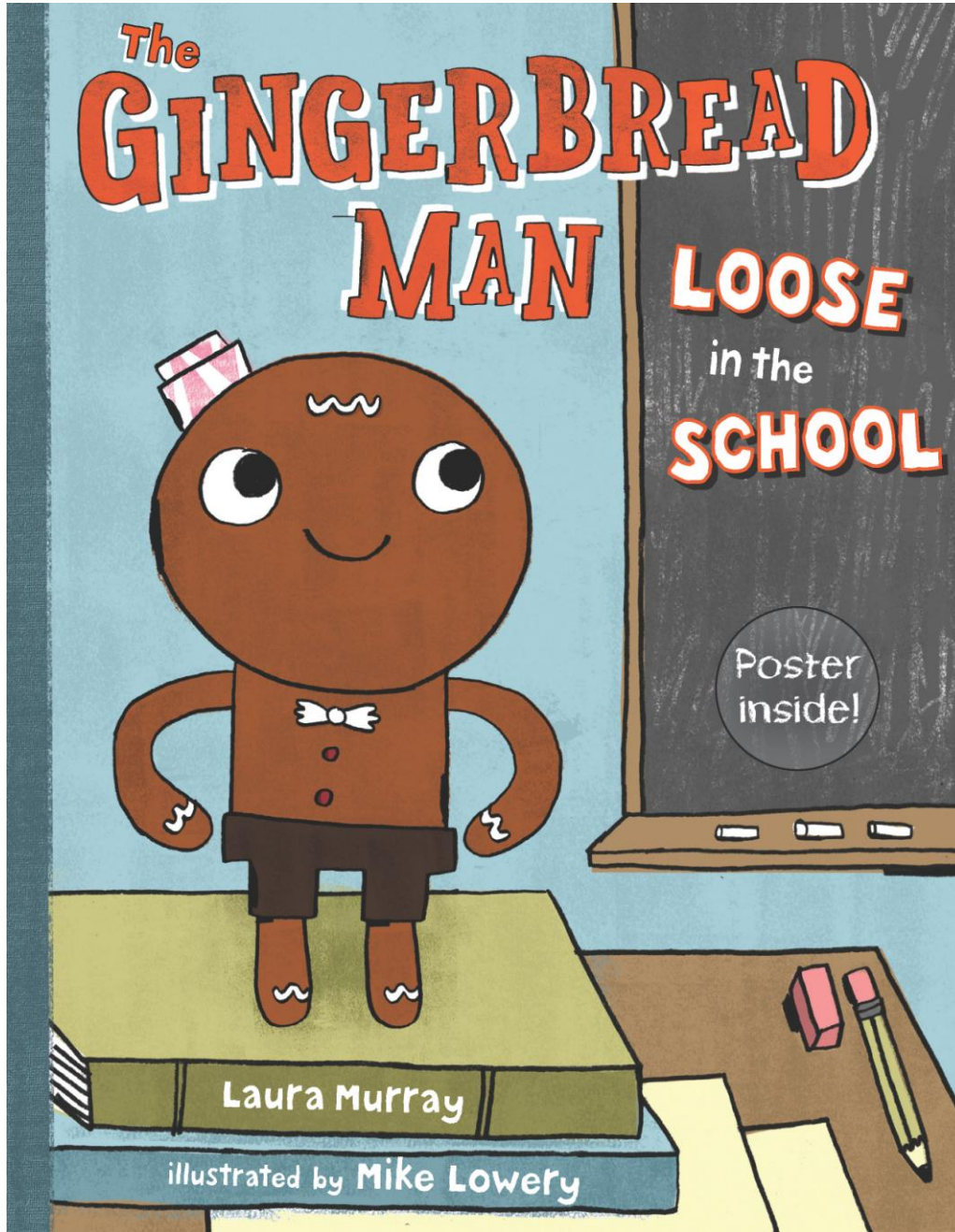


A Teacher's Guide to  
**THE GINGERBREAD MAN  
LOOSE IN THE SCHOOL**

Written by Laura Murray  
Illustrated By Mike Lowery



THE GINGERBREAD MAN LOOSE IN THE SCHOOL Text © 2011 by Laura Murray  
Illustrations © by Mike Lowery; Design by Ryan Thomann  
G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers

## Honors and Praise for **The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School**

### A Junior Library Guild Selection

“A spry, role-reversing story told through comic-book panels and buoyant verse...Cookie-related humor runs through both Murray's rhymes and Lowery's cartoons, as the gingerbread man—as dapper as he is determined—tracks a group of students through their school...The gingerbread man's introduction to friendly, identifiable school landmarks echoes the experience of new students.” ~*Publishers Weekly*

“And so begins his rollicking rhyming adventure as [the gingerbread man] runs, limps, slides and skips his way through the school, guided on his way by the friendly teachers he meets...Teachers looking for a new way to start off the school year will eat this one up.” ~*Kirkus Reviews*

## **Story Summary**

Fresh out of the oven, the Gingerbread Man is ready for school. But when recess arrives, the class who baked him leaves him behind! Luckily, he's one smart cookie and takes off after them: “I'll run and I'll run, as fast as I can. I can catch them! I'm their Gingerbread Man.”

