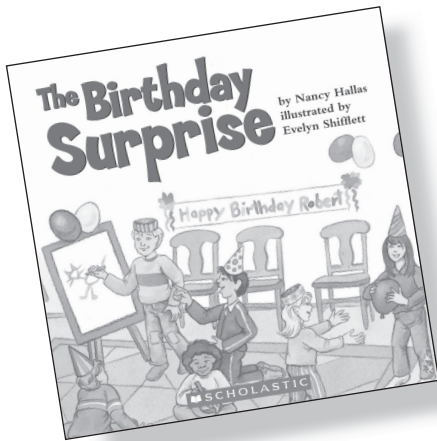


# The Birthday Surprise



Written by Nancy Hallas

Illustrated by Evelyn Shifflett

**Text Type:** Fiction: Narrative — Realistic Story

**Guided Reading Level:** G

**Summary:** Alejandro wants to make a birthday gift for his friend Robert. He and his grandfather make a piñata, which turns out to be a great success.

**Word Count:** 236

**High-frequency Words:** *a, all, and, at, big, can, come, could, for, have, he, help, his, how, I, in, into, is, it, long, make, me, my, now, on, one, other, out, put, said, so, the, then, they, time, to, up, was, when, will, with, yes, you*

## Text Features

### Visual Literacy

- ▶ environmental print

## Text Supports

- ▶ familiar topic
- ▶ illustrations highly supportive of text

## Possible Text Challenges

- ▶ quotation marks
- ▶ exclamation marks
- ▶ question marks
- ▶ contractions: *can't, I'm, it's*
- ▶ some challenging words: *together, finished, piñata, shouted, outside, wow, turns, poured, laughed*

## First Session (pages 2-9)

### Reading Strategies

#### Comprehension

- ▶ inferring
- ▶ predicting

#### Working with Words

- ▶ using picture cues to read unfamiliar words
- ▶ using letter cues across the word for word predictions

### Assessment Opportunities

Note each student's ability to:

- ▶ predict what the present will be
- ▶ infer how Robert feels about the present
- ▶ use picture cues to recognize unfamiliar words
- ▶ use the letters in words to predict words

**Teaching Tip:** When assessing students' learning, make sure you observe them throughout the Guided Reading lesson and not just at the end.



## BEFORE READING

### Making connections: text to self

#### **Activating and Building Prior Knowledge**

Ask students about birthday parties they have attended. Invite them to talk about the games they played, party hats they wore, the special food they enjoyed, the presents they gave, and any gifts or party favours they received. Hand out copies of the book. Ask students to look at the front cover. Say, *This book is called The Birthday Surprise. It was written by Nancy Hallas, and the illustrations were drawn by Evelyn Shifflett.* Ask, *What are the children in the picture doing?* Give students an opportunity to confirm that the picture shows a birthday party, and that it includes many of the items they have enjoyed at similar parties: hats, balloons, and games. Invite students to open the cover fully to show the complete illustration on the front and back covers. Discuss the cake and presents, and whose birthday it might be.

**ESL Note:** Talk about the concept of birthday parties, including presents, cake, games, etc. Ask ESL students to share any special birthday traditions that their family has.

### Predicting

Invite students to read the text on the back cover along with you. Ask, *What surprise do you think Alejandro and his grandfather might make for Robert?*

### Print concepts

#### **Overcoming Text Challenges**

Have students look at page 2. Ask them how they would read the first line on the page. Give students an opportunity to read the sentence, clearly indicating that it is a question. Ask, *How did you know that you should read it like that?* Draw their attention to the question mark. Ask, *What are the actual words that Robert said to his friend? How do you know?* Lead students to see that the words inside quotation marks are always the actual words that a character speaks. (To help them understand what this means, you might tell them that, if there were no quotation marks, the author would simply report what Robert said by writing, "Robert asked if Alejandro could come to his birthday party." Now ask, *How do you think Alejandro feels about being asked to the party? Is there something in his reply that lets you know he's excited and happy? How do you know?* Point out the exclamation mark at the end of the sentence that shows he feels excited about being asked to the party.

### Predicting

Invite students to look at the title page with you. Discuss what might be in the bag. Ask, *Do you think it's a toy, or something to eat, or something else? Do you think you might find out what's in the bag as you read the book? Do you think it might be the surprise that Alejandro and his grandfather make?*

## Inferring

Ask students to turn again to pages 2 and 3. Discuss where the picture takes place and ask what they think the paper in the boys' hands might be. Ask if they think it might have anything to do with the birthday party. If students suggest that it is a birthday invitation, ask, *How do you think the boys might be feeling about the coming party?* Students have already recognized that the exclamation mark denotes excitement; encourage them to note the facial expressions of the two boys that indicate their happiness.

