A TEACHER’S GUIDE TO

A GLUTEN-FREE BIRTHDAY FOR ME!

Created by Marcie Colleen
based on the picture book written by Sue Fliess
and illustrated by Jennifer E. Morris

Published by Albert Whitman & Company
Meet the Author – Sue Fliess

Sue is the author of over twenty children's books (published or forthcoming) including *Tons of Trucks, Shoes for Me!* and *Robots, Robots Everywhere!* Her background is in copywriting, PR, and marketing, and her articles have appeared in *O* the Oprah Magazine, Huffington Post, Writer’s Digest, Education.com, and more. Her *Oprah* article was included in *O's Little Books of Happiness*. Fliess has also adapted a collection of *Palace Pets 5 Minute Stories* for The Walt Disney Company. Her picture books have received honors from the Society of Children's Books Writers and Illustrators, have been used in school curriculums, museum educational programs, and have even been translated into French. She's a member of SCBWI, Children's Book Guild of DC, and she does school visits, book signings, and speaking engagements. Sue lives with her family and a Lab named Charlie in No. Virginia. She loves traveling, reading, writing, and all kinds of cake—especially the birthday kind. To see all of Sue’s books, please visit [www.suefliess.com](http://www.suefliess.com).

Meet the Illustrator – Jennifer E. Morris

Jennifer is an award-winning children’s book illustrator. Her work has appeared in numerous children’s books and publications, including *May I Please Have a Cookie?* and *Please Write Back!* both of which she wrote. Growing up in Pennsylvania, Jennifer always wanted a backyard birthday party, but since her birthday is in January, it would have been hard to find the piñata candy in the snow! Visit her at [www.jemorris.com](http://www.jemorris.com).

Meet the Curriculum Writer – Marcie Colleen

This guide was created by Marcie Colleen, a former teacher with a BA in English Education from Oswego State and a MA in Educational Theater from NYU. In addition to creating curriculum guides for children’s books, Marcie can often be found writing picture books of her own at home in Brooklyn, NYC. Visit Marcie at [www.thisismarciecolleen.com](http://www.thisismarciecolleen.com).
How to Use This Guide

This classroom guide for *A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me!* is designed for students in kindergarten through second grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me!* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Art and drama are used as a teaching tool throughout the guide.

All activities were created in conjunction with relevant content standards in ELA, math, science, social studies, art, and drama.

For more information, please visit [www.aglutenfreebirthday.com](http://www.aglutenfreebirthday.com).

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English Language Arts (ELA)

Reading Comprehension

Before reading *A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me!*, help students identify the basic parts of a picture book: jacket, front cover, back cover, title page, spine, end papers, and jacket flap.

The Front Cover ~

- Describe what you see. Who do you think the main character is? What is the character doing?
- Stand up and pretend to be the main character in the illustration. Pay close attention to the facial expression and body shape of the character. How do you think this character feels? How does this pose make you feel?
- Do you see any other characters on the front cover? Who do you think they are?
- Can you predict what the story might be about based on the title and the cover illustration?

The Back Cover ~

- Describe what you see.
- How is this illustration different from the front cover?
- How is this illustration similar to the front cover?
- Is there anyone on the front cover who is not shown on the back cover? Who?
- Is there anyone on the back cover who is not shown on the front cover? Who?
- What do you think happened between the front cover illustration and the back cover illustrations?
• The end papers are designed to look like a scrapbook of a birthday. What is a scrapbook? Have you ever created a scrapbook?
• Look closely at the photographs taken at the party. Which moments were captured? What do these moments tell you about the birthday party?

Now read or listen to the book. Help students summarize in their own words what the book was about.

• Looking at the first illustrated spread, what are some of the ways that the family prepared for the party?
• The mom and the girl bake the birthday cake themselves. How did they know how to bake the cake? Have you ever followed a recipe?
• Describe some of the fun activities at the birthday party. What is your favorite thing to do at a birthday party?
• Why does one friend stay out on the lawn during cake time?
  o How do you think he feels?
  o Have you ever felt left out?
  o Why does the little boy not eat gluten?
• Being a good party host/hostess means making sure all of your guests are included and having a good time. How is the Birthday Girl a good party hostess?

Let’s talk about the people who made *A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me!*:

• Who is the author?
• Who is the illustrator?
• What kind of work did each person do to make the book?

Now, let’s look closely at the illustrations.

