THE THING YOU SAY SO YOU WILL SMILE FOR THE CAMERA
THAT'S CHEESY	SAT ON A TUFFET, EATING HER CURDS AND WHEY
THE BIG CHEESE	MEANS THE SAME THING AS PASSING GAS OR FARTING
MACARONI AND CHEESE	NOODLES MADE FAMOUS BY KRAFT
CHEESE HEAD	THAT'S SILLY
CUT THE CHEESE	FANS OF THE WISCONSIN GREEN BAY PACKERS
THE MOON	THE BOSS

**The answers**

- ◆ Say Cheese.....The thing you say so you will smile for the camera
- ◆ Little Miss Muffet .....Sat on a tuffet, eating her curds and whey
- ◆ That's cheesy .....That's silly
- ◆ The big cheese .....The boss
- ◆ Macaroni and cheese.....Noodles made famous by Kraft
- ◆ Cheese Head .....Fans of the Wisconsin Green Bay packers
- ◆ Cut the cheese .....Means the same thing as passing gas or farting
- ◆ The Moon.....Nursery rhymes say it is made of green cheese

## A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY FOR ANY AGE: GLOBAL CHEESE

COUNTRY	CHEESE NAME	CHEESE DESCRIPTION
Afganistan	Kadchgall	a hard cheese made from sheep (or camel) milk
Adelaide, Australia	Woodside Cabecou	a soft, mushroomy flavored cheese created by Paula Jenkins with a 45% fat content
India	Bandal	the curds of this soft cheese are separated using lemon juice
United States	Pepper Jack	inspired by Monterey Jack cheese with dried pepper flakes
Norway	Geitost	the caramel-colored national cheese of this country
Great Britain	Capricorn Goat	an award winning, slightly-chalky cheese
Germany	Quark	a moist, white cheese sold in pots; said to date back to the Iron Age
Denmark	Cream Havarti	the most popular cheese in the country that eats the most cheese in the world
Greece	Xynotyro	a hard, flaky cheese that melts in the mouth
Israel	Lebbene	shaped into small balls, eaten when it is almost liquid

There are many different ways you can use this global cheese chart:

1. Write the country, cheese name, and cheese description on index cards, one thing per card. Using a different colored card for each category makes it easier. You can also put a different colored dot on each card (i.e., country is blue, cheese name is yellow, cheese description is red). This will make the game easier to play.

Options for playing the game: Match the cheese with the country or the cheese name with the cheese description. For older students, they can match all three categories.

2. This can be played like the game "concentration." Put all the cards on the table face down (use only two of the three categories). Students turn over two cards. If they make a correctly they get one point and can go again. If they don't, turn the cards face down again. It is the next players turn. Students can work in teams.

Give each group of students a set of cards. Have them put the correct sets together. First group with 100% wins.

3. Talking about the different cheeses in different countries can be a good introduction to discussing similarities and differences with other countries around the world.
4. Ask the students in your class what cheeses they like to eat at home.
5. Taste different cheeses and have students come up with their own names and descriptions.

**Materials needed:** note cards, cheese if doing the tasting option, global cheese chart

## A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY FOR OLDER STUDENTS: CHEESY QUOTES FROM FAMOUS FOLKS

1. Hand out the Cheesy Quotes or write them on the board.
2. As a group, talk about what they might mean.
3. Have each student write a story or poem with one of the quotes as inspiration.

### THE QUOTES:

- ◆ “Age is something that doesn’t matter, unless you are a **cheese**.”  
– Billie Burke, American actress 1885-1970
- ◆ “I don’t want the **cheese**, I just want to get out of the trap.”  
– Spanish proverb
- ◆ “The early bird gets the worm, but the second mouse gets the **cheese**.”  
– Jon Hammond, American radio personality
- ◆ “**Cheese** – milk’s leap toward immortality.”  
– Clifton Fadiman, American radio host, author and editor, 1904-1999
- ◆ “What happens to the hole when the **cheese** is gone?”  
– Bertolt Brecht, German poet, playwright, and theater director

## A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS: SONGS AND RHYMES

Sing or recite the following rhymes and songs together as a class, using actions if you wish.

### Little Miss Muffet (nursery rhyme)

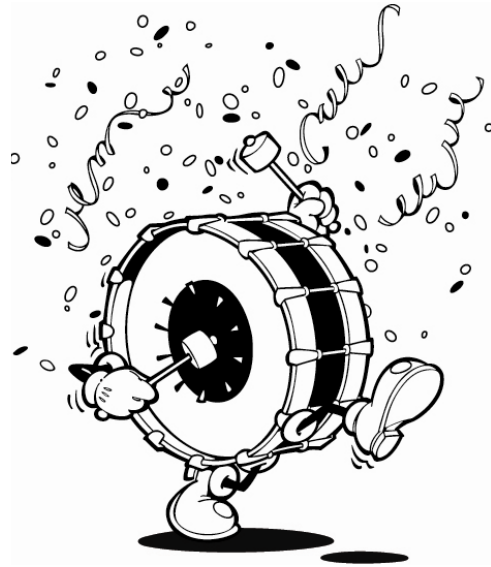
*Little Miss Muffet, sat on a tuffet  
Eating her curds and whey.  
When along came a spider, and sat down beside her  
And frightened Miss Muffet away.*

(a tuffet is a lump of earth covered in grass;  
curds and whey are the lumps and liquid  
of cottage cheese)

**Aiken Drum** (modern version of the traditional Scottish tune—for music and traditional lyrics go to: [www.contemplator.com/scotland/aikendrm.html](http://www.contemplator.com/scotland/aikendrm.html))

(chorus) In the moon, in the moon,  
There was a man lived in the moon,  
And his name was Aiken Drum.

