

We're In Charge of Celebrations!
By LREI's 8th Grade, November 2007
Modeled on Byrd Baylor's Picture Book *I'm In Charge of Celebrations*

Sometimes people ask me
"How can you stand living in New York?
Isn't it noisy?
Isn't it dirty? Isn't it crowded and chaotic and cramped?"

I guess they mean
The overflowing trash cans
The sirens at night, and the packed streets
The homeless people, and the pigeons and rats

I guess they mean the filthy subways
The stupid tourists and constant honking
The slight chance of getting hit by a car or mugged
And the crazy people wandering the street

I guess they forgot
The lights in Times Square
And they way a trip to the Bronx Zoo
Can make you feel five years old
And how beautiful the Hudson River can be

I guess they forgot
Central Park in winter
The museums and restaurants and all the things to do
The incredible distinction of being a New Yorker
And how New York is, simply, the best place on earth

But after considering this
I can't help but laugh out loud
And give them a quizzical look
And then I say
"How? How do I stand living in New York?
It's easy.
You should try it."

A party
That is what New York City is like
It's always crowded like driving on the turnpike
"Arriba, arriba" is what my friends say
They party in the streets and have fun everyday.
Times Square, the streets are always filled with lights
The buildings aren't for you
If you're afraid of heights
There are a couple of great sights
So I'm done rapping, listen to what my homies write.
It's me in NY getting my chunk of the big apple pie
All the art and the smells,
Hear the carolers singing "jingle bells"
See the city snow as it falls to the ground
It's going down
See a pigeon flaps its wings and soar
Living in NYC I can't ask for more
The Statue of Liberty from the highway,
In NY I do it my way
I love city lights and busy streets Living in New York City
I also love the NY heats

In summer you can barely breathe
And in winter the city's cold as ice
I love eating Chinese food with rice
And the Indian spice
That's what attracts all the little mice
All the different races
People's faces
Everybody comes from different places
As I sit in the subway station
I realize, I'm in charge of celebrations!

Living in New York City
Means
Celebrations everyday
Because we make our own
Celebrations
The cultures of this city
Chinatown, Little Italy, Spanish Harlem
Make up the word
The colors
Smells
Decorations
Tie everything together

The Little Italy Festival
Down in Soho
Brings heavy accents
Strong smells of
Sour meat
Italian games
The richness of the
Atmosphere
This is a celebration

This was an ordinary day
But since I'm in charge
Of celebrations,
It became one.
I wish you were here
Everyday is pizza day
Pizza Box
The hang out spot
For the school down the block
Seasonings
Pepper, Garlic Salt
Anything you want
All you need is \$2.25.

The city's famous hot dogs
Boiled and made right in front of your face
The smell of the meat is simply entrancing
The smoke fills the streets with hunger,
Even the subway can't escape
Tons and tons of its carts cross the island
I am just waiting in line for the chance to have my own dog
Imagine: thousands of dogs are being made right now!

School, I wish you were here when the Gyro Cart was
Outside the school
The savory chicken
The succulent lettuce and tomatoes
I would walk down the steps
Smell the delicious meat roasting on the grill to go
On the corner of Bleeker Street and Sixth Avenue
The Middle Eastern vender
Was cool and cooked a million miles a minute
On his silver train car kitchen on wheels
With plumes of smoke filling the air
Coming into the windows of the school
I place my Gyro order
Wait for him to do his magic
He puts white sauce on Gyros
The first bite spills all over me
But I don't care because there's a
Steaming hot Gyro left to devour
Warm and peaceful, but then I'm full
Where did that cart go?
Every Gyro cart I see I ask them to come to
Sixth and Bleecker.

My friends you should have been there to eat
The sizzle of the bacon
Sang a melody of deliciousness.
The quick Queens talking style
Of the guy cooking the meat
Reminded me of the New York City home I possessed
The smell of the meat embraced my nose with a kiss
In my mouth, a delicious and tasty vortex of cheese,
bacon, burger meat, and lettuce
Now I "celebrate" this day every sixth of November,
I call it Birthday Burger Day.

Once I saw a chicken on a sidewalk
It wasn't fried
Alive, scratching, pecking
Bobbing its brown head
I thought it was a pigeon
Although it was the color of the crisp morning sky

It seemed out of place in the tall, gray city
Now April 5th is standing chicken day
New York is that chicken
Out of place in the world

That was probably the only chicken alive on the
Clustered strets of New York City
And I was lucky enough to be
One of the few people to see it

Uptown preppy to Chinatown
West side, east side
Up and down
Orthodox Jews with peyos
Jehovah's witness with an affro
Fur coats to no coats
Rich to the poor
Plethora of colors mixed all around
Good smells bad smells
Dirty street, summer's heat

Icy street, watch your feet
Tourists always search and seek
Homie got the bling bling as his cell phone ring dings
Old man with a brief case puts on a frowning face
Is it a mixed salad or melting pot?
One may always wonder
I can help you not
Just "stand clear of closing doors"
As the subway takes its course
Open yourself to the sights
And see all the flashing lights

The way I see it
The best events
Are with
Everyone.
Where we can share our
Own ideas and do what
We want.
When we can show the
World that we
Have our own
Ways of celebrating
Our one special day.
This my friend is
Halloween!

