



Email: bridget@paperdragonreads.com Phone: (407) 212-7759

"365: How to Count a Year" Lesson Plan Guide

by Miranda Paul

Unit Overview

Duration: 1 week

Grade Level: 3-5

Program: Orange Blossom Nonfiction Award

Subject Integration: Math (measurement and time), Science, ELA

Essential Question: *How can breaking a big idea like "a year" into smaller pieces help us understand and appreciate the passage of time?*

Learning Objectives — Students will be able to:

- Explain how a year can be measured in different units (months, weeks, days, seconds)
- Perform basic calculations converting between units of time
- Identify meaningful, personal ways to mark the passage of time
- Compare how different units of time help us understand short versus long spans
- Express understanding through math activities and personal reflection

ONE-WEEK LESSON PLAN

Day 1: What Is a Year, Really?

Objective: Introduce the concept of a year as a unit of time made of smaller units

Materials: Book, calendar, chart paper

Opening (10 min):

- Quick-write: "How long does a year feel to you? Long, short, or somewhere in between?"
- Partner share

Main Activity (30 min):

- Read the introduction of "365: How to Count a Year"
- Discuss: What are the different ways the book counts a year (months, weeks, days, seconds)?
- Create a class chart listing each unit of time mentioned in the book

Closing (5 min):

- Exit ticket: "Which unit of time (months, weeks, days, seconds) is easiest for you to picture?"

Assessment: Comprehension of time units, participation in chart

Day 2: Counting in Months and Weeks

Objective: Practice converting between months, weeks, and days

Materials: Book, calendars, math worksheets

Opening (10 min):



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- Quick math warm-up: "How many weeks are in a month? How many months are in a year?"

Main Activity (30 min):

- Read the sections on months and weeks
- Practice converting months to weeks and weeks to days using calendars
- Discuss: Why might counting in weeks feel different from counting in months?

Closing (5 min):

- Exit ticket: "Solve: How many weeks until your next birthday?"

Assessment: Math accuracy, unit conversion understanding

Day 3: 365 Days, 31,535,000 Seconds

Objective: Explore large numbers through the concept of days and seconds in a year

Materials: Book, number line or hundreds chart, calculators (optional)

Opening (10 min):

- Discussion: "What's the biggest number you can think of? How does 31,535,000 compare?"

Main Activity (30 min):

- Read the sections on days and seconds
- Use a number line or hundreds chart to build understanding of 365
- Discuss how scientists and mathematicians use very large or very small units to measure time

Closing (5 min):

- Exit ticket: "Why might it be useful to count time in seconds sometimes, and in years other times?"

Assessment: Number sense, understanding of scale

Day 4: The Small Moments That Make a Year

Objective: Connect the book's personal, memorable moments to students' own lives

Materials: Book, personal reflection journal

Opening (10 min):

- Think-pair-share: "What's one small moment from this year that you'll remember?"

Main Activity (30 min):

- Read the sections on "good mornings," movie nights, and birthday wishes
- Discuss how the book turns abstract numbers into meaningful personal moments
- Have students list their own version of memorable moments from the past year

Closing (5 min):

- Exit ticket: "Share one moment you'd add to your own 'year in moments' list."

Assessment: Personal connection, reflective writing

Day 5: Celebrating Our Year

Objective: Synthesize learning through a creative math and reflection project



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Materials: Drawing and writing supplies, project choice cards

Opening (10 min):

- Preview project options; students select and begin

Main Activity (30 min):

- Option A: Create your own illustrated "How to Count a Year" page featuring your own numbers and moments
- Option B: Solve a set of time-conversion math problems (months to weeks, days to hours, etc.)
- Option C: Write a short paragraph about why time can feel both long and short depending on how you measure it
- Share work in pairs or small groups

Closing (5 min):

- Class closing: "One new way I think about a year now is..."

Assessment: Math accuracy, creativity, thematic understanding

Differentiation

- **Advanced learners:** Challenge students to calculate seconds in a leap year and explain the difference
- **Students needing support:** Provide calculators and pre-filled calendars for conversion activities
- **English Language Learners:** Pre-teach key vocabulary (calendar, measurement, conversion) with visual supports
- **Visual learners:** Use number lines, hundreds charts, and calendars throughout the unit

Materials List

- Class set of "365: How to Count a Year"
- Calendars for each student or small group
- Number line or hundreds chart
- Calculators (optional)
- Drawing and writing supplies for Day 5