

MAGIC MOMENTS

A Little Bird Told Me

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL THEME

As children develop, they need to learn to think of others as well as themselves. In the five 'Little Bird' stories, caring personal relationships and a sense of responsibility towards other people are encouraged.

CHARACTERS

Mel: an only child, naturally loving, caring and compassionate

Mum: single parent, kind-hearted and friendly

Mrs Singer: neighbour, elderly, lonely, has difficulty walking

Noni Camden: Mel's best friend, naïve, friendly and trusting

Strange man: middle-aged, seems friendly, has nice dog

Neal's mum: sensible and caring

Grandad: grandfather of Mel and her cousins, wears glasses and a hearing aid, warm-hearted, practical

Yik, Ali, Rani and Yasmine: Mel's cousins, of mixed race

Dylan: step-brother of Rani and Yasmine

Kirk: friend of Yik, slightly older and not a good influence

Mrs Quill: youth club leader, excellent organiser, Pakistani

Auntie Cleo: mother of Rani, Yasmine and Dylan, of mixed race

DAY 1: BIRTHDAYS

Mel had a wonderful birthday, with some presents from Mum and Grandad and cards from lots of people. She also had a party. Mel was very happy. She thought it was the best birthday she had ever had.

"I'm very lucky and very happy," said Mel.

About a week later, on her way home from school, just by a little row of shops, Mel passed old Mrs Singer. Mrs Singer was a friendly old lady who lived next door but one. She had lovely brown eyes, the colour of currants. There was always a smile on her lips and she often liked to stop for a chat. Today, she put down her heavy shopping bags on the pavement and paused for a moment, to lean on her walking stick.

"Hello, my little twinkly star," she said. "And how are you, on this fine day?" Mrs Singer always called everyone her little twinkly star. She found it hard to remember people's names, so, if she called them her little twinkly star, it sounded nice and friendly without letting them know that she'd forgotten their real name.

"I'm OK, thank you," answered Mel. "Look what I got for my birthday." She held up a pencil case in the shape of a Noah's Ark. "Look. The roof comes off and, inside, there are crayons and felt-tip pens. My Grandad made it for me."

"Well, well, well, how clever," said Mrs Singer. "What lovely pictures you'll be able to make with those."

"And I got this from Mummy," said Mel, pointing to her new sports bag. "Now I can carry my reading books and exercise books and lunch box and sports things all in one bag."

"Well, well, well," said Mrs Singer again. "What practical presents. Now you'll never forget any of your school things, will you? And how is your Mum, this week?"

"OK, thank you," said Mel.

"Oh, I'm pleased to hear that. I haven't seen her for ages. I haven't seen you for ages. I haven't seen anyone for ages. I had to stay in with a cold. But I'm all right now."

Mel couldn't think of anything else to talk to Mrs Singer about, so she said goodbye and skipped off down the street. Around the corner she went, and along the road towards her own home.

Just as she was going up to her front door, she heard a bird twittering loudly. Then there was a fluttering of feathers and a cheerful little cheeping sound. At first, Mel took no notice and was just about to go indoors when the little flapping noise and the chirrupy, chirpy, chiffchaff song came again.

Mel looked up. There, sitting on a drainpipe, was the cutest little bird she had ever seen. It wasn't quite a sparrow. It definitely wasn't a robin. And it could hardly be a budgie or a canary, out there in the street. In fact, it seemed to be a mixture of all kinds of small birds.

"How puzzling!" thought Mel. But she liked the little bird.

"Cheerio!" whistled the bird.

"Oh, are you going?" asked Mel.

"No, no, no," answered the bird.

"I don't like goodbyes.

They're rather sad.

But my way of talking

Is cheerful and glad.

*I like chirpy words,
Like children and chickweed
And cherry and chalking
So I say 'Cheerio'
Whenever I can.
I say it when meeting
And just before eating
To say it all day
Is my little plan."*

Mel thought this was very funny and kept saying "Cheerio, cheerio, cheerio," about a hundred times.