With the help of the gym teacher, the nurse, the art teacher, and even the principal, the Gingerbread Man finds his way back to his class and discovers that they have been searching for him, too. A deliciously sweet ending is served up for both the Gingerbread Man and the children who made him.

Bouncing rhymes and charming illustrations make this twist on the classic story an instant read-aloud favorite.

## About the Author



**LAURA MURRAY** was a teacher before becoming a writer. At the beginning of every single school year, a freshly baked gingerbread man managed to escape from her class. She says, “We hung missing posters and searched the halls, discovering crumbs and dropped candies, as we asked school staff members where he might be. But somehow, he always found his way back to our classroom on his own—one smart cookie! Still, I couldn’t help but wonder what adventures he’d had while he was out and about.”

Laura lives with her family in northern Virginia and this is her first children’s book. Learn more about Laura and her work at [www.LauraMurrayBooks.com](http://www.LauraMurrayBooks.com).

## About the Illustrator

From <http://argyleacademy.com>: **MIKE LOWERY** lives in a tiny cottage surrounded by trees where he mostly just makes art. His work has been seen in galleries and publications internationally and he is Professor of Illustration at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Atlanta. His daughter, Allister, loves it when he draws faces on their bananas.

His illustration clients include: Digitas, Hallmark, Simon and Schuster, Bilingual Readers (Madrid), Random House, Walker Books for Young Readers, Nick Jr. magazine, Disney, Gallison/Mudpuppy, G.P. Putnam’s Sons Book for Young Readers, as well as many graphic design and advertising agencies. He has been featured/interviewed in *The Washington Post* and the *Washington City Paper*, and a few years back, he showed 16 of his tiny drawings in a show in Beijing. His work has been featured recently in several books including "Print and Pattern" a collection of illustrated patterns and surface design.

## Pre-Reading

### Building Background Knowledge

Ask students what they already know about the gingerbread man story. Discuss the different endings they may have heard and ask which one they like best, and why.

Choose a traditional version of the story to share with students, like *The Gingerbread Man* by Karen Schmidt. Ask students how they feel about the ending (when the fox eats the gingerbread man). If they could change the story, what would they change? Why?

- *Make connections between previous experiences and reading selections.*

### Take a Book Walk

Show the front cover of *The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School*, including the author's and illustrator's names. What are the author's and illustrator's jobs?

Compared with the original version, how would the story change if the setting were in a school? Who would the characters be? What might the refrain be (instead of: "Run, run, as fast as you can. You can't catch me—I'm the Gingerbread Man!")

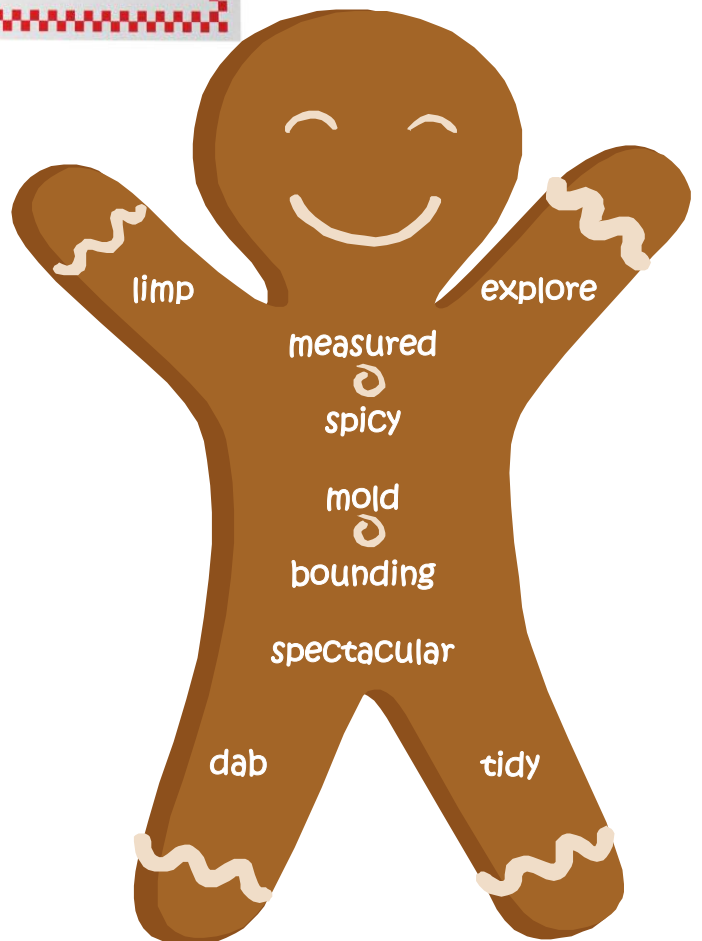
Take a book walk and show children the illustrations. Have them predict what is happening throughout the story.

