

Spider®

THEME

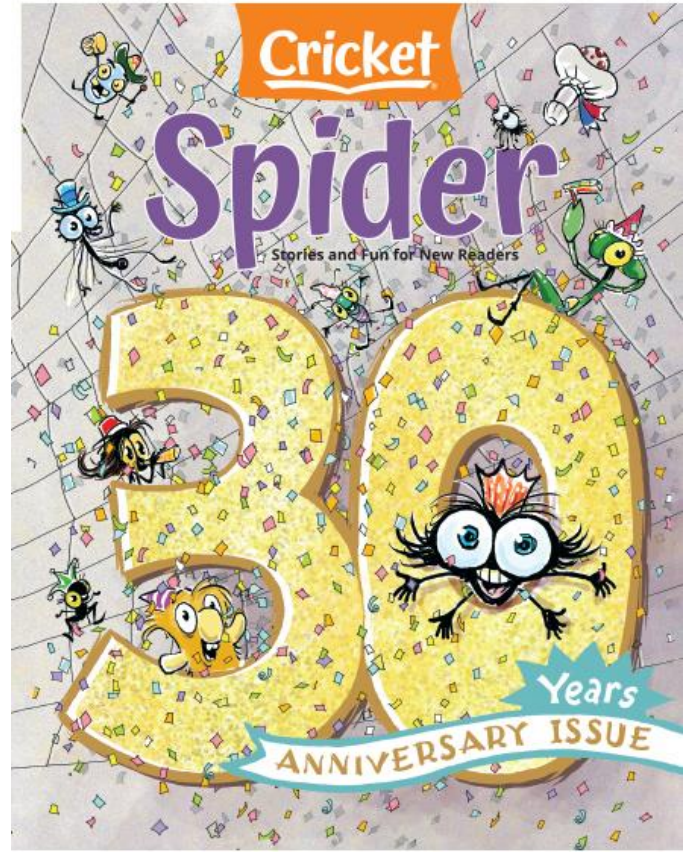
Use the stories and poems in the 30th anniversary issue of *Spider* to talk about birthdays and why they don't always turn out the way characters expect them to. The mini-lessons and activities in this teacher guide will help you reinforce language arts skills and engage your students in a variety of learning activities.

CONVERSATION QUESTION

What makes birthdays special?

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- Students will analyze how individuals develop and interact over the course of a text.
- Students will read and analyze a short story.
- Students will write narratives to develop imagined experiences.
- Students will read and understand a poem.
- Students will make logical inferences.
- Students will recognize the feelings of others.
- Students will analyze cultural characteristics.
- Students will conduct short research projects.



In addition to supplemental materials focused on core English Language Arts skills, this flexible teaching tool offers vocabulary-building activities, questions for discussion, and cross-curricular activities.

SELECTIONS

- **Sideways Infinity**
Contemporary Realistic Fiction
- **My Bad, Bad Birthday**
Poem
- **My Perfect Birthday**
Contemporary Realistic Fiction

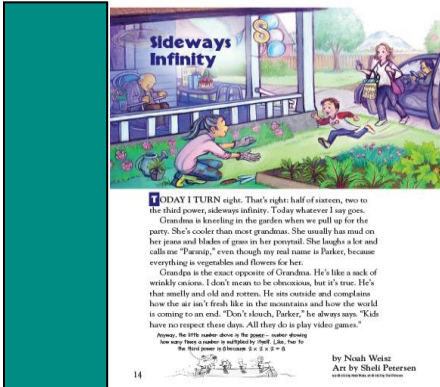
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Sideways Infinity

pp. 14–19, Contemporary

Realistic Fiction

Use this story about a boy visiting his grandparents on his birthday to teach students about character relationships and empathy.



RESOURCES

- Character Relationships

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a short story.
- Students will analyze how individuals develop and interact over the course of a text.
- Students will recognize the feelings of others.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **parsnip** (p. 14) a long, white root vegetable related to the carrot
- **clomp** (p. 15) to walk with loud, heavy steps
- **temper** (p. 16) feelings of anger

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What makes birthdays special?

Ask them to share birthday favorite traditions—foods, games, guests, places, etc. Point out the story title and ask if students know what a “sideways infinity” might be. Explain that “infinity” is the mathematical idea that numbers go on forever so we can never stop counting them. Show the infinity symbol, which represents this idea: ∞ . Ask students to guess what a sideways infinity symbol looks like. Then tell them to read the story to find out why it is called “Sideways Infinity.”

