

# The King's Birthday

by Dot Meharry

illustrated by Philip Webb

## Overview

The King is upset because nobody seems to have remembered his birthday. Lunch, however, reveals a lovely surprise. This is a sequel (with lots of delightful links) to *The Hole in the King's Sock* (Orange). There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2006*.

## Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of making connections, forming hypotheses, and analysing and synthesising. The “Royal” vocabulary and complex sentences provide opportunities for exploring language, while the repetitive structure provides support for less confident readers.

## Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the clear narrative structure
- the fairy tale elements
- the characterisation of the King and Queen
- the humour in the text and the medieval illustrations
- the text design features on pages 10 and 12
- the inclusion of complex sentences
- the expressive dialogue, including italics for emphasis, an imperative (on page 7), questions, and contractions
- the alternatives to “said” – “asked”, “ordered”, “sang”, “thought”, “wondered”
- the compound words – “birthday”, “courtyard”, “everywhere”, “Footmen”, “into”, “Maybe”, “something”, “upset”, “upstairs”
- the possessive apostrophe in the title.

## Introducing the text

Display a copy of *The Hole in the King's Sock* and encourage the children to explore and compare the covers, savouring the humorous details they share, for example, the cheerful font, the King's stripy socks, and the palace setting. *Who are the other characters we are likely to meet?* You could reintroduce some of the “Royal” vocabulary if you think the children are likely to have difficulty with it.

Read the title and speculate about what might happen on a King's birthday. *In this book, the King has a problem. What do you think could go wrong on his birthday?* Encourage the children to share their hypotheses. *While you're reading, I want you to keep thinking about your predictions. See if your ideas change as you read.*

## During the reading

Read the names of the author and illustrator. Ask the children to read the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or clarification.

Pages 2 and 3 – *What is the King’s problem? How do you know? Is that what you predicted? What could he do next?*

Pages 4 and 5 – *What does the King want the Royal Gardeners and the Royal Cooks to say?* Resist the temptation to ask why the Gardeners are picking flowers and the Cooks are making a cake – allow the children to discover the surprise at their own pace. If necessary, model the reading of the first sentence on each page so that the children realise they run on past the first line and that the ideas in each sentence belong together.

Page 6 – Prompt the children to break “courtyard” into “court” and “yard”. If they struggle with “court”, tell them the word and check that they understand the meanings of “courtyard” and “banner”. Some children may be beginning to predict the ending! *Why is he asking for the Queen? What might he say to her?*

Page 7 – Have the children read the King’s dialogue aloud, using a suitably imperious tone. Recap the story so far. *What has gone wrong so far? What will happen next?*

Page 8 – If necessary, explain what “banquet” means.

Page 9 – *What does the banner say? Who made it? Why is the King surprised?*

Pages 10 and 11 – *I wonder where the Queen is ...*

Page 12 – *How is the King feeling now? Do you think he likes surprise birthdays? Would you?*

Reflect on the lesson’s purpose. *Were you able to predict what would happen? What helped you do that?* Note whether the children make connections to their knowledge of the King from *The Hole in the King’s Sock*. *Did your ideas change as you read? How?*

## After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text in pairs, observing their ability to read expressively and how they deal with the challenging vocabulary.

Focus on the narrative structure and identify the problem, complication, and resolution. Talk about how the repetitive pattern creates dramatic tension – and how it helps the children predict what might happen next. Compare the structure with that of *The Hole in the King’s Sock*.

Discuss the characters of the King and Queen. *Why doesn’t the King just tell everyone it’s his birthday?* Contrast the King’s puzzlement with the Queen’s inventiveness. *Think about The Hole in the King’s Sock. Is this how you would expect the characters to behave?*

Explore the dramatic nature of the dialogue. Talk about the use of the alternatives to “said” and how they help to bring the talking alive. You could also talk about the King’s use of questions, the use of italics for emphasis on page 3, the imperative on

page 7, and the contractions that make the speech sound more natural.

Focus on the illustrations. *How does the illustrator help to make the story funny?* You could talk about the expressions on the characters' faces, the fanciful, castle-themed birthday cake, the zany ending, and the mouse sub-plot on pages 2, 3, and 12.

Write the first sentence on page 4 (or page 5 or 6) on the whiteboard and reread it together. Talk about how there are many ways of joining ideas in a sentence. Erase the word "where" and have the children read this as two shorter sentences. Draw out the idea that the writing flows better when the ideas are connected in one longer sentence. As a group, use the complex sentences from the book as a model, for example, "We drove to the mall, where the shops were having a sale." Remind the children of the importance of noticing the punctuation when they're reading – the commas indicate that there is more to come and that the sentence is not finished.

Briefly review the use of the possessive apostrophe in "King's". Explain that it is there because the birthday belongs to the King. Create new examples using the children's names.

Make a list of the compound words in the text and split them. Use "something" and "everywhere" to generate other compound words, for example, "everything", "everyone", "nothing", "nowhere", "somewhere", "someone".

### Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2006*.

Reread *The Hole in the King's Sock*.

Display a list of the "Royal" vocabulary.

Rewrite the story from the Queen's point of view.

Have a "Royal Banquet" day, with banners, dressing up, and opportunities to use the "Royal" vocabulary.

Use the text for Readers' theatre.

Create a story map of the castle to record the King's search for birthday recognition.

Add thought bubbles for the mouse.