• Check out some of the following details that Jennifer E. Morris includes. Can you find:
  o The “Gluten Free Grub” cookbook
  o A nosey squirrel
  o Six dandelions
  o A pink lollipop
  o A bear bib
  o A birthday hat with stars on it
  o A white horse
  o Three pairs of brown sandals
  o A take-home piece of cake

• In a picture book, the text often says one thing, while the illustrations provide further detail. Refer to the illustrations to answer the following questions.
  o What is the dog’s name?
  o How old is the Birthday Girl?
  o What is in the party favors bags?

Simon’s Recipe Says ~ How to Read Recipes

"We made it. Icing too. Wasn’t all that hard to do."

Recipes are really instructions for cooking or baking. If students can follow directions, they can bake.

In a game of Simon Says, students do everything that Simon tells them to do. In baking, the recipe is Simon. Here is a twist on the classic Simon Says game called Simon’s Recipe Says.

• Take a close look at the recipe for Chocolate-Cookie-Crumble Cake at the back of A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me!.
• Read aloud the list of ingredients, paying close attention to the measurement associated with each ingredient.
• Explain and, if possible, demonstrate the use of measuring cups and spoons.
• Read aloud each step in the directions, explaining each step in detail.
• For each step in the recipe, create a gesture or pantomime.
• Once there is a pantomimed gesture for each step, play Simon’s Recipe Says.
Simon’s Recipe Says stir together the flour, sugars, cocoa powder, baking powder, salt, and cinnamon. (Students pantomime the stirring)

Simon’s Recipe Says bake for 20-25 minutes. (Students pantomime baking)

Add a sliced banana. (“I didn’t say Simon’s Recipe Says)

• Play continues as traditional Simon Says would, until one kid is left.
• The lesson: when following a recipe, ONLY do what the recipe says.

Students can bring in their favorite recipes from home and lead the class in their own round of Simon’s Recipe Says.

Writing Activities

How to Write a Recipe

As a class, create a list of instructions on how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

1) Gather the ingredients: a jar of peanut butter, a jar of jelly, and two slices of bread.
2) Get your tools: spoon, knife, plate, etc.
3) Lay the pieces of bread side by side on the table.
4) Open the jar of peanut butter.
5) Place the knife in the jar and scoop out some peanut butter.
6) Spread the peanut butter on one of the slices of bread.
7) Open the jar of jelly.
8) Using the spoon, scoop out some jelly and spread the jelly on the other piece of bread.
9) Place the pieces of bread together, joining the jelly and the peanut butter sides.
10) Using the knife, cut the bread in half.
11) Place on plate.
12) Eat.
13) Clean up and put the jars of peanut butter and jelly away.

Students can create their own recipe cards for their favorite treats, complete with illustrations.

Examples:

• Hot fudge sundae
• Grilled cheese sandwich
• Veggies and hummus
• Ham and cheese sandwich
• Fruit salad
• Scrambled eggs and toast

Create a class cookbook to include all of the recipes.

_For some extra fun_, bring in all of the tools necessary to complete a recipe and have the students walk you through step by step. If they miss a step, hilarity might ensue!

**Someone Else’s Shoes ~ Point of View**

Sometimes we forget that other people have feelings, too.

When was a time that you felt left out of a situation? How did you handle it? Did a grown up help? Did you solve the problem on your own?

Either as a class or individually, explore _A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me!_ from the point of view of the gluten-intolerant guest. What is he feeling as the other children run inside for Cake Time?

Advanced classes will be able to actually create _A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me!_ from the little boy’s point of view. However, if the class is less-advanced, simply have them create captions and thought-bubbles for him.

**The Best Birthday Ever!**

Birthday parties are so much fun!

Lead students in a discussion of birthday parties.

• Have you ever had a birthday party?
• Who did you invite?
• What did you do?
• What did you eat?

Encourage students to bring in photographs of their birthday celebrations to share.

Students can write about what made their party so much fun. They should be sure to describe the experience in as much detail as possible.

OR

Create a fictional story about the ultimate birthday party! What crazy fun would make a birthday party the most memorable ever?

Each story should include a beginning, a middle and an ending.
Optional: Create the story together as a class.

Dear Friend, Thank You

It is always nice to formally thank your friends for an invitation to a party by writing a thank you note.

Using the party from A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me! as inspiration, write a thank you letter to the birthday girl. The letter should include

- a brief re-cap of the party and what you liked about it
- a thank you for the invitation
- a closing

For a further activity, have your students pretend to be the birthday girl and write thank you letters to the attendees for the gifts.

Speaking and Listening Activities

Picture books are written to be read aloud. Here are some other ways to bring A Gluten-Free Birthday to Me! to life in your classroom and also have fun with speaking and listening skills!

Choral Reading

- Using the text of A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me!, read the book aloud together.

