

# Tree of Dreams

From the Americas Book Award Winner

LAURA RESAU

## Literary Chocolate Tasting

*In this packet, you'll find instructions for several delicious reading and writing activities you can do **\*while eating chocolate\***!*

- 1) Guided chocolate taster flight
- 2) Learn more about the bean-to-bar process
- 3) Multi-sensory description and poem
- 4) Using unique figurative language
- 5) Cacao character sketch
- 6) Dreaming up a story
- 7) Chocolate journalism tour
- 8) About the author
- 9) Explore more resources
- 10) Placemat to organize chocolate samples and observations

## Objectives

- To develop **multi-sensory** observation skills essential for creative writing.
- To practice making specific **descriptions** with precise vocabulary.
- To use unique, **figurative language** (metaphors and similes).
- To learn about happy-making **neurological effects** of chocolate. (STEM!)
- To use chocolate as **inspiration for creative writing**, including poetry, stories, character sketches, and newspaper articles.
- To have an excuse to **EAT CHOCOLATE!**

## Materials

- Four to six quality **chocolate bars** (from your local bean-to-bar chocolate-makers if possible!) They should have distinct flavors/tastes. (Do dark chocolate if any participants need dairy-free.)
  - Here are two lists of craft chocolate factory/shops in the U.S.:  
<http://www.chocolatenoise.com/chocolate-today/2017/9/19/my-top-50-bean-to-bar-chocolate-makers-in-the-united-states>
  - <https://medium.com/@CarolWiley/183-bean-to-bar-chocolate-makers-in-the-united-states-a7a31325733d>
- Water **crackers** (several per person)
- Glasses of room temperature **water** (one per person)
- Several paper **plates** (one per chocolate bar)
- **Paper and pens** (for tasting notes)
- **Optional “Chocolate flavor wheel”** with creative, taste-related adjectives. You can easily find one online and print copies or show on a large screen.
- **Optional thesaurus.**

## Instructions

1. **Gather** friends, family, students, classmates, and anyone else (except dogs, since chocolate is poisonous to them!)
2. **Break** each chocolate bar into bite-sized pieces on a plate.
3. **Label** each plate with a number/letter. You can use the **placemat** included to organize your own samples.
4. **Smell, observe, and finally, taste** a piece of the chocolate from the first plate, nibbling at it and moving it around to all parts of your tongue and mouth. Close your eyes and think about the flavors.
5. **Describe** the smells, appearance, flavors, and textures in your notes. Be specific. For example, you could describe the flavor as: nutty, flowery (what *kinds* of flowers?), bright (acidic), fruity, bitter, layered, sweet, brown-sugary, etc.) Use the word list on your placemat, flavor wheel or thesaurus.
6. **Move on to the next samples of chocolate**, and repeat steps 4 and 5, cleansing your palate with crackers and water between each tasting. Make sure to record which chocolate number/letter you're describing.
7. **Share one of your descriptions** with your partner(s). See if they can guess which chocolate you're describing. Compare/contrast your description with theirs. Repeat with the other chocolate samples, taking turns going first.
8. **Look at the description** of the flavor on the packaging (which will probably be given if it's craft chocolate). In what ways do you agree or disagree with the "official description"?
9. **Discuss your state of mind, emotions, and sensations.**

- Can you feel the **theobromine** making you clear, alert, energized, and satisfied?
- Can you feel the **neurotransmitters** like **dopamine** and **endorphins** being released and giving you calm pleasure?
- Can you feel the **phenylethylamine** filling you with love?
- Can you feel the **flavonoids** increasing blood flow to your brain, and, along with the caffeine, making you feel smarter and more focused?
- Can you feel the **magnesium** chilling you out?
- Can you feel the **good bacteria** multiplying in your gut?

