



## Mixing fiction and science in children's books

**H. Gaonac'h**

GEOTOP-UQAM-McGill Centre, Université du Québec à Montréal, Québec, Canada,  
gaonach.helene@uqam.ca

Humankind has always been fascinated by volcanoes and their powerful natural forces. When they hear the word “volcano”, children open their eyes wide and excitedly start asking questions. Many documentary books have been published attempting to answer the question How do Volcanoes work? Although more and more of these books are oriented to children, appealing to them with beautiful illustrations and short and clear explanations; they often fail to motivate young readers. Indeed, it is generally believed that children are not attracted by documentary books, preferring fiction.

But what about a “docufiction” about kids of their own age having an adventure on a volcano and while simultaneously explaining to them a little volcanology? This is the idea I have worked on when publishing a new documentary-fiction (Gaonac'h, 2005) about volcanoes. Initially started in 2002 with a Web Site *Les Chroniques volcaniques avec Vicki Volka*, this project aims to search for new means to communicate news about recent volcanic activity and the associated concepts to children and their families. The fiction follows the adventures of two twelve year old children. Simple explanations, scientific drawings, and illustrations aid in the understanding of technical concepts. Topics include news about erupting effusive volcanoes and the types of hazards facing local populations. They also learn about cutting edge research questions as well as how scientists combine family and work lives. While the web site is oriented more to descriptive news with associated short stories, activities and illustrations, the book is mostly fiction with occasional scientific explanations and web links. In this presentation, I present the main didactic materiel used in the book and how it could be appreciated by a reader both at home and at school. I intend to pursue this science outreach experiment by publishing an English version in the near future.

Gaonac'h, Hélène; *Volcans et crème glacée à l'italienne s'il vous plaît!* Éditions MultiMondes, Quebec, Canada.