- *Preview the selection by using pictures and titles.*
- *Make predictions about content.*
- *Identify what an author does and what an illustrator does.*

# Vocabulary

Your students may be unfamiliar with the following words. Encourage them to use text and picture clues to infer meanings.

Recipe	Serves: _____
Dish: _____	
<b>Words:</b>	
ginger	
Cinnamon	
molasses	
licorice	



- Use meaning clues, pictures, and language structure to expand vocabulary when reading.
- Use context to read unfamiliar words.



## Discussion Questions

1. Who made the gingerbread man? (*knowledge*)
2. Why did the children leave the gingerbread behind? (*comprehension*)
3. What would you do if you ran into the gingerbread man? How would you help him? (*application*)
4. Who do you think was the most helpful to the gingerbread man? Why? (*analysis*)
5. Now that the children have found their gingerbread man, what will they do with him? (*synthesis*)
6. Did the gingerbread man do the right thing when he left the classroom to go and look for the children? Why or why not? (*evaluation*)

## Student Activities

### Gingerbread Men

Compare *The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School* with some of these versions:

- ▶ *Cajun Gingerbread Boy* by Berthe Amoss
- ▶ *The Gingerbread Baby* by Jan Brett
- ▶ *The Gingerbread Boy* by Richard Egielski (urban setting)
- ▶ *The Gingerbread Cowboy* by Janet Squires, illustrated by Holly Berry
- ▶ *The Gingerbread Girl* by Lisa Campbell Ernst
- ▶ *Gingerbread Man, Superhero* by Dotti Enderle, illustrated by Joe Kulka
- ▶ *The Gingerbread Man* by Eric Kimmel, illustrated by Megan Lloyd
- ▶ *The Library Gingerbread Man* by Dotti Enderle, illustrated by Colleen M.
- ▶ *MaddenMusubi Man: Hawaii's Gingerbread Man* by Sandi Takayama, illustrated by Pat Hall

Compare the stories using a chart like the one below. Once the chart is complete, let students vote for their favorite story. Give them each a small gingerbread man to create a bar graph to visually display the results.

<b>Title, Author and Illustrator</b>	<b>Characters:</b>	<b>Setting:</b>	<b>Plot:</b>	<b>Refrain:</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"> <u>The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School</u>                       By Laura Murray                       Illustrated by Mike Lowery                 </p>				

- *Identify the elements of narrative structure, including setting, character, and conflict.*
- *Compare and contrast settings, characters, and events.*
- *Draw conclusions about character and plot.*
- *Summarize major points found in fiction materials.*
- *Understand basic plots of fairy tales, myths, folktales, legends, and fables.*
- *Read, construct, and interpret a simple picture and bar graph.*

## Lost and Found

In *The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School*, the gingerbread man gets lost when he sets out to find the children. Ask students what they do (or should do) when they get lost. Invite a safety officer to your school to discuss what children should do if they become separated from their caregivers.

Share the book ahead of time with the officer. On the day of the visit, have students ask the officer what the gingerbread man did right (asked adults who worked in the school for help) and what the gingerbread man did not do right (wandered off alone). Then make plans for what to do if students are ever lost outside of school.

- Explain the need for specific rules and practices to promote personal safety.