Go on to pages 4 and 5. Ask, *How do you think this boy might be feeling now? How do you know?* Ask students to join you in reading page 4. Discuss how Alejandro is feeling, and why. *Why can't his father help him? How do you think his father feels? What does he say?* (The father says he's sorry that he can't help.)

## Setting a Purpose

## Inferring

Tell students they are going to read to the end of page 9. Ask them to put a sticky note on page 9 to remind them to stop reading there. Tell them that they are going to find out if Alejandro's feelings change again and, if so, how. Say, *Alejandro's feelings go from happy to sad. I want you to read to find out if he stays sad or if something happens to make him feel happy again.*

**Teaching Tip:** Write the comprehension focus question on chart paper or on the board so that students can refer back to it as they independently read the text. Students need to know the purpose for their reading so that they are “tuned in” as they read.



## DURING READING

Ask each student to read independently up to the end of page 9, thinking about the purpose. Ask them to read at their own pace. Observe and listen to students as they read to the end of page 9. Assist as needed with word-solving strategies, vocabulary, punctuation cues, and comprehension strategies.

Possible prompts might include: *Does that make sense? Can you use the picture to help you? Does looking at all the letters help you figure out that word? Does it look right? Did you check all the letters? Now, that makes sense!*

Ask students to use the sticky note on page 9 to draw or write their ideas about what Grandfather and Alejandro have made for a surprise present.

If students finish before the others have completed the reading, ask them to go back and reread pages 2–9, then share with a partner what they think the birthday surprise is.



## AFTER READING

## Inferring

Discuss what happened in the story and how Alejandro's feelings changed. Ask, *Why couldn't his mother help him? How do you think he felt then? How did you know? Did you get a clue on page 7 that Grandfather might help? He was sitting in the next room, and he heard Alejandro ask his mother for help. How did Alejandro's mood change when his grandfather offered help? How could you tell? Do you think Alejandro enjoyed working with his grandfather on the present? How do you know?*

## Predicting

Ask, *Do we know yet what is in the paper bag? We do know it's the surprise that Alejandro and his grandfather made, don't we? What do you think? Do you still think it might be a present that you can eat or another kind of present?* Ask students to share their predictions for what Grandfather and Alejandro have made for Robert. As they predict, ask them why they think as they do. For example, they may have noticed the newspaper and glue on page 9, which may have led them to make a particular prediction. Explain to students that they will continue reading in the next Guided Reading lesson to find out what Alejandro has made for Robert.

## Word solving and building

Revisit the words *Grandfather*, *finished*, and *together*, and ask students to explain any strategies they used to work out these and any other challenging words. Discuss any other challenges you observed as students read.

Point out any positive strategies you observed students use during reading, for example, *I noticed that Bobby used the little word to to help him work out the word together.*

# Second Session (pages 10–16)

## Reading Strategies

### Comprehension

- ▶ predicting
- ▶ inferring

### Working with Words

- ▶ using word parts to read unfamiliar words
- ▶ using picture cues to solve unfamiliar words
- ▶ recognizing contractions

## Assessment Opportunities

Note each student's ability to:

- ▶ predict what the present will be
- ▶ infer how Robert feels about the present
- ▶ use words parts to read unfamiliar words
- ▶ use picture cues to read unfamiliar words
- ▶ recognize contractions



## BEFORE READING

### Predicting/inferring

#### **Activating and Building Prior Knowledge**

Ask, *What surprise has Alejandro been planning?* Lead a discussion to guide students in recalling what Alejandro was doing in the first half of the book. Students should recall that Alejandro and Grandfather were making a present for his friend Robert. Ask each student to share the prediction that he or she wrote or drew on the sticky note on page 9. Ask how Alejandro was feeling at the end of the section they read in the last lesson. Ask, *How might his feelings change again? How do you think he'll feel if Robert doesn't like his present? Do you think Robert will like the present? Why do you think so?*

#### **Overcoming Text Challenges**

Most of the more challenging words and vocabulary occurs in the second session. Students will have had an opportunity to become comfortable with the characters and with some of the print concepts, such as quotation marks, exclamation marks, and question marks. They will likely be eager to find out about the birthday surprise, so they will have some motivation for tackling any challenges the words and vocabulary present.

### Word solving and building

Write the word *piñata* on the board and ask if anyone can tell you what it says. If not, explain that it is a papier maché object, usually filled with small presents or candy. It is hung high above the party guests, and they take turns hitting it, trying to break it open so that the contents fall to the ground where the guests can pick them up. Demonstrate the pronunciation of the “n” and point out the mark that gives it the “ny” sound.

Remind students of strategies they have used that help them to figure out unfamiliar words: looking for a known word inside a bigger word; breaking a compound word into its two parts.

Remind students, as well, of the fact that an apostrophe usually signals that at least one letter has been dropped. Have them look at page 4 and tell you what letters have been dropped from *I’m* and *can’t*. Suggest that students watch for other contractions as they read the rest of the book.

