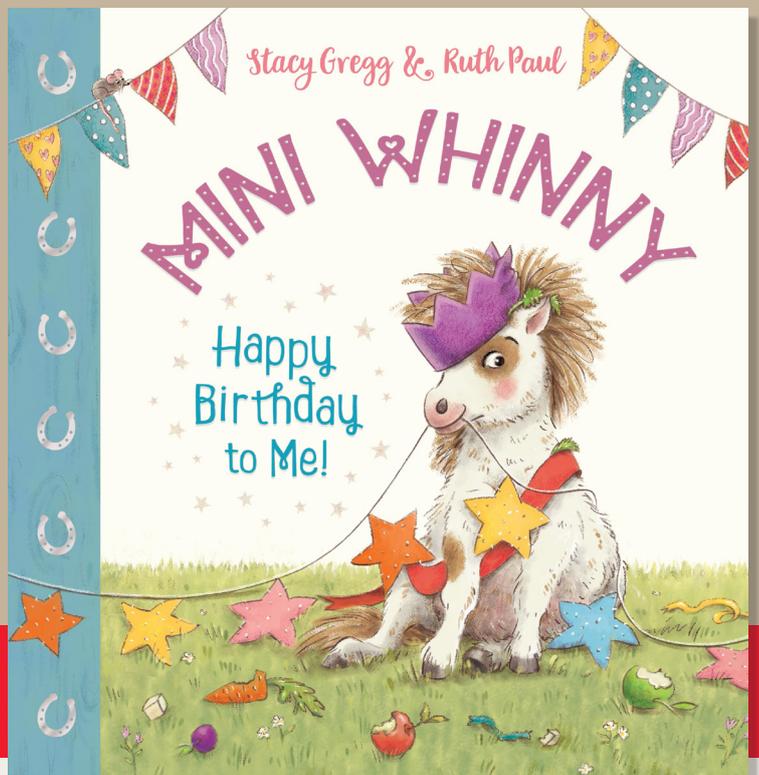


# Mini Whinny: Happy Birthday to Me!

Text by Stacy Gregg  
Illustrations by Ruth Paul

- Art • Reading • Writing •
- Thinking Skills • Oral Language •



## Synopsis

The horses at Blackthorn Stables are getting ready for their birthday party. All horses celebrate their birthday on August 1<sup>st</sup>, the official birthday for all horses. But naughty Mini Whinny doesn't think that's fair; she wants her own birthday party. While the horses take a nap, Mini Whinny puts a cheeky plan into action, shifting all the party decorations and food into her own stable. But she soon realises that partying on your own isn't much fun. And the other horses are cross when they get up the next day and find that someone has stolen their party! Palomina finds Mini Whinny looking sorry for herself and suggests how she can remedy the problem. Soon the horses are led outside and find, to their surprise, that Mini Whinny has decorated a large tree with all the festive decorations. All the horses have a splendid party and Mini Whinny is awarded a rosette.

## About the Author

As a young girl, **Stacy Gregg** dreamed of being a horse rider and a writer when she grew up. She is now the internationally acclaimed author of 23 much-loved junior fiction titles – all about horses. Three of her books have won Children's Choice awards at the New Zealand Children's Book Awards and she has been widely published, with over a million copies sold worldwide. Her books are frequently based on true stories set around the world in locations including Jordan, Russia, Spain and Iceland. Stacy is of Ngāti Mahuta descent and lives with her daughter in Auckland, New Zealand, with her horse in a paddock nearby. This is Stacy's first picture book.

## About the Illustrator

**Ruth Paul** is an award-winning author and illustrator, with Scholastic NZ titles *Stomp! Bad Dog Flash*, *Bye-Bye Grumpy Fly*, *My Dinosaur Dad* and *My Meerkat Mum* among her collection. Her books have been published in New Zealand, Australia, the UK, the US, Canada, China and Korea. Her 2007 Scholastic NZ title *The King's Bubbles* won both the Children's Choice and Best Picture Book at the New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards. Ruth lives near Wellington, New Zealand, where she and her family reside in an environmentally friendly house, with straw-bale walls and water-generated power.