Under the full moon
We walk the streets
Pushing past the giant
Mobs of
Werewolves,
Zombies,
And Vampires,
Oh my!

Going from house
To house, from store
To store,
Filling our bags
With delicious candy
Enjoying the thrill of
Halloween itself
And everything
It represents.

We are thankful
For Halloween
Because now
We're in charge of celebrations!

On June twenty-eighth
I celebrate
Bagel Day

Here's what I do:
I walk
The streets
Of New York,
Humming softly
As I go.

I buy bagels from
Murray's
Bagels on the Square
Zabars
And H&H.

I place them
In a brown paper bag.
Plain,
Poppy,
Onion,
Cinnamon raisin,
And more.

I walk
To Washington Square Park.
I seat myself
On a bench
And sink my teeth into one.

Last time,
I brought toppings.
Cream cheese,
Lox,
Butter,
Cinnamon,
And Nutella.

The next day,
I had a stomachache,
But it was worth it.

Next year
I'll make it even better.
I will invite my friends along.
Then I won't have to eat
So many bagels.

One
Of my greatest
Of all celebrations
Is called
The time of exploding lights.

It lasts
One night
In July.
I wait
All year
To see
The sparkling
Reflections
And the
Sky going
Wild.

You could call them
Common,
But me, I like
To say
Magical.

All the night
I lay on the roof.

My eyes are
Drawn to the sky

And every time
A streak of light
Goes shooting
Through the city,
My heart skips a beat.

One night
I saw a fire-bolt
Coming to get
Me.

It disappeared
And I squinted
Searching for
The light.

The strange thing was
I met a man
Who told me
He was followed too
But he was on
The other side
Of the city.

He said he never
Slept again that night.
Suddenly,
It appeared that we
Connected
In a way
No one else
Could understand.
Every night in July,
I'll think of him.

I've waited all year for this event.

Now, at 7:00, with only 4 hours, 59 minutes and 59
Seconds left, I have nothing to do but sit down,
Eat hot dog wieners and
Sneakily sip some of my parent's champagne.

When my parents walk in, all they say is, "Shame, shame."
I just throw balloons and confetti at them.
They laugh and walk away.

Now I'm alone again.

And as you can see, I'm partying like crazy.
It's New Years, who doesn't?

I always treasure these moments.
This is my time, and my space.
It's usually VERY hard to get your own space in New York
With the number of calls you get on midnight, with people
Yelling "Happy New Year!"

So far a minute has passed
I decide to turn on the post, post, post, post show.
Of course by then,
I'm asleep and missing the party of my life.

I wake up to find myself sprawled out
5 minutes after the ball had dropped.
The only words that can escape from my mouth,
Are the ones that are used to yell at my parents for
Not trying harder to wake me up.

So I flipped on the TV and got to watch a million replays of
the ball dropping, but it wasn't the same.

Right then I realized that
New Years could be whenever I want.

So I decided that New Years would be at 12:05,
Right after everyone else's,
And that would be *my* own time.

The tattered surface of the sidewalk
Is hidden under gum, trash, and debris
It grounds me as
I head toward my destination.

I cross the street as the red hand
Blatantly tells me not to--
Engines roar, horns honk and curses hurl
While I scramble to the safety of the sidewalk.

As I look down at the uneven, crooked surface that
Supports 8 million people each day
I am suddenly entranced by the beauty of the sidewalk we
All share--
A woman asks me, "Are you alright?"

And I realize
We are all in charge of creating celebrations each day.
The perfect day at Little Red.
Not one day, but all of the days in the year
Here in the middle of the village.
Celebrities
Homeless people
Drug dealers
Friends
And us

Crowded with buildings, a rainbow of colors.

Pizza Box and Artie's Deli
Pinkberry and Bagels on the Square

Ball Parks and the sidewalk
Music everywhere.

At school
Feeling warm, close, happy
Easy going and laid back
The teachers
Always helpful and funny.

The amazing memories of our years at Little Red
The Colonial Museum and Williamsburg
The Medieval Pageant and Building Mosques
The Egyptian Tomb and Meditation

Our memories here have grown with us.
Finally after years of listening
To the poems of eighth grades past
Now **WE** are in charge of LREI celebrations.