

# The World According to Humphrey

By Betty G. Birney

*Library of Congress Summary: Humphrey, pet hamster at Longfellow School, learns that he has an important role to play in helping his classmates and teacher.*

## **Booktalk:**

<http://www.mackinbooktalk.com/viewbook.aspx?BookId=1480>

## **Author Information**

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## **Pre-reading Activities:**

- Before reading the book discuss with the class what the world would look like from the perspective of a classroom pet.
- Ask the students what they already know about hamsters and taking care of classroom pets.
- Have the students write down predictions about the story after looking at the cover and table of contents.

## **Chapter Questions:**

### **Chapter 1:**

#### Questions:

1. What is it about Humphrey that makes him view the world differently than the other students?
2. Why does Humphrey think the students' names are Lower-your Voice-A.J. and Wait-for-the-Bell-Garth?
3. Why does Ms. Mac have to leave?

Journal Topic: What would our classroom look like to a Humphrey? Describe the classroom from the perspective of a hamster. Be sure to include a lot of detail.

Vocabulary:

species (1) – a group of similar living things that are capable of breeding

compliment (3) – when someone says something nice about you

pagoda (3) – tall tower

convenient (5) – fulfills all of Humphrey's needs

inkling (5) - clue

responsibility (6) – being in charge of something

rodent (6) – gnawing mammal, they grow incisors but no canine teeth

## **Chapter 2:**

Questions:

1. Name three different things Humphrey ate in this chapter. Do you think he is a picky eater?
2. Why did Mrs. Brisbane leave Humphrey at school?
3. Why does Aldo Amato work at the school at night?
4. Why does Humphrey store food in his cheek pouch?

Journal Topic: Imagine that you are a hamster. Write how you would get across our classroom. Be sure to use a lot of detail.

Vocabulary:

bedding (8) – wood shavings in a cage

mealworms (8) – small worms that are often fed to small animals; larvae of a darkling beetle,

blouse (8) – women's shirt

drowsy (9) - sleepy

nocturnal (9) – active at night

jittery (12) - nervous

nerves (12) – nervous agitation

gnawed (12) – bite or nibble persistently

## Chapter 3:

### Questions:

1. Why does Humphrey say there are two Mrs. Brisbanes?
2. Why did Seyah have to stay inside during recess?
3. Why does Mrs. Brisbane want to get rid of Humphrey?
4. Why does Aldo say Ritchie better have a clean desk?

Journal Topic: Mrs. Brisbane gets upset when she sees the mess around Humphrey's cage. What little things make you upset? Write about them and why they make you upset.

### Vocabulary:

arithmetic (19) – math  
muttering (20) – say something very quietly  
beamed (22) – smiled really big  
fate (23) – the events in someone's future life  
await (23) – wait for

## Chapter 4:

### Questions:

1. Why did Ritchie say the capital of Kentucky was “Hot Dog”?
2. Why does Humphrey say things in threes? (Example on page 29 “CALL-CALL-CALL”)
3. Why is Mr. Morales so excited to take Humphrey home?
4. Why do you think everyone listens to Mr. Morales at school but not at home?

Journal Topic: Mr. Morales takes Humphrey home for the weekend. Have you ever taken care of a classroom pet for a weekend? If so, write about your experience. If not, write about a different experience you've had taking care of a pet.

### Vocabulary:

frankfurter (25) – hot dog  
homing pigeons (26) – pigeons (birds) that return to the place they came from even after traveling a long distance away from it  
threatened (26) – warned of something bad they might do  
whirlwinds (29) – energetic kids

bravo (31) – expression of approval  
slumped (31) – sat down heavily

## Chapter 5:

### Questions:

1. How did Humphrey help Mr. Morales?
2. Did Humphrey's plan work?
3. What kind of ad did Humphrey find in the newspaper?
4. Prediction: What do you think Humphrey's next plan is?