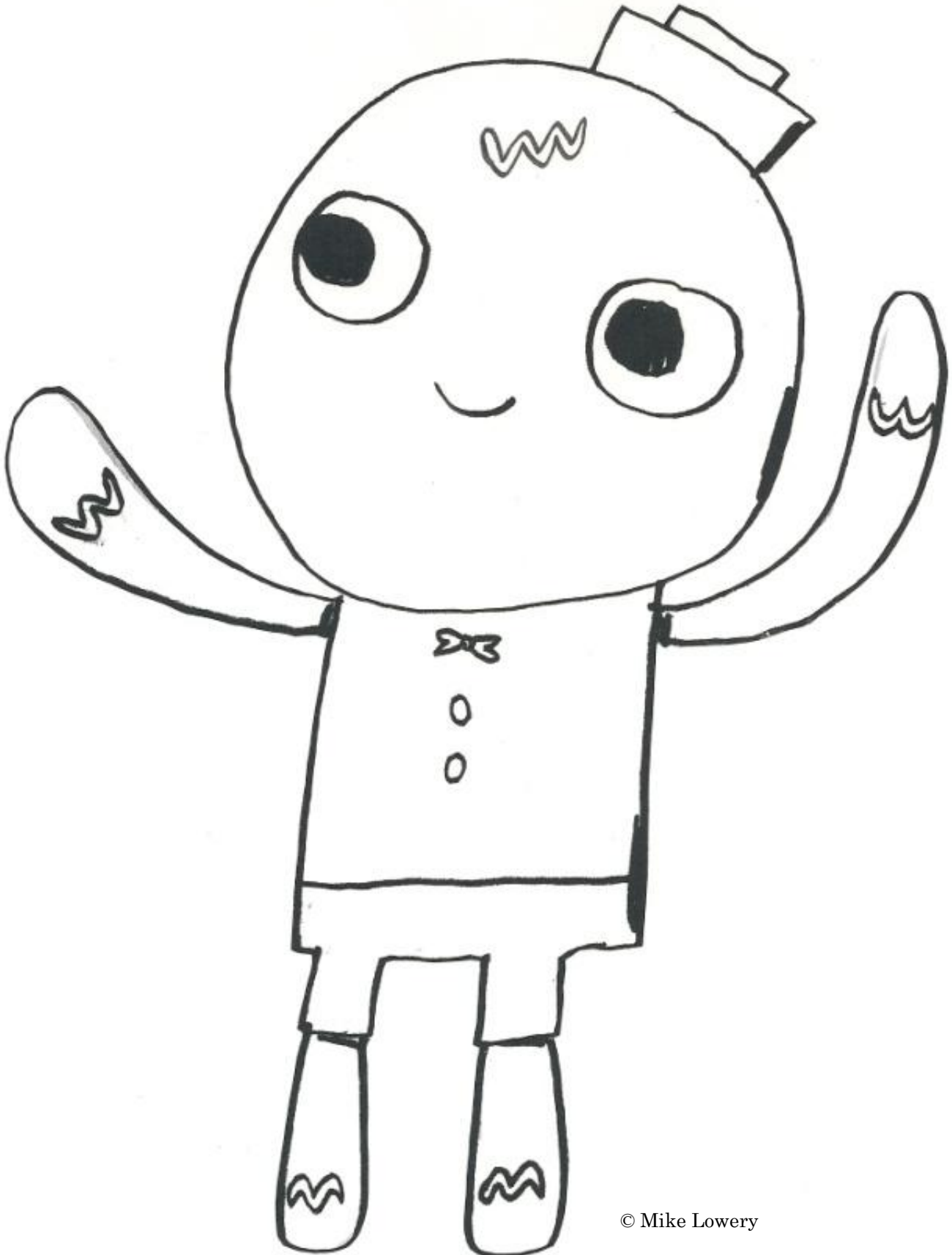
## Gingerbread Man Loose in the World

Let students each decorate their own gingerbread person, using either the template on the next page or their own design. Ask students to bring in stamped envelopes addressed to friends and relatives in faraway places. Use the letter template on the following page or have students compose their own letters.

As the responses come in and the gingerbread people return, use a map to keep track of where your students' gingerbread men have been. Post any photos, postcards, or mementos next to the map.

- *Write letters.*
- *Use simple maps to develop an awareness that a map is a drawing of a place to show where things are located.*
- *Develop an awareness that maps and globes show a view from above, show things in smaller size, and show the position of objects.*



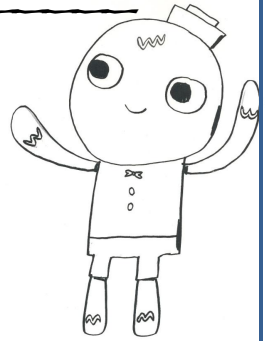


© Mike Lowery

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

In my class, we read a book called The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School by Laura Murray, illustrated by Mike Lowery. My favorite part of the story was when



© Mike Lowery

---

---

---

I am sending you a gingerbread person I made named \_\_\_\_\_. Please show my gingerbread person around your town and send a photo so we can see what you did and saw together. Please return my gingerbread person to me with a photo. Here is my school's address:

---

---

---

Thank you,

## Gingerbread Houses

In the end of the story, the students made a house for the gingerbread man. Have your students do the same. Wash out small milk cartons with soap and hot water and let them dry. Staple the top closed.

Make Royal Icing with:

- 3 Tablespoons meringue powder
- 1 lb. (4 cups) powdered sugar
- 6 Tablespoons warm water

Mix the ingredients together with a mixer for 8 to 10 minutes on low speed. This makes about 3 cups of icing.

Using the icing, adhere the carton to a paper plate then “glue” graham cracker squares on the sides of the carton. Use two more graham cracker squares for the roof (or make smaller roof tiles).