- Turn A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me! into a script. Read the script out loud together. Emphasize memorization of the students' parts as well as good vocal expression.

Mime

- While the teacher reads the book aloud, students can act out the events in the book. Some of the students can be the birthday girl and some the students can be the friends at the party. Emphasize body motion and facial expressions, as well as listening skills. Switch roles and read the book again.

Drama

- Brainstorm a list of things associated with birthday parties. Without making noise, students act out something from the list in front of the class. Ask the rest of the class to guess what they are acting out.

OR
Without making noise, students act out their favorite scene from *A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me*. Ask the rest of the class to guess which scene they are acting out.

- Create a TV commercial to encourage people to read *A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me*.

**Language Activities**

**It’s Rhyme Time**

*A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me* is written in rhyme. Here are some activities to help introduce rhyming to your class.

**Engine and Caboose**

Introduce the concept of producing rhyming words with train engines and caboose pictures or objects. Explain that when you make rhyming words, the caboose will always stay the same but the engines will be different. Pick a sound for the caboose (e.g., “at”) and place many different engines in front to make rhyming words (e.g., h-, m-, c-).

**“I Spy”**

Start the activity by sitting with the children in a large circle. Provide the children with a sentence containing two rhyming words, e.g. “I spy a chair and a bear.” The first object name is something in the room and the second object name doesn’t have to be visible in the room. Have the child on your right create her own “I Spy” sentence. You may want to place objects around the room that are easy to rhyme so you can point them out to the children if they need suggestions.

**Fill in the Blank**

Re-read *A Gluten-Free Birthday to Me* aloud. When you get to the end of a rhyming sentence, pause and have the children raise their hands and give the correct rhyming word to complete the sentence.

For example:

“*It’s my birthday...*

*I can’t wait!*

*Time for us to _______!*”
Offer opportunities for the children to make up silly sentences using other words that rhyme but don't make sense. Continue with the rest of the book until all the children have had opportunities to rhyme.

This can be done with other rhyming books, as well.

**Rhyming Sounds Cube**

For this activity, you’ll need several cubes made from wood blocks or foam. Write a different consonant on each side of the cubes. On a piece of paper (or blackboard) write a two-letter combination beginning with a vowel and ending with a consonant, such as "it," "un" or "ed" six times. Have the student roll a cube to reveal a consonant. Have the student write the consonant from the cube in front of one of the two-letter combinations. For example, if the student rolls a "B," she can place it in front of "ed" to create "bed." Repeat the procedure until the student creates six rhyming words.

**Math**

**Word Problems**

For younger students, the use of pictures or props might be needed to figure out word problems. Note to teachers: Use the word problems below as inspiration to write your own, based on A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me! or any other book of study.

1) The Birthday Girl and her dad have 5 balloons to blow up. They blow up 1 balloon. How many balloons are left to blow up?  
   \((5 - 1) = ?\)

2) One blindfolded boy takes 4 swings at the piñata. He misses. He then takes 3 more swings at the piñata. How many swings does the boy take at the piñata?  
   \((4 + 3) = ?\)

3) There are 6 friends at the birthday party. 5 friends sit at the table for Cake Time. How many friends are missing? \((6 - 5) = ?\)

4) Mom places 2 lollipops and 1 piece of gum in each favor bag. How many items are in each favor bag? \((2 + 1) = ?\)

5) There are 9 gifts in a pile for the Birthday Girl. She opens 7 gifts. How many gifts does she have left to open? \((9 - 7) = ?\)
**Lemonade: a recipe riddle**

Cooking is math. See if your students can solve this tricky recipe problem as they make lemonade fit for a party!

*This activity requires that students know the difference between the following amounts: 1, \( \frac{1}{2} \), and \( \frac{1}{4} \). A discussion of these amounts should precede the activity.*

You will need: zip lock bags, lemons sliced into quarters with seeds removed, water, sugar and straws, measuring cup with graduated measurements on it, knife, and a measuring teaspoon.

The students will be given the following recipe:

- In the zip lock bag, place ____ lemon with the seeds removed, _____ cup of water, and ____ teaspoon of sugar. (ask students to predict which blanks to place the following numbers: 1, \( \frac{1}{4} \), and \( \frac{1}{2} \)).

- Zip the bag securely and gently mix the contents for about 30 seconds, making sure to really squeeze the lemon.

- Open a small section of the top of the bag and insert the straw. Taste test the lemonade.

- How is it? Need more lemon? More water? Not enough sugar? Try the recipe again, this time switching the numbers until the desired taste is achieved.