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display the sentences below and have students use the vocabulary words to complete them.

1. I had to control my _____ when my sister ate my cupcake.
2. My family loves to eat roasted _____ soup.
3. I heard my dad _____ down the stairs in his heavy boots.

READ & DISCUSS

After students read the story, use these questions to prompt discussion:

1. How does Parker feel about Grandma? How can you tell?
2. Does Parker feel the same way about his Grandpa?
3. What is the hurricane inside Parker?
4. How do Parker’s parents help him calm down?
5. How do you think Parker feels when Grandpa says, “You and I are going to walk”?
6. What does Parker remember when he sits with Grandpa?

SKILL FOCUS: Character Relationships

INSTRUCT: Write the word *empathy* on the board. Explain that *empathy* means understanding or imagining how another person feels, even if you are not experiencing those feelings. Point out that empathy is important in real relationships and in story relationships too. Discuss examples of empathy in real life. Then read aloud the last paragraph on page 14. Discuss how Grandpa and Parker feel about each other. Are they trying to understand each other? Have students highlight details that show characters’ feelings and jot margin notes to label the feelings. Have students review the rest of the story using this same process of highlighting details, labeling Parker’s and Grandpa’s feelings, and discussing their interactions.

ASSESS: Distribute and review the *Character Relationships* worksheet. Have students work in pairs to discuss ideas before writing their responses.

EXTEND

Social Emotional Learning: Playing a simple emotions/feelings charades game with students is a good way to practice empathy. Write different emotions on slips of paper and put slips in a bag. Have students take turns pulling slips and modeling the emotion using body language and facial expressions. Other students will try to identify the emotions.

Character Relationships

How to Show Empathy

- Listen and pay attention to how the person is feeling.
- Imagine how the person is feeling, even if you have never been in that situation.
- Ask the person to talk about their feelings.
- Don't tell the person how to feel or what to do.

1. Describe times in the story when Grandpa and Parker **do not** show empathy for each other.

Grandpa does not show empathy for Parker.	Parker does not show empathy for Grandpa.

2. Describe times in the story when Grandpa and Parker **do** show empathy for each other.

Grandpa does show empathy for Parker.	Parker does show empathy for Grandpa.

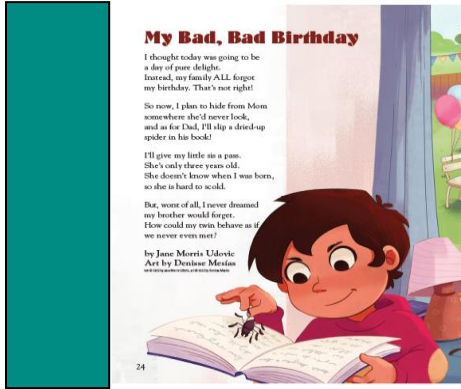
3. On another sheet of paper, write a paragraph that explains how Parker and Grandpa's relationship changes in the story. Support your ideas with story details.

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My Bad, Bad Birthday

pp. 24–25 Poem

Have students write a sequel to this poem about a boy who thinks his family has forgotten his birthday.



RESOURCES

- Write a Sequel

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and understand a poem.
- Students will write narratives to develop imagined experiences.
- Students will analyze cultural characteristics.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **delight** (p. 24) happiness and pleasure
- **slip** (p. 24) to place something somewhere in a secret way
- **behave** (p. 24) to act in a particular way

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What makes birthdays special?

Explain that sometimes a birthday doesn't turn out the way you expect it to—rain cancels an outdoor party, the birthday girl or boy gets sick, a best friend can't come to the party, etc. Invite students to share birthdays that didn't go as planned. Then tell students to notice why the boy in this poem thinks he is having a bad birthday. Is he?

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Share and read aloud the vocabulary words and definitions. Then display the sentences below and have students use the vocabulary words to complete them.

1. _____ politely when you have dinner at a friend's house.
2. Spending all day playing on the beach was a _____.
3. Your secret admirer might _____ a note under your door.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students listen closely as you read the poem aloud. Then have students work in pairs to take turns reading the poem to each other. Use the following questions to discuss the poem.

1. Who is the speaker in the poem?
2. How does the speaker feel in the poem? How do you know?
3. What is the poem about?
4. Why isn't the speaker mad at his sister?
5. Who is the speaker especially mad at? Why?
6. How many stanzas are in the poem?
7. Do all of the stanzas have the same rhyme scheme? What is it?

