



Gittel's Big Surprise Party

Ages 6-9
A story and 9 activities

Gittel's Big Surprise Party

Gittel has exactly one week to plan a surprise party for her Bubby's seventieth birthday.

She writes the plan on a big sheet of paper and tapes it to her bedroom wall.

Step one: Invite everyone. Step two: Make decorations. Step three: Bake the cake. Step four: Get Bubby to the party without her knowing.

She looks at the list. Step four is the tricky one.

"How do I get her there without telling her?" she asks her older cousin Rochel, who is visiting for the week.

"Does she have a favorite thing to do?" asks Rochel.

Gittel thinks. "She loves to go to the park and feed the ducks. Every Thursday, she brings stale bread in a plastic bag."

"Perfect. We'll ask her to go to the park on Sunday. Then, on the way, we'll say we forgot something at the hall, and we'll all stop in."

"That might work," says Gittel.

The next few days are full of busy. Gittel makes paper chains in all of Bubby's favorite colors, purple and gold. She cuts out big letters and glues them to a banner. HAPPY 70TH, BUBBY! Rochel helps her tie balloons to the table legs.

Her mother and her aunts bake a chocolate cake with seventy candles, which are a lot of candles. Gittel counts them twice so there won't be a

mistake.

"Don't tell Bubby," says Mommy, over and over.

"I won't!" says Gittel.

But it is hard. Whenever Bubby comes over, Gittel feels the secret fizz up inside. "What are you up to?" Bubby asks once. Gittel presses her lips together and says, "Nothing! Just drawing."

On Friday, the guest list has grown to forty people. There will be cousins from Brooklyn and friends from the shul and Bubby's old neighbor Mrs. Greenbaum, who is going to bring her accordion.

On Sunday morning, the plan begins. Gittel puts on her nicest dress. She and Rochel walk to Bubby's apartment to pick her up for the park.

"A walk to the park?" says Bubby. "What a lovely idea."

They start down the street. Gittel's heart pounds. She has to say the line.

"Oh no!" she says, as they reach the corner. "I left my sweater in the hall. Can we stop?"

"Of course, sweetheart," says Bubby.

They turn toward the community hall. Gittel pushes open the door.

"SURPRISE!"

Forty people jump out from behind the tables, with confetti and blowers. The room bursts into song. Mrs. Greenbaum squeezes her accordion.

Bubby stops dead in the doorway. Her hand flies to her chest. "Oh!" she says. "Oh, my goodness!"

Her eyes fill with tears. She looks at Gittel, at the banner, at the room full of faces she loves.

"You did all this?"

"With help," says Gittel. "But I planned it."

Bubby crouches and hugs her so hard that Gittel's feet lift off the floor.

"This is the best birthday I ever had."

At the end of the party, after the cake and the singing and the dancing, Bubby sits down on a folding chair, still wearing a paper crown. She takes Gittel's hand and says, "I'm going to remember today for the rest of my life."

Gittel pulls the plan off her wall that night and folds it carefully. In big letters at the bottom, she writes: All done.



Activity 1 of 9

Remember the story

1. Whose birthday is it?

2. What does Bubby love to do on Thursdays?

3. How many people are at the party?

4. What instrument does Mrs. Greenbaum play?



Activity 2 of 9

Fact or guess? (circle one)

1. The banner says HAPPY 70TH, BUBBY! Fact / Guess
2. Bubby is upset about the party. Fact / Guess
3. The cake has seventy candles. Fact / Guess
4. Gittel's plan has four steps. Fact / Guess



Activity 3 of 9

Think and write

1. What would you plan for someone you love?

2. How does Gittel keep the secret even when it is hard?

3. What is the hardest step of the plan?

Activity 4 of 9

Word search (find all 6)

Words: SURPRISE, BANNER, BALLOON, CAKE, ACCORDION, PARTY

F	O	F	Y	C	B	B	C	E	W	I
S	B	S	J	E	M	A	A	B	G	T
U	B	P	A	Y	A	L	K	R	R	Y
R	K	L	C	T	P	L	E	P	H	U
P	K	R	C	R	T	O	R	H	H	M
R	M	T	O	A	L	O	G	B	R	E
I	U	W	R	P	L	N	V	A	L	E
S	U	H	D	A	P	A	D	N	A	T
E	F	K	I	N	H	O	M	N	C	K
N	F	L	O	J	C	Y	R	E	G	E
Y	T	I	N	P	W	L	M	R	C	B



Activity 5 of 9

Scrambled words (from the story)

1. SURPSIRE = _____

2. BREANN = _____

3. LOOLSBAN = _____

4. ISUOCN = _____

5. SENC DAL = _____



Activity 6 of 9

Say it out loud

Practice each line in a calm, steady voice:

"Shh, it's a surprise!"

"I'll help you plan."

"Happy birthday! We love you!"



Activity 7 of 9

My chart

My Party Plan

#	Step	Who helps	Done?
Step 1			
Step 2			
Step 3			



Activity 8 of 9

Draw it

Draw the community hall with the HAPPY 70TH, BUBBY! banner and forty smiling guests.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to draw the community hall, banner, and guests.



Activity 9 of 9

Answers

Remember the story:

1. Bubby's seventieth
2. Feed the ducks at the park
3. Forty
4. An accordion

Fact or guess: 1 Fact; 2 Guess; 3 Fact; 4 Fact

Scrambled words: SURPRISE, BANNER, BALLOONS, COUSIN, CANDLES

Think and write: answers will vary; talk them over together.