

Name: _____ Class: _____

Earth Day Birthday

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Jody Jenson Shaffer is the author of over 27 books of fiction and nonfiction for children. In this short story, a girl celebrates her birthday on Earth Day. As you read, take notes on how April feels about celebrating Earth Day on her birthday.

- [1] "I just want a normal birthday party," April told Bailey as they walked home from school.

Bailey knew what April meant. April's parents loved the environment. And because April happened to be born on Earth Day,¹ all her parties had an Earth Day theme. "Remember when you turned seven?" Bailey said.



"The kids fanned out across the parking lot" by Roger Simó is used with permission.

"How could I forget the Throw-Out Blowout?" said April.

"We helped out at your garage sale and donated the money to charity. And when you turned eight — "

- [5] "It was a Tree Spree," finished April. "We planted maples."

"Last year, we all collected newspapers to recycle," said Bailey.

"The Print Sprint." April groaned.

Bailey giggled. "I thought it was fun."

Later that night, as April loaded the dishwasher, she said, "I'd like to plan my own party this year."

- [10] "Sure," said Mom. "We could have a Compost² Carnival."

"Great idea!" said Dad.

April cleared her throat. "I'd like to go to Maze Craze instead."

"Really?" said Dad, surprised.

"I guess we could do that," said Mom.

1. Earth Day is celebrated on April 22 and is a day to show one's support for the protection of the environment.
2. decaying plant material (such as leaves, grass, and vegetable peels) used to help live plants grow

[15] April couldn't wait for her birthday! She and her friends would have so much fun. And they wouldn't have to think one bit about the earth.

At school the next day, April told her friends. "I'm having my birthday party at Maze Craze!"

"You are?" said Josie. "But we always do something earthy on your birthday."

"Remember that salamander we found two years ago?" said Tyler.

"Yeah," said April. "This year, we're not even going outside."

[20] "Oh," Tyler said.

The following weekend, everyone gathered in the parking lot outside of Maze Craze. "Thanks for coming," said April. "I've been so excited about my party. No shovels. No collecting recyclables. Nothing earthy about it." She shifted her feet. "Then I got here this morning and saw this parking lot."

April's friends glanced around. Plastic bottles bounced across the cement. Newspapers and fast-food sacks clogged the storm drain. Shopping bags rustled in the trees.

"Even though I wanted a non-Earth Day birthday, I couldn't have fun knowing this mess was out here. Can we pick up the garbage in the parking lot first, then go through the maze?"

"Of course!" said her friends. April's parents grabbed some gloves and trash bags from the trunk of their car.

[25] The kids fanned out³ across the parking lot while their parents watched for traffic. Before long, they had filled three bags with bottles, cans, and paper to recycle.

April looked at the bags and smiled. It felt good to do something for the earth. And with everyone pitching in, it didn't take long.

"Happy Earth Day, everyone," said April. "Now I'm ready for Maze Craze."

"Happy birthday, April!" shouted her friends.