Journal Topic: Aldo didn't see the ad Humphrey tried to show him. Create a different ad for something fun Aldo can do on the weekend.

### Vocabulary:

scampered (33) - run quickly but lightly  
cooperate (34) – work together  
meandered (38) – wander around

## Chapter 6:

### Questions:

1. Prediction: Do you think Aldo will go to the Moonlighter's Club? Why or why not?
2. What was Mrs. Brisbane's surprise for the class?
3. Prediction: What do you think Garth has planned to get Humphrey in trouble?

Journal Topic: Room 26 received a postcard from Ms. Mac. Now imagine you are Humphrey. Write a postcard back to Ms. Mac.

### Vocabulary:

scurried (42) – move quickly with short steps  
queasy (42) – feeling sick  
rungs (42) – horizontal support  
panting (43) – breathe quick short breaths  
scolded (44) – spoke angrily  
commotion (47) – confused and noisy disturbance  
disguise (48) – different appearance to conceal your identity

## Chapter 7:

### Questions:

1. Why couldn't Humphrey understand the Nasiris?
2. Why is Sayeh afraid to speak in class?
3. What did Sayeh do to help her mom speak English?
4. Prediction: Do you think Humphrey find a way for Sayehto sing in front Room 26? How?

Journal Topic: Sayeh never talked in class because she was worried about her accent. Write about a time you were afraid of looking silly in front of people.

### Vocabulary:

accent (51) – how someone pronounces words  
swimmingly (52) – smoothly or satisfactorily  
dozed (55) - slept

## Chapter 8:

### Questions:

1. What did the students have to do in order to receive their treats?
2. Who didn't cheer when Humphrey won Best Costume? Why?
3. What good news did Aldo have that night?

Journal Topic: Room 26 had a fun Halloween costume party. Write about your favorite Halloween costume or class party.

### Vocabulary:

eerie (57) – strange and frightening  
ghastly (57) – causing great fear  
goblins (57) – ugly fantasy creature  
cloakroom (59) – room to hang up your coat  
bulbous (64) – big and round

## Chapter 9:

### Questions:

1. What three exciting things happened that week to Humphrey?
2. Do you think Clem opens doors when Miranda and her mom aren't around?  
How can you tell?
3. How did Humphrey stop Clem after he broke into Miranda's room while she was away for the night?

Journal Topic: Humphrey gets really scared when Clem breaks into Miranda's room again. Write about a time you were really scared.

Vocabulary:

coatis (66) – raccoon-like animal found in Central and South America  
bounded (67) – run or walk with very big steps  
forty winks (72) – a short nap

## **Chapter 10:**

Questions:

1. Why has Garth been acting differently?
2. Why doesn't Mrs. Brisbane ever take Humphrey home?
3. Prediction: How do you think Garth can have extra time with Humphrey?

Journal Topic: Have you ever been so upset about something that it made you act differently or get into trouble? Write about that time or a time when you were really upset.

Vocabulary:

bellowed (76) – spoke loudly  
skedaddle (77) – run away  
puzzled (78) – confused

## **Chapter 11:**

Questions:

1. Why do you think A.J. is always loud at school?
2. Why did Humphrey unplug the TV?
3. What was different about A.J.'s family when the TV was unplugged?

Journal Topic: A.J.'s family watches too much TV. Think about your family. Do you watch too much TV? Write about five other things you could do instead of watching TV.

Vocabulary:

sprawling (84) – lying spread out

blaring (85) – loud

feat (89) – achievement requiring great strength and skill

bridge (90) – card game played by four people

## **Chapter 12:**

Questions:

1. Why wasn't A.J. excited when Garth came over?
2. Why didn't A.J.'s parents plug the TV back in when they figured out it was unplugged?
3. Why was Sayeh worried when Miranda said her mom would call Sayeh's mom?
4. Why was Humphrey afraid to go to Mrs. Brisbane's house for Thanksgiving break?