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## Learn more about the bean-to-bar process

If your chocolate is bean-to-bar, the packaging on your chocolate bars might indicate that the beans come from different countries, all near the equator. Note that they may be either forastero, criollo, trinitario, or a hybrid. These are the main different types of beans with unique characteristics. Over 600 different flavor compounds are brought out through the on-site fermentation process, which can differ from batch to batch and farm to farm. The flavor is further developed through the roasting and blending (melanger) processes. **Re-read and discuss sections of *Tree of Dreams* that describe the bean-to-bar process. (p. 24 to 26, p. 134-136, p. 209). Do you now have a better appreciation for chocolate? How so?**

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## Multisensory Description and Poem

*Pick your favorite kind of chocolate from the samples in your taster flight. Take another taste of it, then complete the sentences. Be as specific as you possibly can! Think outside the box! Go wild! The only rule is: you can't use the words "chocolate" or "chocolatey." After completing these brain-storming sentences, try using your ideas to create a short, non-rhyming poem.*

This chocolate **tastes** like

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This chocolate **smells** like

---

This chocolate **looks** like

---

This chocolate **feels** like

---

This chocolate **sounds** like

---

The **spirit** of this chocolate is

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## Using Unique Figurative Language

*Take another taste of your favorite chocolate sample. Quickly answer the questions. Be as specific as possible.*

If this chocolate were a time of day, what would it be and why?

If this chocolate were a non-food item in your house/garage/attic, what would it be and why?

If this chocolate were an animal, what would it be and why?

If this chocolate were a kind of weather, what would it be and why?

If this chocolate were an element like earth/air/water/fire, what exactly would it be and why?

If this chocolate were a landscape feature, what would it be and why?

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## Cacao Character Sketch

*In Tree of Dreams, Coco describes people in as chocolate. For example:*

Of the Rocky Mountain cultivar, **Coco Hidden** possesses a solid maple complexion with tender layers of petals beneath. A bright touch of acidity at the edges. Subterranean hints of sorrow and fear. Undercurrents of longing, sweet notes of caramel with a burning touch of bitterness. A rare mix of steadfast and passionate.

**Leo de la Cueva**, of the Rocky Mountain cultivar: Smooth, mellow, creamy. The brightness of sunshine sparkle on snow. Flavor as quenching as water bubbling from a cool spring. Layers of sweetness like summer-warmed peaches at the farmer's market. A rare mix of softness and toughness. A hint of hidden mystery and magic. Unforgettable honeyed notes of loyalty that linger forever.

**Caitlyn Bland**, of the Heartsprings Oppressive Regime cultivar: Artificially enhanced white "chocolate," made of cocoa butter derived from common, lesser quality beans. Chemically deodorized to mask its fetid stench, resulting in a plastic Tupperware aroma. Generous heaps of preservatives, corn syrup, and milk solids. Rounded out with a fair dosing of hydrogenated oils, vanillin, and other artificial flavors. Perfect accompaniment to Donut Delite.

**Write about yourself (or a friend or family member) as a chocolate description.**

Let it reflect the layers of that person, how you feel about that person, the contradictory parts of the person, etc. Use all your senses (and your chocolate flavor wheel!) and be as specific as possible.

## Dreaming up a Story

*Let your favorite chocolate sample lead you into a story. Remember to use ALL your senses and let your imagination fly WILD.*

What **setting** does this chocolate evoke? (Historical period, geographic location, weather, time of day, landscape or building, music or sounds in background, etc.)

What **emotions or tones** does this chocolate evoke? (Mysterious, wild, funny, liberating, mythical, love, passion, spiritual, etc.)

What **motifs or symbols** (meaningful things) does this chocolate evoke? (particular plants, animals, items, etc.)

What **character** does this chocolate evoke? (Describe his/her appearance, personality, life circumstances, philosophical musings, passions, fears, etc.)

What keeps this character up at night? (Be specific about what **conflict or problem** is in this person's life.)