## Writing Style

The story is written in third-person point-of-view prose in a 32-page picture book, with 20-60 words per page. The introduction introduces the main character and the setting, then sets up the problem. The middle of the story shows Mini Whinny putting her big bad idea into action and realising it is no fun partying on her own. The climax shows Mini Whinny fixing the problem and the other horses finding a party outside under the trees. The conclusion shows everyone celebrating the birthday and Mini Whinny being given a rosette. The author uses clever puns like 'hit the hay' and 'icing-caked ear', and lots of expressive language that conveys the personality of the naughty little pony: "*Mine.*" Mini Whinny took the sparkly stars. "*Mine.*" She pulled down the piñata. "*Mine!*" She grabbed the pass-the-parcel.'

## Illustration Style

Ruth Paul has created the illustrations in Photoshop but draws traditionally on a Cintiq tablet, which reads straight into her computer. She then uses tools that mimic natural paint and brushes. Ruth based Mini Whinny on an imaginary character borrowed from many mini ponies she has come across. She knew from the start that she wanted Mini Whinny to have a particularly out-of-control mane. And she based her personality on Eloise, a little girl with a big attitude, from *Eloise in Paris* by Kay Thompson and Hilary Knight.

## Shared Learning and Discussion Points

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

- Look at the cover. What do you think is the tone for this story?
- How has the author set the scene on the first page?
- How would you describe Mini Whinny after reading about her attitude to the party? (pages 6-9)
- Why does Mini Whinny think horse birthdays are not fair?
- What do you think is Mini Whinny's bad idea? What other bad ideas could she have come up with?
- What does Mini Whinny take from the stables?
- How do you think the horses feel when they discover their party has been stolen?
- How do you play musical statues?
- Why does Mini Whinny need other people to play pass-the-parcel?
- What does Mini Whinny notice after she has sung Happy Birthday to herself?
- What does Palomina find when she follows the sound and finds Mini Whinny?
- What do you think Palomina's plan is?
- What does Mini Whinny do with the decorations and cake?
- How does she surprise the other horses and how do they react?
- How does Mini Whinny patch up the cake?
- Why do the other horses give Mini Whinny a rosette?
- What is a mane?
- Another three creatures have been joining in the horse fun. Who – or what – are they?
- What lesson has Mini Whinny learnt from this experience?

## Activities

### ACTIVITY 1: SUB-PLOT MISCHIEF!

Throughout the story you'll have noticed a cat and two mice on most pages. Think up a sub-plot (mini story) for these three characters. Are they up to mischief, or are they helping? Do they wish it is their birthday, and if so, how could they make it so?

### ACTIVITY 2: DRAW AN IMAGINARY FRIEND FOR MINI WHINNY

Imagine if Mini Whinny had a pony friend. What would be her or his name? What would he or she look like? What type of personality would they have? Draw a picture of Mini Whinny's imaginary pony friend and describe what their character would be like.



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC

### ACTIVITY 3: WHAT IF ...

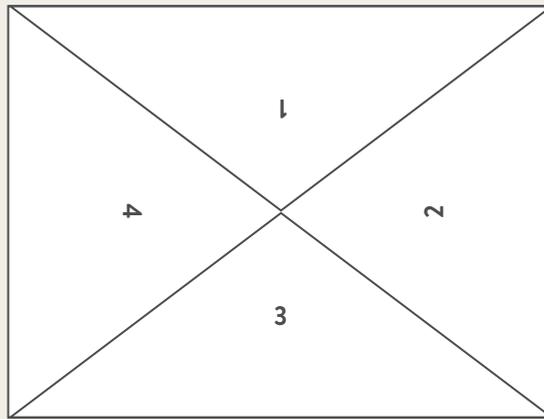
What if it had been raining after Mini Whinny had put the decorations and cake outside? Write what the reaction of the horses would have been then, and how Mini Whinny would have felt. How could she have saved the situation?

### ACTIVITY 4: ACT IT OUT!

Role-play the story. You'll need the main character Mini Whinny, Palomina, several horses, and the cat Berenice. Practise it several times before performing in front of the class.

### ACTIVITY 5: BOOK SQUARE MARK

1. Ask students to make a square with a piece of paper (if using a rectangle piece of paper, cut off the end that is not needed).
2. Fold it into a triangle, then open it and fold it into a triangle on the other side.
3. Next, fold a corner into the middle, until all four corners make triangles pointing into the middle.
4. Number each of the triangles 1-4.
5. Ask students to choose and describe four important story details in logical order with 1 being the beginning, 2 = next major thing that happens, 3 = climax of story, 4 = conclusion. Write a sentence for each point of the story under the flap of the corresponding number.
6. Afterwards they can use the book square as a bookmark.



Teaching notes by Maria Gill