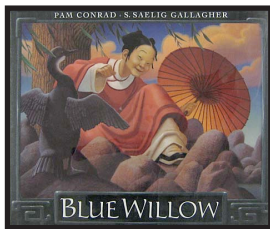




# Cruchley's Collection

Diana Cruchley is an award-winning educator and author, who has taught at elementary, secondary, and university level. Her workshops are practical, include detailed handouts, and are always enthusiastically received.

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## BLUE WILLOW

Pam Conrad, ©1999,  
Philomel Books,  
ISBN 0-399-22904-3

The legend behind the blue willow plate is the story of a girl who falls in love with a poor fisherman. Her father places obstacles in their path and finally she is killed in a storm. When her fisherman lover discovers her death he cries out in anguish and is killed by the villagers mistaking him for a screaming tiger. The rainbow and dove appear over the daughter's pavilion and the father commissions the plate in the memory of the two lovers.

## BLUE WILLOW PLATE OBSERVATION

To teach students to observe carefully, purchase a set of Blue Willow plates as objects to show students – or create a set of coloured photocopies in plastic sleeves. Allow students to observe carefully for no more than 5 minutes.

Give the students a set of sketches to represent the various parts of the plate and then ask them to draw the picture from memory.

Many different companies made the Blue Willow pattern – the original ones in China and many copies from the English fine china potteries – even to today. If you had purchased Blue Willow plates it would be nice to have a few different ones.

Students can re-arrange the elements to make a different picture to represent the same story.

## THE ELEMENTS OF A BLUE WILLOW PLATE

However the Blue Willow pattern was created, and there are many of them, the common elements are: a rainbow band around the outside, a fishing boat, a pavilion, a small bridge with villagers on it, two doves flying, a house, and a tree.

## THE STORY OF THE BLUE WILLOW PLATE

First, ask students to use the elements of the plate to create their own story of the legend behind the plate. Then, read the story aloud to the students. It is a very “tragic” lesson story about true love and the relationship between a father and a daughter. It is a kind of Chinese Romeo and Juliet – of course, you would then have to tell the story of Romeo and Juliet and perhaps have them construct a Venn diagram comparing the stories.

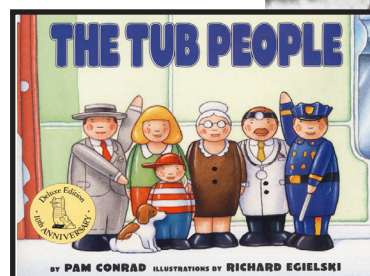
## CORMORANT FISHING

Gather an article from the *National Geographic*, a YouTube, or an encyclopedia about cormorant fishing. Discuss and give examples of how *Blue Willow* uses details of cormorant fishing to make the story come alive as a Chinese story.

Ask them to use the details in the cormorant article to make up a story about the adventures of a boy or a girl becoming a cormorant fisher. Illustrate the story with blue drawings on a white “plate” circle.

## THE AUTHOR: PAM CONRAD

Pam Conrad was born in 1947 and died of breast cancer in 1996 at the age of 48. She began her writing career to support her family after she had two daughters and her husband left her. She wrote many award-winning books.





# Characteristics of the Blue Willow Plate

3 VILLAGERS

TWO DOVES

FISHING BOAT



HOUSE

BRIDGE

PAVILION

RAINBOW RIM

TREE



What do these designs have in common?





# THE WILLOW LEGEND: AN ALTERNATIVE BLUE WILLOW TALE

There was once a Mandarin who had a beautiful daughter, Koong-se. He employed a secretary, Chang who, while he was attending to his master's accounts, fell in love with Koong-se, much to the anger of the Mandarin, who regarded the secretary as unworthy of his daughter.

The secretary was banished and a fence constructed around the gardens of the Mandarin's estate so that Chang could not see his daughter and Koong-se could only walk in the gardens and to the water's edge.

One day a shell fitted with sails containing a poem, and a bead which Koong-se had given to Chang, floated to the water's edge. Koong-se knew that her lover was not far away.

She was soon dismayed to learn that she had been betrothed to Ta-jin, a noble warrior Duke. She was full of despair when it was announced that her future husband, the noble Duke, was arriving, bearing a gift of jewels to celebrate his betrothal.

However, after the banquet, borrowing the robes of a servant, Chang passed through the guests unseen and came to Koong-se's room. They embraced and vowed to run away together. The Mandarin, the Duke, the guests, and all the servants had drunk so much wine that the couple almost got away without detection, but Koong-se's father saw her at the last minute and gave chase across the bridge.

The couple escaped and stayed with the maid that Koong-se's father had dismissed for conspiring with the lovers. Koong-se had given the casket of jewels to Chang. The Mandarin, who was also a magistrate, swore that he would use the jewels as a pretext to execute Chang when he caught him.

One night the Mandarin's spies reported that a man was hiding in a house by the river and the Mandarin's guards raided the house. But Chang had jumped into the raging torrent and Koong-se thought that he had drowned.

Some days later the guards returned to search the house again. While Koong-se's maid talked to them, Chang came by boat to the window and took Koong-se away to safety.

They settled on a distant island, and over the years Chang became famous for his writings. This was to prove his undoing. The Mandarin heard about him and sent guards to destroy him. Chang was put to the sword and Koong-se set fire to the house while she was still inside.

Thus they both perished and the gods, touched by their love, immortalised them as two doves, eternally flying together in the sky.

*What elements in the illustration does this version omit?*

