

LEVELED BOOK • N

# Leap Year Birthday



**Multi  
level  
H•K•N**

Written by Brad Bolchunos • Illustrated by Dani Jones

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## Focus Question

What makes Leroy's birthday different from most people's birthdays?



"I'm a time traveler," Leroy told his friends. He waved his hands, widened his eyes, and said, *"Whoosh!"*

His friends looked less than impressed.

"Seriously?" Alan said.



“Time works differently for me,”  
Leroy said. “Today is my birthday,  
and I’m in second grade . . . but I’m  
only two years old!”

The others stared at him, then burst  
into laughter.

“You’re eight,” Lucy said, “not two.”

Leroy tried to explain. “Most of the other years don’t count. They’re sort of ‘pretend years.’ My birthday is on February 29. It’s called a **leap year** birthday, which only happens every four years. For time travelers like me, four of your years is like one of mine.”

“That’s crazy,” said Philip. “If you’re only two, maybe you should be wearing diapers.”

Leroy just looked at him. “I don’t need diapers,” he said. “I need to understand why I’m birthday **deprived.**”

The others walked away down the street together, shaking their heads in disbelief.

Leroy frowned. No one had remembered his birthday this morning—not even his mother. He didn't complain because he knew it was hard to remember something only once every four years.

Leroy wondered: What about those other people with leap year birthdays? There had to be a few out there. Were they **confounded** by this whole situation too?





Why did February 29 have to be different anyway? Why couldn't it behave like all those other days of the year? If it stopped being different, Leroy could stop being different too.

Leroy shrugged and shuffled into the kitchen. "Mom, do we have a book about time travel?" Leroy asked.

"Sorry, Leroy," Mom said, "but the library might. Let's go see."



At the library, Leroy asked the librarian, Mrs. Willowbark, about time travel. "I'm trying to **comprehend** it, but I'm only two years old," he said.

"Is that so?" she asked. "I would've guessed you were eight."

"I am eight," Leroy said. "I mean, I ought to be eight. Today is my birthday." He stole a look at his mom to see if she was paying attention.

"Aha!" cried Mrs. Willowbark.

"A **leap day** baby!"

"More of a toddler," Leroy said, "since I'm two."

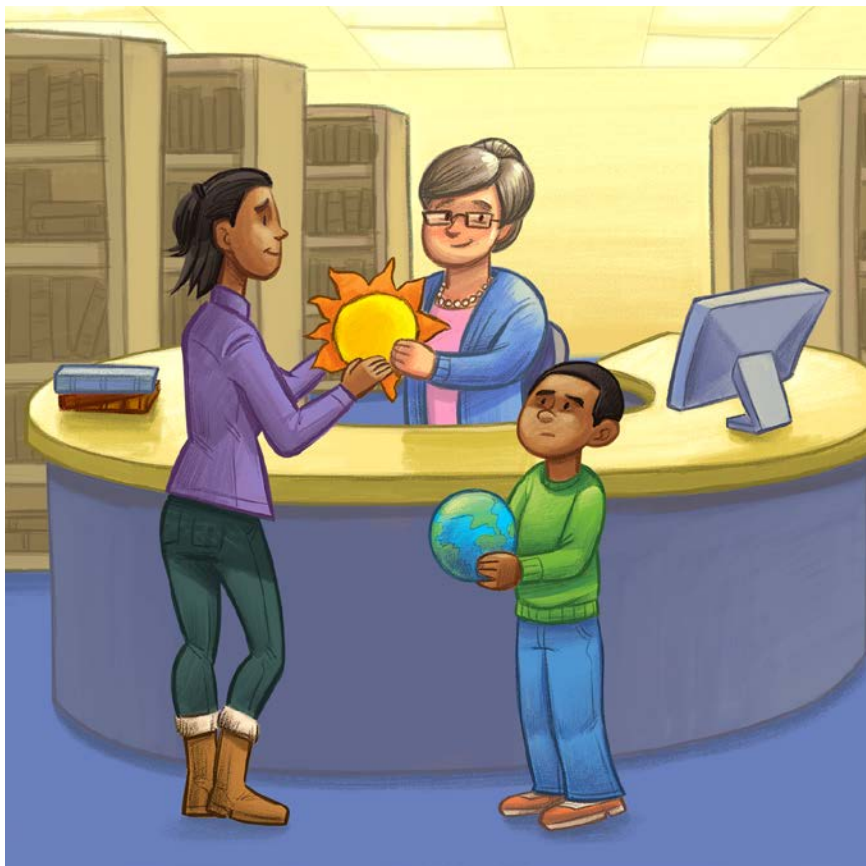
Mrs. Willowbark smiled and asked, "So is it time travel you want to know about or leap day?"



“Aren’t they the same?” Leroy asked.

“Not really,” she said. “Let’s try something.”