Let students decorate the houses with pretzels, gumdrops, chocolate chips and other candy. Challenge them to create and describe patterns.

If food allergies are an issue in your class, let students use paper squares instead of graham crackers, and decorate with non-edible decorations like buttons, sequins and yarn.

Have students look at their finished houses and list the shapes they see. What shapes are on their friends' houses? How are the houses different? The same?

Tally the number of shapes used by the class then analyze the data. Which shapes were used the most? The least?

- *Student will describe the location of one object relative to another (above, below, next to) and identify representations of plane geometric figures (circle, triangle, square, and rectangle).*
- *Compare the size (larger, smaller) and shape of plane geometric figures (circle, triangle, square, and rectangle).*
- *Identify, describe, and extend a repeating relationship (pattern) found in common objects.*
- *Gather data relating to familiar experiences by counting and tallying.*

## Newcomer Book

For directions on how to go on your own class gingerbread man hunt, visit author Laura Murray's website: <http://www.lauramurraybooks.com/teachers-librarians.html>.

Take photos along the way, then let children write the story of their school gingerbread man hunt using the clues as scaffolding. Bind the pages into a class book. When a new student joins your class roster, let students buddies use the book to take the new student on a tour of the school and meet helpful staff members.

- *Organize writing to include a beginning, middle, and end.*
- *Share writing with others.*
- *Identify the intended audience.*

## Cookie Cutters Galore

Cookie cutters of all shapes (including letters and numbers) can be used for more than making cookies. Use them for:

√ Creating stamps with paint

√ Cutting out food in fun shapes, such as bread, cheese, Jello, pancakes and watermelon slices (Put craft sticks in watermelon shapes and freeze them for a sunny day treat.)

√ Making shapes from play dough

√ Tracing stencils

√ Fill with a photo for a frame

- *Identify, describe, and draw two-dimensional (plane) geometric figures (circle, triangle, square, and rectangle).*
- *Understand the elements of art and the principles of design as they relate to artistic expression and communication.*

## Sensational Senses

Everyone loves the smell of cookies baking in the oven! Try the gingerbread cookie recipe on the back of the poster that comes with *The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School*.

Put the following ingredients in small cups and label them only with numbers:

Dish: \_\_\_\_\_ Serves: \_\_\_\_\_

**Recipe**

1. flour
2. baking soda/powder
3. salt
4. ground ginger
5. ground cinnamon
6. ground cloves
7. molasses
8. brown sugar
9. vanilla

List the ingredients on chart paper or an interactive whiteboard. Let students smell each cup and try to guess which ingredient is inside.

If possible, bring the warm gingerbread cookies into the classroom as soon as they are out of the oven. Explain that the cookies must cool before they can be decorated or eaten. In the meantime, give each child a set of identical 1-inch stickers. On a chart labeled with the time, ask students who can smell the fresh cookies to put a sticker on the chart in a vertical line (like a bar graph).

Proceed with normal classroom activities, but stop at regular intervals (every 5 to 10 minutes) and have children repeat the activity with the stickers on the chart. After 15 to 20 minutes, only those sitting nearest to the cookies will likely report that they can still smell the cookies. When most children can no longer detect the gingerbread smell, take a class break (for lunch or recess) and then come back into the room. Now have the children repeat the sticker activity with the chart. Almost all of them should now be able to smell the cookies again.

Discuss why they temporarily “lost” their sense of smell. (We become desensitized to smells over time). What might happen if our brains “paid attention” to all smells all the time?

- *Gather data relating to familiar experiences.*
- *Read, construct, and interpret a simple picture and bar graph.*
- *Investigate and understand that humans have senses that allow one to seek, find, take in, and react or respond to information in order to learn about one's surroundings.*

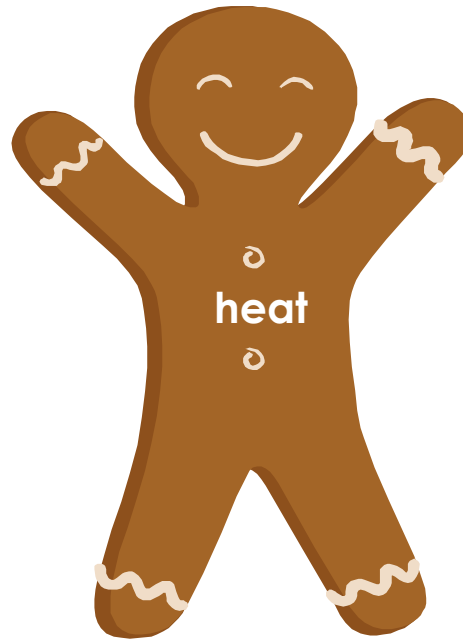
## Baking Up Rhymes

Copy the following gingerbread men in color on cardstock. Stick a magnet on the back of each one and set out cookie sheets. Invite students to match up rhyming sets on the cookie sheets either by reading the words or listening to them read by someone else.

