

## Activity Guide

### *Courtney's Birthday Party*

Written by Dr. Loretta Long

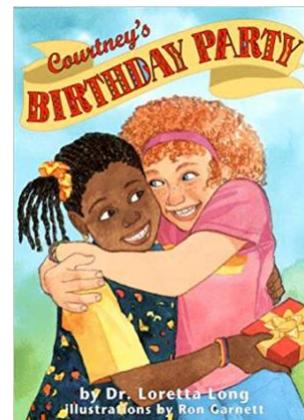
Illustrated by Ron Garnett

Published by Just Us Books

Target ages: 6-9

### Book Description

Courtney is very excited. Her seventh birthday is only a few days away and her mother has planned a special party. All of Courtney's classmates will be invited. Courtney and Diana are best friends. They ride the same school bus; they sit on the same row in class; they love the same snacks. And on Saturday, they will be the same age. It has never mattered to them that one is White and one is Black. But when Courtney's mom sends the party invitations to class, Diana is not included. Both girls are devastated. With energetic prose, educator Dr. Loretta Long, tackles a tough subject and offers a realistic treatment of a situation that is all too familiar in classrooms and communities across the U.S.



### Themes

Friendship, getting along with other, prejudice, cultural diversity, birthday celebrations,

### Pre-Reading Discussion

- What makes someone your best friend?
- Look at the cover. What do you think the book is about?
- How would you feel if you and your best friend were not able to share an important event or occasion together?

### Discussion Questions

- What are some ways that Courtney showed that she was Diana's best friend?
- What are some ways that Diana showed that she was Courtney's best friend?
- Can you give one example of how you did something special for your best friend?
- Why do you think Courtney and Diana have never visited each other's houses?
- How did Courtney's mother feel about Diana going to Courtney's birthday party?
- What did Courtney's mother learn at the end of the story?
- What did Diana's mother learn at the end of the story?
- What do you think will happen the next time Diana and Courtney want to have a play date?

Define these words/phrases:

Celebration

invitation

best friend

ethnicity

tolerance

prejudice

### WRITING/LANGUAGE ARTS

A. Have children write a letter to their parents introducing their best friend

B. Have children make a list of adjectives that describe them, then write a list of adjectives that describe their best friend. Post the lists in the classroom, or have the children discuss their character traits.

Encourage students to point out the similarities they share

C. In the book, Diana said, "We're different on the outside but the same on the inside." What does that mean? Have students write a different sentence that expresses that same thought.

D. Have students find someone in the class who is of a different race, ethnicity or religion from them. Ask students to conduct an interview to learn more about that person, and then write a feature article or biography on the interviewee.

### **ART**

A. Allow children to make invitations to a class or personal event.

B. Ask children to draw a picture with their non-dominant hand. Discuss how that challenge made them feel.

### **MUSIC**

Invite students to write their own birthday song, including lyrics and melody.

### **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

A. Diana earned money to buy a birthday gift for her best friend. Have students take an inventory of classroom materials and write down what might be needed. Then ask students to brainstorm ideas for earning money. Keep a chart of how much money is earned. Create a class newsletter to share the project with the school and community.

B. Ask students to share one thing about themselves that is very unique and one thing that is more common.

C. Invite students to help plan a class party or other event. What food will be served? Who will do invitations? (See Activity A under Art). Who will be invited?

### **About the Author**

Dr. Loretta Long is an actress and educator who has entertained children for over thirty years in her television role as "Susan" on Sesame Street. In addition to her work in entertainment, Dr. Long conducts diversity workshops for parents, librarians and educators. She earned a doctorate degree in education from the University of Massachusetts. Courtney's Birthday Party, published by Just Us Books, is her first title for children

### **About the Illustrator**

Ron Garnett is an accomplished illustrator and graphic designer who has illustrated a number of books for children. They include the Great Black Heroes series published by Scholastic. A few of those titles include Great Black Heroes: Five Brave Explorers, and Great Black Heroes, Five Bold Scientists. He also illustrated Courtney's Birthday Party, published by Just Us Books. Ron lives in Kansas City, MO.

*Additional classroom resources are available our Resource Center at [www.justusbooks.com](http://www.justusbooks.com).*

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