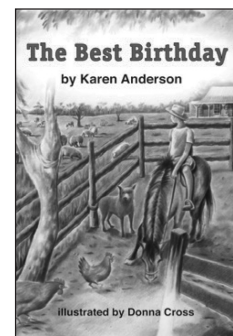


The Best Birthday

by Karen Anderson
illustrated by Donna Cross



Book Summary

Jamie has a special birthday present to send his cousin Rachel in England. The only problem is that she'll have to wait six months to find out what it is!

Features of the Book

- Email formats
- Exchange of written communications that progress the story
- Illustrations that provide extra information and support
- Contractions – *I've, That's, can't, I'll, it's, don't, won't, There's, Here's*
- Colloquial language – *No way!, I don't get it!, got it?, heaps of friends, just kidding*

Purpose

The Best Birthday can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- S** recognising and understanding colloquial language;
- S** making, confirming, and revising predictions;
- S** using charts and diagrams to record important details;
- S** reading aloud with expression;
- S** using text as a model for writing.

The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Recognising and understanding colloquial language
- S** Making, confirming, and revising predictions
- S** Using charts and diagrams to record important details

Materials needed

- A copy of the text for each child and one for the teacher
- A whiteboard or chart paper and marker pens
- Optional: a copy of the blackline master, scissors, marker pens, and a pencil for each child

Introducing the text

Ask the children to share their experiences of the best birthday they have had.

- *What made that birthday better than other birthdays you remember?*

Show the group the cover of the book.

- *What can you tell about the setting of this book?*
- *What country might this be? How can you tell?*
- *What do you think this book might be about?*

On a chart titled “Predictions”, ask the children to make predictions under the following headings: Setting, Characters, Plot, and Present.

Read the blurb on the back cover together and ask the children to predict the kind of present that Jamie might send Rachel. Record their predictions on the chart under the heading Present.

- *Why might Rachel have to wait six months to find out what the present is?*

Reading and discussing the text

This can be taken over two days. If your group can read the book with less support, adjust the lesson plan accordingly.

Day One

Ask the children to look through the book briefly.

- *What do you notice that is different from most books?*

Give an explanation of email if necessary, including the use of a subject line. Read the emails on pages 4 and 5 together.

- *How would you describe the way the two cousins communicate with each other?*
- *How is emailing different from writing letters?*

Turn to page 7 and direct the children to look at the phrase “I don’t get it!”

- *What does this phrase mean?*
- *Is this the kind of language you would normally put in your writing? Why/why not?*

Explain to the children that this is called colloquial language. Point out other examples of colloquial language as you read the book and help the children to recognise that this language is less formal than other writing. They may notice that colloquial language is more like talking.

The children can now read to the end of Chapter 2 independently.

Day Two

Remind the children of the predictions they made before starting the book. Discuss their predictions.

- *What do you know now about the setting?*
- *Have you changed your mind about what the present might be?*
- *Which clues helped you change your mind?*
- *Who do you think the character on the cover is?*

Add the children’s revised predictions to the chart.

Discuss the clues that Jamie has been giving Rachel. Explain that these clues are also designed to keep the reader guessing what the present might be.

- *What additional clues do the illustrations give us?*

Read Chapter 3 together and discuss the additional clues. Discuss how Rachel’s thoughts about the present have changed with each clue.

The children can now read the rest of the book independently. When everyone has finished reading, ask the children to look at the predictions chart again.

- *Were our predictions about the setting and plot correct?*
- *Were you surprised by the ending? Why/why not?*

Explain that good readers often change or revise their predictions as they gain more information from the text. This helps them to gain a better understanding of the book as they read.

Revisiting the Text

The activities below can be used immediately after the guided reading lesson or during later reading sessions as mini-lessons or individual activities.

S Reading aloud with expression

Look at the way that Jamie and Rachel write to each other via email. Discuss how this might be different if they were writing letters to each other. Explain that often friends write emails as if they were actually talking to each other.

Ask the children to choose a section from the book to read aloud in pairs. Remind them to think about the way the character is feeling when he or she is speaking as well as the volume and expression required. Remind the children that the punctuation can give them clues for reading with expression. Allow time for the children to practise before they read their sections to the rest of the group.

S Using text as a model for writing

Show the children examples of different types of written communication, such as emails, postcards, and faxes.

- *Have you ever received any of these types of letters?*
- *Why do people use each kind of letter?*
- *What is the fastest way to send a message?*

Discuss the differences between casual and formal letter language (contractions, salutations, content).

Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the features of two kinds of written communication, for example, postcards and emails. Ask the children to select one form to write to a friend, describing a special birthday they have had.

B The children can complete the blackline master on page 87.