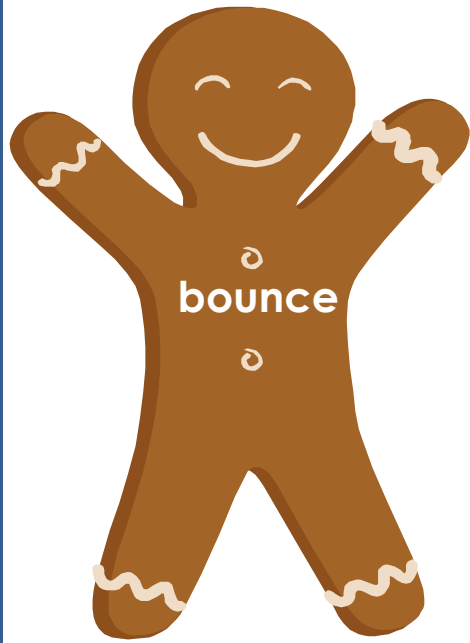
- *Recognize rhyming words.*
- *Identify orally words that rhyme.*

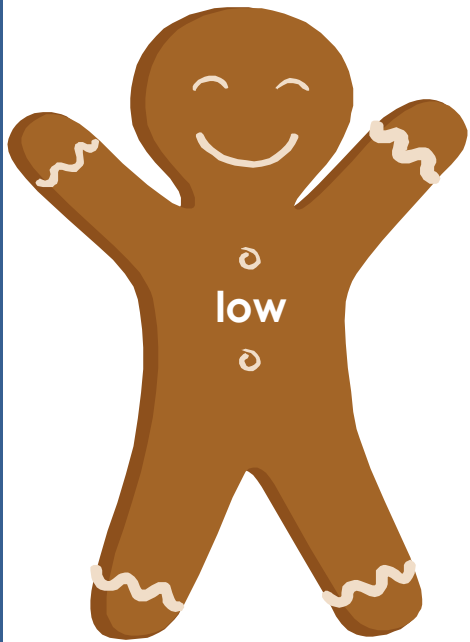


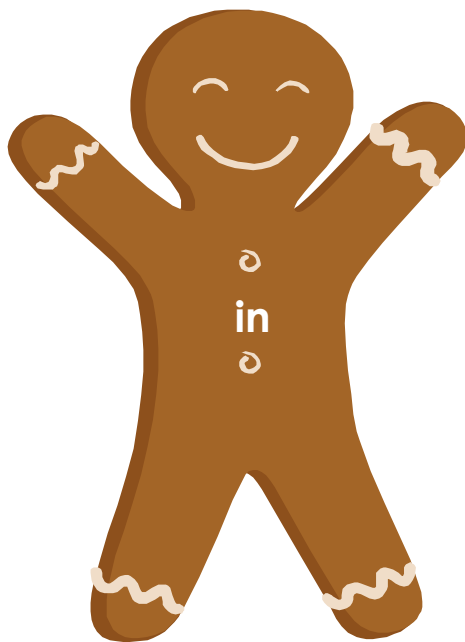
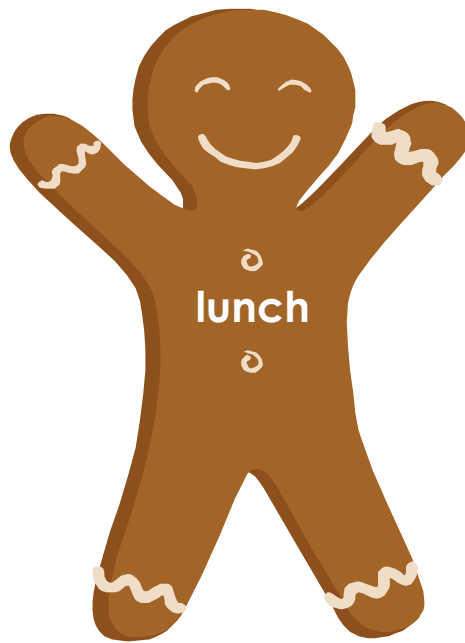
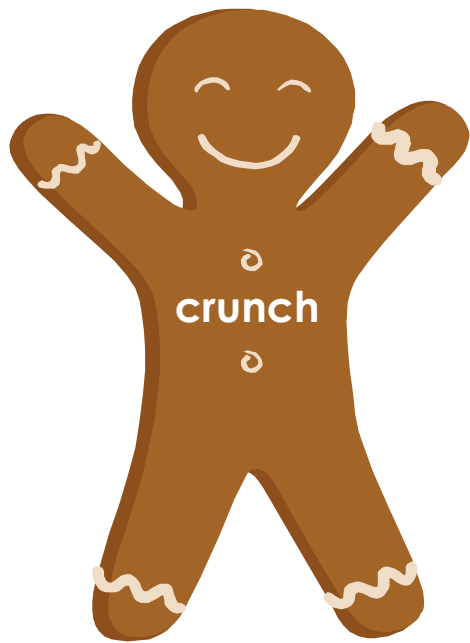