### **Setting a Purpose**

#### **Predicting**

Say, *Now I want you to read to the end of the book to find out what Alejandro’s birthday surprise is.*



## **DURING READING**

Observe and listen to students as they read to the end of the book. Assist as needed with word-solving strategies, vocabulary, punctuation cues, and comprehension strategies. Possible prompts might include: *Does that make sense? Can you use the picture to help you? Does looking at all the letters help you figure out that word? Does it look right? Did you check all the letters? Now that makes sense!*

Note students’ successful use of reading strategies and any difficulties they encounter.

If students finish before the others have completed the reading, ask them to go back and reread, then share with a partner what the birthday surprise was.



## **AFTER READING**

#### **Predicting**

Discuss what happened in the story. Ensure that all students understand what a piñata is and, if necessary, provide an example. Invite sharing of any personal experience students may have had with piñatas at a party. Ask, *Were we right about the birthday surprise? What clues did we have? Remember those in the picture on page 9?* You may need to praise students for the types of guesses they made, even if they were wrong. The most important thing is that they attended to the pictures and used whatever clues the pictures provided.

#### **Inferring**

Ask, *Why do you think Alejandro wanted Robert to open his present last?* Discuss the idea that a piñata is often the last activity of a birthday party, since the prizes inside the piñata can be treats for the guests to take home. As well, you could draw from students the idea that Alejandro was being considerate of the other guests. When the piñata was unwrapped, everyone would probably want to play with it right away, and the other gifts might be forgotten.

Ask *Did Robert like his present? How do you know?* Students might have noticed that Robert looks pleased when he opens the gift bag (page 12), that he “shouted” “Wow!” (note the exclamation mark), or that Robert asks Alejandro to show him how to make a piñata (page 16). Ask, *Did the other guests think the piñata was a great gift? Why do you think so?*

### Visual literacy

Point out the sign on the wall on page 11 (and on the cover) and ask a student to tell you what it says. Ask if any students have had such a sign at their own birthday party or at one that they attended. Ask, *Where else might you see words wishing the birthday person “Happy Birthday?”*

### Word solving and building

Although the words *show* and *how* (page 15) have similar spelling patterns, they are pronounced differently. Prepare chart paper with the words “show” and “how” written at the top of two columns. Have students generate other words that have the same end sounds as these words (e.g., below, now, brow, tow, low, throw, cow). Work together to decide in which list each word should be written. Ask, *Does it look the same? Does it sound the same?* Students then choose to have you write each word either under *show* (as in the case of *low* and *throw*), or under *how* (as in the case of *now* and *brow*). Demonstrate how students should say each word slowly and decide where they should print the word on their own paper. Remind students that they should use the spelling pattern “ow” to spell all the new words.

If students generate words such as *go* that have another spelling pattern, write the word in separate place and ask, *Does it sound the same? Does it look the same?* Explain that some words may have the same sound, but have a different spelling pattern, and that they will not go in either of the lists on the chart.

To conclude the lesson, invite students to read the lists of words chorally with you.

### Word solving and building

Revisit the words *shouted*, *turns*, *everyone*, *laughed*, *cheered*, and *sure*. Ask students to explain the strategies they used to work out these and any other challenging words.

Point out positive reading strategies you saw students use during the lesson, e.g., *I noticed how Ruth checked the picture on page 10 to work out the word pizza on page 11.*

## Rereadings

Provide opportunities for each student to reread the book independently or with a partner.

## Focused Follow-up

The following activities are optional. Choose those that best meet your students’ needs.

### ***A Very Bad/Very Good Present***

Have students draw a picture of a birthday gift they imagine receiving. Have them draw a picture of themselves, showing how they feel about the present. The present can be either one that they really love or the very worst birthday present they can imagine. Have them share their drawings with a partner and discuss how they would feel about the present.

### Inferring

### ***Piñata Prizes***

Have students write a list of possible prizes to include in a piñata. Encourage them to think about what they need to consider in order to come up with good ideas. For example, *What might happen if the prizes are too heavy? What might happen if the prizes are too big? What might happen if the prizes are breakable? What might happen if there aren't enough prizes?*

### **Inferring**

### ***How I Know Robert Liked the Piñata***

Give students a copy of the BLM and have them complete the sentence starter "I know that Robert liked the piñata because \_\_\_\_\_." They may wish to draw a picture of a piñata.

### **Making connections: text to self**

### ***Making Piñatas***

Provide a sample piñata for students to explore. If possible, find a set of instructions for making a piñata and have the class make one. Finally, have students write their own instructions (in point form, along with illustrations) for building a piñata.

### **Word solving and building**

### ***Word Endings***

Write "Everyone laughed and cheered" on the board and ask students what is the same about the words *laughed* and *cheered*. When they have identified the "ed" ending, have them look through the book and write down all of the words they can find with the "ed" ending.

# How I Know Robert Liked the Piñata

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I know that Robert liked the piñata because

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