

Huget, Jennifer LaRue. *The Best Birthday Party Ever*. New York: Schwartz & Wade Books, 2011.

"My birthday is 5 months, 3 weeks, 2 days, and 8 hours away. Today I started to plan my party."

And so the planning begins for the 5-year-old soon-to-be birthday girl in this charming picture book. She has to start planning early if she wants the best birthday party ever. She is going to invite all 57 of her friends including the mailman, and the invitations will be sprinkled with fairy dust. She will have 9 thousand balloons, streamers and napkins, all in pink. On the menu is a 17-layer cake, each layer a different flavour, with 6 zillion candles on top. Not only will there be a magician, camel rides and a Ferris wheel, but each lucky guest will receive a hamster as a party favour.

In a kid-friendly countdown style towards the big day, our sweet party planner gets more and more excited as her birthday approaches and the plans get more and more grandiose. Only after her mother comments that this birthday party is "getting out of hand" does she agree to skip the sparkly necklaces. The day finally arrives and while it may not be the party she dreamed of, she is appreciative and enjoys her day so much that she immediately begins plans for her next birthday.

This beautifully illustrated read-aloud captures the excitement of a child as she looks forward to her special day and will appeal to lower elementary grades as well as preschoolers. The whimsical mostly-pink drawings may be initially off-putting to boys but they are certain to relate and enjoy the story.

****(out of 4)