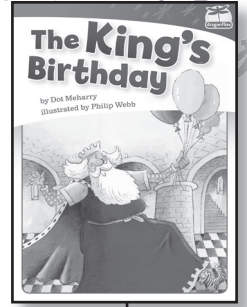


# The King's Birthday

by Dot Meharry

illustrated by Philip Webb



## Overview

The King is upset because no one has remembered his birthday. Lunch, however, reveals a lovely surprise. This is a sequel (with lots of delightful links) to the Dragonflies fluent title *The Hole in the King's Sock*.

## Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of using prior knowledge, making and confirming predictions, and noting details in illustrations. 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 and the medieval illustrations
- 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, today, upset, upstairs*
- the possessive apostrophe in the title

## Setting the scene

Show the students the front cover along with the *The Hole in the King's Sock*. Encourage them to compare the covers, savouring the humorous details, for example, the King's stripy socks, and the palace setting. *What other characters are we likely to meet?* You could reintroduce some of the “royal” vocabulary if you think the students are likely to have difficulty with it.

Read the title and discuss 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 students to share their predictions. While you're reading, I want you to think about your predictions. See if your ideas change as you read.

**Back cover** – Read aloud the preview question. Discuss the students' predictions.

## The first reading

Read the names of the author and illustrator. Ask the students 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. If necessary, model the reading of the first sentence on each page so that the students realise the sentences run on to another line.

**Page 6** – Prompt the students to break “courtyard” into “court” and “yard”. Check that they understand the meanings of “courtyard” and “banner”. Some students may be beginning to predict the ending! *Why is he asking for the Queen? What might he say to her?*

**Page 7** – Have the students read the King’s dialogue aloud, using a suitably imperious tone. Recap the story so far. *What has gone wrong? 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. *Did you predict what would happen? What helped you? Note whether the students made connections with *The Hole in the King’s Sock*. Did your ideas change as you read? How?*

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

- Listen to the students 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 repetition creates dramatic tension – and how it helps the students 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 alternatives to “said” and how they help to bring the dialogue 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 characters’ expressions, 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 pages 5 or 6) on the board and reread it together. Talk about the ways of joining ideas in a sentence. Erase “where” and have the students 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 there was a sale on at the shops.” Remind the students of the importance of noticing the punctuation when they’re reading – the commas indicate that there is more to come.
- 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 students’ names.

### **Suggestions for further activities**

- 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.
- BLM word activity: practise punctuating sentences  
The students can punctuate the sentences from the book.
- BLM comprehension activity: research content words  
The students can research the words that are listed and write a description of each.  
They can then illustrate each description.