



**Art & Craft
Academy**



Different Heroes Series

Maryam

and Grandma's Buttons



Written by

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To every child who sees the numbers
scatter before their eyes,
and to every grown-up who helps gather them,
one button at a time.

Maryam and Grandma's Buttons



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Illustrations and design: **Art & Craft Academy**

Published by



Different Heroes Series, Book 4

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1

This is Maryam. She loves visiting her grandma every Friday.

Grandma is a seamstress, and she has an old cookie tin full of buttons: red, blue, and green, big and small, with two holes and with four holes. Maryam sits on the rug, sorts the buttons by color, and makes flowers and butterflies out of them.



2

But Maryam has a problem with numbers.

When she sees numbers in her notebook, they seem to scatter, like buttons when the tin falls on the floor! Which is bigger: seven or four? How many are left if we take away two? Maryam counts on her fingers... then forgets where she was.



3

In math class, Miss Mona said, **“Quick quiz! What is five plus three?”**

The children raised their hands fast. But Maryam started counting on her fingers... one, two... then she lost track.

She said quietly, “Seven? No... nine?” Then she looked down and thought, “I just don’t understand numbers.”



4

On Friday, Grandma noticed that Maryam was sad, so Maryam told her about the quiz.

Grandma smiled and brought an empty egg carton with ten cups. **“Numbers are like buttons, Maryam. They like to have a home. Come, let’s build them homes.”**



5

Grandma put five red buttons in the first row and asked, “**How many cups are still empty?**”

Maryam looked... and she didn’t need to count! “**Five cups!**”

Then Grandma added three blue buttons. Maryam’s eyes sparkled. “**Only two cups are left... so it’s eight! Eight and two make ten!**”



6

Maryam started practicing every day. She put buttons in the egg carton and made a shape for each number: four was a square, and five was a flower.

Some days were hard, and the buttons scattered all over again. Then Grandma would say, **“That’s okay. We’ll gather them again.”**



7

At school, Miss Mona said, **“Let’s make a gift for the kindergarten children: ten bracelets, with ten beads on each one.”**

Then the bead box tipped over, and beads scattered all over the desks! Everyone started counting at the same time. Yousef said, **“Faster... faster!”** and Layla said, **“I forgot where I was!”**



8

Maryam raised her hand. **“Can I try Grandma’s way?”**

She took empty egg cartons out of her bag and put one bead in each cup: five red and five blue.

“When it’s full, we have ten beads... without counting!”

Soon, all the children were filling egg cartons, and the bracelets were finished one after another.



9

At the kindergarten, the little ones loved the colorful bracelets. Miss Mona said, **“Maryam, you made the numbers line up all by themselves!”**

On Friday, Maryam sat next to Grandma, put the buttons in the egg carton, and said, **“The numbers still scatter sometimes, Grandma... but now I know how to build them homes.”**

The End

Let's Talk About the Story

1. How did Maryam feel during the quick math quiz?
2. How did the egg carton help Maryam know the number without counting?
3. Who in your life helps you when something is hard?

For Parents and Teachers

Some children are smart and creative, but numbers seem confusing to them. They know the names of the numbers, but they don't really "feel" how much each one means. This difficulty has nothing to do with intelligence or laziness.

Signs we may notice

- Finding it hard to connect numbers to amounts (that 5 means five things).
- Counting on fingers for much longer than classmates, and getting lost while counting.
- Finding it hard to tell which of two numbers is bigger, or how many things are in a small group without counting each one.
- Finding simple facts like $5 + 3$ hard to remember, even after practice.
- Feeling worried or frustrated during math.

Good to know: Counting on fingers is normal for young children, and fingers are a helpful learning tool. These signs do not necessarily mean dyscalculia. It is worth a closer look when the difficulty continues despite good teaching and support.

What helps?

- Hands-on materials: buttons, beads, counters, or other safe objects the child can move and arrange.
- A "ten-frame," like the egg carton, so the child can see the number and how many more make ten.
- Familiar patterns, like the dots on a die, to recognize small amounts at a glance.
- Math in everyday life: cooking, shopping, sharing things, and setting the table.
- Time to think: allowing fingers and tools, and avoiding speed quizzes and time pressure.

If the difficulty continues despite good teaching and support, talk to a specialist in learning difficulties. They can assess whether it may be dyscalculia, a learning difficulty with numbers, and how best to support your child. Early support can change a child's whole relationship with numbers.

Let's Make a Magic Egg Carton

You will need

An egg carton with ten cups in two rows of five (or one cut from a large egg tray), large buttons or counters in two colors, and a die.

Games

1. **Fill the Number:** Say a number from 1 to 10. The child puts in that many buttons. Then ask, "How many cups are still empty?"
2. **Two Colors:** Put in some red buttons, then some blue ones. The child says the total and explains how they know, without counting one by one.
3. **Ten Friends:** Put in 6 buttons. The child adds more until it is full: 6 and 4 make ten!
4. **Dice:** The child rolls the die and puts in the same number of buttons. Over time, they learn to recognize the dot patterns at a glance.

Small buttons and beads can be a choking hazard. Supervise children closely and keep small pieces away from children under three. For children who still put things in their mouths, use larger counters.



Maryam makes flowers and butterflies
out of buttons,
but numbers scatter in front of her
like buttons falling out of a tin!
Can Grandma help her gather them again?
A warm story about numbers, grandmothers,
and simple tools from every home.

Different Heroes Series

Ages 5 to 8

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