

# Larry the Lizard's Birthday<sup>1</sup>

By Barbara Bianchi

Summer was ending and the days were getting cold. The yellow school bus rounded the corner and came to a stop. Mr. Crow, the bus driver, waved goodbye as Larry Lizard and his friends Marvin Mouse and Sam Squirrel jumped down the steps and out the door.

As they reached the sidewalk, Larry noticed a sound under his feet that he had not noticed the day before. Crunch, crunch, crunch. Dried leaves covered the sidewalk and crunched as he walked. Autumn was Larry's favorite season! He liked the cooler weather and looked forward to jumping into piles of leaves. His nose wriggled at the smell of fall. He must be sure to bring his jacket with him to school from now on.

There was another reason why Larry liked fall the best. "My birthday is next week!" he yelled out to no one in particular. When he got home, he heard his Mom and Grandma Liz talking about making carrot cake for his birthday – his favorite!

His friends Marvin and Sam would be at his birthday party. His Mom and Grandma Liz would be there too. This year would be a really special celebration because his Uncle Hugo and cousins Martin, Rosa, as well as Daniel and his two sisters (Irene and Juanita) were coming. He hadn't seen them since they came for his birthday three years ago.

Here is the list of ingredients for Grandma Liza's recipe for carrot cake:

1 ½ cups sugar \_\_\_\_\_

1 cup vegetable oil \_\_\_\_\_

3 eggs \_\_\_\_\_

2 cups flour \_\_\_\_\_

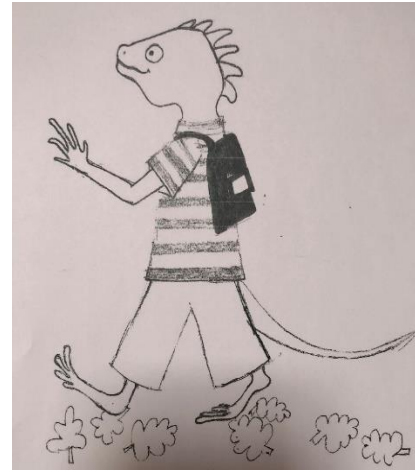
1 ½ teaspoon baking soda \_\_\_\_\_

1 teaspoon vanilla \_\_\_\_\_

½ teaspoon salt \_\_\_\_\_

3 cups shredded carrots \_\_\_\_\_

1 cup nuts \_\_\_\_\_



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<sup>1</sup> Suggested Grades: 2 – 4 Skills: Adding (or multiplying) integers, fractions, and mixed numbers

“Oh my,” said Grandma Liz. “There are so many coming to Larry Lizard’s birthday party this year that I think we will need to make two cakes!”<sup>2</sup>

**How many, including Larry, will be at the birthday party?**

**List their names.**

**The last time Larry the Lizard’s uncle and cousins came to celebrate Larry’s birthday, he was turning 6 years old. How old will Larry be this year?**

**On the lines by each ingredient in the recipe for carrot cake, double the amount of each ingredient so that Grandma Liz and Mom have everything they need to make two cakes.**

**Draw a sketch of Larry the Lizard:**

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<sup>2</sup> This is my attempt to use a Story with Math to provide differentiated instruction to a whole group third grade class with a great variation in math abilities. In my opinion, teaching at a level that’s too easily accessible to each student can be counter-productive to meeting the needs of all students. Instead, “teaching up” allows teachers to not be stuck on low-level math ideas (reference Carol Ann Tomlinson on differentiated instruction). While many third grade students are not familiar with adding mixed numbers, having a student explain how he/she was able to add  $1\frac{1}{2}$  and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to get 3 is a way to plant the seed for new understanding. At the same time, the task of doubling the recipe also provides all students with success, since there are many opportunities to reinforce simple addition or multiplication through doubling the recipe. (This activity may also be suitable for a small group remediation activity for fourth grade or small group challenge for second grade.)

Additionally, linking math to every day examples, such as baking a cake, can help some learners to understand how key concepts are useful in everyday life.