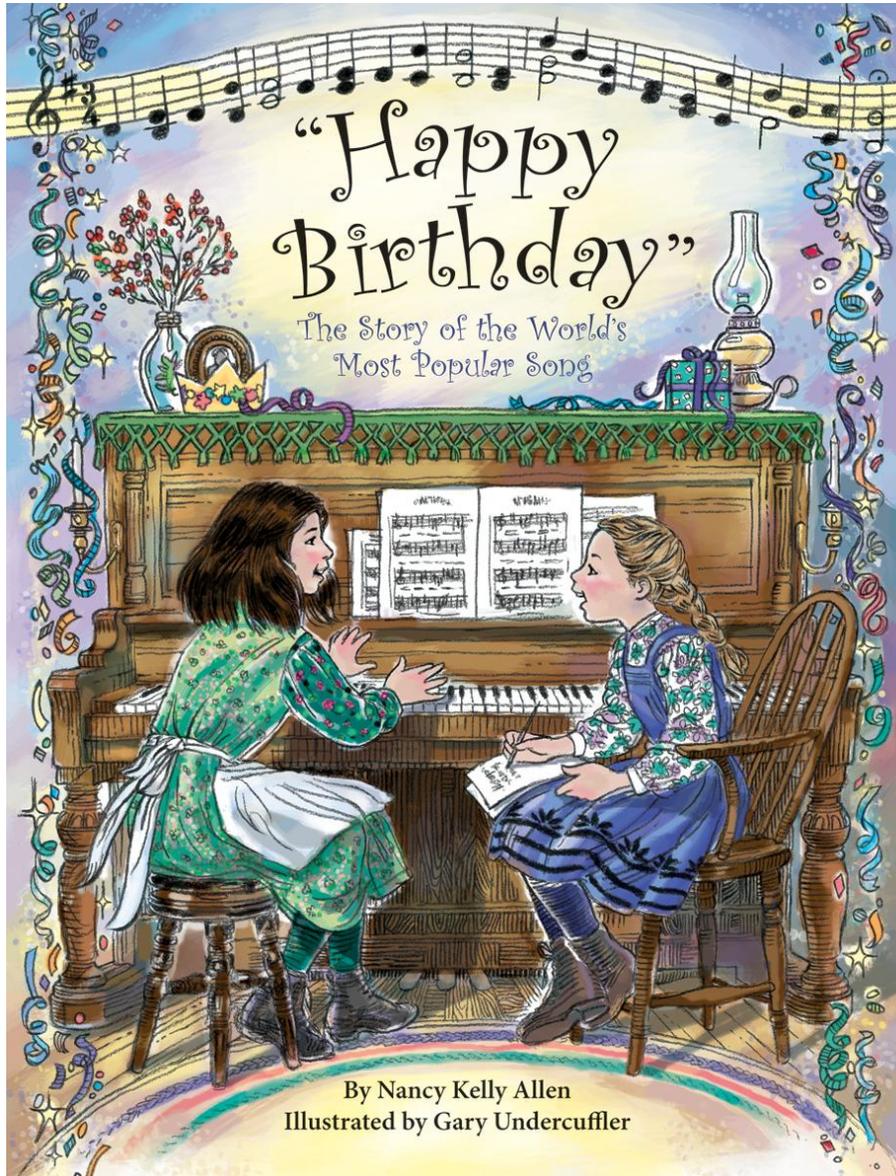


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ACTIVITY GUIDE for



“Happy Birthday”:

The Story of the World’s Most Popular Song
BY Nancy Kelly Allen, Illustrated by Gary Undercuffler

**Guide created by Nancy Kelly Allen
Reproducible worksheets**

Book Discussion

Read and discuss “*Happy Birthday*”: *The Story of the World’s Most Popular Song*. Ask the following open-ended questions:

1. What is a biography? (Discuss the definition that means *writing about life*. A biography is writing about the life of a person.)
2. This book is a dual biography. What do you think that means? Have you read a biography? (If yes, invite students to discuss the books.)
3. What makes someone or something famous?
4. How do you think it would feel to be famous?
5. How does fame affect people?
6. If you could be famous for any reason, what would you choose?
7. Who is a famous person you admire? Why do you admire that person?
8. Who is someone you admire that is not famous? Why do you admire that person?
9. Why is it important to do your best work?
10. What is an autobiography?
11. Do you think the Hill sisters planned to write Happy Birthday in order to be famous? Explain.
12. What impact have the Hill sisters made on music around the world?