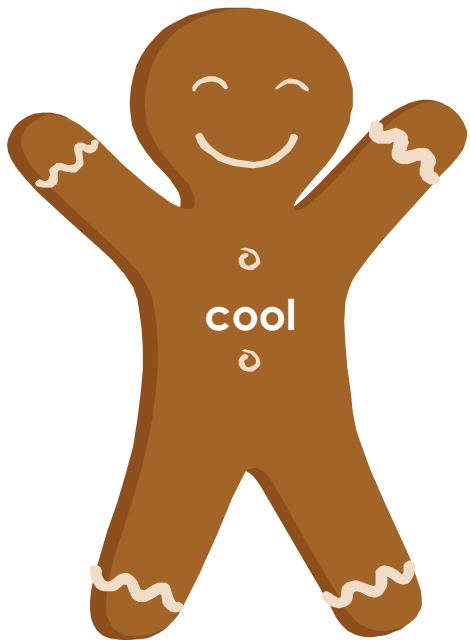
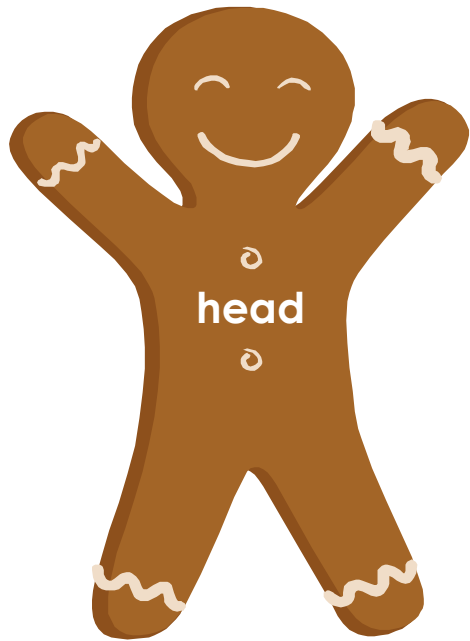














## An Interview with Author Laura Murray



**How did you get the idea for *The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School*?**

I was a teacher before becoming a writer, and *The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School* was inspired by a Kindergarten Gingerbread Man unit I taught at the beginning of each school year. In class, we compared and contrasted different versions of the Gingerbread Man story and used Gingerbread Man activities for each subject. But at the end of the unit, our freshly baked Gingerbread Man always managed to escape from the classroom. We hung missing posters and searched the halls, discovering crumbs and dropped candies, as we asked school staff where he might be. But he always found his way back to our classroom on his own - one smart cookie!

My students absolutely loved this unit and would come back years later asking if the Gingerbread Man had escaped yet. Even though we read many versions of the Gingerbread Man story during the unit, there was not one that mirrored the fun of our school Gingerbread Man chase. So I decided to try and write a new version. I started wondering what adventures the Gingerbread Man might have had while he was out and about, and then I began to ask *what if...*? What if the story was set in a school? What if the story was told by the Gingerbread Man himself? What if he was trying to *find* the class who made him, instead of running away from them? Those "what if" questions helped me imagine a Gingerbread Man adventure that was sprinkled with fresh, funny twists to set it apart from the traditional tale.

**Once the idea came to you, what happened next? Did you jot it down right away? Let it simmer?**

I wrote it down right away and put it in a file I have for story ideas. But I found that I couldn't quit thinking about the fun possibilities for this story, and that's when I knew I needed to finally pursue my long-time interest in children's writing. I wanted the story to be from the Gingerbread Man's point of view, so I started asking him questions. What did he want? What was getting in the way of what he wanted? What exciting, funny, or mischievous things could he do in a school? The story simmered as I wrote my first drafts, and it got better with each rewrite. I did some research and joined an organization called The Society of Children's Book

Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI.) I also bought books and went to conferences to learn all that I could about writing for children. When I felt it was ready for others to see, I joined a local writing critique group. They provided wonderful feedback that led to several more rounds of revision. *The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School* went through over 50 drafts before I finally felt that it was ready to start submitting to publishers.

**What did you find the most challenging about writing this book? The most rewarding?**

The most challenging thing about writing this book was the rhythm and rhyme. The story is written in verse. Verse can be a lot of fun to read out loud if done well and children love to predict the refrains and ending rhymes, but fitting a 900 word story into such a rigid pattern can be quite a challenge.

