

Hip Hip Hooray!



Teachers' notes

Written by Tania McCartney
Illustrated by Jess Racklyeft
Published by Windy Hollow Books

About the Author

If she could, Tania McCartney would live inside a book, and as an author, illustrator and editor—she kind of already does. Tania has 30 years' experience in magazines and publishing, and has 40 books in print or production. In 2013, she reconnected with illustration and has gone on to produce several illustrated maps and books, including *Mamie*, a picture book on the life of May Gibbs (HarperCollins, 2018) and *This is Home: Essential Poems for Australian Children* (with Jackie French, National Library Publishing, 2019).

The founder of Kids' Book Review, Tania's books have been published in nine countries. She has received various awards including several CBCA Notable books, the SCBWI Crystal Kite Award and the CBCA Laurie Copping Award for Distinguished Service to Children's Literature. An ambassador for the Chief Minister's Reading Challenge (ACT), she is a fierce advocate for juvenile literacy. Tania has lived in Paris, London and Beijing, and currently lives in Canberra with her family, a forest of artwork and a mountain of books. www.taniamccartney.com.

About the Illustrator

After working in the publishing industry sales world for many years, Jess jumped ship a few years ago to follow her dream of illustrating rather than selling books. She's illustrated eight picture books including SCBWI Crystal Kite Award winner and CBCA Notable Book, *Smile Cry*, and several other titles including *If Baby Could Talk* and *Love Was Hiding* with Windy Hollow Books.

Working with watercolours and digital illustration, she also creates work for greeting cards, prints and portraits, and more work can be seen at www.jessesmess.com.

With two young children, if she's not drawing, she's either constantly reading picture books, visiting the library or book shop, usually with a coffee in hand. Her kind of heaven!

Illustration Style

The artwork was created with watercolours, pencil and digital Photoshop illustration, and the style is whimsical modern.

Interview with the author

1. What was the inspiration for the story?

With the success of *Merry Everything*—a story featuring animals from around the world and their Christmas traditions—Jess and I were inspired to explore a new set of animals and how they might celebrate that all-important and treasured time of any child's life—the birthday celebration.

There are so many interchangeable traditions in cultures around the world, and it was fun to explore how each animal might observe their own birthday festivities. Of course, a birthday isn't the same without family and friends, and for children, especially the very young child, this annual celebration (which takes soooo long to come around each year) is a time to feel special, and loved.

As with *Merry Everything*, the book ends with animals coming together as one. That sense of connectivity and support is an important part of the messaging in this story, and of course, that sense of community and belonging is everything to children, no matter where they live or where they come from.

2. What was the most rewarding part of this project?

Bringing back a new series of animals! And seeing the images unfold. Each time Jess would send through a new spread through, it was like turning six all over again—'unwrapping' that image and feeling the anticipation in the moments before that first party guest arrives, jostling for musical chairs, hearing that piñata WHACK! and the tumble of lollies into open arms.

3. What was the most challenging part of this project?

No challenges, oh, wait. One. Having to wait while Jess worked on the next spread!



Interview with the illustrator

1. What media did you use to create your illustrations?

Can you briefly describe your process?

This book was created with watercolours and digital illustration—my two favourite mediums! I sketched out roughs and then sketched again onto lovely watercolour paper, and after painting and scanning, used the artworks kind of like chess pieces, moving them about in Photoshop, and adding shadows and extra effects. I used the same process as Merry Everything to ensure continuity for the series, and it came together pretty easily.

I wanted to experiment with colours, and use a palette that was a bit unusual for me. I worked on it in 2018 which was the Pantone Year of Ultra Violet, so I decided to incorporate purple shades in there. I really loved the result!

Activities

English

Read the story and have children choose a particular page they resonate with. Is it the particular animal they resonate with, or the tradition depicted on that page? Is it both?

Which birthday traditions can children identify with in the pages of the book? Are there any traditions children don't experience in their own homes?

Have children write a short story on the birthday rituals they celebrate at home. Are there any unusual traditions?

Have them discuss the earliest birthday they can remember. Can they write a story about their favourite birthday cake?

Ask older children to research the birthday games, foods and traditions from other parts of the world. Do some cultures shun birthday celebrations altogether?

Why is a birthday a wonderful time to come together as friends and family?

Research various party food traditions from around the world, and choose some new recipes to try, either in class, or have the kids bring in their own favourite birthday recipes or treats.

What is the origin of the birthday cake, birthday cards and classic party games like blind man's bluff, musical chairs and pin the tail on the donkey?

Visual arts

Have children draw a picture showcasing the birthday traditions they celebrate at home.

Ask children to choose their own animal and then imagine how that animal might celebrate their birthday. Ask them to draw a scene.

What would the most whacky, over-the-top birthday cake look like? Can children draw or create one from modelling clay?

Children can create their own birthday decorations, inspired by the book. Perhaps they could incorporate elements that tie in with each animal, for example, a squirrel could fill a piñata with acorns.

2. What was the most rewarding part of this project?

I've loved continuing the partnership with Tania, as we have now worked on many books together – and also with Windy Hollow, who I again have done several books with. Because of the history working together, the process is smooth and very enjoyable, and we make a tight team!

3. What was the most challenging part of this project?

I think just keeping the stamina of the busy spreads and celebratory mood with so many elements! Books take a lot of work and time, and sometimes towards the end you feel like a crawl to the finish line. However, with the team's feedback and a few little patches of time 'off' I felt like we got there in the end!

Create a birthday card or birthday party invitation.

Drama

Students can role play various scenes from the book, taking on animal roles.

Children can make their own paper puppets based on characters from the book, and act out a birthday scene.

Children could mime out the creation of a birthday cake—baking, decorating, blowing out candles, slicing the cake and eating it.

Play some traditional party games!

Music

The birthday song was first published in 1893. Have older children research its origins.

Explore the birthday song lyrics in other languages. Can kids try singing the song in Italian or Chinese?

Have a singalong!

For more information on *Hip Hip Hooray!*, visit www.windhollowbooks.com.au.