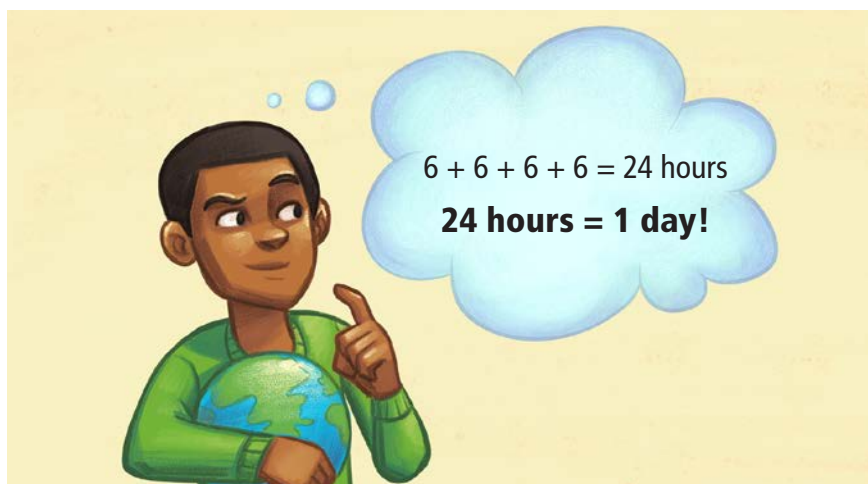
She asked Leroy’s mother to pretend she was the Sun, and Leroy to pretend he was planet Earth.



Next, she told him to spin like a top while also circling his mom.

“Every time you complete a spin, one day passes,” she told Leroy. “You also move a little bit in a big loop around the Sun. One full loop, getting back to where you started, is one year. That’s 365 spins—or days—on your journey.”





“Over time, people figured out a year was not exactly 365 days,” Mrs. Willowbark explained. “To complete a full year, you have to spin a little bit more. You need an extra quarter of a turn, or six hours, every year. In four years, that adds up to one full extra day, a special year with 366 days.”

“Calendars would not work without leap years,” she added. “In a hundred years, summer would start almost a month later.”

“Why are they called *leap years*?”

Leroy asked.

Mrs. Willowbark smiled. “Say New Year’s Eve was Sunday last year.

Usually that means it would be Monday this year, but in a leap year, it would be Tuesday. It would ‘skip’ or ‘leap’ ahead a full day.”

Leroy laughed for joy. He finally understood!





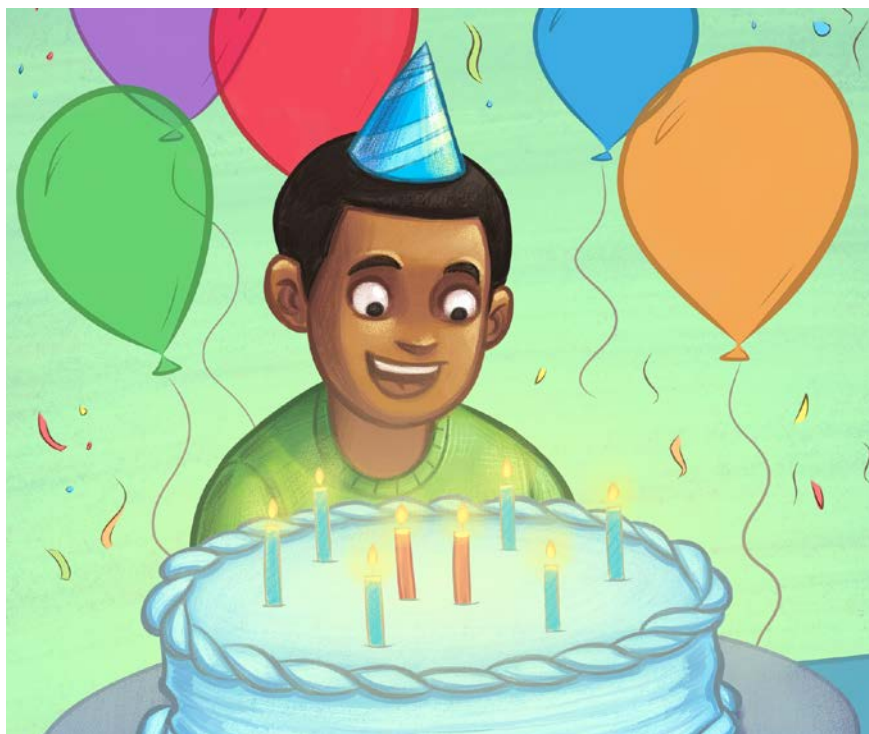
When he returned home, Leroy's friends were waiting for him, with streamers and party hats. "Happy birthday!" they shouted.

"We didn't forget—we just wanted to surprise you," Alan said. "Your mom got you out of the house while we decorated."

Leroy spun around and stared at his mom in amazement.

“When you were born, my heart leaped for joy,” Mom said.

She brought out a cake with eight candles. Six were blue and two red—Leroy’s favorite color—for his special leap year birthdays.







Mom **beamed** at Leroy like the Sun beams at the Earth. Leroy beamed back.



## Glossary

<b>beamed</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	smiled brightly or happily (p. 15)
<b>comprehend</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to understand the meaning of something (p. 8)
<b>confounded</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	caused confusion or surprise (p. 6)
<b>deprived</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	not having something important or beneficial (p. 5)
<b>leap day</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	February 29, the extra day that occurs in the calendar every four years (p. 8)
<b>leap year</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a year with an extra day in it, February 29 (p. 5)

## Words to Know

beamed

comprehend

confounded

deprived

leap day

leap year

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### Correlation

LEVEL N	
Fountas & Pinnell	M
Reading Recovery	20
DRA	28

# Leap Year Birthday

*A Reading A-Z Level N Leveled Book*

*Word Count: 701*

## Connections

### Writing and Art

Would you want your birthday to be on February 29? Write a paragraph explaining why or why not.

### Science

Review with a partner how days and years are measured by Earth's movement in space. Then, discuss how the length of a year would change if Earth were farther from the Sun.



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