The most rewarding thing about writing this book was being able to use my imagination to create something that I hope children, teachers, and parents alike will enjoy for a long time to come. And also to see how my publisher's (GP Putnam's Sons) vision and Mike Lowery's illustrations made the story come to life!

**How did the illustrations come about?**

I am not an illustrator or artist. My art ability amounts to stick figures with boxy clothes and a splash of color outside the lines. But my publisher, GP Putnam's Sons, works with some very talented illustrators. Once they acquired my story, they searched for an illustrator whose style matched the text. I remember when they first showed me Mike Lowery's work. I loved it, but it was different than what I had imagined and from other Gingerbread Man illustrations I'd seen. I quickly realized, though, that this difference is exactly what makes his work so genius - it complements the story with a fresh, hip, child-friendly style that is absolutely perfect!

**Do you have a writing routine?**

I have three young children, so I work my writing time around our family time. But when it is "writing time," I stick to it. My brain seems to work best in the morning, when things are quiet. I have tried to make my writing environment fun and cozy, filled with children's books, writing quotes, pictures, a big window to stare out of and think, a warm cup of coffee, and of course - my friend and occasional enemy - my computer. (Although, plain paper and a pen work just fine as well!) I try to

break writing into bite-sized pieces that are doable in the time I have and not to go back and "fix" my work while I am writing. It is never perfect the first, second, or even third time I write it - I don't expect it to be - I just try to let the ideas and story come out and turn off my inner critic.

One of my favorite "must-haves" for writing is a big gingerbread-colored coffee mug that my children and I made on Mother's Day at a pottery place. It says "Imagine" on one side and "Mischief" on the other. I always try to keep those two words in mind when writing for children.

**How did you know you wanted to become a writer? When did you begin to think of yourself as a writer?**

I think my love for writing came from reading. I love to escape and be the character for a while. I have actually put off reading the end of some of my favorite books because I knew I would be really sad when the adventure ended.

In college, I took a children's literature course for my Education degree and absolutely loved it. I remember thinking that "someday" it would be wonderful not to just read books, but to write them as well. That dream simmered for a long time, until I came up with the Gingerbread Man story idea. It pushed me to learn more about writing for children and really dedicate myself to becoming a children's writer.

If you love to read and love to write, then you are a writer in your heart. I started to think of myself as a writer as soon as I decided to pursue writing for children. You have to believe in yourself first, and then with hard work, perseverance, feedback, and revision - you can come up with a creation that will convince others that you are writer as well. One of my favorite quotes by Richard Bach is, "A professional writer is an amateur who didn't quit."

**What is the best piece of writing advice you have ever received?**

To actually sit in the chair and WRITE. Sounds simple doesn't it, but how often have we heard someone say, *I've always wanted to try writing a book?* And I was just as guilty of that "someday dream" mentality as everyone else who has ever thought of writing. There are so many great ideas out there, but deciding to make the time to actually write them down and craft them into a story, seems to be one of the hardest steps in the process. The minutia of daily life will absolutely keep you

from writing if you let it. So I decided to take Jane Yolen's # 1 piece of advice on writing - "BIC" (bottom in chair).

### **What advice do you have for young writers?**

1. Read, read, read.
2. Keep journals about your daily life and DON'T throw them away when you get older. Reading them later will remind you of how you feel now.
3. Write stories. You don't have to show them to anyone, but keep them. I remember sitting in English classes wondering if I was really ever going to use all that information about grammar, sentence parts, story structure, etc. Well, guess what—you really do.
4. Need ideas? Think of situations in your life or a story you know, and ask what if something else had happened? This is exactly what I did with *The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School*. What if he wasn't running away from the people who made him; what if he was chasing them instead?
5. You also might want to check out a book called *What's Your Story? A Young Person's Guide to Writing Fiction* by Marion Dane Bauer. This book is great for adult writers too.
6. Enter kid's writing contests. Google "kid's writing contests" and list of several options will come up.

### **When you aren't writing, what are some of your favorite things to do?**

I love to spend time with my family. We travel as much as we can, exploring new and different places. We like to make forts in the woods, climb trees, swing, and hike. I particularly enjoy making cakes, costumes, and crafty things with my kids. I love to read and go to the movies, as well. My husband and I are also scuba divers. Although I haven't done it in a while, it is a fabulous world under the sea - I have seen fish bigger than me, ship wrecks, and things glowing on night dives.

### **What is your favorite cookie?**

A warm gingerbread cookie with icing and candies (I know you may be suspicious of my answer because my book is about this very cookie, but honestly, it's my



favorite. :)) A close second would be a sugar cookie with icing - my mouth is watering just thinking about it!