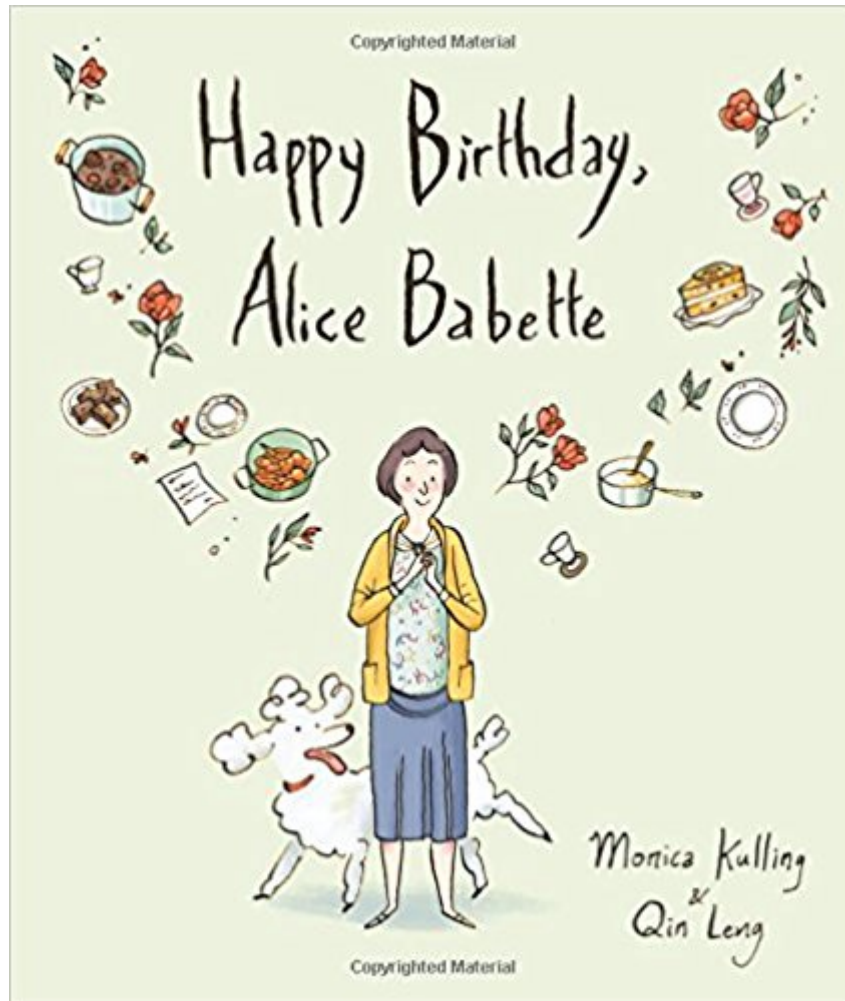




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# Happy Birthday, Alice Babette



## Synopsis

It's Alice's birthday! But her friend Gertrude seems to have forgotten. No matter, Alice goes out and enjoys her day just the same. A beautiful spring afternoon in Paris; what could be better? Little does she know that her dear friend has a few surprises up her sleeve. While Alice spends the day walking around Paris; riding a carousel in the park and watching a puppet show; Gertrude turns her attention to the kitchen. She is determined to make a lavish dinner with all of Alice's favorite things and write a poem to match the occasion. But the lure of the perfect poetic line proves to be too distracting, and just as Alice's day takes an exciting and unexpected turn, Gertrude's big dinner falls all to pieces. The poem turns out beautifully, of course, but the house is a bit of a mess. It's a good thing Alice doesn't mind cleaning up. And that she has such a good brownie recipe for their guests. Inspired by the lives of artist Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, Monica Kulling's warm and whimsical narration is perfectly balanced by Qin Leng's bright and energetic illustrations. This is a sweetly joyful story of love, friendship and creative inspiration.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 620 (What's this?)

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Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

K-Gr 3 • Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein lived famously at 27 rue de Fleurus in Paris, entertaining and encouraging writers and artists from Ernest Hemingway to Pablo Picasso. Their

loving partnership lasted nearly 40 years; while Stein (who was inept in the kitchen) wrote, Toklas cooked and kept home (and later penned a cookbook). In this fictionalized account of a birthday fête, Stein plans to surprise Toklas with a "special dinner" and celebratory poem. As Toklas spends the day strolling about the Luxembourg Gardens, stopping for a carousel ride and a puppet show, Stein shops for the groceries. Disaster ensues when, as the "pot lids tap-dance" on the stove, "the perfect line" for the poem pops into Stein's head, and off she races to write it down. But all's well that ends well: Toklas returns home, tidies up, and makes her renowned brownies; Stein's poem is written; her adventure in the kitchen becomes a story; and friends arrive for dinner, arms laden with food and gifts. Leng's watercolor art is full of fluid line, amusing detail, and movement is framed by the white backgrounds it rests against. Interior and exterior scenes are comprised of spot-art groupings or span spreads. Pastels predominate, but there's always a splash of red awnings, a rug, a pot to draw the eye. VERDICT It's unlikely that the book's audience will have heard of this couple, but no matter; a birthday surprise upturned and righted is always cause for delight. Daryl Grabarek, School Library Journal

"It's unlikely that the book's audience will have heard of this couple, but no matter; a birthday surprise upturned and righted is always cause for delight." #151; School Library Journal "Leng's (A Walk on the Shoreline) airy ink drawings bring just the right chic Parisian energy to this odd-couple story." #151; Publishers Weekly "A rose is a rose, and loving friendship is loving friendship, as this sweet celebration makes clear." #151; Kirkus Reviews "The cartoonish, fine-lined ink illustrations . . . capture the sunny energy of a Paris springtime." #151; Booklist "All . . . can enjoy Qin Leng's air ink and digital-color illustrations of April in Paris and the affectionately funny portrait of a legendary friendship." The Horn Book "Author Monica Kulling and illustrator Qin Leng invite the imagination into Gertrude and Alice's world through a tender fictionalized day in the couple's real life. The sweetness and sincerity of their love rises above the language and radiates from the story itself." Brain Pickings "[Happy Birthday, Alice Babette] give[s] kids a sense of what respect looks and feels like without ever resorting to the word itself." #151; Quill & Quire". . . the most palatable parts of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas's lives provide rich inspiration for this charming story of friendship." #151; Globe and Mail". . . provides an enchanting glimpse into the Parisian life of the two women and their fondness for each other and life in general." #151; CanLit for Little Canadians

What happens when Gertrude Stein becomes the cook as a surprise for Alice B.'s birthday, taking

over Alice's usual responsibility? That's what occurs in this whimsical story about one of the literary and art world's most famous couples. Of course Gertrude's interest in writing the perfect birthday poem for Alice gets in the way resulting in a disastrous meal and a messy, messy kitchen! The illustrations capture April in Paris and the two ladies from 27 rue de Fleurus beautifully.

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