

# Teaching Guide for

# *My Favorite Birthday*

*A picture book written by Nilanka Maldeniya*

*& illustrated by Charity Russell*

Grades K-4

## LANGUAGE & ARTS

### Reading Comprehension

Before reading the book, help students identify the basic parts of a picture book: jacket, front cover, back cover, title page, spine, end papers.

*Front cover discussion:*

- Describe what you see. Who do you think the character is? What is she doing? What is the setting of the book?
- Pretend to be the character in the illustration. Pay close attention to the facial expression and body language. How do you think this character feels?
- What do you think this story is about?

***Now read or listen to the book. Help students summarize in their own words what the book was about. Discuss afterwards:***

- What is the girl talking about?
- Who are the other characters in the book?
- What are the girl's different birthday memories?
- What was special about each birthday memory?
- How does the girl feel at the end of the story?
- How do you feel about birthdays?
- Do you have a favorite birthday memory? Describe it.

### Writing Activities

A character's actions can tell us what kind of person they are.

Pay close attention to the main character's actions, and the expressions on her face. Record your thoughts scene by scene.

*Example*

- What the girl does: Says thank you to her party guests.  
How you might describe her: Polite, kind, appreciative.

After gathering information about the main character, write a few new scenes for the book.



### Talk about the creators of the book.

Who is the author? Who is the illustrator? What did each of them do?

Research them & discuss your findings.

### Drama & Art

- Students act out story as it is read out.
- Students draw their own birthday story.
- Have students take turns silently acting out a specific scene (i.e. charades).
- The story is in the 1st person narrative. Discuss other ways to write a story. Rewrite in the third person and also use dialogue. For younger students, you may need to use speech bubbles instead.



## MATH

### Ice-cream Counting

This activity will help students with counting and number recognition.

- Cut triangles to be ice-cream cones.
- Cut out a large number of small circles using multi-colored paper.
- Make ice creams using the cones and the circles or "scoops". Students will have fun making towering ice-creams while also learning their numbers!

### Birthday Candles

Everybody loves blowing out the candles on a cake! Make a gigantic birthday cake using styrofoam and get the students to help decorate it with markers, pom poms and anything else. Stick candles into the cake and have kids take turns blowing out "1", "2", "10" candles and so on. Kids love pretending they are older so this game is a hit!

### Birthday Present Scavenger Hunt

- Label many popsicle sticks from 1-10/25 and hide them all over the classroom.
- Students have to hunt for and make a full set of sticks.
- The student who finds all the numbered sticks first gets the birthday present the class will have wrapped up and decorated earlier (use an empty box or fill it up with a treat!)

### Word Problem (examples):

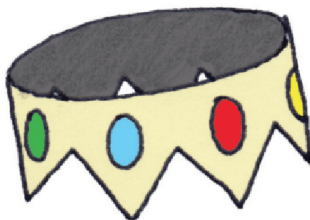
Younger students may need pictures and props to get to the answers:

- The girl has 2 presents in the morning. She gets 2 more presents in the afternoon. How many presents does she have?
- The girl invites 10 friends to her party. 2 friends can't come because they are sick. How many friends come to the party?
- The girl has six candles on her cake. She blows out one. How many candles are still lit?

### Birthday Games

Some of the traditional birthday games are great for teaching math concepts.

- Musical chairs is a fun game where kids can work out their energy and learn the concept of subtraction at the same time. Game can be played indoors or outdoors, and with colored paper squares in lieu of chairs. Take away one or more "chairs" at a time until there's a winner!
- Call out a number and have students get themselves into groups of the number you call out in 30 seconds!



## SOCIAL STUDIES

### Happy Birthday!

- Each student should pick a public figure they admire.
- At home and during a library session, students should research their public figure.
- One item will be the public figure's birthday. Students should also obtain information about what the public figure did in his/her lifetime that was noteworthy.
- Students can create a poster board and present their research to the class.



### International Birthdays

Pick a few countries that have different birthday traditions and celebrations and discuss. Teach children an appreciation for other cultures and languages by having them say "Happy Birthday" in a few languages - maybe one for every day of the week!

## SCIENCE

### Candle Burning Experiment

- Talk to the class about candles and how and why they burn.
- With preschoolers, you can use pictures to make the points.
- With older children who are able to follow instructions and safety rules, you can carry out a candle burning experiment.

What you need:

- A candle
- A match
- Fire extinguisher
- Several sized glass jars
- Stop watch
- Notebooks
- Pencils

Using a stopwatch, record how much time is taken for the flame to go out for each candle that is covered by a small jar, medium jar, and large jar. Students can also record the times on their own. Discuss the results with the students and explain that although the air can't be seen, there is more oxygen inside the large jar which results in the flame taking longer to burn out.

Consider having a local firefighter come in to speak to the class about fire safety at home, at school, and in public places.