The little bird fluffed up her wings and a few feathers floated down on to the pavement. "I hear you had a lovely party," she trilled.

"That's right," said Mel. "It was a wonderful birthday. The best ever."

*"Of course, your birthday was on the twelfth
But did you know there's someone else
Born on that date, just like yourself?"*

"Who?" wondered Mel.

"Mrs Singer," came the surprising reply. "Old Joan Singer, your elderly neighbour"

Mel was very puzzled. "How can that be?" she asked. "She's much, much older than I am. She can't have been born on the same date."

*"Ah, not the same year,
I admit that, my dear.
Just how long ago
I don't really know.
Many years, I am sure.
But do please remember
The twelfth of September
Is also the birthday
Of someone you know."*

Mel thought for a moment. "And did Mrs Singer have a party?" she asked.

*"No," said the bird.
"Poor old Joan
Lives all alone.
She's a son in America
And a daughter called Erica.
Joan sends them cards
And tries to phone*

*But she still spent her birthday
All alone.
That day in September
Was no more special
Than March or June
Or even November."*

"Oh, how sad," said Mel. "It must be awful if no one remembers your birthday."
The little bird agreed.

*"No post," she twittered.
"No cake, no friends,
Not even a ghost,
An empty house,
No one to talk to
Not even a mouse."*

"I must go inside now," said Mel. "But you've given me something to think about. I hope I see you again."

*"I think you will," cheeped the cheery little bird.
"I might come to call.
Watch out for me
On a fence or a wall
You could be outdoors
Or going to bed,
But I might be somewhere
Just out of sight,
To whisper good thoughts
And tell you what's right."*

"OK, I will," promised Mel, as she waved goodbye.

After tea, Mel sat thinking for a while. Her birthday cards were still dotted around the room, on the shelf and the window ledge and the coffee table.

"And there's poor old Mrs Singer with no cards at all," thought Mel. "I can't give her any of mine. They've all got my name and my age on them. That's no good to Mrs Singer." She glanced out of the window and she was sure she saw the little bird fly past. A thought came into Mel's head.

"I know," she said to herself. "I could make a card for Mrs Singer. I could draw a picture with my crayons and I could do the writing all different colours with my felt-tip pens."

There was a flurry of feathers outside the window and Mel had a bright idea. Quickly, she went to the bottom drawer of her cupboard, rummaged around and found last year's calendar. "Just the thing," said a voice inside her head.

Mel took the plain piece of card from the back of the calendar, folded it in half and started to draw on it. Inside, she wrote: **MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF YOUR BIRTHDAY, LAST WEEK. WITH LOTS OF LOVE FROM MEL AND HER MUM.**

She used lots of different colours and made the whole thing really cheerful.

Mel looked at her presents. As well as the pencil case and the bag, there was a box of chocolates. She picked up the box of chocolates, put the card on top and went to her Mum.

"Can I go round to see Mrs Singer?" she asked "I won't be long. I want to take this for her."

"I'll come with you," said her Mum. "I haven't seen her for ages. I'll just ask her if everything's OK."

When old Joan Singer came to the door, Mel said, "A very happy un-birthday to you, Mrs Singer. Next year, we'll have a party together, on exactly the right date, the twelfth of September."

Mrs Singer was amazed and delighted. "Oh, how very kind of you," she said. "And how very clever, too. Come inside and we'll all have a cup of tea. However did you find out the date of my birthday?"

"Oh, a little bird told me," said Mel.

Teacher's Notes

Theme: Thinking of other people

Group Discussion

1. Could Mel help Mrs Singer in any other way?
2. Do you think Mel was the only one who could see or hear the little bird? Why?
3. Where do you think Mel got the idea of making something for someone else?
4. Do you know anyone like Mrs Singer? Can you do anything to help them?
5. In what ways can young people help old people?

Activity

Ask the children to think of someone they know who might not get any birthday cards and make a special card for them. If they don't know anyone, they could imagine a person like Mrs Singer.