**The Anti-Allergy Scavenger Hunt** *(see cutouts on page 20)*

This scavenger hunt will help students sharpen observational and counting skills.

- Create several copies of the paper cut-outs of different shapes that represent different common food allergies or food intolerances.
  - Peanut
  - Bread (gluten)
  - Shrimp/Shellfish
  - Glass of milk (dairy)

- Number each different shape set from 1-5.

- Hide these cut-outs around the room.
• Assign students a certain food shape.

• Ask students to find their set of food shapes numbered 1-5. If a student sees a food shape they are NOT collecting, he/she must leave it for another student to find.

• The first student to find a food shape 1-5 sequence, wins.

• Additional activity: This same game can be played with a set pattern of colors or pictures to teach sequencing.

**Graphing Birthdays**

Conduct a survey of birthdays in the classroom or across a grade level or the entire school.

Graph the birthdays by month.

• Which month has the most?
• Which month(s) have the fewest?
• Are there any months that don’t have any birthdays?
• Are there more boys or more girls or more teachers born each month?

![Birthdays Graph](image)

Display the graph and its gathered data in a bulletin board display.

For additional graphing fun, create a graph of favorite desserts: cake, ice cream, pie, cookies, etc.
Science

The Science of Baking (http://www.education.com/activity/article/Bake_Cake_fifth/)

Although this is a more advanced lesson, it can be fun for kids and can be adapted according to their level and the resources available.

Baking is a science.

When baking a cake, chemical reactions occur.

- Heat helps baking powder produce tiny bubbles of gas, which makes the cake light and fluffy.
- Heat causes protein from the egg to change and make the cake firm.
- Oil keeps the heat from drying out the cake.

Here is a fun experiment to see what happens when you eliminate one ingredient when baking a cake.

What You Need:

- small bowls
- tin foil mini loaf pans (Tip: number each pan with a pencil on the bottom to keep track)
- cooking oil
- measuring spoons
- cup or mug
- index card
- pencil
- science journal (optional)

Ingredients for one cake:

You'll need to measure and mix this set of ingredients four times to complete all four experiments—with the exceptions that are given below.

- 6 tablespoons all-purpose gluten-free flour
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
• ¼ teaspoon baking powder
• 2 tablespoons milk
• 2 tablespoons cooking oil
• 1/4 teaspoon vanilla
• butter knife
• 1/3 of an egg (Break egg into a cup; beat until mixed, then use approx. 1/3 of it. Save the rest for 2 of the other cakes.)

What You Do:

1. Coat the inside of each pan with the cooking oil, or cooking spray so the cake doesn't stick.
2. Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees.
3. Mix all of the dry ingredients together.
4. Now, add the wet ingredients (as stated in the ingredient list, only use 1/3 of the egg; save the rest for use with the other cakes, below).
5. Stir the wet and dry ingredients until smooth and all the same color.
6. Pour batter into the pan.
7. Bake in oven for 15-20 minutes.

After 15 minutes, remove the cake from the oven, set aside, and let cool for tasting later (yum).

Label the first cake #1 on an index card.

Make sure to label each cake with its number to separate differences when all they are all baked.

Next, continue on to make three more cakes, but do the following:

• Leave the oil out of one. Label the cake "#2 NO OIL"
• Leave the egg out of another. Label the cake "#3 NO EGG"
• Leave the baking powder out of the third. Label the cake "#4 NO BAKING POWDER"

8. After baking, cut each cake in half and look inside.

• Do the cakes look different from each other?
• Do they taste different from each other?
• What did the chemical change and use of heat do to cakes #1-4?

9. Discuss all of the reactions that occurred with cakes #1-4.
10. Write about, or draw pictures of what was observed in a science journal.

**Allergy/Tolerance research project**

Your immune system acts like a superhero, protecting you from diseases by fighting germs like bacteria and viruses. Sometimes your immune system overreacts and battles ordinary things like grass, pollen, or certain foods. One reason for this is you have an allergy. Another reason is that your body has an intolerance.

Many people who can’t eat gluten do not have an allergy, but have an intolerance such as Celiac disease.

Assign groups of 2-3 an allergy/intolerances to research.

Some common allergies/intolerances include:

- dust mites
- pets (cats, dogs, etc.)
- grass
- tree pollen
- mold and mildew
- foods:
  - milk
  - wheat (gluten)
  - soy
  - eggs
  - tree nuts
  - seafood
  - legumes (peas, beans, and peanuts)

Take notes and gather as much information as possible on the following topics:

- The cause of the allergy/intolerance
- Where this allergy/intolerance is often found and how those who are allergic/intolerant avoid it
- Symptoms
- How you find out if you have this allergy/intolerance
- Treatment

Possible sources for information:

- Nonfiction books
- Encyclopedias
- The Internet
Once the information is gathered, work to create either an illustrated poster or booklet of the findings.