1. And he played upon a ladle,  
A ladle, a ladle,  
He played upon a ladle,  
And his name was Aiken Drum.
2. And his hair was made of spaghetti,  
Spaghetti, spaghetti,  
His hair was made of spaghetti,  
And his name was Aiken Drum. (chorus)
3. And his eyes were made of meatballs,  
Meatballs, meatballs,  
His eyes were made of meatballs,  
And his name was Aiken Drum. (chorus)
4. And his mouth was made of pizza,  
Pizza, pizza,  
His mouth was made of pizza,  
And his name was Aiken Drum. (chorus)
5. And his coat was made of roast beef,  
Roast beef, roast beef,  
His coat was made of roast beef,  
And his name was Aiken Drum. (chorus)
6. And his hat was made of good cream cheese,  
Good cream cheese, good cream cheese,  
And his hat was made of good cream cheese,  
And his name was Aiken Drum. (chorus)
7. And he played upon a ladle,  
A ladle, a ladle,  
He played upon a ladle,  
And his name was Aiken Drum.





**The Farmer in the Dell** (music and lyrics at: [kids.niehs.nih.gov/lyrics/farmer.htm](http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/lyrics/farmer.htm))

The farmer in the dell, the farmer in the dell,  
Hi-ho, the derry-o, the farmer in the dell.

The farmer takes a wife, the farmer takes a wife,  
Hi-ho, the derry-o, the farmer takes a wife.

The wife takes a child, the wife takes a child,  
Hi-ho, the derry-o, the wife takes a child.

The child takes a nurse, the child takes a nurse,  
Hi-ho, the derry-o, the child takes a nurse.

The nurse takes a cow, the nurse takes a cow,  
Hi-ho, the derry-o, the nurse takes a cow.

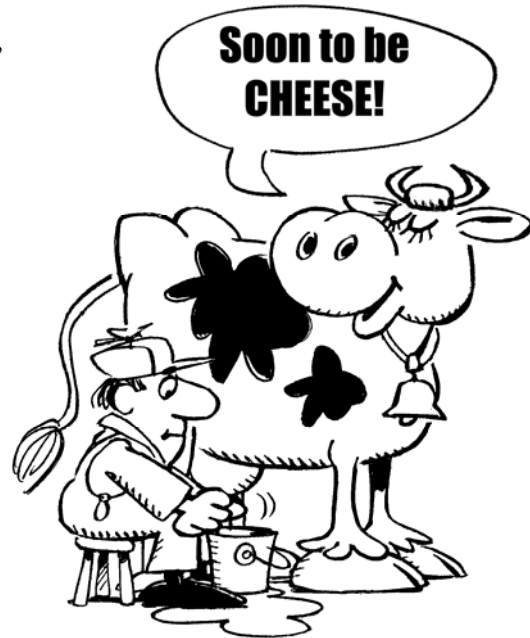
The cow takes a dog, the cow takes a dog,  
Hi-ho, the derry-o, the cow takes a dog.

The dog takes a cat, the dog takes a cat,  
Hi-ho, the derry-o, the dog takes a cat.

The cat takes a rat, the cat takes a rat,  
Hi-ho, the derry-o, the cat takes a rat.

The rat takes the cheese, the rat takes the cheese,  
Hi-ho, the derry-o, the rat takes the cheese.

The cheese stands alone, the cheese stands alone,  
Hi-ho, the derry-o, the cheese stands alone.



**The "Farmer in the Dell" game**

At least 10 children form a circle around the Farmer, who stands in the center of the circle. Everyone sings. At the end of the first verse, the farmer chooses someone from the circle to be the Wife. At the end of the second verse the Wife chooses someone to be the Child and so on. The last person in the circle is the Cheese and gets to be the farmer in the next game.

### **A bit about the real history in the story**

Cheshire, Massachusetts was first settled in 1766 and was officially incorporated in 1793. It is named after Cheshire, England. When Thomas Jefferson was running for the office of President, Cheshire was the only town in Berkshire County to favor him, so when he won the election they wanted to show their support in a very big way.

Because Cheshire, like their namesake, specialized in dairying and making cheese, they decided to send a gift of Cheshire cheese to President Jefferson using curds from every farmer in town. The result was a wheel of cheese four feet in diameter, 18 inches thick, and weighing 1,235 pounds (560 kg). It was moved on a sled, drawn by six horses, and boat to Washington, D.C. One of two monuments in Cheshire commemorates the cheese; the other memorializes the founders of the town.

