

Chrysanthemum By Kevin Henkes

ACT 1

Teacher, Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Mother, Father, Chrysanthemum, Jo, Rita, Victoria, Mrs. Chud

Narrator 1: The day she was born was the happiest day in her parents' lives.

Mother: She's perfect!

Father: Absolutely!

Narrator 1: And she was. She was absolutely perfect.

Mother: Her name must be everything she is.

Father: Her name must be absolutely perfect.



Teacher 1: And it was. Her parents named her Chrysanthemum.

Chrysanthemum grew and grew and grew. And when she was old enough to appreciate it, Chrysanthemum loved her name. She loved the way it sounded when her mother woke her up, and when her father called her for dinner. She loved the way it looked written with icing on her birthday cake, or when she wrote it herself with her fat orange crayon. And she loved the way it sounded when she whispered it to herself in the bathroom mirror.

Chrysanthemum: Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum.

Teacher 1: Chrysanthemum thought her name was absolutely perfect. And then, she started school. On her first day, Chrysanthemum wore her sunniest dress and her brightest smile. She ran all the way to school.

Chrysanthemum: Hooray!! School!!

Narrator 2: But when Mrs. Chud took role call, everyone giggled upon hearing Chrysanthemum's name.

Jo: It's so long!

Rita: It scarcely fits on your nametag.

Victoria: I'm named after my grandmother. You're named after a flower!

Teacher: Chrysanthemum wilted. She did not think her name was absolutely perfect. She thought it was absolutely dreadful.

The rest of the day was not much better.

Mrs. Chud: Chrysanthemum, your name is spelled with exactly 13 letters!

Victoria: That's exactly half as many letters as are in the entire alphabet! If I had a name like yours, I'd change it.

Narrator 2: Chrysanthemum wished she could.

Mother: Welcome home!

Chrysanthemum: School is no place for me. My name is too long. It scarcely fits on my name tag. And, I'm named after a flower!

Mother: Oh, pish! Your name is beautiful!

Father: And precious and priceless and fascinating.

Mother: It's everything you are.

Father: Absolutely perfect!

Narrator 2: Chrysanthemum felt much better after her favorite dinner (macaroni and cheese with ketchup) and an evening filled with hugs and kisses and board games.

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Reader's Theater: Props:

- *fake (or real!) birthday cake, with Chrysanthemum written on it
- *piece of paper/poster board with Chrysanthemum written in orange on it
- *nametags for Chrysanthemum, Rita, Jo, and Victoria, Mrs. Chud, Victoria, Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Mrs. Twinkle
- *at least four desks
- *one small table
- *three chairs
- *"Chrysanthemum" banner

ACT 2

Characters: **Teacher, Narrator 1, Mother, Father, Chrysanthemum, Jo, Rita, Victoria, Mrs. Twinkle**

Teacher: The next morning Chrysanthemum wore her most comfortable outfit. She walked to school as slowly as she could. She dragged her feet in the dirt.

Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, she wrote.



Victoria: She even looks like a flower!

Rita: Let's pick her!

Jo: Let's smell her!

Teacher: Chrysanthemum wilted. She did not think her name was absolutely perfect. She thought it was absolutely dreadful.

The rest of the day was not much better. Victoria raised her hand and said,

Victoria: A chrysanthemum is a flower. It lives in a garden with worms and other dirty things. I just cannot believe your name.

Narrator 1: Chrysanthemum walked home sadly.

Mother: Welcome home!

Chrysanthemum: School is no place for me. They pretended to pick and smell me.

Mother: Oh, pish. They're just jealous. Who wouldn't be jealous of a name like yours?

Father: After all, it's absolutely perfect.

Teacher: Chrysanthemum felt a trifle better after her favorite dessert (chocolate cake with butter cream frosting) and another evening filled with hugs and kisses and board games.

Chrysanthemum wore her outfit with the seven pockets the next day. She filled it with her most prized possessions and her good-luck charms. Chrysanthemum took the longest possible route to school. She stopped and stared at each and every flower.

"Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum," the flowers seemed to say.

Teacher: That morning the students were introduced to Mrs. Twinkle, the music teacher, who they thought was an indescribable wonder. She assigned roles for the class musicale. Victoria was chosen as the dainty Fairy Queen. Rita was chosen as the spiffy Butterfly Princess. Jo was chosen as the all-important Pixie-messenger. And Chrysanthemum was chosen as a daisy.

Victoria, Rita, Jo: Chrysanthemum's a daisy! Chrysanthemum's a daisy!

Teacher: Chrysanthemum wilted. She did not think her name was absolutely perfect. She thought it was absolutely dreadful.

Mrs. Twinkle: What's so humorous?

Victoria, Rita, Jo: Chrysanthemum!

Jo: Her name is so long!

Rita: It scarcely fits on her name tag.

Victoria: I'm named after my grandmother. She's named after a flower!

Mrs. Twinkle: My name is long.

Jo: It is?

Mrs. Twinkle: My name would scarcely fit on a nametag.

Rita: It would?

Mrs. Twinkle: And, I'm named after a flower, too!

Victoria: You are?

Mrs. Twinkle: Yes, my name is Delphinium. Delphinium Twinkle. And if my baby is a girl, I'm considering Chrysanthemum as a name. I think it's absolutely perfect.

Teacher: Chrysanthemum could scarcely believe her ears. She blushed. She beamed. She bloomed.

Chrysanthemum: Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum.

Narrator 1: Jo, Rita, and Victoria looked at Chrysanthemum longingly.

Jo: Call me Marigold!

Rita: I'm Carnation!

Victoria: My name is Lily of the Valley!

Teacher: Chrysanthemum did not think her name was absolutely perfect. She knew it! Eventually Mrs. Twinkle gave birth to a healthy baby girl. And, of course, she named her Chrysanthemum.