Birthdays Around the World



by Jackie Glassman

Level M/28 Word Count: 988*

The Big Idea

People around the world celebrate their birthdays in different ways.

Skills at a Glance

Comprehension
- Compare and contrast
- Summarize information

Phonics
- Hard and soft c (because, become, candles, ceremony, cultures, except, parcel, voice)
- Spellings for / sh / (Danish, dish, mashed, nation's, shape, she, shouts, social)

Content Vocabulary
- Words associated with birthdays

Grammar/Word Study
- Dictionary skills

Genre
- Informational nonfiction

*Numerals are not included in the word count for this book.

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What is your favorite birthday celebration?



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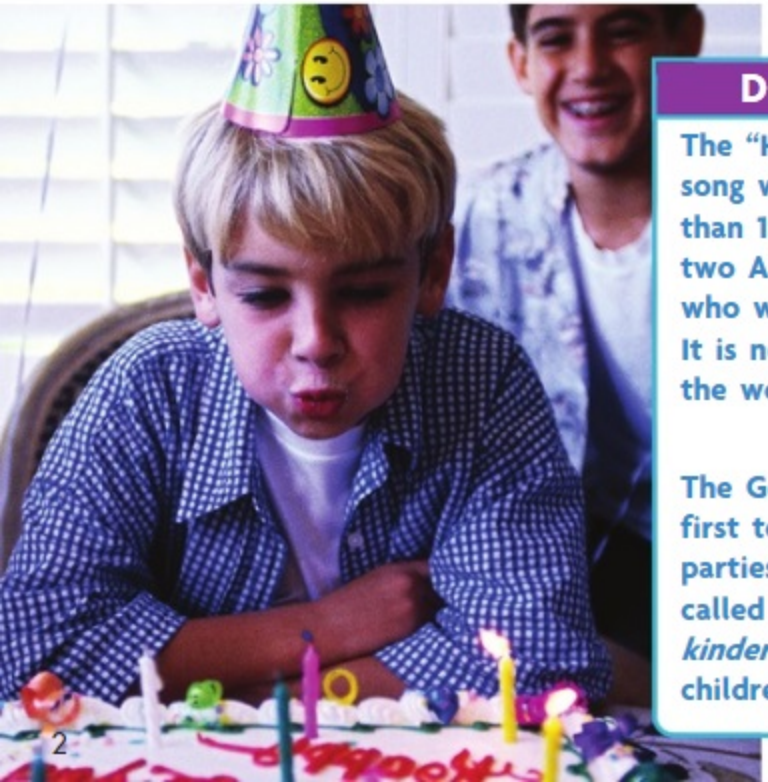


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Where and Why Did Birthday Parties Begin?

No matter who you are or where you live, you have a birthday. Everyone in the world has a birthday. From the games people play to the food they eat, this special day is celebrated in different ways by different cultures.



Did You Know?

The "Happy Birthday" song was written more than 150 years ago by two American sisters who were schoolteachers. It is now sung all over the world.

The Germans were the first to have birthday parties for children. They called the party a *kinderfest*, meaning children's festival.

How do you celebrate your birthday? If you live in the United States, you probably have a party. Everyone sings "Happy Birthday" as you make a wish and blow out candles on a cake. But where and why did birthday parties first begin?

The first parties were held hundreds of years ago in Europe. Back then, people believed that bad spirits were all around you on your birthday. They thought that if friends and family joined you to celebrate, their good wishes and gifts would scare away the spirits.



Did You Know?

Some people say that birthday candles were first lit to frighten away bad spirits. People made wishes while blowing out the candles because they thought the spirits would be distracted by the change in the light.

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How Are Birthdays Celebrated Around the World?



The day on which each of us was born is a day we celebrate. In some European countries, a tree is planted when a baby is born. It is believed that if the tree grows to be strong and healthy, the child will, too.

In Germany, a baby's birth is recognized with a special birthday candle. It has twelve markings on it. Each year on the child's birthday the candle is burned down to the next marking.

Say It!

Alles gute zum geburtstag or ***Herzlichen glückwunsch zum geburtstag*** means "happy birthday" in Germany.



▲ This birthday cake says "Happy Birthday" in German.



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In Kenya, the mother straps her new baby to her back. She takes the infant to the fields where the cattle are kept. When she gets there, her husband and the village elders have a special ceremony to give the child a name.

In the mountains of Ethiopia, just north of Kenya, the news of a baby's birth travels by voice: five shouts for a boy and three for a girl.



◀ Kenyan mothers carry their children on their backs until the children are old enough to walk.

Did You Know?

It is a custom for a mother in West Africa to take her baby for a walk when the baby is eight days old. Friends and family are invited to meet the new baby as mother and child stroll by.



In Korea, families celebrate two important days in a child's life: the 100th day and the first birthday. These days are special because in the past, many babies died before reaching them.

On a first birthday, a Korean baby is said to choose its own future! Objects are put in front of the baby and everyone waits to see which will be picked up. A baby who chooses a book might become a teacher!

Say It!

Sangil chha hamnida means "happy birthday" in Korea.

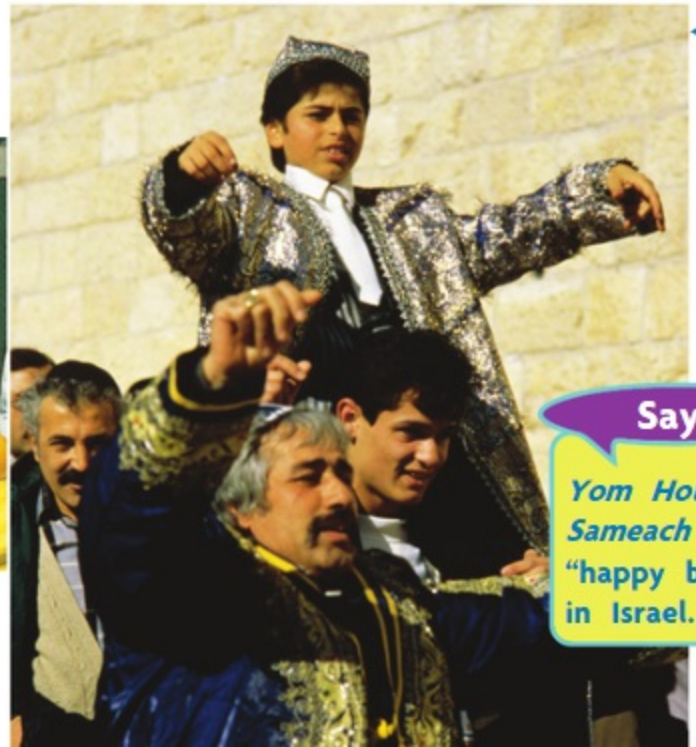


▲ In Korea, families celebrate with rice cakes and other treats. Games are played and gifts are given.



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In Israel, the most important birthday in a child's life is the thirteenth birthday. On that day, the child takes part in a special ceremony. For a boy, it is called the bar mitzvah. For a girl, it is the bat mitzvah. A child prepares for this ceremony for months. On this day, he or she is said to become a grown-up!



◀ Israeli birthday children sit in a chair decorated with streamers and are lifted high into the air. Party guests dance all around them.

Say It!

Yom Holedet Sameach means "happy birthday" in Israel.