Writing Activities

- Write an **alphabetical biography** of a person. Write 26 sentences and/or paragraphs, each beginning with a different letter of the alphabet. Illustrate each paragraph. Add title page and staple into a book. Example: L is for Louisville, Kentucky, where the Hill sisters grew up. Tips: A biography is not a list of facts. A biography is a story of a person's life with a beginning, middle, and ending. The biography should make us care about what the person did and why he or she did it. Most of all, it should NOT be boring!
- Have students interview each other and **write biographies** about those they interviewed.
- Have students **brainstorm** words that describe themselves and use those words to write an autobiography.
- **Create a pie biography.** Cut a circle into eight slices. Students list one fact about the Hill sisters per slice. Illustrate each slice. Invite students to dramatize the person by acting a scene from the person's life.
- Bio Poems: Students will write **poems** about themselves beginning each poem with the words *I am*.
- **Who in the world is _____?** This is a good activity to start the day. Write the question on the board and add a name. Add a different name each day. Invite students to use the library, newspaper, Internet, textbooks or other sources to learn more about the person. You may choose to have students work in teams. Older students should document the sources from which they retrieve the information. This activity encourages proper research documentation. Younger students can locate the information from paragraphs or articles.
- **Biography Traits:** Students read a biography, list quality traits they can apply to their own lives, and write a paragraph or report on how those traits can be applied to their own lives along with the expected changes and outcomes. Younger students can write on the printout of shoes. The student's name and the name of the famous person are both listed on each shoe printout. Add lines for the quality traits and how the traits will affect the life of the student. Post the work on a wall with the title: *Following in the footprints*. Invite students to walk around the room and read the footprints.
- **Similes:** The author used the phrase, "her talent was honed sharp as a razor." Explain that author's use of similes to describe a character and to paint a picture with words. Invite students to write the following similes using *as* and *like*:
 - Her smile was as ----- as-----.
 - The bell rang as ----- as -----.
 - The piano sounded as ----- as -----.

The cat ---- like a -----.
The star ----- like a -----.

- **Biography Book Report:** Students read a biography and write a book report, including a cover page and illustrations.
- Students **interview** someone they know, take notes on the subject, and write a biography.
- **Make biography boxes.** Who would you like to see on next cereal box? Students can make biography boxes. Paste an illustration that reflects the person's life on one side of the box. Paste the biography on the opposite side. The inside of the box can be used to store items that represent the person's life.
- **Celebrity Guest.** Imagine a famous person is going to visit the classroom. Have students write an introduction that focuses on the part of the life that made the person famous.
- **Who's Who.** Students research and write about the person they chose as the world's greatest person. This person may or may not be famous. Have them write about the characteristics that make the person great.
- **Rewrite or retell** a biography from the point of view of the person's pet or piece of clothing, such as a shoe.

Geography/Social Studies Activities

- Find Louisville, Kentucky, on a **map**. How far is Louisville from your classroom?
- Discuss **how cities have changed** since the time the Hill sisters wrote the world's most famous song. Consider the following: transportation, lighting, streets, clothing, schools, communication, housing, etc. Write a story about living in the late 1800s or early 1900s.

Music/Dramatic Play

- Write and perform an original **song**, just like the Hill sisters did.
- **Musical books.** Place chairs in a circle and place one book under each chair. Play music. When music stops, students sits, reaches under chair for a book and reads. When music starts, students place books under chairs and begin walking. Repeat the activity a few times. After the musical book walk, place all books on a shelf so students can continue reading the books of their choice.

- **Freeze Dance:** Students dance to the beat of the music. If the music has a fast tempo, they move quickly. A slow tempo requires slow movements. When the music stops, students freeze. Change the music and students dance again.
- **Left-Right:** Ask student to raise their left hands. Practice lifting left and right hands until they understand. Then have them march in a circle or around the room to the beat of the music. Next, have them march in the military fashion of left-right, left-right to the beat of the music. March in one direction, turn, and march in the other.
- **Dramatize Mildred and Patty Hill** as though they are alive today. Write and perform a discussion between the two women as they talk about their song being the most famous song in the world.

“HAPPY BIRTHDAY”
The Story of the World’s Most Popular Song
 By Nancy Kelly Allen, Illustrated by Gary Undercuffler

“Nancy Kelly Allen’s buoyant prose virtually sings throughout this engaging account of the world’s best-known musical ditty. Informative and fun!”

—Paul Brett Johnson, author and illustrator of *The Cow Who Wouldn’t Come Down*

During a time when candles glowed in lieu of electricity, the Hill sisters of Kentucky spent their days playing music on the piano and singing. While Mildred tickled out tunes on the ivories, Patty strung together lyrics and sang along.

Once the sisters grew up and became teachers, they continued to mix music and words, creating lovely melodies with an infectious beat. Each day they serenaded their kindergarten class with the catchy song “Good Morning to All.” When Mildred and Patty changed the lyrics at a birthday party, they could hardly have imagined that their little tune would become one of the world’s most recognizable and beloved songs.

Complete with Gary Undercuffler’s detailed and colorful illustrations, this cheerful children’s book captures the history of the “Happy Birthday” song.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nancy Kelly Allen is the author of Pelican’s *Daniel Boone: Trailblazer*. As a former teacher and librarian, she enjoys being in an environment where she can conjure ideas for her next story. Allen earned master’s degrees in elementary education and library science from Morehead State University and the University of Kentucky, respectively. She resides in Hazard, Kentucky.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

In addition to teaching art and design, Gary Undercuffler has received numerous awards for his art, including three Illustration of the Month awards and three Illustration of the Year awards from *Highlights* magazine. Undercuffler lives in Glenside, Pennsylvania.

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