Write a **short-short story** (less than a page), incorporating your brain-stormed ideas. You might include this plot element: *Your character bites into the chocolate. And everything changes.*

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## Chocolate Journalism Tour

If you're lucky enough to have a craft chocolate maker in town, try scheduling a **visit to the shop or factory!** Imagine you're a journalist. Interview the chocolate-makers and take notes and photos. Afterward, **write a newspaper article** about

the experience. Be sure to follow newspaper article format, with all the facts (where, what, when, who, why, how), as well as plenty of quotations.

If you can't swing a chocolate shop/factory visit, you **could \*imagine\* you're a journalist visiting Coco's beloved El Corazón** and writing about it for the local newspaper. You could use the information on these pages of *Tree of Dreams*, as well as throughout the book: (p. 24 to 26, p. 134-136, p. 209).

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### About the Author



Laura Resau is the award-winning author of *Tree of Dreams* (Scholastic) and eight other highly acclaimed young adult and children's novels. Set in Latin America and Europe, her books are inspired by her time abroad as a cultural anthropologist, ESL teacher, student, and adventurous writer. She loves sitting under trees, wandering by rivers, camping in the mountains, playing ukulele, biking around town, and eating chocolate. She lives with her husband, son, and beagle in Fort Collins, Colorado.

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### Resources

For more resources, please visit <https://www.lauraresau.com/wild-chocolate>. Laura would love to hear about your group doing a chocolatey literacy activity. Please feel free to send her a recap and photos at [Lauraresau@gmail.com](mailto:Lauraresau@gmail.com) with the subject heading "Reader Mail" or through her social media accounts. Thanks!

**READ, WRITE, EAT CHOCOLATE, AND BE HAPPY! 😊**

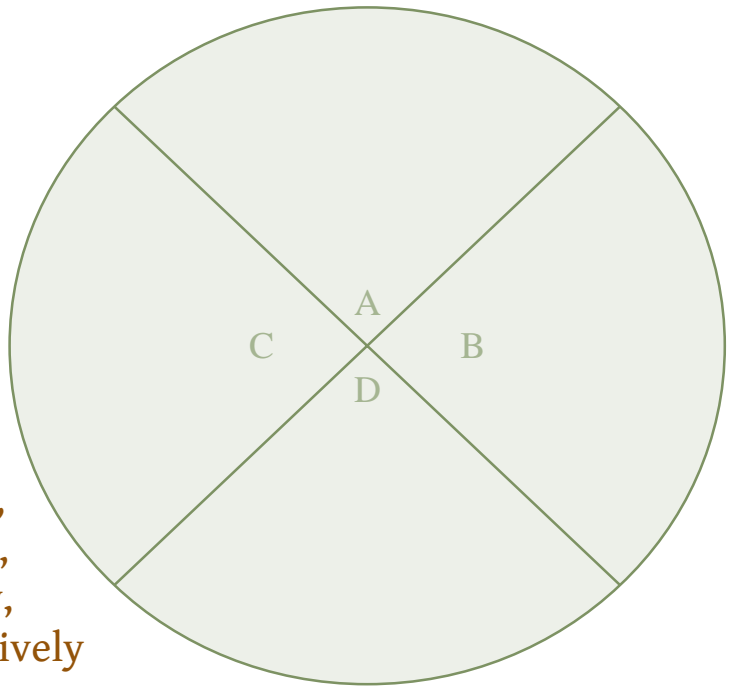


# Chocolate Flight and Write with Laura Resau, inspired by

## Tree of Dreams (Scholastic)

### Descriptive Words To Use

shiny, dull, smooth, flat, bumpy, chunky, grainy, gritty, velvety, silky, fruity, nutty, floral, earthy, woody, salty, spicy, smoky, sweet, bitter, tart, creamy, caramely, picante (chili), coffee-ish, honeyed, citrus-y, mysterious, bright, happy, sad, dark, light, magnificent, angry, wintry, summery, heavenly, bold, lively



|       | A     | B     | C     | D     |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|       | ***** | ***** | ***** | ***** |
| Look  |       |       |       |       |
| Smell |       |       |       |       |
| Feel  |       |       |       |       |
| Taste |       |       |       |       |
| Like? |       |       |       |       |