

# Lion Guards the Cake

By Ruth Paul



• Reading • Writing • Thinking Skills • Art

## Synopsis

Atop the gatepost at the front of a house, a stone Lion stands guard. As evening falls, the stone lion comes alive. A birthday cake has been made, and Lion takes it upon himself to go and guard the cake inside the house.

When the house mice approach the cake, Lion is there to pounce on them and swat them away. When the whiskery cat approaches through the cat flap, Lion is there to claw at the cat, who scarpers away. When the cat and the dog creep through the window to the kitchen, they find Lion fast asleep. They enter through the window, and join the mice, who start nibbling on the cake. Suddenly, Lion lets out a huge ROAR! The mice, dog and cat flee in fright, and the birthday cake lands in a crumbled heap on the floor.

Lion tries to fix up the cake, and in so doing, tastes a little. Then a little bit more. In the end he gobbles down the whole cake ... then feels guilt at the thought of the household waking up to no birthday cake. He sets about putting things to rights, proceeding to make a cake out of random items he finds in the kitchen – including bananas, broccoli and a cereal box!

As dawn breaks, Lion resumes his guard at the entrance to the house – with a much fuller stomach – as the household awakes.

## About the Author

**Ruth Paul** is an award-winning author and illustrator, with the Scholastic titles *Stomp!*, *Bad Dog Flash*, *Bye-Bye Grumpy Fly*, *My Dinosaur Dad*, *My Meerkat Mum* and the popular *Mini Whinny* series among her collection. Her books have been published in NZ, Australia, the UK, the US, Canada, China and Korea. *The King's Bubbles* and *I Am Jellyfish* have both won best Picture Book at the NZ Post Children's Book Awards.

Ruth achieved a Bachelor of Arts majoring in English and History from Victoria University, a Diploma in Visual Communication Design from Wellington Polytech (now Massey University), and most of a law degree. She now lives at Makara, near Wellington, New Zealand, where she and her family reside in an environmentally friendly house, with straw-bale walls and water-generated power.

# Writing and Illustration Style

*Lion Guards the Cake* is a playful, creative read-to picture book full of mischief and mayhem that will captivate young readers aged 2–7. Lion normally sits on guard at the gate in his concrete form, but come dusk and with a birthday cake in the house, he has come to life and magnanimously volunteered to guard the cake. This clever story is packed with natural rhyme (nothing is forced or painful), a rollicking pace, and a musical rhythm that lends itself to reading aloud. Peppered with onomatopoeia, this delightful text will withstand multiple readings. Children will delight in the perseverance of the little mice, whiskery Cat, and scrabbling Dog who eventually join forces in an attempt to taste the tantalising cake. When the ever-deteriorating cake inevitably falls to the floor, Lion also takes the job of cleaning up very seriously and puts the cake in the safest place possible, but the story does not end there. Earnest, prideful Lion puts things right with a pawful of this and a mouthful of that and creates his own interesting, if not impressive, surprise.

The illustrations, also by the multitalented Ruth Paul, are full of joie de vivre and humour. The colours are bright and vibrant and the characters are bursting with personality. This delicious picture book will be enjoyed by the whole family.

## Shared Learning and Discussion Points

During the shared sessions, encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of characters and events. Have them make predictions and inferences and relate these to their own experiences. Read the passages aloud and have students read alongside or by themselves.

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the cover and read the blurb then turn to the title page.

- When and where is this story set? How can you tell?
- Who is the main character in the story? Who are the supporting characters?
- What do you think this story might be about? What does it mean to guard something? What kind of cake is it?
- Have you ever found it hard to resist the temptation of a sweet treat in the house?

### Comprehension

- Where has Lion come from? Do you think he appreciates the bird sitting on his head? (title page) How can you tell?
- Do you think Lion was asked to guard the cake? If not, why is he doing it?
- How old is the person whose cake it is?
- On the first page, point out the A, A, B, B, B rhyming structure.
- How does Lion 'check' the cake? Look through the book and note how the cake looks worse every time Lion checks it. What is he actually doing?
- Point out the pattern of the cumulative rhyming text 'a big fat **paw**'; 'a big fat **paw** with a very sharp **claw**'; 'a big fat **paw**, with a very sharp **claw**, and he hears a **snore**'; 'a big fat **paw**, with **more** than one **claw**, and hear not a **snore**, but a .... **ROAR!**'
- Note the same rhyme throughout the book: **more/door**, **paw/floor**, **door/more**, **claw/sore**, **floor/more**, **paw/snore/door**, **more/door**, **paw/claw/snore/roar**, **floor/anymore**, **chore/sore**, **paw/before**. Brainstorm more rhyming words with the same sound e.g. **store**, **four/for**, **saw**, **explore**, **core**, **bore**, **wore**.
- Point out that for two words to rhyme they need to have the same sound at the end and that some words sound the same and look the same (**paw/claw**, **more/snore/chore/sore/before**, **floor/door**) and other words sound the same but look different (**roar**). Find other rhyming words in the book e.g. **yard/guard**, **post/most/ghost**.
- How do you think Dog and Cat feel when they see that Lion is asleep? What is a 'foe'? If necessary, tell the students that a 'foe' is an enemy. Why are Dog and Cat 'foes no more'?
- Does Lion want to 'clean up' the cake? Why?
- What are 'mandibles'? If necessary, tell the children that 'mandibles' are jaws. Why do Lion's jaws ache?
- Why does Lion make a new birthday cake? Does he think he's done a good job? How can you tell? Would you like Lion to make your birthday cake? Why/why not?
- What will the family think happened to the cake? Do you think anyone (aside from the birds) will notice the cake crumbs and icing on Lion at the gate?
- How many uses of onomatopoeia can you find in the text and illustrations? Can you make up your own words using onomatopoeia to describe the sound of the mice on the floor, the ingredients going into the mixing bowl, or the cake being formed and put on the plate?



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC

# Activities

## ACTIVITY 1: MAKE A FAKE CAKE

Using the illustration of Lion's cake as inspiration, invite the students to make and decorate cakes from play-dough, or draw or paint their own cake. If play-dough is used, take a photo of each cake. Have the children pick an ingredient and include it in their writing about making a cake e.g. Edie put tomato sauce in her cake.

## ACTIVITY 2: BAKE A CAKE

As a class, research to find out what goes into a cake e.g. flour, butter, sugar, eggs, baking powder. It may be possible to make and bake a cake as a group activity. If not, you could watch a video on YouTube on how to make a cake – there are plenty to choose from.

## ACTIVITY 3: ROLE PLAY

Invite the students to role play the story, with one student being Lion, guarding the cake, and other students being the mice, Cat, and Dog. The students might like to make masks for their role play.

## ACTIVITY 4: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

As a class, discuss what might happen next? Will the family eat the birthday cake Lion made? Will they make a new birthday cake? Who will guard it this time?

## ACTIVITY 5: TAKE A LOOK AT ANOTHER BOOK

Share read another book about cakes, such as *I Really Want the Cake*, *Bunny Cakes*, *I Love Cake!*, or *Who Ate the Cake?*

## ACTIVITY 6: DO YOU TRUST LION?

Is Lion a trustworthy character, do you think? Did anyone ask him to guard the cake, or was it his own decision? Discuss with a group if he had good intentions when he volunteered himself for the task, or if he may have had an ulterior motive. Was he doing this for the good of the household, or for the good of Lion himself?

Written by Frances McBeath