Journal Topic: A.J. thinks Garth has been a jerk lately at school, but when Garth comes over to play with Humphrey they become friends again. Have you ever thought one of your friends was being mean? How did you solve the problem? Write about your experience.

Vocabulary:

promptly (96) – right away

generous (98) – giving a lot

## **Chapter 13:**

Questions:

1. Why was Mrs. Brisbane worried about taking Humphrey home?
2. Why did Humphrey say he would send Mr. Brisbane to the principal's office?
3. Why does Mrs. Brisbane tell Mr. Brisbane that he's stuck in a cage?

Journal Topic: Humphrey says there are many different Mrs. Brisbanes. In what ways could there be more than one of you? Write down the different roles you play in life.

Vocabulary:

molehill (104) – small pile of dirt from a mole digging a hole

scowled (105) – frowned angrily

vantage point (106) – point of view

## **Chapter 14:**

Questions:

1. Why did Humphrey make Mr. Brisbane chase him around the house?
2. Why was Mrs. Brisbane surprised when she said Mr. Brisbane looked different?
3. How did Humphrey help the Brisbanes?
4. Why did Mrs. Brisbane change her mind about taking Humphrey home?

Journal Topic: Humphrey helps Mr. Brisbane feel better by helping him have fun. Write about a time you had to cheer up a friend. Or write about three ways you could cheer someone up.

Vocabulary:

grouchy (108) – grumpy, complaining

bustled (109) – move around noisily

established (109) – set up

triumphantly (110) – proud that he won

rosy (111) – pink

## **Chapter 15:**

Questions:

1. He says he was glad Mrs. Brisbane doesn't take him home every night. Why did Humphrey change his mind about staying at school?
2. What does Aldo want to get Maria for Christmas?
3. What news did Garth share about his family?
4. Why do you think Mr. Morales bought a hamster for his children?

Journal Topic: Like Ms. Mac said "You can learn a lot about yourself by getting to know another species." Write about at least two things Humphrey learned by

getting to know Mrs. Brisbane and the students in Room 26. What did you learn from reading this book? Write something you learned, too

### Vocabulary:

menorah (115) – candelabra with seven branches used for Chanukah

## **Interdisciplinary Activities:**

- Social Studies – learn about different cultures and discuss how people come to America and may not know English
- Social Studies & Writing – Have students write about their responsibilities at home
- Social Studies & Art– Have student create family trees and compare differences
- Art – Have students draw a picture of Humphrey’s new cage or a dream cage for Humphrey

## **Other books by Betty G. Birney:**

*Humphrey series: Friendship According to Humphrey, Trouble According to Humphrey, Surprises According to Humphrey, Adventure According to Humphrey, Summer According to Humphrey, School Days According to Humphrey (June 2011)*

*Pie's In The Oven  
Tyrannosaurus Tex  
Let's Play Hide And Seek*

## **Related Websites:**

- Crosswords, word games, and other activities can be found at

<http://www.bettybirney.com/humphreyville.html>

- Official ASPCA website article about hamster care. Subtopics include Background, Housing, Veterinary Care, and General Use. Includes a printable PDF handout.

<http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/small-pet-care/hamster-care.aspx>

- Pet Poetry. A collection of poems about pets.

<http://www.k12.nf.ca/perlwin/Pet%20Poetry%20Poems.html>

## **Related Reads:**

- *Memoirs of a Goldfish* by Devin Scillian
- *Oh, Theodore! Guinea Pig Poems* by Susan Katz

## **Teacher Guides:**

- *The World according to Humphrey* Teacher's Guide can be found at:

<http://www.bettybirney.com/WorldTeachersGuide.html>

- A curriculum guide for the entire *Humphrey* series can be found at:

[http://www.bettybirney.com/pdf/Humphrey\\_curriculum\\_guide.pdf](http://www.bettybirney.com/pdf/Humphrey_curriculum_guide.pdf)

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