### **A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY FOR OLDER STUDENTS: Doing the impossible**

1. Look through a *Guinness Book of World Records*. What impossible things have people done? (for resources go to: [www.guinnessworldrecords.com](http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com), official site of the *Guinness Book of World Records*).
2. Now think about history. What seemingly impossible things have people done? (walking on the moon, inventing computers, finding a cure for polio)
3. Challenge your students to think of a big dream they have. In a story or poem, write about that dream and think about ways that they could accomplish it.

### **Curriculum connections:**

writing, history, team work, social skills, literature

## *The White House*

### **White House fast facts:**

1. President Washington (and Washington D.C., city planner Pierre L'Enfant) chose the site for the White House.
2. James Hoban designed the White House after winning a design contest for it.
3. The first cornerstone was laid in October of 1792.
4. President John Adams (president #2) and his wife, Abigail, were the first family to live in the White House.
5. The White House is the only private residence of a head of state throughout the world that is open to the public, free of charge.
6. The White House has survived two fires; one at the hands of the British in 1814 (during the war of 1812) and another in the West Wing in 1929, while Herbert Hoover was President.
7. Thomas Jefferson held the first Inaugural open house in 1805. Many of those who attended the swearing-in ceremony at the U.S. Capitol simply followed him home, where he greeted them in the Blue Room.
8. President Jefferson opened the White House up for public tours, and it has remained open, except during wartime, ever since.
9. President Jefferson welcomed visitors to annual receptions on New Year's Day and on the Fourth of July. Receptions on New Year's Day and the Fourth of July continued to be held until the early 1930s.
10. There are 132 rooms, 35 bathrooms, and 6 levels in the Residence. There are also 412 doors, 147 windows, 28 fireplaces, 8 staircases, and 3 elevators.
11. At various times in history, the White House has been known as the "President's Palace," the "President's House," and the "Executive Mansion." President Theodore Roosevelt officially gave the White House its current name in 1901.
12. With five full-time chefs, the White House kitchen is able to serve dinner to as many as 140 guests and hors d'oeuvres to more than 1,000.
13. The White House requires 570 gallons of paint to cover its outside surface.
14. The White House has a variety of facilities available to its residents, including a tennis court, jogging track, swimming pool, movie theater, and bowling lane.

## ***Companion Books and Websites***

### **REFERENCE BOOKS**

*Cheese Primer* by Steve Jenkins. Workman Publishing Company, 1996.

*Don't Know Much about the Pilgrims* by Kenneth C. Davis, illustrated by S.D. Schindler. Viking Juvenile, 1992.

*Extra Cheese, Please!: Mozzarella's Journey from Cow to Pizza* by Cris Peterson, illustrated by Alvis Uptis, Boyds Mills Press, 2004.

*Home Cheese Making: Recipes for 75 Delicious Cheeses* by Ricki Carroll, Storey Publishing, 2002.

*Our White House: Looking Out, Looking In*, compilation by various authors and illustrators, Candlewick Press, 2008.

*Thomas Jefferson: a picture book biography* by James Cross Giblin, illus. by Michael Dooling. Scholastic, 1994.

*White House* by Lloyd G. Douglas, Children's Press, 2003.

*White House: An Illustrated History*, by Catherine O. Grace, Scholastic Reference, 2003.

### **WEBSITES ABOUT CHEESE**

[www.songsforteaching.com/jackhartmann/pleasesaycheese.htm](http://www.songsforteaching.com/jackhartmann/pleasesaycheese.htm) ("Please Say Cheese" children's action song, American Dairy Association)

[www.ilovecheese.com](http://www.ilovecheese.com) American Dairy Association cheese website

[www.cheese.com](http://www.cheese.com) (extensive website all about cheese)

[www.historyforkids.org/learn/economy/cheese.htm](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/economy/cheese.htm) (The History of Cheese)

### **WEBSITES ABOUT HISTORY AND THOMAS JEFFERSON**

[www.monticello.org](http://www.monticello.org) (Thomas Jefferson and the Early 1800s)

[odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/tj3/writings/brf/jeflxx.htm](http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/tj3/writings/brf/jeflxx.htm) (Thomas Jefferson's letters arranged by year)

[library.thinkquest.org/J002611F](http://library.thinkquest.org/J002611F) (colonial kids)

[library.thinkquest.org/J002132](http://library.thinkquest.org/J002132) (life in the early 1800s/colonial times)

[edsitement.neh.gov/view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?id=260](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=260) (NEH site, Life in Early America, 1740 - 1840)

### **WEBSITES ABOUT THE WHITE HOUSE**

[www.whitehouse.gov/history/life/video/index.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/life/video/index.html) (a virtual tour of the White House)

[www.whitehouse.gov/history/whtour](http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/whtour) (pictures and text of the White House)

[www.whitehouse.gov/kids](http://www.whitehouse.gov/kids) (The White House for kids, includes teacher's guide)