SKILL FOCUS: Write a Sequel

INSTRUCT: Explain to students that sometimes in a story or poem, readers know something a character doesn't know. Have students study the illustration on pages 24–25 and work with a partner to answer this question: *What do I know that the speaker of this poem doesn't know?* (His whole family is planning his birthday party.) Tell students they are going to write a sequel to the poem, or a continuation of it. Their sequels will be in the form of a story about what might happen if the speaker turned around and looked out the window. Briefly discuss what the speaker would see and how he might feel.

ASSESS: Have students work in pairs to complete the *Write a Sequel* worksheet. Then have them work independently to write their sequels. Invite students to read their sequels to the class.

EXTEND

Social Studies: Have students work in pairs or small groups to research how kids around the world celebrate birthdays. Assign one country or culture to each group (Australia, Brazil, Jamaica, Nepal, Mexico, Denmark, China, India, Egypt, etc.). Have groups create short presentations that use words and pictures to tell about the celebration.

Write a Sequel

What would happen next in “My Bad, Bad Birthday” if the speaker turned around? Use the prompts below to brainstorm ideas with a partner. Record your ideas in the boxes.

What would he see?	What would he feel?
What would he do?	What would he say?

Write Your Sequel Now that you have some details, it’s time to write your sequel. Remember to write it in story form. Also do the following:

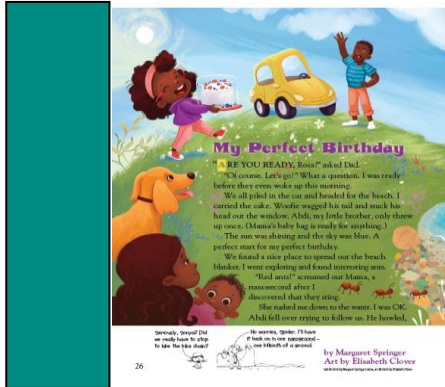
- Give the speaker a name.
- Write your sequel from the speaker’s point of view (using *I*).
- Include dialogue.
- Make an illustration to go with your sequel.

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My Perfect Birthday

pp. 26–31 Contemporary
Realistic Fiction

Use this story about a “perfect” birthday to give students practice in inferring character traits.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and understand a short story.
- Students will make logical inferences.
- Students will conduct short research projects.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **snout** (p. 27) the long nose of some animals such as pigs and some dogs
- **pillowy** (p. 27) soft and puffy like a pillow
- **sprawl** (p. 30) to lie or sit with your arms and legs spread wide apart

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What makes birthdays special?

Ask students to share their ideas about what a perfect birthday celebration would be like. Then ask if students could enjoy a birthday celebration that wasn't quite perfect. Have students preview the illustrations in “My Perfect Birthday.” Then have them predict two ways the birthday in the story might be less than perfect. Remind students to check predictions after reading to see if they were correct.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Have students work in groups of three to write sentences using the vocabulary words, with each group member taking on a different word. Have groups review their sentences and confirm that the words are used correctly. Invite students to share their sentences. Then tell students to look for these words as they read the story.

READ & DISCUSS

After students read the story, use these questions to prompt discussion:

1. How does Rosa feel about her birthday celebration?
2. Compare how Rosa and her mother react to the red ants.
3. What does Rosa do after Woofie licks the cake?
4. How do the clouds and the weather change in the story?
5. What does the tow-truck person teach Rosa?
6. Why doesn't Rosa get to eat a Triple Z Party Burger?
7. How does Rosa feel at the end of the day?

SKILL FOCUS: Inferring Character Traits

INSTRUCT: Explain that the way a story character speaks, acts, and reacts reveals what kind of person the character is. For example, the character might be angry, generous, creative, or adventurous. These adjectives and many others are used to describe a character's traits. Sometimes an author will directly reveal a character's traits. Usually, readers must infer traits based on a character's words and actions. Use a familiar story to help students practice inferring character traits.

ASSESS: Have students work in pairs to reread the story and highlight details showing Rosa's words and actions. Then have pairs identify the traits that are revealed. Partners can jot traits on sticky notes and place the notes next to the details that reveal the trait. As a class, decide what Rosa's main trait is (for example, optimistic).

EXTEND

Science: Have students work in groups to research and answer one of the following science questions based on story details. Give each group a different question. Invite groups to share answers. *How do red ants sting? Is it safe to eat something your dog has licked? What kind of clouds look like pillowy marshmallows? How do camels survive in the desert? How long does an average thunderstorm last? How do jumper cables work? Why do some people get carsick?*