

Happy Birthday

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illustrated by Jennifer Cooper



Overview

A young girl is turning six, and everyone has a special way of saying “happy birthday”. The joy and excitement of birthdays are captured in this cheerful text that the students will find easy to relate to.

Suggested purposes

This book supports the comprehension strategies of using prior knowledge, making connections with real-life experiences, and using illustrations to understand text. The use of high-frequency words, repetition, and a close picture–text match are supports for the reader, but there are also subtle text changes that require the students to pay close attention to print. The content words on each page provide opportunities for the students to practise their decoding skills.

Text features (Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the high-frequency words – *a, it, my, on, said, with*
- the repeated initial letters – *b, s, h*
- the digraphs -ph – *phone*; -th – *with, birthday*
- the initial consonant blends – *cl, fl, sm*
- the compound word – *birthday*
- the repetitive text structure
- the use of speech bubbles
- the names of the family members
- the split picture on page 5
- the extra information provided in the illustrations (the girl’s age on the cover, and page 4)
- the warm family relationships portrayed in the illustrations

Setting the scene

Discuss birthdays. *How old will you be on your next birthday? What do people do to help you celebrate your birthday?* Responses might include giving presents, singing, or making a birthday cake. If necessary, suggest some ideas that don’t involve buying things. *Do you remember what happened at kindergarten when you had a birthday? Did the children sing to you?*

The first reading

Look closely at the cover illustration. *What is the girl holding? How old is she? How do you know?* Encourage the students to attempt the title. Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

Back cover – Read aloud the preview question. Help the students to make connections with the preview question and their own experiences.

Title page – Listen to the students read the title again.

Page 2 – You may need to ask targeted questions to establish the pattern of the text. *What is Mum saying? What is Mum doing? Did she just say “happy birthday”? How did she say it?* Read the page and tell me. If the students say “cuddle” for “hug”, encourage them to cross-check using the initial consonant.

Page 3 – *What is Dad saying? Look at Dad’s face. What is he doing? How did he say “happy birthday”?* Listen to the students read pages 3 to 7, offering support as necessary.

Page 5 – Observe which students notice the change in text structure to “on the phone”.

Page 8 – *Where is the girl now? How will her class say “happy birthday”?* Listen to the students read page 8. You could then sing happy birthday together.

Ideas for revisiting the text (Choose only one or two per session.)

- Listen to the students reread the text. Observe their attempts to self-monitor, cross-check, and read expressively.
- For the students who need more work with initial letters, locate words in the text that begin with “b”, “s”, or “h”. Make a list of other words that begin with the same letter.
- Find “phone” in the text. Write it on the board. *What sound do these letters make in this word?* Talk about other “ph” words, such as “Philip” and “photo”.
- Find “smile” in the text. *What other words begin with “sm”?* Make a list together. Do the same for “fl” or “cl”.
- Locate “with” in the text. Focus on the “th” ending. *What sound does this word end with?* Show the students other examples of words with the same ending, for example, “teeth”, “bath”, “mouth”, or “cloth”. *Can you hear this sound in the word “birthday”?*
- Locate the compound word “birthday” and show the students how it is two words joined together. Think of other words that have “day” at the end of them, for example, “today”, “yesterday”, and “Sunday”.
- Focus on page 4 – *What do you think it says inside the card?*
- Using the words and punctuation cards for this book, reassemble the sentences with the students.
- Look closely at the illustrations on pages 2 to 5 and talk about the family relationships. For example, *What is Dad doing on page 2? Who is Ben? What is Mum doing while the girl is talking on the phone?*

Suggestions for further activities

- Make birthday cards for a family or class member who is having a birthday. Say and write “happy birthday” in other languages.
- Explore different ways of sending birthday messages, such as by fax, email, on a banner, or a message on a cake.
- Innovate on the text structure. For example, you could make a class or group thank-you book – “Mike said it with a smile.” “Jun said it with a picture.”
- Draw pictures of birthday celebrations and add speech bubbles.
- Make a birthday cake from play dough. Wrap “presents” and write gift tags for the presents.
- BLM word activity: recognise the relationships between letters and their sounds
The students can match the names of the characters in the boxes with their initial sounds. They can cut out the character boxes and stick them on to the letter box.
- BLM comprehension activity: drawing pictures to match captions
The students can draw the appropriate illustrations in the boxes.