Name: _____ Date: _____

Aunt Bea's Backward Birthday

Circle group

Aunt Bea turned forty. She said her party would be backward. "Everything will be in the wrong order," she said, "and I will love it."

My cousin Tess and I came at six in the evening. We said, "Goodbye!" At the same time Aunt Bea said, "Hello." We laughed so hard that Uncle Roy dropped the pretzels.

First we ate cake for dinner. Then we ate spaghetti. At seven o'clock we ate breakfast. Aunt Bea wore her coat inside out. Her hat sat on her chin. She walked backward to the table and sat facing the wall.

Then I remembered something. I had no present. Tess had none either. We whispered in the hall.

"Backward," said Tess. "She wants everything backward. We can make a backward card!"

We wrote a poem with every letter flipped, like in a mirror. Then we held the card up to the mirror in the hall and read it out loud. Aunt Bea watched over her shoulder. The poem said she was the best aunt in the world.

"Best gift ever," said Aunt Bea. She wiped her eyes. "And you gave it before I opened the door."

Questions

1. How old was Aunt Bea turning?

_____

_____

2. What did the family eat first?

_____

_____

3. What was the problem for the narrator and Tess?

_____

_____

4. Why did Tess think of a backward card?

_____

_____

5. How did they read the card?

_____

_____

6. Why was it funny to say goodbye first?

_____

_____

Words to know

backward: turned toward the back or in reverse order
mirror: a glass that shows your reflection

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Aunt Bea's Backward Birthday

Triangle group

When Aunt Bea turned forty, she announced that her party would be backward. "Everything," she said, "will happen in the wrong order, and I will love it."

My cousin Tess and I arrived at six in the evening and said, "Goodbye!" Aunt Bea said, "Hello" at the exact same moment, and we all laughed so hard that Uncle Roy dropped the pretzels.

Dinner came first, and it was a cake the size of a hatbox. Next came the main course, which was spaghetti. Then, at seven o'clock sharp, we ate breakfast. Aunt Bea wore her coat inside out and her hat on her chin. She walked backward to the table and sat down facing the wall.

Then I remembered something awful. I had forgotten to bring a present. Tess had not brought one either. We whispered in the hallway, trying to think of something.

"Backward," Tess said suddenly. "She wants everything backward. So we can write her a card that goes backward!"

We grabbed paper and wrote a poem, but we wrote it with every letter flipped, the way it looks in a mirror. Then we held the card up to the hallway mirror and read it aloud while Aunt Bea watched over her shoulder. The poem said she was the best aunt in the whole world.

"Best gift ever," said Aunt Bea, wiping her eyes. "And you gave it before I even opened the door."

Questions

1. How old was Aunt Bea turning?

_____

_____

2. What did the family do first at the party?

_____

_____

3. What problem did the narrator and Tess have?

_____

_____

4. Why did Tess think of a backward card?

_____

_____

5. How did they read the card?

_____

_____

6. Why was it funny that the party began with goodbye?

_____

_____

Words to know

announced: said something so everyone could hear
backward: turned toward the back or in reverse order
hatbox: a round box used to hold a hat
mirror: a glass that shows your reflection
aloud: out loud, in a voice others can hear

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Aunt Bea's Backward Birthday

Square group

When Aunt Bea turned forty, she announced with great cheer that her birthday party would be entirely backward. "Everything," she declared, "will happen in the wrong order, and I intend to love every minute of it."

My cousin Tess and I arrived at six in the evening and called out, "Goodbye!" At the exact same moment, Aunt Bea called, "Hello," and we all laughed so hard that Uncle Roy dropped the entire bowl of pretzels.

Dinner came first, and it was a cake the size of a hatbox. Next came the main course, which was spaghetti, and then, at seven o'clock sharp, we sat down to breakfast. Aunt Bea wore her coat inside out and her hat on her chin, and she marched backward to the table and sat down facing the wall.

Then I remembered something awful: I had forgotten to bring a present. Tess had not brought one either, so we huddled in the hallway and whispered, desperately trying to think of something.

"Backward," Tess said suddenly. "She wants everything backward, so we can write her a card that goes backward!"

We grabbed some paper and composed a poem, but we wrote it with every letter flipped, the way writing looks in a mirror. Then we held the card up to the hallway mirror and read it aloud while Aunt Bea watched over her shoulder. The poem declared that she was the best aunt in the whole world.

"Best gift ever," said Aunt Bea, wiping her eyes. "And you gave it to me before I even opened the door."

Questions

1. How old was Aunt Bea when she held her backward party?

_____

_____

2. What did the family do first at the party?

_____

_____

3. What problem did the narrator and Tess discover?

_____

_____

4. Why did Tess decide a backward card was a good idea?

_____

_____

5. How did the cousins read the poem on the card aloud?

_____

_____

6. Why was it amusing that the cousins arrived saying goodbye?

_____

_____

Words to know

announced: said something so everyone could hear
backward: turned toward the back or in reverse order
hatbox: a round box used to hold a hat
mirror: a glass that shows your reflection
aloud: out loud, in a voice others can hear

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Aunt Bea's Backward Birthday

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Aunt Bea's Backward Birthday

Easier · 192 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2

1. Forty.
2. Cake for dinner.
3. They had no present.
4. Aunt Bea wanted everything backward.
5. They held it up to a mirror.
6. People say goodbye at the end, not the start.

Triangle: Aunt Bea's Backward Birthday

This passage · 236 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 4.1

1. Forty.
2. They ate cake for dinner.
3. They had forgotten to bring a present.
4. Aunt Bea wanted everything backward, so a backward gift fit the party.
5. They held it up to a mirror.
6. Goodbye is usually said at the end, so saying it first was backward.

Square: Aunt Bea's Backward Birthday

Harder · 261 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 6.5

1. Forty.
2. They ate a cake for dinner.
3. They had forgotten to bring a present.
4. Aunt Bea wanted everything backward, so a backward gift suited the party.
5. They held the card up to a mirror.
6. Goodbye normally comes at the end of a visit, so saying it first was backward.