Celebrate with a Reading Ritual

I began writing my picture book *The Stuff of Stars* out of a profound sense of awe. I began with the mystery of the universe itself and with the miracle of life that blooms in our small part of that universe. I began in celebration of every human child born into all this wonder.

*The Stuff of Stars* is a book about beginnings, about birth days. I wrote it with the intention of rejoicing over momentous starting points, from the birth of the universe to the birth of a child. And of course, a child’s birthday is something to be celebrated in a big way. But I’d also like to suggest a much smaller and more intimate way of celebrating; by sitting together with the birthday child and reading.

We all know from personal experience how meaningful it can be to share a ritual. Regularly reading aloud with a child is a wonderfully warm and satisfying ritual for both you and the child in question, and one you can create with your own child, a grandchild, a niece or nephew, or any other child who is close to your heart. Although you will want to share books with them all through the year, you could go a step further and create a special reading ritual for their birthday as well. Take a time apart

“Celebrate a Reading Ritual” for *The Stuff of Stars* by Marion Dane Bauer, illustrated by Ekua Holmes (Candlewick, 2018) HC ISBN 978-0763678838. Copyright © 2018, Marion Dane Bauer. It may be copied for educational or bookstore use but may not be reprinted or resold for commercial purposes. www.mariondanebauer.com
during that day and spend it sharing *The Stuff of Stars*, reminding this chosen child of their own miraculous beginnings and that they, too, are made of the stuff of stars.

To expand the ritual, you could take a photo of this shared reading time each birthday and glue each new photo onto the beautiful marbled endpapers of *The Stuff of Stars*. This simplified scrapbook is a way to create a personalized Birthday Book that is also an evolving keepsake, shared together from a child’s one-week birthday forward.

You could also share this Birthday Book ritual with a friend or relative by giving them *The Stuff of Stars* as a personalized shower or baptism gift, including a note about how it can be turned into a Birthday Book. As the first photo, glue the baby’s ultrasound photo, or a photo of yourself, the extended family, or a group of supportive friends, onto the endpapers.

If you are a Pinterest follower, you may also want to check out two of my boards for further ideas about ways to share *The Stuff of Stars*. One features ideas for celebrations such as birthdays and baby showers, and the other features possibilities for connecting young people to science.

*The Stuff of Stars* is all about the beginnings of things; perhaps this is a chance for you to start a new kind of celebration.