

**Minnesota Storytime
Reading Guide**

Title: *Countdown to Kindergarten*

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Illustrator: Harry Bliss

**Publisher and
Copyright Date:** Harcourt, 2002

**Connection to
Minnesota:** Minnesota author

Summary: This is the story of a little girl about to start kindergarten who cannot tie her shoes by herself and fears the worst.

Suggested ages: 4-6

Tips for Reading:

- As the story is written in the first person, read most of the book as a young girl with all her nervous anticipation.
- Change your voice for the quotes from the mother, father and teacher.

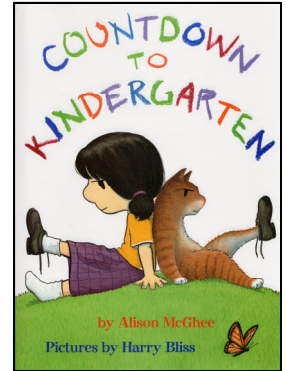
Questions before reading:

- Do you remember when you were about to start kindergarten or a new day care or your first sports team? How did you feel about starting something new?
- Can you remember when you first learned to do something, like get dressed by yourself or write your name or ride a bike? How did you feel when you were first able to do one of these things?
- Can you count backwards from ten to one, like a countdown for a rocket ship before blastoff? Let's do it together.

To Introduce this story say: It's ten days before a little girl starts kindergarten. She can do lots of things - like count backwards from ten to one and feed her cat – but she's nervous because she can't tie her own shoes. Let's read her story.

Questions After Reading:

- Why was the little girl nervous about not being able to tie her own shoes?
- What kinds of things did she do with her shoes and her shoelaces? Why did she do those things?
- Did all the other kids in kindergarten know how to tie their shoes? Did you ever think you were the only kid who couldn't do something? What were you trying to do? How did you learn to do it?



RELATED ACTIVITIES

- Art:**
- Using shoelaces and tempera paint, make a picture of how you feel before you do something new.
- Culture:**
- Think about five-year-old children in other places around the world. Can you think of any places where kids don't wear shoes?
- Language:**
- Talk about what your first day in kindergarten was like (or what you think it will be like).
- Math:**
- Count backwards from ten to one. (For children who can easily do this, make it more complicated by switching the activity to counting backwards from twenty to one or by twos or in another language.)
- Science:**
- Explain all the steps needed to tie your shoes.
 - Demonstrate how to tie a tie or a scarf.
- Other:**
- Visit a kindergarten classroom to learn more about what it will be like.
- Suggestions for English Language Learners:**
- Share the book a second time by just explaining the story through the illustrations.
 - Discuss the similar feelings that an ELL child might have starting kindergarten because he/she might be nervous being with a group of children and not fully understanding English.
- Related Books:**
- ***Look out Kindergarten, Here I Come!*** by Nancy L. Carlson (Viking, 1999)
 - ***The Night Before Kindergarten*** by Natasha Wing (Grosset & Dunlap, 2001)
 - ***First Day Jitters*** by Julie Danneberg (Charlesbridge, 2000)
 - ***When You Go to Kindergarten*** by James Howe (revised edition, William Morrow, 1994)
 - ***Wemberly Worried*** by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow, 2000)
 - ***Hello School!: A Classroom Full of Poems*** by Dee Lillegard (Knopf, 2001)