**What is Gluten?**

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye. It’s what makes dough stretchy, helps it to rise and keep shape, and often gives foods their chewy texture.

Gluten is most easily identified as products containing “flour” or wheat such as breads, cakes, muffins, cookies, crackers, and other baked goods.

Here are some activities to help students identify foods that contain gluten.

- Using flash cards with pictures of foods, identify the pictures as either gluten or non-gluten foods.
- Become familiar with the “gluten-free” symbol on packaged foods.
- Practice reading the labels of products and searching for words such as "yeast" or "flour" as indicators that the product is unsafe.
- Challenge students to create a breakfast, lunch, snack, and dinner menu that does not contain any gluten.

**Gluten Scavenger Hunt**

Visit the grocery store or your own kitchen for this scavenger hunt.

Provide each student, or small group of students a list of gluten-containing ingredients that may or may not appear on food labels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bread</th>
<th>Flour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgar</td>
<td>Gluten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereal extract</td>
<td>Kamut ® — khorasan wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couscous</td>
<td>Malt, malt extract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cracker meal</td>
<td>Matzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Einkorn</td>
<td>Noodles, pasta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmer – also know as faro</td>
<td>Seitan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farina</td>
<td>Semolina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students will have twenty minutes to search the shelves and cabinets to find out as many labels containing these words as possible. After twenty minutes, the hunt ends, and it is time to share their findings with the class.

*Extra challenge:* Can you find some non-food items (such as shampoos and lotions) that contain gluten?
Social Studies

Our Birthday and Celebrations

We all have birthdays, yet we might have different ways of celebrating.

Ask students to tell about their birthdays/favorite birthdays/birthday celebrations (especially cultures other than American).

Have students recite the months of the year and create a birthday calendar bulletin board. Then have each student write their name and place it on their birthday on the calendar.

• Additionally, students can learn to write their month, day, and year of birth and write their birthday in the alternate format (_/__/__).

Ask students what other birthdays they know or would like to know.

• Ask at least 4 family members and friends what their birthdays are.
• Search for the birthdays of famous people or see what other people have the same birthdays as the students. [http://www.famousbirthdays.com](http://www.famousbirthdays.com).
• Write each birthday carefully on the birthday calendar bulletin board.

Discuss *A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me!* and encourage students to find ways that the book’s celebration is the same or different from their own families’ celebrations.

Have students describe their birthday celebration in a paragraph and draw a picture to go along with it, if they choose.

**Happy Birthday, Everyone!**

It can be a struggle to try and celebrate everyone’s birthday throughout the year. Especially those pesky summer birthdays. Therefore, do it all at once!

Throw an ‘Everybody’s Birthday’ party for the entire class. Invite family and other classes, as well. Each student can help decorate the classroom, bring in recipes, take photos, face-painting, etc.

Be sure to document with photographs and write down some memories to create a scrapbook afterward.
Birthdays Around the World

Using the following websites, research birthday traditions from around the world.

- [http://www.kidsparties.com/traditions.htm](http://www.kidsparties.com/traditions.htm) - Describes briefly birthday customs in many countries, as well as the special traditions of many families.
- [http://www.birthdaycelebrations.net/traditions.htm](http://www.birthdaycelebrations.net/traditions.htm) - Learn how to sing “Happy Birthday” in different languages, read about the history of birthday cake, cards, candles, balloons, and more, and explore the traditions of many different countries.

Assign each student or groups of 2-3 students a country to research.

Students will then create an oral presentation, complete with visual aids, that includes:

- 3 interesting facts about the country
- A map locating the country
- Facts about birthday traditions
- “Happy Birthday” written in the country’s native language
- BONUS: Photographs, samples of music, etc.

What Makes a Good Friend?

Discuss what makes a good friend. Draw upon examples from their own friendships and create a list describing what makes a good friend.

Example: Good friends...

- Remember important things (birthdays, accomplishments, etc.)
- Are reliable.
- Do kind things for one another and use kind language.
- Help out when a friend is sad or has a problem.
- Like to spend time together.
- Have fun with one another.

Look closely at *A Gluten-Free Birthday for Me!* How does the Birthday Girl act as a good friend to everyone at her party?

As a class, create an action plan on how to be a good friend.
Anti-Allergy Scavenger Hunt Cutouts

- Peanut
- Milk Carton
- Shrimp
- Toast